



# 2019 MEN'S GAME GAME MANAGEMENT MANUAL



*“As an [official] you are neither inside the game, as the players are, nor outside it among the fans, but that the game passes through you, like rainwater through a filter, and that your job is to influence it for the better, to strain out any impurities, to make it cleaner, fairer, and more transparent without impeding it, corrupting it, changing its course, or making it taste funny.” – Bruce Weber*

## GAME MANAGEMENT

Game Management refers to the use of different techniques that help the game run smoothly. Less experienced officials typically work hard to correctly execute the “science” of lacrosse officiating: remembering all of the appropriate rules, judging the game correctly, and following proper mechanics. Officials with more experience start to focus on the “art” of officiating: keeping the game flowing, communicating appropriately, and preventing problems before they occur. This manual is designed to teach you the key aspects of game management.

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## PRE-GAME

*“I feel bad for them. They’re the only ones who never play a home game.” – Jim Leyland*

What you do in the twenty minutes before a game can have a tremendous impact on your game management. Showing up to the field with plenty of time to spare in a neat, clean uniform, carrying yourself professionally as you inspect the field, introducing yourself to the coaches, and conducting your coach’s certification all create the feeling that you know what you are doing. The coaches come to expect this routine, and if you deviate from it, they will start to question your abilities before you make a single call.

Ideally, you will get to the game early enough to check the field thoroughly. However, no matter how rushed you are, you must check the goals before the opening faceoff. It is best to check the goals 20 minutes or so before the game so the home team has time to fix them, then check them again after the coin toss to make sure there are no balls left in the goal and no new holes. If you do not check and there is a questionable goal with a hole in one of the nets, one of the coaches will be furious.

It is also important to establish a rapport with the table personnel. Give them as much information and instruction as they can handle. There are printed guidelines for timers and scorers available on the US Lacrosse website. In any case, make sure they know to call you over if they are unsure about anything. Instruct the table personnel to not allow the crew to restart play if they are unclear about anything (it is better to wait than try to re-create).

Take time to make sure the table is properly equipped with a working horn and a timing device. If there is a visible scoreboard, find out if the clock will be used and if it has an automatic horn for the end of the period. If not, be clear with the timer about the procedure for the end of the period. Also, be sure to inform both coaches about the horn and clock situation.



The pre-game period is also a time for officials to communicate with each other. At higher levels, the pre-game may last an hour or more at lower levels it may consist of talking for a few minutes in the parking lot before taking the field.

The officials should also review mechanics, discuss any new rules interpretations, and determine if there are any special circumstances that they need to consider.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ta9crAD8H5A> – Example Pre-Game

## FACEOFFS

*“If you want to advance, you must look and perform like an athlete.” – Todd Skaggs*

Faceoffs are one of the most challenging parts of the game to officiate. Here are some ways to ensure that they go well:

- In your pre-game, discuss if any of the officials have knowledge of the faceoff players. Is there a tendency of one or both players to stretch the rules (i.e. using hands, withholding, etc.)? If there is, then discuss how the crew will handle those potential calls.
- Take a few minutes before the game and meet with the faceoff players from both teams to go over expectations the crew has and for the players to ask questions.
  - Crosses perpendicular to the ground and parallel to the line
  - No hands on the plastic
  - A clear neutral zone
  - All body parts to the left of the head
  - The whistle will vary after “set”
- Use verbal and physical adjustments to get the players into the legal position necessary for the faceoff.



- If you need to restart the faceoff, for example the ball not staying still on a grass field, then stand both players up and pick a new spot to faceoff.
- Do not coach individual players. Instead, speak to them as a group:
  - YES: “Move left” or “Hands off the plastic”
  - NO: “Blue, get your head out of the neutral zone”



- If you conduct a faceoff with a player in the penalty area, remind the table crew that the penalized player cannot release until there is possession and check that one of the wing areas remains empty for the man-down team. It is also a good idea to ask how much time remains on the penalty so the officiating crew is aware of the situation.

## MECHANICS

*“The game moves fast, so slow it down. That was something my supervisors consistently said to me: Slow it down and let the game come to you.” – Mike Liner*

The standard lacrosse mechanics are designed to put you in the best position to make the correct call.

Coaches and players can tell when make a call while out of position. When an official calls, or does not call, a crease violation from 25 yards away, or calls an end line out of bounds on a shot while standing on goal line extended instead of running toward the line, the official erodes the confidence that the players have in their calls, and that makes it much harder to manage a game.



However, if the official is in the right position to make the call, it is much harder for the coaches and players to debate it.

For example, on a close call of a goal or a non-goal due to a crease violation, the official blasts the whistle, sprints in and emphatically signals “no goal, no goal, crease violation.” There is not going to be much argument.

Contested end line calls should also have an official on the end line making the call.

If you are forced to make a long-distance call, run in several yards while blowing the whistle so that when you announce the call you are closer to the action.

Always hold your direction-of-play signal for a second or two. It takes that long for everyone to see you and recognize which team is getting the ball.

On any close call a strong whistle, a big and clear signal, and a quick restart keeps the game moving and gets the players back to playing.



