



MEN'S GAME

GAME MANAGEMENT MANUAL



An Official Publication of the National Governing Body of Lacrosse

GAME MANAGEMENT

Game management refers to the collection of techniques used to ensure that the game runs smoothly. Less experienced officials typically have to work hard to correctly execute the “science” of lacrosse officiating; remembering all of the appropriate rules, judging the game correctly, and following the proper mechanics. Officials with a bit more experience can start to focus on the “art” of lacrosse officiating: keeping the game flowing, communicating appropriately, and preventing problems before they occur. This manual is designed to help you learn the key aspects of game management.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pre-Game	3
Faceoffs	4
Mechanics	5
Dead Ball Officiating	6
Communication	9
Dealing with Conduct Issues	11
Game Control	14
Types of Games	15
The Principle of Advantage/Disadvantage	17
The Play-On	18
Mistakes by Officials	20
Articles	21

PRE-GAME

What you do in the twenty minutes before the game can have a tremendous impact on your game management. Showing up to the field with plenty of time to spare in a neat, clean uniform, carrying yourself professionally as you inspect the field, introducing yourself to the coaches, and conducting your coach's certifications all create the feeling that you what you are doing. The coaches come to expect this routine, and if you deviate from it, they will start to question your abilities before you make a single call.

Ideally, you will get to the game early enough to check the field thoroughly. However, no matter how rushed you are, you must check the goals before the opening faceoff. It is best to check the goals 20 minutes or so before the game so the home coach has time to fix them, then check them again right after the coin toss to make sure there are no balls left in the goal and no new holes. If you do not check and there is a questionable goal with a hole in one of the nets then one of the coaches will be furious.

It is also important to establish a rapport with the table personnel. Give them as much information and instruction as they can handle. There are printed guidelines for timers and scorers available on the US Lacrosse web site which serve as a cheat sheet to help them stay on track; giving these to the table personnel often helps. In any case, make sure they know to call you over if they are unsure about anything. Instruct the table personnel to not allow the crew to restart if they are unclear about anything (it is better to wait than try to re-create).

Take some time to make sure the table is properly equipped with a working horn and a timing device. If there is a visible scoreboard, find out if the clock will be used and if it has an automatic horn for the end of the period. If not, be clear with the timer about the procedure for the end of the period. Also, be sure to inform both coaches of the horn and clock situation.

The pre-game period is also a time for officials to communicate with each other. At higher levels, the pre-game may last an hour or more; at lower levels, it may consist of talking for a few minutes in the parking lot before taking the field. One of the first things to decide on a crew is where the crew members are going to officiate. Would the inexperienced official feel better working the far side of the field the entire game? How about in the closing minutes of a tight game? Do you want the experienced official on the bench side? If need be, use an alternate rotation but try not to hide an official the entire game on the far side. The officials should also review mechanics, discuss any new rules interpretations, and determine if there are any special circumstances that they need to consider.

FACEOFFS

The faceoff is one of the keys to the game, and most coaches tell their teams two of the keys to victory are winning faceoffs and ground balls. Given this, faceoffs are one of the most challenging parts of the game to officiate and many players use many things to give them an advantage. Our job is to ensure that they are legal, according to the rule book.

Key points to focus on to conduct a proper and legal faceoff include:

- In your pre-game, discuss if any of the officials have knowledge of the faceoff players. Is there any awareness of cheating (i.e. using their hands, withholding, etc.)? If there is then discuss how the crew will handle the calls.
- If you are in a rules change year and faceoffs are impacted by new rules then take a few minutes before the game to meet with the faceoff players from both teams to go over the expectations the crew has and for the players to ask any questions.
- At the initial faceoff of every game (or in the pre-game faceoff player meeting), the faceoff official should review with the players the rules and mechanics of the faceoff:
 - Crosses perpendicular to the ground
 - No hands on the plastic
 - Clear neutral zone
 - All body parts to the left of the head
 - Varied whistle
- Use verbal and physical adjustments to get the players into the legal position necessary for the faceoff. Use preventative officiating for the first few faceoffs, but if a player continually puts himself in an illegal position despite your warnings then you may need to call that player for illegal procedure.
- If you need to restart the procedure, for example the ball not staying still on a grass field, then stand both players up and pick a new spot on the midfield line to faceoff.
- As an official you do not coach players. Speak to them as a group:
 - YES: “Sticks to the left” or “hands off the plastic”
 - NO: “Blue, get your head out of the neutral zone”
- Your arms should be at your side, your whistle should be in your mouth, and you should back away from the faceoff smoothly and blow your whistle with a varied cadence.
- If you are conducting a faceoff with a player in the penalty area, remember to remind the table crew that the player cannot release until there is possession and that one of the wing areas must remain empty for the team that is man-down. It is a good idea to ask how much time is remaining on the penalty so the officiating crew is aware of the situation.

MECHANICS

Employing proper mechanics is another important part of game management. The standard lacrosse mechanics are designed to put you in position to make the correct call. While there may be times when you deviate from these mechanics, it should only be done for a specific reason.

Coaches and players can tell when you are out of position and make a call. When an official calls, or does not call, a crease violation from 25 yards away, or calls an end line out of bounds on a shot while standing on goal line extended instead of running toward the line, the official erodes the confidence that the players have in their calls, and that makes it much harder to manage a game.

