

The Other Side of the Coin

Signals

It's our signals that demonstrate our knowledge, illustrates our confidence and is our method of communication with not only all participants, but also with our refereeing team. In many cases, we take the quality of our signals for granted, but we must be aware that a sharp whistle and proper, polished signals present a professional image. From the very new referee, to those that have many years of experience, we all need to be conscious of what we actually look like on the stand. I've found that personally I have to work very hard to correct my own bad habits; we must never stop improving.

In general things that we need to keep in mind with our signals:

- Signals start and end each play during a match, so they're pretty important!
- Your whistle should be easily heard and be blown at the moment the ball lands or an infraction occurs.
- Every signal should be displayed crisp and deliberate - long enough and high enough for everyone to see and understand.
- The timing of the sequence of our signals is important. In three separate actions, the first referee will:
 1. Whistle to signal the end of the rally (or fault).
 2. Indicate side with the appropriate side-out signal.
 3. Then finally indicate the nature of the fault.

Areas of concern in regard to our signals:

- Only the official hand signals should be used. The use of any other signals should be avoided and used when it is absolutely necessary. I know how tempting it is to indicate that contact was below the height of the net of a back row player with the '1/2 baseball safe' signal, but please - that is not an official signal! Too many of us use such signals all the time and shouldn't.
- During the play we do use discrete / brief signals to communicate between R2 to R1. Please remember these are discrete and are not for the participants, but only to be shared with our refereeing team. R1 & R2 should discuss as a team prior to the match where they will be giving those discrete signals and how they want them dealt with.
- If the whistle goes as a result of a call by R2, (i.e.; net fault, line fault, blocking fault, ball hitting antenna on R2 side) the signal sequence for the referees are:
 - R2 whistles infraction
 - R2 indicates nature of the fault
 - R2 pauses; waiting for R1 to indicate side for serve.
 - R1 indicates only side out to appropriate side (R1 does not repeat signal for infraction)
 - R2 then mimics R1's signal to indicate side.

Tools we can use to improve our signals:

- Most obviously use our VC rule book pages 69 - 74. Take the rule book into the bathroom and stand in front of the mirror to practice. What you think you're doing, may not actually be what you see in the mirror. For example: What does your Illegal attack signal look like? Is it like the picture?
- My favorite tool is the FIVB online signals video at: <http://www.fivb.org/EN/Refereeing-Rules/-MultimediaReferees2013/> Scroll through the content to #28 OFFICIALS SIGNALS. I've attended the Regional Officials Meeting in Ottawa for several years and each year, we would debate exactly how our signals should look so we may have consistency across the country. When this FIVB tool came out several years ago, we all agreed this would be our go to for consistency. Let's use it!
- Besides the use of a mirror, have someone video you during a match. You might be very surprised at what you see. I know I was and I know that I still have bad habits to break. We must constantly be improving.

Don't become complacent with your signals. You might call our signals the business card of our refereeing. Is your business card clean and easily read? Or are the corners of your business card bent and a bit messy? Let's give them a polish!

Until the next toss of the coin.