## DEAD-BALL OFFICIATING

*“It’s common knowledge there’s a lot of pressure calling games. I don’t bottle it up. I like to have some fun, break the ice, and get guys ready that way. I wasn’t going to sit around like a zombie. I was very comfortable in my environment, being ready and being loose.” – Ray Scapinello*

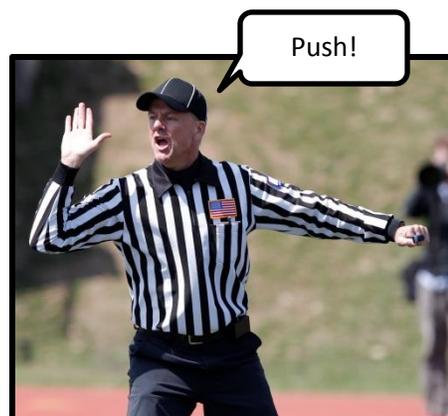
Dead-ball situations are not a rest time for officials! The officials need to work hard to make sure that play gets restarted quickly and appropriately under the rules. Good officials know how to anticipate the restart requirements during a dead ball or time-out so delays are minimal.

When there is a loose-ball technical foul, the officials need to stop play, report the foul, and restart play. When reporting the foul, only the basics need to be communicated:

- YES: Signal and say “Push,” then state “White ball!”
- NO: “Blue, number 39, loose ball push in the back, white ball”

This is not a time for counting players or connecting with your partners; because the foul occurred during a loose ball the proper number of players should already be on the field and your partners should be focused on the play.

If the ball needs to be moved outside the attack area, then instruct the players to do so promptly.



Well-coached teams are eager to start play, and will pick up the ball and be ready to go almost as soon as you are finished relaying the call. If you are not ready when they are, they will ask, “Whistle? Whistle?” At the same time, remember that while most restarts are quick, no restarts should be rushed. This means no “running restarts,” where the player with the ball gains an advantage by sprinting past the nearest defender before your whistle to restart play.

If the player with the ball is fairly close to the correct restart location, then restart play. Stopping play to quibble over whether the player should be one more yard to the left or right is irritating to both teams.

This brings up another point. If you call a loose ball push on B1, and B1 argues with you about it, you could warn him, ask him to address his concerns to his coach, or give him a conduct foul. However, sometimes the most effective way to end the discussion is to restart play while he is trying to argue with you. The restart accomplishes two things: one, you keep the game moving, and two, you punish B1 for arguing without interrupting the flow of the game.

## DEAD-BALL OFFICIATING (CONT.)



For any time-serving penalty, the officials need to communicate the penalty to each other quickly and then communicate the details to the scorer's table. Take your time communicating with the table area.

Make eye contact with the personnel responsible for recording the penalty and make sure they know what is happening. When you report a penalty you become a salesman, and you want your pitch to look professional.

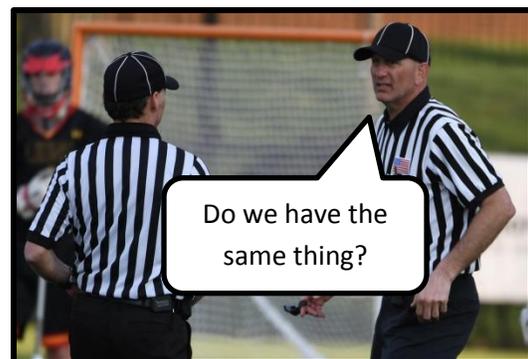
While the Trail reports the penalty the rest of the crew should get the ball to the correct spot on the field for the upcoming restart. As soon as the Trail finishes reporting the penalty he turns on his timer, after which the teams have 20-seconds to substitute. The players should never have to wait for the officials in this situation unless the officials need to correct a problem.

This is not to say that officials cannot huddle to get things right if there is a complex penalty situation. For example:

1. B1 slashes A1, flag down
2. A1 passes to A2 who shots and scores
3. A1 slashes B1 in retaliation

Was the slash during live-ball or dead-ball time? Is possession awarded or is there a faceoff? What is the penalty situation?

In these more complex situations it is more important to get the call right than it is to keep the game moving.



## DEAD-BALL OFFICIATING (CONT.)

When stopping play there is a tendency to immediately look at your partner and find out what is being called. However, if you turn to each other too quickly, you may miss some residual action such as a late hit or a slash. These incidents have a huge impact on game management



1. Ball is passed by the white player, and then he swings his crosse at his opponent's groin.
2. Off-ball slash to blue's groin by the white offensive player.
3. Blue falls to the ground.

One key is to make sure all residual activity from the play is over before you turn to communicate with your partner. Someone should be watching the players at all times. Watch the players cross during timeouts and the ends of periods from near the bench-side wing line before looking at your scorecard. Watch the teams cross again as they break from their huddles and go to their field positions.



## DEAD-BALL OFFICIATING (CONT.)

The Trail official must keep their eyes on the shooter after the shot and not the ball entering the goal!

Trail watches the shooter on every shot in 2- and 3-person crews. If the crew misses these fouls players and coaches get frustrated, and then the game can get out of hand.