However, if the official is in the right position to make the call and sells the call, it is much harder for the coaches and players to debate it. For example, on a close call of a goal or a non-goal due to a crease violation, an inexperienced official might give a soft whistle, jog in front 25 yards away, and give a half-hearted goal signal, which just encourages the defensive team's coach to argue that it wasn't a goal. Instead, when the experienced official blasts the whistle, springs in from 5 yards away and emphatically signals "no goal, no goal, crease violation" there is not going to be much argument, even if the play was so close the call could have gone either way.

Contested end line calls should also have an official on the end line making the call. If you do are forced to make a long-distance call because of how the play developed then run in several yards while blowing the whistle so that when you announce the call you are closer to the action. Always hold your direction-of-play signal for a second or two: it takes at least that long for the table and the coaches to see you and recognize which team you are awarding the ball to.

On any close call a strong whistle, a big and clear signal, and a quick restart keeps the game moving and forces the players to play and the coaches to coach.

DEAD-BALL OFFICIATING

One complaint of many coaches and players is that some officials interrupt the flow of the game. Sometimes that is coach-speak for “We wish they would never call fouls and just let the boys play.” But other times coaches have a legitimate complaint, because the officials are supposed to keep the game moving as much as possible.

The most glaring example of this occurs during dead-ball situations. Dead-ball situations are not a rest time for officials: the officials need to work hard to make sure that play gets restarted quickly and appropriately under the rules. However, we tend to focus our training on what to do during live-ball play, so when play stops many officials are not sure what to do, and the game slows down as a result. This is not the only problem, since coaches and players can sense when the officials are not sure of what to do, and that undermines their confidence in the officials. Good officials know how to anticipate the restart requirements during a dead ball or time-out so delays are minimal.

When there is a loose-ball technical foul, the officials need to stop play, report the foul, and restart play. When reporting the foul, only the basics need to be communicated:

- YES: Signal and say “Push,” then state “White ball!”
- NO: “Blue, number 39, loose ball push in the back, white ball”

This is not a time for counting players or connecting with your partners; because the foul occurred during a loose ball the proper number of players should already be on the field and your partners should be focused on the play. If the ball needs to be moved outside the attack area, then do so promptly; if not, you should blow the whistle as soon as the ball is in the crosse of a player from the correct team and there are no players within five yards of the ball-carrier.

Well-coached teams will be eager to start play and will pick up the ball and be ready to go almost as soon as you are finished relaying the call. If you are not ready when they are, they will ask, “Whistle? Whistle?” At the same time, remember that while most restarts are quick, no restarts should be rushed. This means no “running restarts,” where the player with the ball gains an advantage by sprinting past the nearest defender before your whistle to restart play.

Also, if the player with the ball is fairly close to the correct restart location, then restart play. Stopping play to quibble over whether the player should be one more yard to the left or right is irritating to both teams.

This brings up another point. If you call a loose ball push on B1, and b1 argues with you about it, you could warn him, ask him to address his concerns to his coach, or give him a conduct foul. However, sometimes the most effective way to end the discussion is to restart play while he is trying to argue with you. The restart accomplishes two things: one, you keep the game moving, and two, you punish B1 for arguing since he is out of the play without interrupting the flow of the game.

DEAD-BALL OFFICIATING (CONT.)

When there is a whistle for a non-time serving foul (e.g. a ward, an illegal offensive screen, etc.), the rules require the offending team to place the ball on the ground. If a team tries to gain an advantage by rolling or throwing the ball away and preventing a quick restart then they are likely guilty of delay of game and should be penalized. Of course, you need to use your judgment, because if the ball rolls a few yards and stops at the feet of a player for the offended team then there is no real disadvantage caused. But, if the ball is thrown far enough away that it slows down the game, then that action deserves a 30-second penalty. In this case, your call encourages both teams to do everything they can to keep the game moving or serve time in the penalty box for slowing the game down.

For any time-serving penalty, the officials need to communicate the penalty to each other quickly and then communicate the details to the scorer's table. Take your time communicating with the table area; this is your time to shine. Make eye contact with the personnel responsible for recording the penalty and make sure they know what is happening. When you report a penalty you become a salesman, and you want your sales pitch to look professional.

While the trail reports the penalty the rest of the crew should get the ball to the correct spot on the field for the upcoming restart. As soon as the trail finishes reporting the penalty and is sure the table understands the foul, he should turn his timer on, after which the teams have 20-seconds to substitute if they desire. As soon as they are done subbing and are in position the officials should signal each other that they are ready and play should resume. The players should never have to wait for the officials in this situation unless the officials need to correct a problem.

This is not to say that officials cannot huddle to get things right if there is a complex penalty situation. For example:

- B1 slashes A1, flag down
- A1 passes to A2 who shots and scores
- A1 slashes B1 in retaliation

Was the slash during live-ball or dead-ball time? Is possession awarded or is there a faceoff? What is the penalty situation? In these more complex situations it is more important to get the call right than it is to keep the game moving.

DEAD-BALL OFFICIATING (CONT.)

