



Expectations for Referee Performance by Grade Level National Assessment Program

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The following is a list of “Performance Expectations” for referees based upon grade level. Assessors should use this as a guideline when evaluating referees at various grade levels in determining their overall performance.

Grade 8: Entry Level Referee

The referee is expected to demonstrate the following skills:

- Has an elementary knowledge of the game.
- Recognizes obvious fouls and misconduct but may not recognize subtle fouls, such as persistent infringement and tactical fouls.
- Keeps his assistant referees (AR's) in view while running the diagonal system of control but often has a diagonal that is rigid and rarely does the referee go wide or deep into the corners or enter the penalty area when the game demands it. Does not recognize the need for a flexible diagonal.
- Has basic fitness but often runs at a constant pace or walks and doesn't demonstrate sprinting to recover from deep positions, when required.
- Gives a basic pre-game briefing which usually focuses on mechanics and signals for proper communication.
- Main focus is on fouls and lacks the personality to manage players when the game demands it.
- The referee is in proper uniform and gives a good first impression upon arriving at the pitch.
- Applies the Laws of the Game as written with little or no understanding of the Spirit of the Game.
- Deals with violent conduct and serious foul play for game control but lacks the experience to always recognize when they occur.
- Generally ignores coaches and doesn't have the courage or understanding to ensure they behave and are not abusive.

Grade 7: Referee – Intermediate level

Referee is expected to demonstrate the following skills in addition to those found in a Grade 8:

- Demonstrates fitness to run a flexible diagonal for the entire game and always keep the AR in view.
- Has a work rate that varies from a jog, to light sprint, to a full out sprint when the game demands it.
- Has a firm grasp of the Laws of the Game and understands when to invoke the Spirit of the Game vs. the Letter of the Law while managing the game and the players.
- Demonstrates some personality in managing players and uses some preventative mechanics to avoid problems during the match.
- Demonstrates self confidence in decisions and is willing to be approached by players who have questions.
- Demonstrates a strong presence with the use of the whistle, appearance, and body English.
- Demonstrates the proper use of advantage.
- Demonstrates foul recognition and foul discrimination.
- Makes good use of cards for game control and demonstrates good card mechanics.
- Makes effective use of assistance given by AR's on offside, and misconduct.
- Often ignores dissent rather than deal with it.

Grade 6: Referee – Adult Level Games

Referee demonstrates all the previous grade skills plus the addition of higher level skills in managing the game and players:

- Demonstrates an understanding of subtle and tactical fouls.
- Demonstrates a high level of fitness and dynamic positioning to ensure a proper view of challenges.
- Demonstrates proper mechanics and positioning for static restarts.
- Uses personality to help defuse flash points and to manage players.
- Demonstrated consistency in fouls recognition, foul discrimination and use of cards.
- Demonstrates the ability to read play and anticipate rather than react to game situations.
- Demonstrates good eye contact with AR's on all dead ball situations and makes good use of their assistance on offside decisions and fouls, as appropriate.
- Demonstrates knowledge of the Laws of the Game, proper mechanics and procedures, knowledge of recent memoranda, and proper restarts for all situations. Is beginning to develop a solid and thorough understanding of the most recent teachings and directives from U.S. Soccer.
- Demonstrates some preventive refereeing skills.

Grade 5: Referee – Advanced Level Adult Games

Referee demonstrates all the requirements for the lower grade levels as well as:

- Capable of refereeing the highest level amateur games within the state and in regional and national tournaments. AR on higher level games including some professional games.
- Demonstrates pre-game planning and game preparation skills.
- Recognizes tactical play, player roles, and tactics the teams are employing to achieve their goals.
- Demonstrates good fitness and a flexible diagonal to stay close to critical play without interfering with player's options and always having the AR in view.
- Exhibits regular good physical presence, strength of whistle, body language and presence when making/selling decisions.
- Makes use of his/her personality to manage the game with calculated risk taking, 100% enforcement of misconduct and good game control.
- Demonstrates the ability to distinguish between trifling fouls and fouls that need to be called based upon the skill level of the players.
- Recognizes fouls that are reckless and meant to injure players and issues the appropriate cards in response to those actions.
- Demonstrates the use of advantage when appropriate and allows teams to take the quick free kick when they wish to do so.
- When cards are given, always gets something in return that results in player behavior modification.
- Demonstrates management of the game techniques in recognizing gamesmanship tactics, simulations, delaying tactics, etc., which results in maximum playing time for both teams.
- Demonstrates a thorough verbal and relatively consistent application of U.S. Soccer teachings and directives on the field and during off-field discussions.

Grade 3/4: National Referees and National Candidates

Referees must perform at the highest level and are capable of refereeing high level senior amateur matches and professional matches. Referee demonstrates all the requirements of the lower level referee as well as;

- Demonstrates the use of personality to diffuse and prevent escalation of physical play.
- Demonstrates the use of personality to provide a calming influence when the game intensity is increasing.
- Demonstrate the ability to open a clear line of communications with players and coaches.
- Demonstrates the ability to set the bar for misconduct and violent conduct/serious foul play by “drawing the line in the sand” early so players and coaches know what to expect.
- Demonstrates knowledge of when the game changes, why it changes and acts to control the changing temperature of the game.
- Demonstrates the ability to allow the game to flow, by proper selection of fouls, and distinguishing between trifling fouls and fouls that need to be called at the professional level.
- Demonstrates the proper response to 100% misconduct.
- Demonstrates the ability to recognize moments of truth and takes appropriate action accordingly.
- Demonstrates the ability to have a feel for the game and to have flexibility in making sure the punishment is appropriate to the crime.
- Demonstrates the ability to use preventative techniques to eliminate/prevent misconduct and aid in game control.
- Exhibits the ability to deliver the appropriate message in a way (based on the game, the situation and the personality of the player) that results in the desired outcome.
- Demonstrates common sense and consistency in decision making so that players and coaches feel that the decisions are fairly and equally given.
- Manages the game so that the entertainment value is maximized without disregard to game control
- Demonstrates the ability to identify and correctly deal with elbows and tackles that endanger the safety of an opponent or could injure an opponent.
- Demonstrates the ability to use personality and preventative techniques to prevent the escalation of physical play that would result in violence.
- Demonstrates a feel for the game and when to change tactics to head off escalation of physical play.
- Differentiates between fouls/misconduct that are “careless” and “reckless” versus “using excessive force” with the possibility of injuring an opponent.

- Demonstrates the proper response to dealing with bench behavior that is irresponsible or abusive, using the guidance put forth by US Soccer directives. Demonstrates the use of techniques to prevent escalation of improper behavior within the technical area.
- Understands the requirements and expectations of professional players.
- Demonstrates full knowledge of and the ability to implement all current U.S. Soccer teachings and directives. Is up to date on all memoranda and position papers and applies them as required during the game.
- Is a leader of the officiating team both on and off the field. Takes charge.