### Keys to Success

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- Jog into the action. Your presence can defuse a potential problem before it escalates.
- Being able to describe what caused the shooter to be on the ground goes a long way in building trust between you and the players and coaches.
  - “From what I saw, the hit came as the shooter was releasing the ball.”

## COMMUNICATION

*“If you like having every close decision you make criticized, if you like doing your job surrounded by thousands of people ready to blame you for mistakes other people make, every one of them believing they can do your job better than you can, and if you don’t mind the only response you get for a job done absolutely perfectly being silence, then maybe you would like to be an umpire.” – Ken Kaiser*

Be professional every time you communicate. Always refer to the coach as “coach,” and do not use first names, especially if you are friends. You never want to give any indication of a relationship as it could be perceived as improper by the opposing team and be detrimental to your attempts to manage the game.

A great time to establish rapport with the coach is during the pre-game certification. It is okay to ask:

- How is the season going?
- Do you have any rules questions?
- Is there anything you want us to look for?

If the coach is new to coaching or new to lacrosse you might communicate differently. For example, you might ask them periodically if they have any questions during the game.

If you establish a good relationship, a coach becomes a great advocate for the officials.



During the game, it is important to maintain a professional demeanor. Do not make comments about the play calling, level of play, or about the teams. After a comment from a coach such as, “that was a terrible call,” do not come back and say, “coach that was a terrible play you just ran.” If a coach says you made a terrible call either ignore it, or tell the coach what you saw (if the situation and time permits). Any live-ball comments from you to the coach should be short and to-the-point. Extended dead-ball time such as timeouts and between periods are when longer discussions are appropriate.

Be polite and professional in how you speak and act.



It is critical to avoid sarcasm; it is unprofessional and often misinterpreted by coaches. In fact, a large percentage of complaints about officials stem from such misunderstandings and the tone an official uses.

This is not to say that you cannot use humor. Humor can be a great way to defuse tense situations, although you need to be extremely careful. Try to observe the kind of humor used by experienced officials and learn from it.

## COMMUNICATION (CONT.)

When facing a verbal conflict, be sure to keep your voice level and under control. If a coach screams at you and you scream back, you look bad, but if the coach is screaming and you're talking in a normal voice, the coach looks bad. Be aware of non-verbal communication: the way you say things and your body language while you are saying them often carry more weight the words you use.



If a coach asks a question respectfully about why you called or did not call something, answering him will keep the lines of communication open, maintain the coach's level of respect for you. If you make a close call then letting a coach know why you made the call achieves the same things.

Officials all make mistakes. If you make an error and you realize it; tell the coach "I missed that call. I am sorry." Acknowledging a mistake often goes a long way with the coach.

An effective way to get a coach to stop yelling at you is to restart play and hustle into position. Once live play is going, the coach is most likely focusing on the game rather than you. For this reason, quick restarts under the rules are a key to successful game management.

After a controversial call have the official who made it come over as soon as possible, and clear the air with a quick explanation to the coach rather than to let the situation fester. If the situation or time does not permit this interaction then the nearest official can tell the coach that he will get an explanation at the earliest opportunity.

Body language and posture is an often overlooked means of communication. Coaches and players will zero in on an official who has the "deer in the headlights" look or who slouches when making calls as if unsure. Conversely, they get irritated with the "gunslinger" who peers in to the play with arms wide and ready to sling flags. Stand tall and relax. Have the attitude that you can handle whatever presents itself.

Finally, do not try to be someone you are not. What works for one official may not work for your personality. Take from others what you think you can use, but always remember to be yourself.

### Keys to Success

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- Stay calm
- Maintain an even tone of voice
- Be professional
- Be brief and factual
- Did the coach ask a question? Or was it a comment that does not require a response?

## CONDUCT ISSUES – COACHES AND PLAYERS

*“The job demands [...] the ability to communicate effectively and cultivate and develop professional relationships with players, coaches, and other officials.” – Kerry Fraser*

You DO NOT need to tolerate abusive behavior!



The first rule of dealing with coaches is that comments, such as “that’s a slash!” can be ignored, while questions, “why did you not call a slash there?” may or may not need a response.

When coaches make comments about what they think should be called, it can generally be let go. However, if a coach is endlessly commenting on the officiating and actively distracting you from your job then you should address his conduct.

If you are politely asked a question and the game situations allows, answer whenever possible; this is an expected part of an official’s job, and it also helps you manage the game by building a relationship with the coach.

There are some lines that should not be crossed without consequences. These include:

- Profanity directed toward you or another game participant
- Anyone questioning your integrity
- Direct criticism of you as an official
  - You can ignore, “That is an awful call,” but not, “You’re an awful official.”
- Threats of any kind
  - “I am going to get you in the parking lot after the game!”
  - “You will never officiate here again!”
- Any comments of a prejudicial or racist nature

In the cases of poor conduct, try to handling them with an escalating progression, commonly known as The Ramp. We recommend starting with a verbal warning, followed by a conduct foul when the offending team has possession, then by a time-serving conduct foul, then a 1- to 3-minute unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, and finally with an ejection. Depending on the severity of the foul and what preceded it, steps in this progression may be skipped or repeated.