Often when the officials stop play, they immediately look to each other to find out what the call is since they are concerned about getting play restarted. However, if you turn to each other too quickly, you will miss some residual action after the play such as a late hit or a slash after the whistle. These incidents have a huge impact on your game management, since everyone sees the infraction but you. Or, as often happens, you might see only the retaliation and not the act that precipitated it.

One key to dead-ball officiating is to make sure all residual activity from the play is over before you turn to communicate with your partner. Your partner should wait for you to make eye contact before starting to signal so you do not miss anything. Someone should always be watching the players at all times. A crew of officials can live with a missed offside call, but a missed late hit or off-ball high hit quickly brings down a game. Watch the players cross during timeouts and the ends of periods from near the bench-side wing line before looking at your scorecard. Watch the teams cross again as they break from their huddles and go to their field positions.

Another key is that the trail official must focus on the shooter after the shot, and not the ball entering the goal, to make sure there are no late hits. If you miss these fouls, it leads to a high level of frustration among the coaches and the players, which can lead to an out of control game.

COMMUNICATION

GENERAL RULES ABOUT COMMUNICATION

Communication is an essential part of game management. By communicating with the coaches and players you can often diffuse problems before the game gets out of control.

You need to be professional every time you communicate. Always refer to the coach as “coach,” do not use first names especially if you are friends off the field. You never want to give any indication of a relationship as it could be perceived as improper by the opposing team and be detrimental to your attempts to manage the game.

A great time to establish rapport with the coach is during the pre-game certification. If you do not know the coach, then ask some basic questions such as:

- How is the season going?
- Do you have any rules questions?

If the coach is new to coaching or new to lacrosse you might communicate differently. For example, you might ask them periodically if they have any questions during the game.

If you establish a good relationship, a coach becomes a great advocate for the officials.

During the game, it is important to maintain a professional demeanor. For example, do not make any comments about the play calling, the level of play, or make any demeaning comments about the teams. After a comment from a coach such as, “that was a terrible call,” do not come back and say, “coach that was a terrible play you just ran.” If a coach says you made a terrible call either ignore it, or tell the coach what you saw (if the situation and time permits). Any live-ball comments from you to the coach should be short and to-the-point. Extended dead-ball time such as timeouts and between periods are when longer discussions are appropriate.

If a coach continues to berate you, warn them to stop, but if you do, the next time you must call a violation, usually a conduct foul at minimum.

It is critical to avoid sarcasm; it is unprofessional and often misinterpreted by coaches. In fact, a large percentage of complaints about officials stem from such misunderstandings and the tone an official uses.

This is not to say that you cannot use humor. Humor can be a great way to defuse tense situations, although you need to be extremely careful. Try to observe the kind of humor used by experienced officials and learn from it. Self-deprecating humor seems to work best.

COMMUNICATION (CONT.)

When facing a verbal conflict, be sure to keep your voice level and under control. If a coach screams at you and you scream back, you look bad, but if the coach is screaming and you're talking in a normal voice, the coach looks bad. Also, be aware of non-verbal communication: the way you say things and your body language while you are saying them often carry more weight than what you say.

Even though the rules do not require you to address questions from the coaches, do not make the mistake of refusing to talk with them. If a coach has a question respectfully about why you called or did not call something, answering him can keep the lines of communication open, maintain the coach's level of respect for you, and prevent frustration. Also, if you made a difficult call letting a coach know why you made the call achieves the same things.

In the same vein, we all make mistakes. No coach ever coached a perfect game and no official ever worked a perfect game. If you make an error and you realize it, and the coach questions your call then admit your mistake. Apologies and tell the coach "I missed that call. I am sorry." Acknowledging a mistake often goes a long way with the coach.

The best way to get a coach to stop yelling at you is to restart play. Once live play is going, the coach is most likely focusing on the game rather than you. For this reason, quick restarts under the rules are a key to successful game management.

Some people believe that after a controversial call it is better to leave the official who made the call on the far side of the field or even rotate him over to the far side. It is actually better to have him come over as soon as possible and clear the air with a quick explanation to the irate coach rather than to let the situation fester. If the situation or time does not permit this interaction then the nearest official can tell the coach that he will get an explanation at the earliest opportunity.

Body language is an often overlooked means of communication. Coaches and players will zero in on an official who has the "deer in the headlights" look or who slouches when making calls as if unsure. Conversely, they get irritated with the "gunslinger" who peers in to the play with arms wide and ready to sling flags. Stand tall and relax. Have the attitude that you can handle whatever presents itself.

Finally, do not try to be someone you are not. What works for one official may not work for your personality. Take from others what you think you can use, but always remember to be yourself.

DEALING WITH CONDUCT ISSUES

COACH AND PLAYER CONDUCT

Even if you do everything right, there will always be games with poor conduct. Do not expect coaches and players to be rational or objective while they are involved in an emotional and physical game. There will often be times when they are certain you are wrong about a rule when you are right or when both coaches are certain you are favoring the other team. Furthermore, many coaches and players do not understand the basic officiating principles such as mechanics and the principle of advantage/disadvantage. None of this, however, means you need to tolerate abusive behavior directed at you from players, coaches, or spectators.

