



## MENTOR AREA

### *STAGE 3: Your first match in the middle* *PART 2: Taking charge of your first match*

So, you've arrived at the ground with all the necessary equipment and are ready to referee your first game. By now you will no doubt be feeling a mixture of excitement, nerves, and fear of the unknown. Following the advice contained in this guide will help break down what may seem a daunting prospect into a more manageable process that should become enjoyable!

#### STEP 1: Pre-match routine

When you arrive at your game you will need to introduce yourself to club officials/managers from both teams. This is nothing to be afraid of and such exchanges are normally friendly and jovial. Nevertheless, it's important to make a good first impression with these people and outline your expectations in terms of respect and compliance with rules such as substitutions and player equipment. You may also need to get some form of match card/team sheet from each team, see your league/competition rules to see if this is applicable.



In the majority of instances you will be the sole match official in your first game. However, in the majority of competitions each club elects someone to assist the referee in making throw in decisions. Make sure this person is known to you before the match and be sure to give them a short briefing and hand them a flag. It's a good idea to show the appropriate signals if the person is not familiar with them but also explain that on occasions you may give a different decision to them which may be based on the fact that you have seen something different, perhaps from another angle and stress that they should not be frustrated by this.

Now it's time to inspect the field of play, ensuring that the pitches dimensions, markings and goals are in accordance with competition rules and the L.O.T.G. Remember, corner flags are compulsory so it is important to make sure these are put in place prior to the commencement of the match.

Next, receive the match ball and check this is compliant with competition rules/L.O.T.G. An easy way to remember the checks you carry out on the match ball is W.A.S.P.S. This stands for Weight, Air, Shape, Pressure, Size; these are what you should check in relation to the ball. In junior competitions, ball size varies depending on the age of participants, so make sure you check the competition rules so you know the correct size.

## STEP 2: Time for kick off

Now that you've met the relevant people and carried out the appropriate checks, it's time to get your first game underway. Give a firm blast of your whistle and call the captains



into commence with the handshake and coin toss. This is your opportunity to inform the captains what you expect of their teams during the match, stressing of course the importance of respect for all participants in the game and yourself. Keep this brief and friendly but be sure to get your message across!

Once the players are in position, count them to ensure that the correct number are on the pitch and then blow your whistle, giving the appropriate signal to commence the game.

It may then seem like things are happening very quickly and this can be slightly daunting at first. Try to remember what you have learnt on your course in terms of positioning but don't worry too much about getting it perfect to begin with as this takes time to develop. In your first match, just try to make sure you have a good view of what is going on and you are close enough to play without being in danger of interfering with it.

Signals are also something which some new officials struggle with at first, particularly signalling the correct way for throw-ins. It is good to get into the habit of signalling when giving decisions as soon as possible as it is an essential part of our communication with players as match officials. That said, for the purposes of getting through your first game, if you are struggling to signal correctly then simply shouting phases such as 'Red throw' and 'Goal Kick' can help make sure your decisions are clear.

Don't be afraid to penalise fouls and offences as they arise, you have pass the L.O.T.G test by this point so you can be confident that you have a good knowledge of the games rules. Therefore when you do see something which requires a foul being awarded and your intervention then don't be afraid to act. You may get a bit of stick but if you're confident in your



decisions and don't seem to be influenced by players round you, the majority of players, managers and spectators will respect that.

Finally, remember to enjoy it! You have worked hard to get to this stage and presumably took up refereeing for enjoyment. Stay calm, be positive, and remember that you're doing something which very few people are willing to. You can't be expected to get everything perfect in your first game so just try your best, relax and enjoy the experience. Best of luck for your first game!

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