**Our level of tolerance must be established and adhered to. When we say we’ve heard enough and we continue to let it go on without consequences we are in for a long day.**

Another important thing to remember is that lacrosse is supposed to be fun; allowing poor behavior to continue makes it difficult for anyone to have fun, and can ultimately degrade the contest into an unsafe situation. Officials who pride themselves on being able to handle a great deal of abuse are not doing anyone any favors, particularly the next set of officials, who face a coach or players who think they can get away with any level of abuse. If you see this kind of behavior, put a stop to it immediately.

## CONDUCT ISSUES – SPECTATOR BEHAVIOR

*“A tough day at the office is even tougher when your office contains spectator seating.” – Nik Posa*

By and large, spectators can be ignored. However, if they use abusive language toward you or the players, or if they make threats, then inform the site administrator or head coach and ask that they talk to the spectator and urge him or her to conduct themselves in a more appropriate fashion.

Under unusual circumstances, you may even ask that the site manager eject certain spectators (or even all of them).

Suppose you are working a rivalry game and a group of fans from one school sits at midfield and shouts offensive remarks at the players from the opposing school. If you ignore them, the intensity of the game may escalate as the fans get under the players’ skin. Instruct the site administrator or head coach to ask them to stop. If their behavior continues, have the site administrator remove the offending fans and do not resume play until the offending spectators leave the game site.



## CONDUCT ISSUES – WARNING SIGNS

*“It doesn’t matter if anyone else knows you did it right, as long as you know.*

*Be as professional as you can.” – Jerry Markbreit*

In most cases, there are warning signs that will alert you to take corrective action. Learning to spot these signs takes experience, but here are a few examples:

- Players and coaches become more concerned with hitting than playing lacrosse.
  - Hard body checks are drawing louder cheers than goals.
  - Players knock down opponents and stand over them in a show of dominance.
- You noticed A1 and B1 take a couple of hard body checks at each other during the game. A1 lays a big, but legal body check on B1, resulting in a turnover. B1 takes exception to the hit as the ball is being cleared by Team A.
  - You are the new trail in transition and you notice B1 lingering near A1.
  - Take an extra second and keep your eyes on these players.
  - You may hear B1 threaten A1 or even see B1 take a cheap shot.
  - He is also probably hoping that A1 will retaliate and that A1 will get caught.
- A1 scores a goal and is body checked by B1 late. B1 is penalized for a dead-ball illegal body check, and also, A1 was injured on the play.
  - A2, his teammate, starts toward B1 during the dead ball, but the Trail official breaks things up before anything starts.
  - Later on B1’s penalty expires and he returns to the game. Who do you think you most need to watch on Team A once B1 steps back onto the field?
  - The officiating crew already had to stop A2 from doing something retaliatory after the late hit, and now that B1 is back on the field A2 may attempt to get retribution for the late hit on his teammate.



When you see warning signs, you need to pay close attention and be ready to take action because game management is about to turn into game control.

### Keys to Success

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- If you notice comments are distracting you or your partner then you should address the behavior as soon as possible.
- You have complete authority to stop the game in order to correct behavior by anyone at the game; try stopping play with a team in possession to simplify the next restart.

## GAME CONTROL

*"Know the game you are officiating." - Jim Carboneau*

When you sense that the game is deteriorating, it is time to clamp down and limit the number of possible problems. Here are techniques you can use to control the game when necessary:

- You and your partners set the threshold much lower for calling fouls.
  - This results in more whistles, more flags, and more players serving penalties, but fewer opportunities for actions to escalate.
- You change the pace of the game by taking more time during dead balls to explain penalties.
  - Be very generous on your interpretation of 5 yards on restarts, and make players stand completely motionless on the restart. This gives the players time to cool off.
  - This technique is especially effective in running-time games.



- If the benches are getting too excited; gather all of the coaches together and explain to them about the importance of honoring the game and setting a sportsmanlike example.
- Remind the coaches that 5-minutes of personal fouls earn a disqualification.
- If the situation warrants:
  - Explain that it is possible to play the rest of the game with a full penalty area, to expel players, or to suspend the game if the behavior does not improve.
  - Explain that you are disappointed with their behavior and you are sure that they want to improve it so the rest of the game can be played.

When the game is teetering out of control you have to use your whistle and flag to maintain order. That does not mean that you ignore the other aspects of game management, but if you need to penalize or eject a coach or a player to get your point across, then do so.

## TYPES OF GAMES

*"Let the game come to us."* - Tom Abbott

### The Rout

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In games where one team is winning by a large margin you face the serious risk that the losing team will start taking cheap shots out of frustration.

You need to be extremely vigilant despite the fact that the game is already decided. If there is any kind of scuffle, even a minor one, send both players involved to the penalty area for one to three minutes (non-releasable, since the penalty time will start at the same time). This will create more space on the field and make it less likely that you will have problems. It is okay if you explain to the leading coach that you are trying to keep things calm and are protecting his players by getting some players off the field.



