

# COMMUNICATIONS

*“Dealing with Coaches,  
Players and Crews*

- Opening Remarks
- Introduction to Communications
- Basics of Communication
- Effective Communication

**Communication Guidelines and Principles**

- In every situation on the field any official may have information that is pertinent.
- Choose your words carefully. Any communication can be misinterpreted or his heard.
- Do not let emotions be seen. Look composed even if you aren't.
- Do not threaten or attempt to intimidate.
- Your striped shirt does not grant you immunity from criticism. Expect it. Accept it. Don't waste time trying to justify your calls.
- Provide the opportunity for communication from others. Listen.
- You cannot shut out communication. How you deal with it is all you can control.

- Be approachable. Respond to all reasonable requests for information.
- Don't antagonize. Walk away if necessary.
- Do not belittle, berate, or demean players, coaches, or other officials.
- Guard against making unsolicited, off-handed comments or gestures, even in an attempt to be humorous.
- Exercise the authority that your striped shirt bestows upon you but do not flaunt it or show off.
- Be honest if you want to build trust and credibility.

- Be professional – human but business-like.
- Football is an emotional game. Expect emotional outbursts. Don't be surprised by it. Try to contain it where you can. But don't overreact.
- A look can be more effective than a word.
- Don't create doubt by communicating irrelevant information.
- Your flag is there to signal fouls not send messages.
- Raise your voice to be heard not to strengthen your position.

**APPLICATION OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS:**

- Conflicts On The Field
- Overruled Calls
- The Bad Call
- Communication With Coaches
- Players Out Of Control

**Conflicts on the Field:**

**Player and Player:**

- Physical presence
- Whistle
- Voice
- Diversion of attention from player to you
- Listen
- Escort service

**Conflicts on the Field:**

**Coach and Official:**

- Avoid conflict
- Carry on normal duties
- Move away
- Listen for pertinent information
- Listen for reasonable request for information
- Avoid debate or argument
- Give coach time to cool out
- Divert coaches attention (calmly)
- Extricate 'target' official
- Resume normal voice level talk with coach

**Overruled Calls:**

- Difference of opinion
- Objective – get it right!
- All voices heard
- Base decision on knowledge and observation not intuition and feeling
- Fact finding mission

**The Bad Call:**

- Move on – re-load
- Re-focus your concentration
- Resume pre- snap duties
- Don't try to sell the bad call
- Take the criticism you just earned
- Admit your mistake
- Help your partner move on

**Communication with Coaches:**

- Pre-game meeting is the foundation
- Explain the out-of-the-ordinary
- Respond to all reasonable requests for information
- Avoid debate or argument
- Don't allow coaches to interfere with the conduct of the game. Coaches manage their team. Officials manage the game.
- "Coach, I hear you."

**Players out of Control:**

- Establish presence
- Divert attention
- Talk to him
- Escort him away
- Listen to his complaints and concerns
- Solicit the captain's assistance
- Do not threaten
- Flag as warranted

GET INTO GOOD HABITS:

- Be aware that all your actions convey messages.
- The perception that others have of you as an official is impacted by how and what you communicate.
- Review and evaluate your officiating performance in terms of communication effectiveness. Make changes where necessary.
- When you have information, find a way to communicate it.
- When you don't have enough information, find a way to communicate your need.
- Avoid unnecessary communication.
- Use communication to inform, encourage and motivate.
- Follow standard procedures for information transfer religiously. Don't take things for granted. There are reasons why we communicate downs, goal-line situations, distance required, 'hold' or 'go' clock situations, etc. We are not only sharing pertinent information, but also conveying our readiness for the next play.