

The Ten Commandments of Refereeing

by Lars-Ake

This article summarizes the words of Mr. Björck, a FIFA Instructor and member of the FIFA Referee Committee from Sweden, to the assembled National Referees and candidates.

Body language is a key to successful refereeing. Beyond that, the referee must follow the Ten Commandments of Refereeing to be successful.

1. **Leadership Qualities:** Be a match leader. Lead by example, gain the players' respect. Your personality is vital; you can't copy anyone, it must be your own. Be eager to cooperate with everyone. Become trusted for your actions. Use the Laws correctly. Take responsibility for the application of the Laws. Study the rules, use them correctly.
2. **Justice:** Always be neutral and steadfast. Show no prejudice. Remember that all matches are equally important. Do not underestimate any person or event. Your attitude will be reflected in your actions.
3. **Knowledge of the Rules:** Have a good knowledge of the Laws and use correct interpretations of the Laws to enjoy success in any match. The referee must understand the game. Use the rules to apply the Spirit of the Game. Do not work blindly and strictly according to the Letter of the Law: that is the skill in refereeing.
4. **Strictness:** Be consistent. Use the rules. Do not wait for next incident; act immediately. Cautions and send-offs mean nothing after you have lost control of the match—players will realize your insecurity.
5. **Make Correct Decision at the Correct Time:** Proper use of the advantage is the sign of a good referee. If you are not sure of a call, do not blow the whistle. When you use the advantage, do not forget your cards—go back and deal with the misconduct. It shows you understand the game, that you read the game well.
6. **Condition and its Influence:** Good physical condition equals good mental condition. Lack of good physical conditioning results in slow reactions, inconsistency, inability to observe the game properly. Present a good image when you enter the field through your dress, your comments to all participants, and how you relate to the players. That brings immediate respect. The colorless referee shows no personality, because he has an insecure image of himself and makes difficulties for himself. Such a referee will not go far.
7. **Good Sense of Humor:** A good sense of humor is gold! Sport should be cheerful. Do not lose your sense of humor. You can improve your relations with the players if you use no swear words, keep yourself calm, control your temper, use agreeable and relevant language, do not forget to smile—but do not exaggerate, and do not forget to smile—but don't smile at every moment.
8. **Courage and Will Power:** Show firmness—stand behind your decisions. You cannot replace one foul with another foul. Don't talk with spectators. Don't let decisions be influenced by spectators.
9. **Cooperativeness:** Have good relations and communications with your assistants. Do not be arrogant or contemptuous. Trust your ARs; don't blame them or shame them in public.
10. **Loyalty:** Behave loyally. Don't criticize colleagues in public. Don't reveal your opinion in public. Talk with the referee afterwards.