Do not become sloppy just because the result of the game is no longer in doubt. Do whatever it takes to keep your focus on the game. Ignoring game management in a rout can put you in the middle of a difficult situation.

In a lower-level game, you might inquire discreetly to the losing coach if he wants to keep the full time on the clock or shorten the periods.

### The Elimination Game

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In playoff games the players are more likely to be in control since no one wants to make a mistake that costs his team the chance to win. Emotions run high in these games, and you must carefully monitor the situation, especially when the game is not close.

Tournament games are similar. There are often many games played in one day, which leads to physical, mental, and emotional fatigue in the players, coaches, fans, and even spectators. In particular, tired players are more likely to play sloppy lacrosse, leading to more frequent fouls.

Be aware of the weather conditions. This is especially true for tournaments held in hot, humid conditions. The NFHS and US Lacrosse Youth Rules allow for the officials to call timeouts and allow players extra time to rehydrate and deal with the heat.

## TYPES OF GAMES (CONT.)

### The Rivalry Game

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Rivalry games come in a variety of styles. They can be games between schools that have:

- A traditional rivalry in all sports
- A rivalry in lacrosse only
- A history of bad blood arising from on- or off-field incidents

One significant difference in a rivalry game is that there may be an emotional crowd, which can amplify the emotions of the players. As an official, you do not want to pay too much attention to the spectators, but be aware of how the players are reacting to them. With an emotional game, you tend to see more aggressive players and more obvious fouls.



In a rivalry game, you may have to start out calling things a little tighter than you would for two teams that rarely play each other. That does not mean you need to call every foul, but you do need to send the message that the crew is watching, and will maintain, control. When players believe that the officials are not going to penalize fouls, they will often decide to take matters into their own hands, and this is especially true in a rivalry game. If the teams get the message early and behave themselves, the game usually flows fairly and safely.

### The Inexperienced Team

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Where most of the players are playing lacrosse for the first time, you may be faced with one or two teams with little rules knowledge. The coaches may not know the game very well either. Do what it takes to help the teams get through the game with as little frustration as possible. That may mean taking extra time to have correct faceoffs, or explaining that a play-on occurred but since the fouled team gained possession, there was no need to stop play.

The players are likely to commit fouls due to lack of control and rules knowledge rather than with malicious intent. When you flag someone try to make sure that he understands what he did wrong. If you see something that hints at a team-wide misconception, for example players keep going into the opponent's crease, politely explain the rule to the coach so he can relay it to the players. Actions like this reduce frustration for everyone.

If only one team is inexperienced, you may find that the game is also a rout.

## PLAY-ON - THE PRINCIPLE OF ADVANTAGE/DISADVANTAGE

*"We don't want to determine the outcome of a game unless it's the most blatant thing you've seen." – Jerry Seeman*

Contact does not always equal a penalty. Calling technical fouls when there is no advantaged gained or disadvantaged caused makes for a tedious game and will earn the ire of everyone. The difficult part is determining what to call and what not to call. The guiding principle for these situations is called "The Principle of Advantage/Disadvantage," or TPOAD.

The basic idea is to call:

- Fouls that present a safety issue (personal fouls are never about advantage or disadvantage)
- Fouls that you must call to maintain proper behavior (conduct fouls)
- Fouls that are obvious to everyone (line violations, crease violations, offside)
- Technical fouls that disadvantage the offended team or create an unfair advantage for the offending team

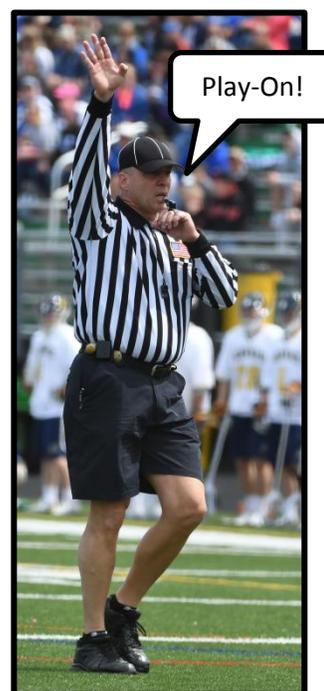
Suppose A1 is clearing the ball and B1 pushes him from behind, making A1 stumble briefly. If A1 does not fall or lose possession of the ball there is no need to call a foul. However, if B1 commits exactly the same push in a different situation, a flag for the push may be appropriate. For example, a push that causes A1 to:

- Go out of bounds
- Go offside
- Step into the crease
- Move past the goal, making him miss a scoring opportunity
- Lose possession

In each of these cases, A1 is disadvantaged by the foul and so the flag should be thrown.

Whenever you judge technical fouls, try to determine whether an advantage is gained or a disadvantaged is caused before throwing your flag.

This is not easy, and it takes a few years to get comfortable with these decisions. Talking to more experienced officials about why they did, or did not, call a foul can help you refine your decision making.



## PLAY-ON - TECHNIQUE

Proper use of the play-on technique is important for game management. The main idea behind the “play-on” is to allow play to continue so that a team that was offended is afforded the opportunity to pick up the ball and potentially score. The play-on improves the flow of the game by reducing the number of whistles.