The first rule of dealing with coaches is that comments, such as “that’s a slash!” can be ignored, while questions, “why did you not call a slash there?” may or may not be responded to. Coaches are entitled to their opinions and you cannot expect them to coach without expressing their opinions. When they make comments about what they think should be called, it can generally be let go. IF they politely ask questions and the game situations allows it, answer them whenever possible; this is an expected part of the official’s job, and it also helps you manage the game by building a relationship with the coach.

However, there are lines that you cannot allow to be crossed without penalty. These include:

- Profanity directed toward you or another game participant
- Anyone questioning your integrity as an official
- Direct criticism of you as an official
 - o While you might ignore “That is an awful call,” you cannot ignore “You are an awful official.”
- Threats of any kinds
 - o I am going to get you in the parking lot after the game!
 - o If you call one more penalty against my team you will never officiate here again!
- Any comments of a prejudicial or racist nature
- A coach who is out of control

In the cases of poor conduct, officials generally follow an escalating progression, starting with a verbal warning, followed by a conduct foul when the offending team has possession, then by a time-serving conduct foul, then a 1- to 3-minute unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, and finally with an ejection. Depending on the severity of the foul and what preceded it, steps in this profession may be skipped or repeated. This is known as The Ramp and is illustrated here:

DEALING WITH CONDUCT ISSUES (CONT.)

The important thing to remember is that lacrosse is supposed to be fun, and allowing poor behavior to continue makes it difficult for anyone to have fun, and it can ultimately degrade the contest into an unsafe situation because it can lead to excessively violent play and fighting. Officials who pride themselves on being able to handle a great deal of abuse are not doing anyone any favors, particularly the next set of officials, who face a coach or players who think they can get away with any level of abuse. If you see this kind of behavior in your games, put a stop to it immediately.

SPECTATOR BEHAVIOR

Dealing with spectators is another issue. If spectators have general comments about your officiating, then ignore them. However, if they use abusive language toward you or the players or if they make threats of any kind, then inform the site administrator or head coach and ask that the problem spectator be removed. Of course the site administrator at an NCAA Division I game is going to be very different from the one at a high school club game played at a public park. The rule of thumb is to tell the home head coach about the problem and ask that he take care of it. In the club game, he may have to do it himself, while at higher levels he may pass the assignment on to an athletic director or to school security. If the problem is bad enough for you to be distracted from officiating then corrective action needs to be taken. In any case, never elevate the position of a spectator complaining about your officiating by addressing them directly.

It is important to keep spectators away from the field. Do not allow play to continue if there are fans within 6 yards of the sideline or on either end line. It is a liability for you if someone too close to the field gets hurt, but it is also harder for the fans to abuse you when they are farther away.

Under unusual circumstances, you may ask that the site manager eject certain spectators (or even all of them). For example, suppose you have a high-school rivalry game with two physical teams, and a group of fans from one school sits at midfield and peppers the players from the opposing school with offensive remarks. If you ignore it, the physicality of the game may escalate as the fans get under the players' skin. Instead, have the site manager ask them to stop. If they continue to abuse the players, have the site administrator remove the offending fans and do not resume play until the offending spectators leave the game site.

DEALING WITH CONDUCT ISSUES (CONT.)

WARNING SIGNS

While there are times that a game will deteriorate so rapidly that you do not have time to act, in most cases there are warning signs that will alert you to the need to take corrective action if you spot them. Learning to spot these signs takes experience, but here are a few examples:

- Players and coaches become more concerned with hitting than playing lacrosse
 - Hard body checks are drawing louder cheers than goals
 - Players knock down opponents and stand over them in a show of dominance
- You noticed A1 and B1 take a couple of hard body checks at each other during the game. A1 lays a big, but legal body check on B1, resulting in a turnover. B1 takes exception to the hit as the ball is being cleared by Team A.
 - You are the new trail in transition and you notice B1 lingering near A1.
 - Even though you are supposed to follow the play down field you should watch and listen to A1 and B1.
 - You may hear B1 threaten A1 or even see B1 take a cheap shot. If you do, penalize B1 heavily since B1 was counting on you being focused elsewhere and took an opportunity to retaliate.
 - He is also probably hoping that A1 will retaliate and that A1 will get caught.
 - By focusing on these players, and not the ball, for a few extra moments, you are able to penalize the guilty player, remove A1's incentive to retaliate, and discourage more antics away from the ball because you sent the message that you are always watching.
- Team A's start midfielder A1 scores a goal and is body checked by B1 well after the goal. The trail official penalizes B1 for a dead-ball illegal body check. However, A1 is injured on the play and is carted off the field.
 - A2, his teammate, starts toward B1 during the dead ball, but the Trail official breaks things up before anything starts.
 - Later on B1's penalty expires and he returns to the game. Who do you think you most need to watch on Team A once B1 steps back onto the field?
 - The officiating crew already had to stop A2 from doing something retaliatory after the late hit, and now that B1 is back on the field A2 may attempt to get retribution for the late hit on his teammate.
 - Keeping track of players who come up to, but do not cross, the line of legality is important.

When you see warning signs such as these, you need to pay attention even more and be ready to take action. This is where game management shifts into game control.

GAME CONTROL

When you sense that the game is deteriorating, or when it suddenly gets out of hand with no warning, it is time to clamp down and make sure you limit the number of opportunities for problems.

