

Coaches can have a positive influence on the development of the competitive nature of children by teaching them to respect the officials of the game. The officials first responsibility is the rules of safe play. Coaches influence how athletes and fans respond to the game officials. “Fair play” is a message that the coach must openly promote . Game day disputes over penalty calls should never exceed the coach’s better judgement for promoting the positive life lessons of “Fair Play” for the child-athlete.



Working with Officials

Officials (referees, judges, umpire, scorers, etc.) are often placed in the unenviable position of alienating 50 per cent of the crowd and players at any given time, and can be subject to criticism, abuse and harassment. It is important to remember that officials have the same needs and motivations as others involved in sport and that they have a critical role to play in ensuring the safe and fair management of competition.

It is important that coaches are good role models to the participants regarding how officials should be treated. A coach who verbally abuses or berates an umpire is giving the message to the participants that this type of behaviour is acceptable. Coaches should display professionalism in their behaviour towards officials, and encourage participants to do the same. The coach should warn and/or counsel a participant who displays abusive behaviour towards an official.

Tips for working with officials

- A meeting with officials at the beginning of the season is a good idea. The coach can use this opportunity to introduce themselves and any support staff, to get to know the officials (get to see the human side) and to start developing open lines of communication away from the heat of competition.
- Invite officials along to pre-season team functions or meetings, where appropriate, in both formal (explain any new rules, how competitions will run) and informal capacities so that athletes and others involved in the program get to know them as people and not just as the face on the other end of the whistle or flag.
- Maintain open and positive lines of communication throughout the year — discuss any issues as they arise in an open and non-threatening manner away from the heat of competition. In this way the coach can help reduce the risk of small points of contention becoming major issues, minimize the abuse of officials and help ensure that any competition is played in a safe and fair manner for the enjoyment of all involved.