

International Referee Development Program

Health & Wellness Guide



Background

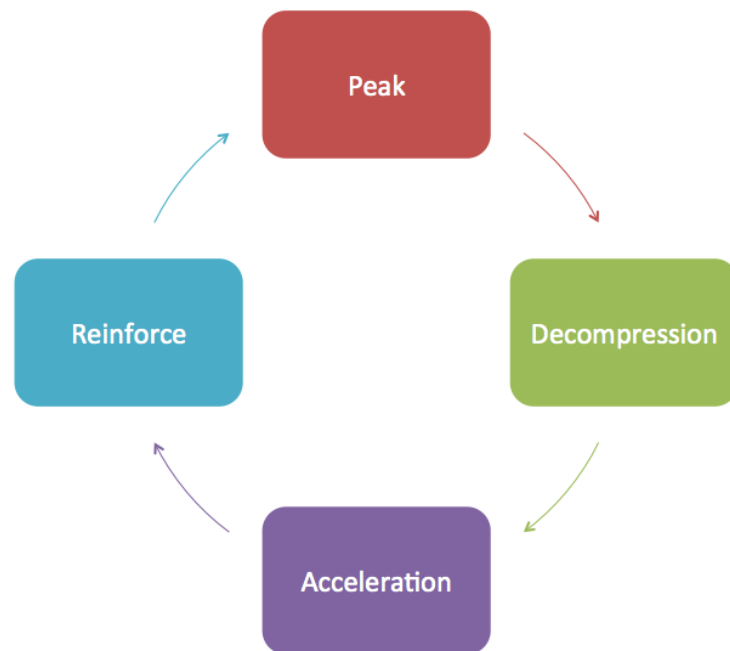
The IRDP certification process allows referees to improve their refereeing through rules clarifications, written tests, field exams, workshops, and other training methods. Referees are put through hours of training in preparation for the single season matches, tournaments, regionals, and ultimately nationals. Rules knowledge and field experience certainly are the largest factors to your development as a referee, but often times referees overlook the physical and mental preparation and conditioning (as well as recovery) necessary to survive a season. Over the past few years quidditch refereeing has had to evolve to accommodate the increased skill, speed, and physicality of its players. This requires tremendous physical and mental fitness on the part of the official; the games are fast, hard fought, and difficult to officiate when fatigued or out of shape. High level officials are athletes just like the players and are expected to meet certain physical demands which are no different than what is expected from the players at the highest levels. A year-round commitment to physical and mental fitness has enabled them to perform at the highest level, earning the respect of the players and coaches along the way.

This guide was created to focus on you and your health as an official throughout an entire season. The ideas presented are intended to strengthen your intellectual and physical stamina and are suggestions made by seasoned officials who have officiated this game for over the course of the sport's history. For the novice referee, it will help you create a solid foundation of health and well-being. For intermediate referees, it will provide ways to raise the bar to the next level of officiating. And for those experienced and high-level referees, this guide will provide ways for you to sustain that high performance indefinitely.

The Quidditch Calendar

There is no single quidditch season. The sport is a year-round obsession of players, coaches, and fans. That demand is met with a year-round commitment from organizers, administrators, planners, and above all, referees. The season builds over the course of the year, ending with the most exciting events: regional, national, and international championships.

Knowing this cycle is essential to developing a customized referee training schedule. Having a blueprint for the year allows referees to prioritize which areas of their development (mental and physical) need more focus as opposed to others. This guide is focused on mental and physical development throughout each phase of the cycle. By developing both mind and body, this guide hopes to improve your overall health and well-being as a member of the referee community.



From day one until the final championship, the cycle is divided into four distinct phases: Acceleration, Reinforce, Peak, and Decompression. Depending on your national league, the dates may vary. The important takeaway is that these four phases are split into three month periods, each with their own goals and objectives.

Phase One: Acceleration

The start of every quidditch season begins with the release of the newest version of the rulebook. Rulebook creators reflect on what worked and failed over the past season and adjust the rules accordingly. Recent rulebooks haven't made drastic changes, but have altered many rules that, in aggregate, requires referees to thoroughly comb the sections to improve comprehension. The three months during the Acceleration phase may be viewed as the most important phase of the cycle, due to the simple fact that the regular season begins in the next phase. The Acceleration phase requires the largest amount of mental and physical training.

The first half of the Acceleration phase should have a particular focus on knowledge of the rulebook. Referees should give the rulebook an entire read-through upon its release to the general public. Make notes in the margins when you recognize a change (big or small). Rulebook makers may include a changelog indicating all of the changes between rulebooks; while this is certainly helpful, referees should remember that this is not a shortcut to reading the rulebook.

After reading through the rulebook, use flashcards and other study methods to help fully grasp the rules. It is also good practice to keep a copy of the rulebook by the bedside to peruse during downtime. Full immersion in the rulebook is pivotal at this time.

Aside from the rulebook, it is also very important to send and receive views to/from the overall referee community. Referees should spend time conversing with each other in person as well as on constructive online referee forums. Not only will referees reinforce knowledge of the rulebook (as well as have their questions answered), but they will also form a bond with other referees, which promotes health through camaraderie and shared goals.