Here is a common play-on situation:

- B1 pushes A1 from behind during a loose ball. A1 scoops the ball with a clear path to the goal.
  - Stopping this play disadvantages Team A by taking away their scoring opportunity.
  - Instead, if you signal and yell “Play-on,” everyone knows that you saw a violation and Team A was disadvantaged.



With a play-on you are always awarding possession to the offended team. It is a matter of whether the offended team will pick the ball up and end the play-on, or if you need to stop play to award them the ball.

### Play-On Calls Around the Crease

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Although calling a play-on near the crease follows the letter of the rulebook, this would not be wise since other fouls can occur.

- A1 steps in the crease and you signal and yell “Play-on!”
- B1 cross-checks A2, the shooter, and you throw your flag.
- The loose ball goes into the goal.
  - The result is loose-ball simultaneous fouls and no goal. A1 serves 30-seconds for the crease violation, and B1 serves a 1-, 2-, or 3-minute personal foul. Team A’s ball.



This is a difficult situation to explain to Team A’s coach, who thinks his team just scored.

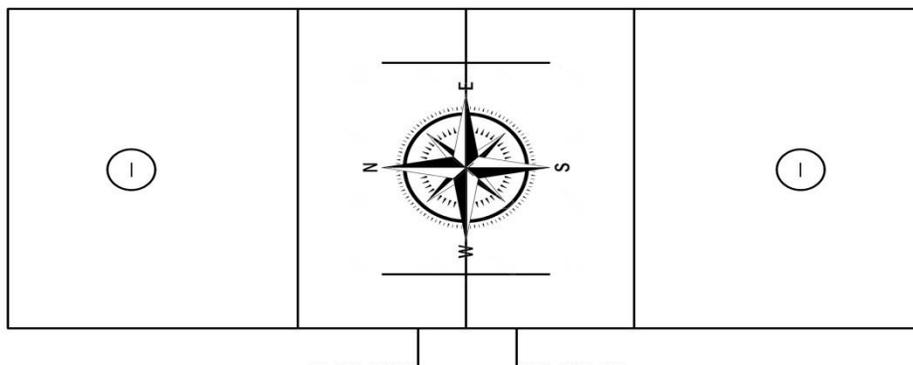
Whenever you are in a situation such as this, immediately blow your whistle!

By stopping play faster you avoid having to explain this very difficult explanation.

## PLAY-ON – TECHNIQUE (CONT.)

How long you wait before blowing the whistle on a play-on is a key aspect of game management.

If the ball pops out of the scrimmage area and it seems likely that a player from the offended team will be able to track down the ball and scoop it uncontested, you can allow the play-on to continue for a couple of seconds.



- A North-South (end line to end line) play-on is better than one going East-West (sidelines).
  - There is no advantage for a player who scoops up a loose ball during a play-on next to the sideline, surrounded by three defensemen.
  - As soon as the player picks up the ball he will be checked out of bounds.
  - Better to stop play and award his team possession with a quick restart.
- A play-on in the offensive half of the field is usually better than a play-on in the defensive half.
- The lower the level of play, the shorter the play-on should be.
  - Players are much more likely to get hurt during loose-ball scrums.
  - End play as quickly as possible.

A stoppage of play and a clean restart is usually preferable if the player is about to pick up the ball, but has no realistic opportunity to go anywhere.



### Keys to Success

- ALWAYS call the safety fouls.
- Have a short play-on if the offended team has no real chance to do something if they pick it up.
- Be loud! Let the players know you saw a foul.

## MISTAKES BY OFFICIALS

*“No one has ever called a perfect game.” – Tom Sutton*

All officials will make mistakes:

- Better officials make fewer mistakes
- Mistakes happen due to a misapplication or a misunderstanding of the rules
- Mistakes happen from being out of position
- Mistakes happen due to a lack of focus coupled with not seeing what happened
- If we learn from our mistakes they can become a positive experience

How mistakes are handled has a huge impact on our game management.

- Huddle as a crew and correct the mistake as soon as possible
- Do not “show up” your partners; help one another
- Own up, apologize, and state that you will work to not let it happen again

It is also important to know what to say to the coach next to you when your partner makes a call on the far-side. Never throw your partner under the bus. Practice responses such as:

- “Coach, he is right there.”
- “It is hard to tell from where we are.”
- “I don’t have a great angle coach, but I’ll ask him what he saw.”

If you tell a coach you will get him an answer, make sure you follow up with him. This builds trust that goes beyond the game you’re currently working.

If a mistake is made, do not make it worse with quick restarts and confusion. Remember **P.A.C.E.**

- **P**erformance
- **A**fter
- **C**ritical
- **E**rror

Follow these five steps to fix any mistake:

1. Own it to everyone
2. Discuss with your crew
3. Explain the situation to the coaches
4. Provide both teams time to substitute
5. Move on (restart)



**Dealing with Failure Talk:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5e\\_2YbFj5Qs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5e_2YbFj5Qs)

## **ARTICLES**

The Men's Officials Development Task Force selected the following articles for inclusion in this manual because they show how game management can be put in practice.