Here are some techniques you can use to control the game when necessary:

- You and your partners set the threshold much lower for calling fouls. This will result in more whistles, more flags, and more players serving penalties, but in fewer opportunities for actions to escalate into a fight.
- You can change the pace of the game by taking more time during dead balls to explain penalties and settling down the players before resuming play.
 - Be very generous on your interpretation of 5 yards on restarts, and make players stand completely motionless on the restart. This gives the players time to cool off.
 - This technique is especially effective in a running-time game.
 - Sometimes the faster, hotter, and more contentious the game the slower cooler, and more soothing the officials need to be.
- If the benches are getting out of control, gather all of the coaches together and explain to them about the importance of honoring the game and setting a sportsmanlike example.
- If the situation warrants, explain that it is possible to play the rest of the game with a full penalty area, to expel players, or to suspend the game if the behavior does not improve. Explain that you are disappointed with their behavior and you are sure that they want to improve it so the rest of the game can be played. Tell them that your job is to keep the game safe, fair, and fun and you can take all the fun out of the game if that is what it takes to keep the game safe.

When the game is out of control you have to use your whistle and flag to maintain order. That does not mean that you ignore the other aspects of game management, but if you need to penalize or eject a coach or a player to get your point across then do it.

GAME TERMINATION

When officiating youth games the US Lacrosse Sportsmanship Card procedures should be used to deal with unacceptable behavior from players, coaches, and fans. The youth rules support the philosophy that the officials may terminate the game to protect the players and the culture of the game. Situations that might result in game termination include:

- Threats made toward the officials
- A fight or multiple fights before or during the game
- Continued dirty play from one or both teams
- Continued abusive language, taunting, baiting, or inflammatory comments

In most cases you will call the head coaches together and explain that you have no obligation to continue the game under objectionable circumstances. The “carding” of the coach or coaches indicates that the game is being continued under the threat of game termination. Then, if necessary, terminate the game. Be sure to record the game situation (score, possession, penalties, time, left, and quarter) in case the game is resumed at a later date. Call your assigner as soon as possible to explain the situation and send the assigner a written report of the incident with 24 hours.

TYPES OF GAMES

There are certain types of games that require special attention.

THE ROUT

In games where one team is winning by a large margin you face the serious risk that the losing team will start taking cheap shots out of frustration. You need to be extremely vigilant despite the fact that the game is already decided. The bright side is that routs are easier to manage than close games because it is extremely unlikely that any call you make will have an impact on the outcome of the game. If there is any kind of scuffle, even a minor one, send both players involved to the penalty area for one to three minutes (non-releasable, since the penalty time will start at the same time). This will create more space on the field and make it less likely that you will have problems. If you explain to the leading coach that you are trying to keep things calm and protected his players by getting some players off the field, he will understand.

One consideration when sending two players off for a minor scuffle or an altercation: under NFHS rules a second non-releasable unsportsmanlike conduct foul results in an expulsion (and in most states a suspension for a subsequent game of games). Thus, it often makes more sense to send the players off for unnecessary roughness instead; the penalty is the same and the time is non-releasable, and you avoid having to expel players. Of course, if the players' actions warrant, give the unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, but this option gives you a less foul when it is appropriate.

The most important thing to remember in a rout is that you cannot become sloppy just because the result of the game has been decided. Do whatever it takes to keep your head in the game, because ignoring game management in a rout can put you in the middle of the brawl if the frustration level of the losing team is allowed to grow unchecked.

In a rout in a lower-level game, you might inquire discreetly to the coach getting beaten if he wants to keep the full time on the clock or shorten the periods.

THE ELIMINATION GAME

In playoff games, teams tend to be more evenly matched, and the importance of the game tends to make players play more in control since no one wants to be the one who makes a mistake and fouls in a close game to cost his team the chance to win. Still, emotions run high in these games, and you must carefully monitor the situation, especially when the game is not close.

Tournament games are similar, except that there are often many games played in one day, which leads to physical, mental, and emotional fatigue in the players, coaches, fans, and even spectators. In particular, tired players are more likely to play sloppy lacrosse and to play defense with their sticks instead of their feet, leading to more fouls.

Also, you should always be aware of the weather conditions, but this is especially true for tournaments held in hot, humid conditions. The NFHS and US Lacrosse Youth Rules allow for the officials to call timeouts and allow players extra time to rehydrate and deal with the heat.

TYPES OF GAMES (CONT.)

THE RIVALRY GAME

Rivalry games come in a variety of styles. They can be games between schools that have a:

- Traditional rivalry in all sports
- Rivalry in lacrosse only
- History of bad blood arising from on- or off-field incidents

One significant difference in a rivalry game is that there may be an emotional crowd, which can amplify the emotions of the players. As an official, you do not want to pay too much attention to the spectators, but be aware of how the players are reacting to them. With an emotional game, you tend to see more aggressive players and more obvious fouls.

In a rivalry game, you will probably start out calling things a little more tightly than you would for two teams that rarely play each other because you know there is a significant risk of cheap shots escalating. That does not mean you need to call every foul. Just that you send a message that the game is not going to be a free-for-all where no fouls are called. When players believe that the officials are not going to penalize fouls, they will often decide to take matters into their own hands, and this is especially true in a rivalry game. If the teams get the message and behave themselves, you can ease off a bit as the game goes on.