Along with the mental development as a referee, it is important to focus on physical training during this phase as well. The highest quality referees are those that are able to move effectively during gameplay to get into the best possible positions. Being physically fit also enables you to sustain refereeing over long periods of time, especially in tournaments. In addition, physical exercise is linked to stress relief and allows you to look and feel good. During the Acceleration phase, try to develop a

workout plan that combines aerobic activity (jogging), anaerobic activity (agility drills, sprints), and weight-lifting (or push-ups). To prevent injury, only do those activities that you can comfortably handle, and gradually increase in difficulty as you see fit. Be careful of high intensity workouts where not having the proper form will result in injuries. As always, remember to stretch before every workout and make sure to rest to allow your muscles to recover. As a general guideline, if you experience pain during training, stop immediately. Pain is your body's own defence mechanism against further injury. A temporary loss in training time and fitness is far better than long term damage to your body.

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of injured soft tissues early is essential in the recovery process.

Some of the signs and symptoms to look out for are:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Bruising
- Tenderness
- Redness
- Loss of movement

Phase Two: Reinforce

Now that the season is underway, referees will often find themselves refereeing close to every weekend. The Acceleration phase's goal was to raise the referee's mind and body level to prepare for the regular season. The Reinforce phase is very much a balance between mental/physical preparation and quidditch matches and tournaments. Mental and physical preparation should be less intense than that of the Acceleration phase. Referees should continue to review the rulebook, and exercise moderately during the week to maintain their current levels. The more important aspect of this phase is that referees must make sure to rest after every tournament to prevent being burned out. After referees have received feedback from their performance, they should find time to relax and give their bodies ample time to recover.

Phase Three: Peak

The Peak phase requires the re-focus on mental training. There is always a chance that certain rules will be tweaked in the days leading up to national championships, and it is important to be as mentally prepared as possible. Since there are typically less tournaments leading up to the national championships, referees can increase their physical training to maintain their current levels. Referees must maintain their diet and exercise to prepare for the toughest competitions.

Phase Four: Decompression

With the closure of national championships, mental and physical levels have dropped for both players and referees. The most competitive tournament of the year has concluded with the most deserving team achieving the pinnacle of quidditch competition. As a referee, the Decompression phase begins the day after national championships and lasts during the months of April, June, and July. Like with any sport, it is important to let your body and mind recover from the season. Referees have undoubtedly worked and trained hard throughout the season, and the best thing to do for the few months after the national championship is to take a break from quidditch. One complaint of many referees is that they get burned out from refereeing all the time. The Decompression phase is a way for referees to detach from the game and recharge their batteries.

Sustaining Performance During a Tournament

It is not uncommon for referees to find themselves tired and fatigued during a tournament, especially those tournaments that have a shortage of referees. There are many ways a referee can prevent fatigue during hours of refereeing.

- Make sure to get a good night's rest. Resist the urge to stay out at night prior to a tournament. Sleep deprivation can be detrimental to a referee and will often lead to a drop in performance.
- Do not skip breakfast. Based on a tournament schedule, it might be impossible to find food during the day. Try to have a solid breakfast before the day starts.
- Pack water and snacks. Similar to the previous point, if you are refereeing an entire day, it might not be possible to grab a snack, and often times, there won't be places to get food around the field. Try to pack bottles of water and snacks such as granola bars, bananas, fruit, and other non-fatty foods.
- Stretch and warm-up before every match. Make sure to properly stretch to help prevent injuries during matches. Try to get the blood flowing through short sprints and movement exercises.
- Bring clothes for every type of weather. Referees might have control over the field, but the weather is something they cannot control. Make sure to bring an extra sweater, T-shirt, pants, shorts, socks, and other items that you may need in case of a temperature shift.
- Make sure to bring an extra pair of comfortable sneakers or flip-flops/sandals. Once your matches end, slip into your sneakers or flip-flops to give your feet a rest. You will need them for the entire day.
- Take advantage of every break you are given. If you are able to, try to get away from the fields every now and again to clear your head. This will prevent you from being burned out.
- Wear sunscreen and keep out of the sun as much as possible during hot and sunny days. Staying out in the sun too long will drain your energy.

Nutrition

Maintaining a healthy diet is essential for a referee that wants to take their officiating to the next level. This doesn't mean that you have to give up sweets or junk food, but as is with the case of all things, everything should be done in moderation. Everybody's diets will be different, but generally, there should be a carbohydrate (60-70%), protein (10-15%), and fats (20-25%) component in your diet. Each contributes differently to your performance.

Carbohydrates provide both physical and mental energy for high intense activity. They are broken down into glucose within the blood, to be used as immediate energy, or are stored within the muscles and liver, to be utilised at a later time. Glucose is the primary fuel for our brain function; when blood glucose levels are low (hypoglycaemia), the brain does not work as well as it could. Decisions and skill are impaired, and fatigue will occur.

Carbohydrates can be split into slow and quick-releasing carbohydrates. Slow-releasing carbohydrates provide a steady, prolonged source of energy. Examples include whole grain bread, apples, pears, whole wheat pasta, oats, and berries. Quick-releasing carbohydrates provide a rapid increase in blood sugar which provides surges in energy. Examples of quick-releasing carbohydrates are bananas, sports drinks, cereals, and fruit juice.

Fats provide the major energy reserve in the body; however, it is important to consume the right kinds of fats, such as those found in seeds, nuts, and fish. Protein is necessary for building muscle and controlling exercise metabolism.

Finally, referees must be drinking plenty of water. The loss of body fluids leads to fatigue and can lead to poor performance and decision-making. Referees must remember to keep hydrated before, during, and after matches.