The authors are all current or former top lacrosse officials, and you will benefit from the breadth of their experiences and collective wisdom.

## RESPONDING TO COACHES QUERIES AND COMMENTS

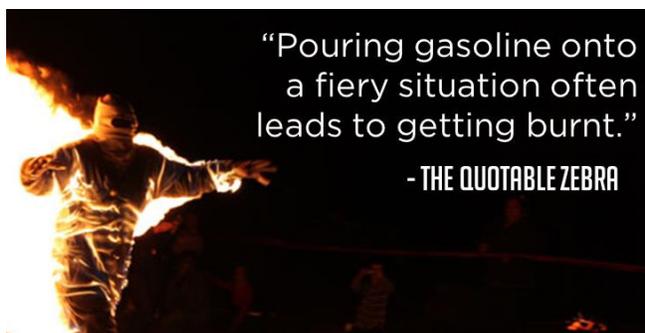
Eric Evans

As an official, responding to coaches during a game is one specific aspect of overall communication with coaches. Yes, there are rules and procedures in place in the rulebook, but responding to a coach is often more art than science, more dealing with human behavior under stress than applying lacrosse knowledge.

In general, officials need to recognize that coaches have invested much time and effort in preparing for a game and that an athletic contest can generate strong emotions. Officials will best serve the game that afternoon by defusing, managing and helping a coach through a tough moment rather than by assuming an immediate adversarial role. Officials must strive to be engaged at all times: aloofness, indifference, boredom, and disdain are inexcusable.

Compliance through cooperation is preferable to compliance through coercion.

Most often when a coach addresses a referee he is either seeking information or is simply venting. We always need to answer questions, but we don't always need to address venting. At some point, though, "Coach, it is my job to inform you, not convince you." But the referee who can do both simultaneously will be well served.



Even if we are treated unprofessionally or rudely, we MUST respond professionally. Yes, there will be times when you will have to "bite your tongue." Responding to, "That's a terrible call" with, "that's a terrible man-up play you just ran" is unacceptable. Stay calm and be kind.

### Reminders

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- Treat both coaches the same.
- "Coach" is always preferable to "First Name."
- Officials need to beware the carryover comments:
  - "You didn't call that last game."
  - "No one has called that all year."
    - "Coach, I can't speak about previous games. This is what we are doing today."



Evans earned First Team All-New England as a defenseman for Hotchkiss in 1968, and began officiating in the 1990s. He is one of a handful of referees who have worked a NCAA Division 1 Final and a World Games Final. During a 9-year career officiating in Major League Lacrosse, Evans served as Secretary of the Collegiate Officials Committee and Chair of the International Officials Committee for US Lacrosse.

## COMMUNICATION – A KEY FACTOR IN GAME MANAGEMENT

Matt Palumb

What separates good officials from the great ones is the ability to communicate effectively, and there are four parts to communicating games:

1. Your crew
2. The table
3. Coaches
4. Players

The best officiated games usually start with three (or two) officials that are "on the same page." This starts with a solid pre-game, and continues throughout the game. Once the game starts, the communication among the crew becomes less verbal and done more through calls. Are we attempting to match calls at both ends when it's appropriate? If someone on the crew calls a 50-50 push at one end, we should get the same call at the other end. Are we quickly getting together when something strange happens to lean on each other for help? Remember, the only teammates we have during a game are each other!

The number and quality of your table personnel will vary from level to level. At youth games, we're often lucky we have anybody over there that's willing to keep score and penalty time. The entire crew needs to go over and meet the table crew. Find out who is keeping game time and penalty time. Is there a horn at the table? Does your game clock have an automatic horn or is someone needed at the table to use the hand-held horn at zeros on the clock? Who will release the players from penalties? A good "R" will quickly make the table personnel part of their crew. Most importantly, once the game begins, do not allow coaches or players from either team to give your table personnel a hard time. Protect them. Have zero tolerance for players and coaches verbally attacking table personnel.

You only get one chance to make a first impression. Especially with a coach you've never met before! I always start it off with a firm handshake, eye contact and a smile. From there, let the coach steer the conversation a little bit. Some guys like to chat for a couple minutes, others like to get right down to business and go back to coaching quickly. Just know this: especially the higher up you go, trust that the other coach or someone on his staff is probably watching you communicate with the opposing coach.

Just like how we want to be consistent with calls at each end, we also want to be consistent with how we communicate with coaches. Once in a while, they make it difficult. Maybe one guy is a talker, likes to laugh and smile, while the other guy has a more serious approach with very little chatter. You need to be aware of this and try your best to balance your pre-game interaction as best you can. Don't spend 10 minutes with one coach and 30 seconds with the other. Usually, at least someone on the crew has an idea of what type of personality each coach has. Discuss that in your pre-game.