THE INEXPERIENCED TEAM

In youth lacrosse or at higher levels of player where most of the players are playing lacrosse for the first time, you may be faced with one or two teams with little idea about what they are doing. The coaches may not know the game very well either in these instances. When this happens you should not worry too much about being accused of coaching. Instead, do what it takes to help the teams get through the game with as little frustration as possible. That may take the form of taking extra time to have correct faceoffs, or explaining to people that you did see a loose-ball push and had a play-on, but since the fouled team gained possession there was no need to stop play.

In a game like this, the players are likely to commit fouls due to lack of control and ignorance rather than intent and testosterone, so when you flag someone try to make sure that he understands what he did wrong and that it is all a part of learning the game. If you see something that hints at a team-wide misconception, for example players keep going into the opponent's crease, politely explain the rule to the coach so he can relay it to the players. Actions like this reduce frustration for everyone.

If only one team is inexperienced, you may find that the game is also a rout. In that case, the warnings about routs apply. Be especially alert to an athletic but unskilled new team getting beat and trying to take out their frustrations with more physical play.

THE PRINCIPLE OF ADVANTAGE/DISADVANTAGE

You do not automatically penalize everything you see that is technically a foul. Doing so makes for a tedious game and will earn the ire of the coaches, players, and fans. The difficult part is determining which falls to call and which to ignore. The guiding principle for these situations is called “The Principle of Advantage/Disadvantage,” or TPOAD.

The basic idea is that you should call:

- Fouls that present a safety issue (personal fouls are never about advantage or disadvantage)
- Fouls that you must call to maintain proper behavior (conduct fouls)
- Fouls that are obvious to everyone (line violations, crease violations, offside)
- Technical fouls that disadvantage the offended team or create an unfair advantage for the offending team

The last item is most easily understood by example:

Suppose A1 is clearing the ball and B1 pushes him from behind, making him stumble briefly. If A1 does not fall or lose possession of the ball there is no need to call a foul. However, if B1 commits exactly the same push in a different situation, a flag for the push may be appropriate. For example, a push that causes A1 to:

- Go out of bounds
- Go offside
- Step into the crease
- Move past the goal, making him miss a scoring opportunity
- Lose possession

In each of these cases, A1 is disadvantaged by the foul and so the flag must be thrown.

Whenever you judge technical fouls, try to determine whether an advantage is gained or a disadvantage is caused before calling the foul. This is not easy, and it may take you a few years to get comfortable with these kinds of decisions. Talking to more experienced officials about why they did or did not call a foul can help you learn this important principle.

THE PLAY-ON

Proper use of the play-on technique is important for game management. Many newer officials have a hard time remembering when to use the play-on, and so some of the nuances of its use for game management are lost on them. It is important to understand the reason the play-on exists in order to apply it correctly.

Before the play-on was introduced, a team on defense would intentionally push or hold an opponent during a loose ball. At the time, play was stopped anytime a loose-ball violation occurred. This gave the defensive team time to adjust their position while the official reported the foul. In essence, the fouls were used to slow the game down and allow defenses to reset.

The main idea behind the play-on is that it allows play to continue so that a team that is offended by a loose-ball technical foul is afforded the opportunity to pick up the ball and attack their opponent's goal. The play-on also improved the flow of the game by reducing the number of whistles.

Here is a common play-on situation:

- B1 pushes A1 from behind during a loose ball. A1 scoops up the ball with a clear path to the goal.
 - Stopping play for the loose-ball push disadvantages Team A by taking away their scoring opportunity.
 - Instead, if you signal and yell "Play-on," everyone knows that you saw a violation and Team A was disadvantaged.

With a play-on you are always awarding possession to the offended team. It is a matter of whether the offended team will pick the ball up and end the play-on, or if you need to stop play to award them the ball.

CREASE TROUBLE

Although calling a play-on around is following the letter of the rulebook, this would not be wise since other fouls can occur. Consider this example:

- A1 steps in the crease and you signal and yell "Play-on!"
- B1 cross-checks A2, the shooter, and you throw your flag.
- The loose ball goes into the goal.
 - The result is loose-ball simultaneous fouls and no goal. A1 will serve 30-seconds for the crease violation, and B1 will serve a 1-, 2-, or 3-minute personal foul. Team A will get the ball.

This is a difficult situation to explain to the Team A coach, who thinks his team just scored a goal. Whenever you are in a situation such as this, immediately blow your whistle, indicate the foul, and restart the game with the attacking team in possession laterally outside the goal area. By stopping play faster you avoid the cross-check, shot, and the difficult explanation.

Here is a different example:

In a loose ball scrum with 8 players, B1 pushes A1 from behind. If you allow play to continue and A1 scoops the ball, he is likely going to get the ball checked out of his crosse or be fouled again. In this case it makes sense to stop the play quickly and award Team A the ball with a quick restart.

THE PLAY-ON (CONT.)

