

From the January 2013 issue of Referee Magazine: Skills for your Lifetime; Mistakes Teach, Decisions Humble, Locations Let You See:

1. Work towards minimizing mistakes. It is not wrong to strive for perfection but do not lose sight of the fact that life is not fair and in the broad sense, perfection won't be achieved. You may have a great ("perfect") game one day the next may be in the toilet. Every game has many variables (i.e. players, coaches, fans, the other officials working with you, attitudes, & perspective) that change every game. You'll make mistakes; just work towards making fewer as you progress in your career.
2. Making decisions and getting them right is a delicate balance. Sometimes going with the flow is the best way to get a decision right. You may see something but then pick up from both teams and your assistant that

they saw something different. No matter how certain you were, if everyone else is reacting differently you may just want to go with the flow and avoid that battle. This happens a lot on throw-ins, goal kicks or corner kicks. Both teams are starting to head in a particular direction despite you thinking in was the other direction. If they are all in agreement go with it and accept that maybe you were the only one to see it that way. Use your assistants to help "get it right."

3. Location, Location, Location. It is not only the 1st rule of real estate but the 1st rule of officiating. What we decide is based on what we see. What we see is based on where we are. For nearly all our games, with 3 officials, we only have 3 pairs of

eyes. We remain outnumbered by players, coaches and spectator eyes. What we see is informed by our training, neutrality, and experience and what they see is informed by passion and partnership. Our information is of higher quality. Strive for good position. Positioning is never a matter of being at certain place; it is a matter of seeing what needs to be seen.

4. Adjust your expectations regarding assignments based on a realistic evaluation of your ability to match your positioning to the needs of the game. If you aren't seeing what needs to be seen, you aren't doing that game any good and need to start doing different games.

Getting out of the Lines of Fire.

Competitive games have enough problems without the referee creating some. Some simple adjustments while in the following "lines of fire" can reduce confrontations:

1. **Penalty Kicks** – They are probably the most contested decision referees make. When you blow the whistle, point to the penalty mark. If needed back towards the goal line a few yards from the keeper (he/she will be one of the most unhappy players). If players follow you, point to the goal line and remind them not to leave the field. Very seldom will they follow and if they do, it is an easy caution. If you stay on the field, it is harder to restore order.
2. **Free Kick near area** – Less intense but more frequent are fouls whistled just outside the

penalty area. If a quick kick is not taken, as you prepare for the ceremonial restart, expect chirping. Criteria for a card are personal, public, and provocative. If you can get away quickly, set the wall and get away. Once play resumes, the focus will be on playing and not on the referee (as much).

3. **Disputed Goal** – Following a goal the defenders felt was scored after an offside, the mechanic for the assistant is to run back up the field. If a player follows the assistant he is isolating himself for discipline.
4. **Injuries** – When a player is injured and you have called the coach, move 10-15 yards away not in the path of the coach. If the coach bypasses the player to attempt to speak to you, remind the coach why they were invited on the field.

5. **Parents** – Don't go looking for trouble. Don't talk to parents after a match looking for compliments. You might get complaints and if you want the referee to discipline them, remember you brought that on yourself. After the match is over, it is time to leave.
6. **Conflicting signals** – When the referee and assistant point in opposite directions, it creates controversy. The Guide to Procedures has worked out arrangements so one of you will give the signal first. Get eye contact. As an assistant, if you are unsure, flag goes straight up and stays up. Subtle signals at waist height helps ensure the signal agrees.