

# The Other Side of the Coin

## New Season, New You

Welcome to all our new referees just joining us and for those of us who have been doing this for years; time to dust off our whistle and hope that our pants still fit! The beginning of the season can be somewhat overwhelming to all of us.

For those totally new to the refereeing, I hope you have enjoyed the experience so far. The information you've received may leave you feeling like you're drinking from a fire hose, but it gets easier; trust me!

So you took the clinic, wrote the exam, got evaluated at few matches and here you are...you have your first match... possibly alone!

Be sure that you're choosing matches that suit your experience.

Work with the assignor – their goal is to fill all assignments with referees that will be able to handle that level of ball. High level matches will come with time, start small and your aim will be big for the future.

As your match approaches prepare:

- Pack your gear ahead of time and keep it all together. Can't say that I've never screwed this up though. I did have to do a USPORT match once with my husbands' shoes rather than my own. I felt like I was wearing clown shoes, but it taught me to double check. I also know that my husband once took my pants to an assignment rather than his own. We now have our pants clearly labeled. Lesson learned.
- Your equipment includes: Uniform – VC pants with a navy or black belt, VC shirt, white socks, white runners.
- A whistle, badge, sanction cards, rulebook (a rule book should be in your bag, but kept in your bag and used for your own information.)
- We should also carry a ball pressure gauge, a ball pump and something to measure the net height with. For most of us, that is a net chain.
- A wristwatch for timing. Cell phones should not be used for this and should not be visible at all during your match. If a spectator sees you checking your cell phone, it appears that you are checking your text messages and that is not really professional.
- Have the phone numbers of your assignor with you in case something should arise.
- At tournaments, I always come prepared with some food in my bag. Should the tournament have a room with a pot of chilli: bonus, but it's not our expectation. Never enter a coaches room without permissions from the coordinator.

What do you do when you arrive at the venue for your assignment?

- Introduce yourself to the coaches. This should lead you to discover who the host coach (or organizer of the event.) They will be able to answer your questions such as: Where is the game ball? Who will be scorer and where are the score sheets? Who will be your lines judges?
- In a tournament setting, there is even more to consider; is there specific tournament rules? Best of 3? of 5? Two game matches? Is there a scoring cap on the sets? Is there particular warm up protocol? Get together with any other referee working the event before the first whistle to ensure you're all on the same page.
- Check the score sheet – some schools make their own version of a score sheet and there isn't even space for a roster. We need to be flexible. ☒ Take time to instruct your volunteer scorer. Train them with patience and they'll become your best friend. Fingers crossed!
- Take a good look at the venue. The net & the benches.
- Check the referee stand. Is it safe? The referee should actually get up on the stand prior to the match starting. (Some of us that are vertically challenged either carry with us a small step or a box that we have made.)
- Unless you are really lucky, you'll probably not have a certified R2. At best, you may have a student volunteer. If you do have a volunteer, give them a basic overview of what you really need from them. Know that they can only absorb a limited amount of information so keep it simple and make your crew feel welcome.
- Be aware of the time on the clock and conduct your coin toss at the appropriately. It becomes the job of the referee to ensure an event runs as close to on time as possible. Often in a tournament setting, you're scrambling to finish one match and begin the next.

At the conclusion of your match (or matches)

- Avoid stopping to chat with an unhappy coach or fan.
- What if you had an incident where a participant or fan made comments to you after the match? On your way to the car? The sanction scale can only be used during the match, so should something happen after a match: Record it on the score sheet and we also have an Incident Report that can be used to report any post match behaviour. Available at: <https://www.edmontonvolleyballofficials.com/>
- Maintain composure on and off the court. Conduct yourself as a professional from the moment you arrive until you leave to go home. When you wear the Volleyball Canada uniform, you are representing all referees.
- Say thank you to your crew
- Take a moment at the end of a match to reflect on your performance. Many referees take notes of areas that they need to improve.

What if your match doesn't go so well? (Trust me, we've ALL been there) How can you move forward? Here's a bit of advice:

- Talk to someone you trust. Ask for a mentor. There are senior referees that would welcome a text or an email with a question or a sounding board. Request a mentor and be a sponge. Senior referees; we need to be available to support our newer referees!
- Remember when you make a call, you're pleasing 50% of the people and the other 50% will want you removed from their Christmas card list, so try not to be too hard on yourself. If you make a mistake – and you will, learn from it, but don't beat yourself up. Perfect games are rare, dare I say illusive.

Moving forward:

- Be a spectator at 'higher' level matches. If you see a senior referee there, ask if you'd be welcome to sit with them.
- Take the opportunity to work as a lines judge
- Be a student of the game. Every time we put on our uniform, we have an opportunity to learn.
- Don't dwell on your mistakes, but use them as motivation to learn and improve.
- As you start your referee career the rulebook probably looks intimidating, as you've just begun to know the rules, but let me tell you that rule knowledge is our best way to overcome fear of getting on the stand. The better you know your rules, the more comfortable you will be. Remember that we not only have our VC rulebook, but there are also the Guidelines and FAQ's.

If you choose to really involve yourself into refereeing, you will find that you will gain so much more than your experiences on the court. There are many advantages that you may not even recognize at this time, such as important life skills, engaging in our volleyball community and one of my favorites; you make friends for life. You're joining a fraternity of other crazies that all love the sport of volleyball!

Maybe you have aspirations to someday travel internationally as a volleyball referee or your maybe your biggest dream is work a HS final. No two roads are the same, but whatever your future holds, you are an extremely valuable cog in the wheel of our association!