How long you wait before blowing the whistle on a play-on is a key aspect of game management. Some guidelines:

- The lower the level of play, the shorter the play-on should be.
 - At these levels of play, players are much more likely to get hurt during loose-ball scrums, so it makes sense to end those plays as quickly as possible. In fact, during loose-ball scrums at low levels you should be looking for any technical foul you could possibly call to get the ball off the ground. While people may accuse you of making a ticky-tack call, letting the loose-ball scrum continue too long can be hazardous.
- If the ball pops out of the scrimmage area and it seems likely that a player from the offended team will be able to track down the ball and scoop it uncontested, you can allow the play-on to continue for a bit longer.
- A North-South (end line to end line) play-on is better than an East-West (sideline to sideline) play-on, and a play-on in the attack half of the field is better than a play-on in the defensive half of the field.
 - What would the offended team rather have?
 - A clean restart with all players 5 yards away OR
 - Uninterrupted possession of the ball at that moment
 - It depends. A clean restart would be preferable if the player has nowhere to go if he picks up the ball. A chance to pick up the ball and press their opponent's goal is preferred if the situation permits.
 - What advantage have you given a player who scoops up a loose ball during a play-on next to the sideline surrounded by three defensemen?
 - There is no advantage here. As soon as the player picks up the ball he will be checked out of bounds. Better to stop play and award his team possession with a quick restart.

MISTAKES BY OFFICIALS

All officials will make mistakes, with the better officials making fewer mistakes. This can be due to a rule misunderstanding or misapplication, because the official was out of position, or because the official did not see what happened. Whatever the reason, how you handle making a mistake can have a huge impact on your management of the game.

The best way for the crew to handle a mistake is to huddle and correct the mistake before it has an impact on the game. Often, one official will realize that a call is incorrect but does not want to “show up” a fellow official, and will keep quiet. Most coaches and players, though, will have much more respect for the crew if they meet and get the call right. In other situation, where you blow a call and realize it, then honesty is the best policy. If the coach is mad because he says you blew the call, and you say, “You are right coach, I am sorry and it will not happen again,” it is very difficult for them to keep up a tirade. Just do not put yourself in a position where you need to do this often.

It is also important to know what to say to the coach by your side when the far-side official makes a close call. Never throw your partner under the bus. Practice responses such as:

- “Coach, he is right there.”
- “Coach, it is hard to tell from where we are.”
- “He has a good angle there, Coach; he must have seen something we didn’t.”

If your partner makes a call that the coach does not understand and you do not know what the call was either, tell the coach you will check with your partner and ask about the call when there is a break in the action. Then remember to follow up with your partner and the coach.

If a mistake is made, do not make it worse with quick restarts and confusion. Communication between the crew, table, coaches, and players is critical.

Give teams the opportunity to get the right players on the field after a mistake. Common examples are:

- Pointing in the wrong direction
- Inadvertent whistle or flag
- An overruled call
- A misapplied rule

Tips to prevent mistakes:

- Know the rules
- If you keep seeing your partner’s mistakes, then who is watching your area of the field?
 - No one, officials split the field for a reason. Focus on your primary coverage area
- Did your partner not see a foul or did he pass on it? If he passed what is the reason?
- Communicate with your partner during game breaks
 - Discuss what is going on and how you will handle things going forward

ARTICLES

The Men's Officials Development Task Force selected the following articles for inclusion in this manual because they show how game management can be put in practice.

The authors are all current or former top lacrosse officials and you will benefit from the breadth of their experiences and collective wisdom.

RESPONDING TO COACHES QUERIES AND COMMENTS

Eric Evans

As an official, responding to coaches during a game is one specific aspect of overall communication with coaches. Yes, there are rules and procedures in place in the rulebook, but responding to a coach is often more art than science, more dealing with human behavior under stress than applying lacrosse knowledge.

In general, officials need to recognize that coaches have invested much time and effort in preparing for a game and that an athletic contest can generate strong emotions. Officials will best serve the game that afternoon by defusing, managing and helping a coach through a tough moment rather than by assuming an immediate adversarial role. Officials must strive to be engaged at all times: aloofness, indifference, boredom, and disdain are inexcusable.

Compliance through cooperation is preferable to compliance through coercion.

Most often when a coach addresses a referee he is either seeking information or is simply venting. We always need to answer questions, but we don't always need to address venting. At some point, though, *"Coach, it is my job to inform you, not convince you."* But the referee who can do both simultaneously will be well served.

Even if we are treated unprofessionally or rudely, we MUST respond professionally. Yes, there will be times when you will have to *"bite your tongue."* Responding to, *"that's a terrible call"* with, *"that's a terrible man-up play you just ran, Coach"* is unacceptable. Stay calm and be kind.

REMINDERS

- Treat both coaches the same.
- *"Coach"* is always preferable to *"First Name."*
- If you err, or rather, when you err. Own it. Explain it to both coaches (point the wrong way, inadvertent flag, etc.) Be sure all teams are set before restarting play. Worse thing you can do is compound an error by a quick restart when teams are confused.
- Officials need to beware the carryover comments:
 - *"You didn't call that last game."*
 - *"No one has called that all year."*
 - *"Coach, I can't speak about previous games. This is what we are doing today."*
- NFHS Coaches Challenge has a set procedure. Follow it.