## COMMUNICATION – A KEY FACTOR IN GAME MANAGEMENT

Matt Palumb

Once the game starts, I think communication with coaches should be at a minimum. Answer questions the best you can. Support your partners. If there is a strange play or rule situation in the game, get both coaches together in the middle of the box and explain what you have to them at the same time. Try to do it as quickly as possible without rushing. This should be done by the referee. Don't be sarcastic. Do the best you can to stay composed and do not raise your voice. Fair or not, we are held to higher standards than the players and coaches. Coaches do not like to be ignored, so do your best to address their concerns. Don't be afraid to say, "I missed it," "I didn't have a good look at the play," "I'll take a better look at xyz." Tell them what you saw on a given play. Don't lie; you'll instantly lose credibility.

Finally, none of us need to put up with being abused. Use the tools in your toolbox to address these situations. First we have our communication skills: "Coach, that's enough," "Coach, if this continues, it's going to hurt your team." The toolbox also includes conduct fouls and unsportsmanlike conduct fouls. Finally, and we hope it doesn't happen often, a coach will lose the privilege of having an open line of communication: "Coach, I'm no longer talking to you, it's not helping the game."

The last people you'll come in contact with on game day, but also spend the most time with, are the players. Having a good line of communication with the players in the game can really help the game go well. The older the players are, the more you'll probably talk with them to help the game along. Youth players probably don't have a whole lot to offer in the way of helping you. However, you should still be communicating with them, but most of the focus is on you helping them understand the rules. Talk them out of things. Do a little teaching. At the middle school level and below, most coaches will appreciate the help. If a coach gives you a hard time about teaching a kid during the game, to me, he simply doesn't "get it." As long as you do it at both ends, please, help the kids learn the game.

As you move up to higher levels, that's when you lean on the captains or leaders of a given team to help you with a teammate of theirs who is being difficult. The really good captains can even help you with a tough coach. Be approachable to players who want to communicate with you. If they're not coming to you for the right reasons, you can put an end to that communication quite easily: "Number 15, you and I are done talking." Give them the opportunity to have the privilege of an open line of communication. If they go on to lose that privilege through their actions, then let them know that.

Every person communicates a little differently. Figure out your strengths and use those strengths to help you and your crew have a positive experience!



Palumb played ('88, '89, and '90) and officiated ('05, '10, '12, '17) NCAA Division 1 title games. He has worked Major League Lacrosse games since the league's inception in 2001; officiating 7 MLL championship games. Palumb officiated the 2001 U19 World Games in Baltimore, MD and the 2006 Open World Games in London, ONT. He also officiates Division 1 collegiate basketball.

## THE SEVEN C'S OF OFFICIATING

Mike Hyland

### 1. Competence

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Know the rules. Spend a little bit of time each week getting your head in the book. If you are questioned by a coach on a rule, then go back that night and read the rule. Find the AR that proves you right or wrong. If right, good. If not, learn from it. Review your mechanics each week to get ready.

### 2. Communication

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Talk. Talk more. Talk often. Talk with your crewmate(s) before the game. Talk loudly on the field. Talk after flags are thrown to get it right. Talk after goals are scored. Talk to kids in the middle who are elbowing each other or picking inside. Talk to faceoff men. Talk to coaches. Talk to kids in a scrum when the ball is loose. Talk to your goalie after the ball goes in the net. Talk about stalling. Talk to your timekeepers. Talk to your horn person. Talk to the scorer.

Use your hand signals all the time, not just once in a while or when you think the play is big. The coaches always want to know direction. Slow down your signals during a heated play. Go slow, talk slow, and slow the mechanics down.

### 3. Compassion

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We are all humans and will screw up. Have compassion for the players and fellow officials. Don't throw a fellow official under the bus by agreeing with a coach that a flag was bad. Just say nothing or support him. Stay a team throughout the game.

### 4. Consistency

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Your first flag or non-flag should set the level for the game for all officials, not just you. Watch what the other official(s) flags or passes on down at his end of field in the first few minutes of play; then do the same down your end of the field. Games get out of hand when officials are calling different style of games.

I have been in games where I normally would throw five to seven more flags but did not since we set the tone early. I also have been in games where I was throwing flags at everything since that is the tone we set in that particular game. Coaches, players, and fans want better consistency, not judgment. Consistency between games is not the issue here. It's consistency during your game.

## 5. Confidence

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Get it, keep it, and then think: “be humble.” Be confident in your calls. Don’t back down, but don’t get a chip on your shoulder. I like thinking of being underwater. I try to zone out the crowd, and remain completely calm under fire. Never laugh or get mad. Be alert, steady and professional.

## 6. Conviction

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A solid official first must have a strong belief that you are there to oversee the lacrosse game in an accurate and non-biased way. The belief in your ability to perform your duties during the game is paramount. Believing in and confidently delivering all foul calls and instructions to coaches, players and fellow officials provides the appearance that you’re strong and have an unwavering belief in your ability.

## 7. Courage

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This is the choice and willingness to confront uncertainty, intimidation, and danger without showing fear. As an official, from parking lot to the field, you must show that you are the calm individual in all situations. As we all find out, it’s not easy to make the tough calls in tight spots, but having the courage to do so even when your emotions are difficult to control is the difference between being a good official, and being the best official.



Hyland is a decades-long NCAA D1, D2, and D3 playoff official, and has officiated the U19 and Men’s Lacrosse World Championships. He is a US Lacrosse head clinician as well as an international evaluator.