

## Officiating Past the Fear

*Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer fear, do not sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy.*

### **Dale Carnegie**

Today I want to talk about the fear, anxiety and doubts that hold back both those considering starting officiating, and also that make the committed officials job less enjoyable.

In a US study of college officials (including lacrosse, football, hockey, baseball and basketball) 50% of respondents said that they felt either stressed or very stressed in games.

My aim today is to articulate the feelings we have, and recognise them with ourselves and others.

In doing so, I hope current officials can impart words of encouragement that will have a real impact on those people. And I hope they can work on action to escape the trap of fear themselves.

I want to talk about some common areas for concern by Umpires and Referees, the motivation of some to abuse officials, and how you can lessen or overcome the fear.

First, let me say, that Officiating is NOT like playing sport. You are not there to show off, or to make friends.

You need to accept, that conflict in a game is inevitable. You will have 2 teams, trying hard to win.

Dealing with conflict is the central part of the job. This is the difference between average and good officials.

### **What do we fear?**

1 Failure - I will get it wrong

2 Inadequacies - How can I control this game?

3 Loss of control - How will I react to criticism or questions?

And the anomaly is of course, that normally if you do a good job, nobody notices.

Sometimes we are the target of anger, not because of anything we have done. Reasons are often complex.

Parents!

Players

Coaches

How to deal with fear, and the stress caused by fear

Two manifestations of fear

1 Physical - Perspiration, palpitations physical pain and nausea.

2 Anxieties – Intense worry and feelings of dread

PREPARATION IS THE KEY

Get to the ground in plenty of time.

Get Support

Consider the teams, players and coaches in the game.

Rehearse, eg in a centre draw how you will explain the rule, and what you will do if there is an infraction.

Dress like an Official, not as a member of a club.

Practice how you will react to the various levels of “feedback”

You can only control yourself, so make sure you do.

Be fit, and appear fit

When you are selling the idea of officiating, remember that all new officials will have fear.

Assure them, advise them, and support them.

And in closing, Warren Gaunt often points out to new referees

Us Referees know three quarters of the rules, Players and Coaches know half the rules and most Spectators know none of the rules so Remember Us Referees are well in front.