Evans earned First Team All-New England as a defenseman for Hotchkiss in 1968, but it was not until the 1990s that he started officiating. He is one of a handful of referees who have worked a NCAA Division 1 Final and a World Games Final. During a 9-year career officiating in Major League Lacrosse, Evans served as Secretary of the Collegiate Officials Committee and Chair of the International Officials Committee for US Lacrosse.

COMMUNICATION – A KEY FACTOR IN GAME MANAGEMENT

Matt Palumb

Supervisors often say what separates good officials from the great ones is the ability to communicate effectively during a game. This communication has 4 parts to it:

1. Your crew
2. The table
3. Coaches
4. Players

The best officiated games usually start with three (or two) officials that are "on the same page." This starts with a solid pre-game, and continues throughout the game. Once the game starts, the communication among the crew becomes less verbal and done more through calls. Are we attempting to match calls at both ends when it's appropriate? If someone on the crew calls a 50-50 push at one end, we should get the same call at the other end. Are we quickly getting together when something strange happens to lean on each other for help? Remember, the only teammates we have during a game are each other!

Let's move on to the people at the table. The number and quality of your table personnel will vary from level to level. At youth games, we're often lucky we have anybody over there that's willing to keep score and penalty time. The entire crew needs to go over and meet the table crew. Find out who is keeping game time and penalty time. Is there a horn at the table? Does your game clock have an automatic horn or is someone needed at the table to use the hand-held horn at zeros on the clock? Who will release the players from penalties? A good "R" will quickly make the table personnel part of their crew. Most importantly, once the game begins, do not allow coaches or players from either team to give your table personnel a hard time. Protect them. Have zero tolerance for players and coaches verbally attacking table personnel.

Let's talk about communication with coaches. You only get one chance to make a first impression. Especially with a coach you've never met before! I always start it off with a firm handshake, eye contact and a smile. From there, let the coach steer the conversation a little bit. Some guys like to chat for a couple minutes, others like to get right down to business and go back to coaching quickly. Just know this: especially the higher up you go, trust that the other coach or someone on his staff is probably watching you communicate with the opposing coach.

Just like how we want to be consistent with calls at each end, we also want to be consistent with how we communicate with coaches. Once in a while, they make it difficult. Maybe one guy is a talker, likes to laugh and smile, while the other guy has a more serious approach with very little chatter. You need to be aware of this and try your best to balance your pre-game interaction as best you can. Don't spend 10 minutes with one coach and 30 seconds with the other. Usually, at least someone on the crew has an idea of what type of personality each coach has. Discuss that in your pre-game.

COMMUNICATION – A KEY FACTOR IN GAME MANAGEMENT

Matt Palumb

Once the game starts, I think communication with coaches should be at a minimum. Answer questions the best you can. Support your partners. If there is a strange play or rule situation in the game, get both coaches together in the middle of the box and explain what you have to them at the same time. Try to do it as quickly as possible without rushing. This should be done by the referee. Don't be sarcastic. Do the best you can to stay composed and do not raise your voice. ***Fair or not, we are held to higher standards than the players and coaches.*** Coaches do not like to be ignored, so do your best to address their concerns. Don't be afraid to say, "I missed it," "I didn't have a good look at the play," "I'll take a better look at xyz." Tell them what you saw on a given play. Don't lie; you'll instantly lose credibility.

Finally, none of us need to put up with being abused. Use the tools in your toolbox to address these situations. First we have our communication skills: "Coach, that's enough," "Coach, if this continues, it's going to hurt your team." The toolbox also includes conduct fouls and unsportsmanlike conduct fouls. Finally, and we hope it doesn't happen often, a coach will lose the privilege of having an open line of communication: "Coach, I'm no longer talking to you, it's not helping the game."

The last people you'll come in contact with on game day, but also spend the most time with, are the players. Having a good line of communication with the players in the game can really help the game go well. The older the players are, the more you'll probably talk with them to help the game along. Youth players probably don't have a whole lot to offer in the way of helping you. However, you should still be communicating with them, but most of the focus is on you helping them understand the rules. Talk them out of things. Do a little teaching. At the middle school level and below, most coaches will appreciate the help. If a coach gives you a hard time about teaching a kid during the game, to me, he simply doesn't "get it." As long as you do it at both ends, please, help the kids learn the game.

As you move up to higher levels, that's when you lean on the captains or leaders of a given team to help you with a teammate of theirs who is being difficult. The really good captains can even help you with a tough coach. Be approachable to players who want to communicate with you. If they're not coming to you for the right reasons, you can put an end to that communication quite easily: "Number 15, you and I are done talking." Give them the opportunity to have the privilege of an open line of communication. If they go on to lose that privilege through their actions, then let them know that.

Every person communicates a little differently. Figure out your strengths and use those strengths to help you and your crew have a positive experience!

Palumb began officiating lacrosse in 1992 and became a collegiate official in 1996. He officiated his first NCAA playoff game in 1999. Palumb played ('88, '89, and '90) and officiated ('05, '10, '12, '17) NCAA Division 1 title games. He has worked Major League Lacrosse games since the league's inception in 2001, eventually officiating 7 MLL championship games. Palumb officiated the 2001 U19 World Games in Baltimore, MD and the 2006 Open World Games in London, ONT. He also officiates Division 1 collegiate basketball.