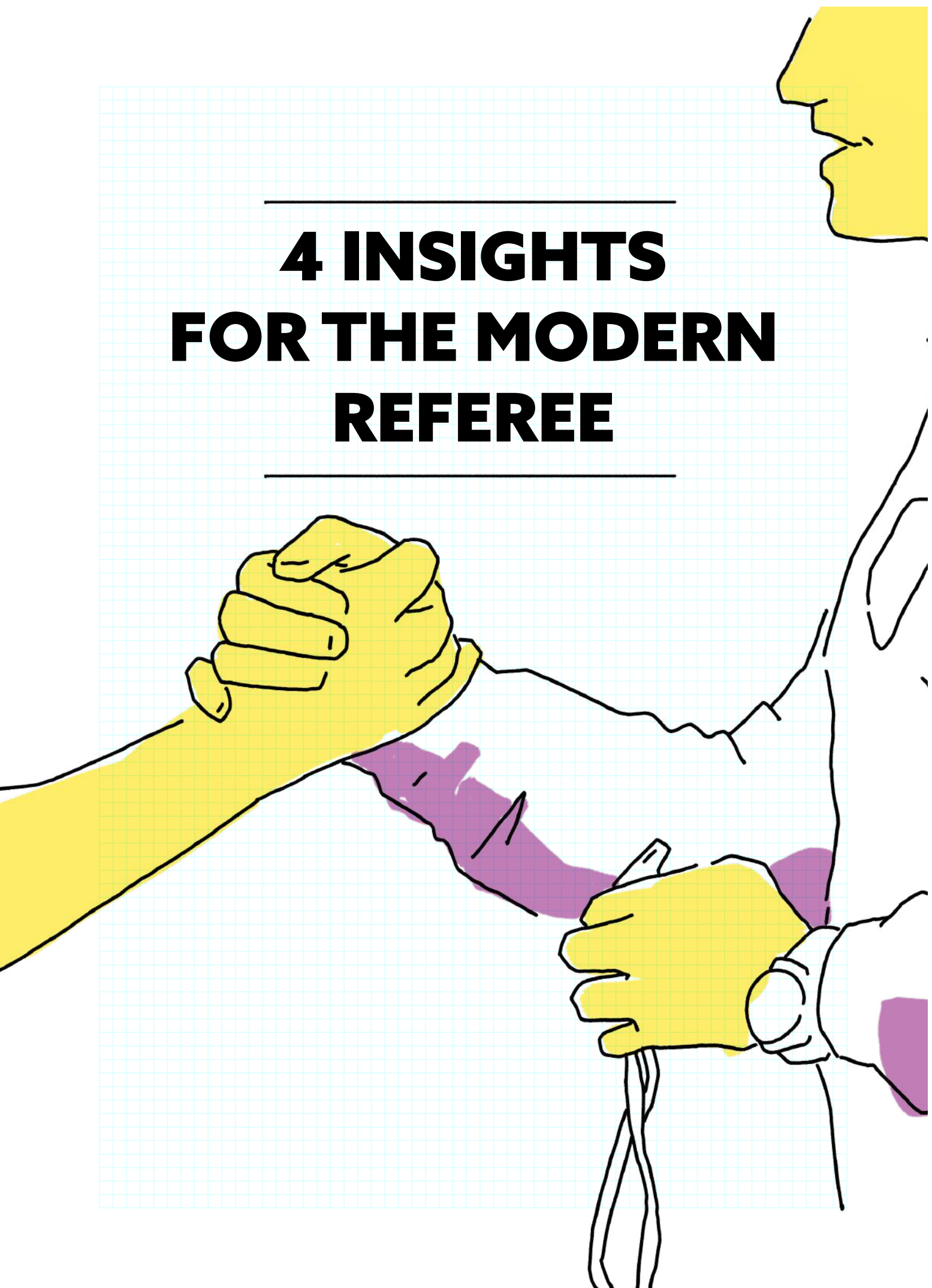

4 INSIGHTS FOR THE MODERN REFEREE





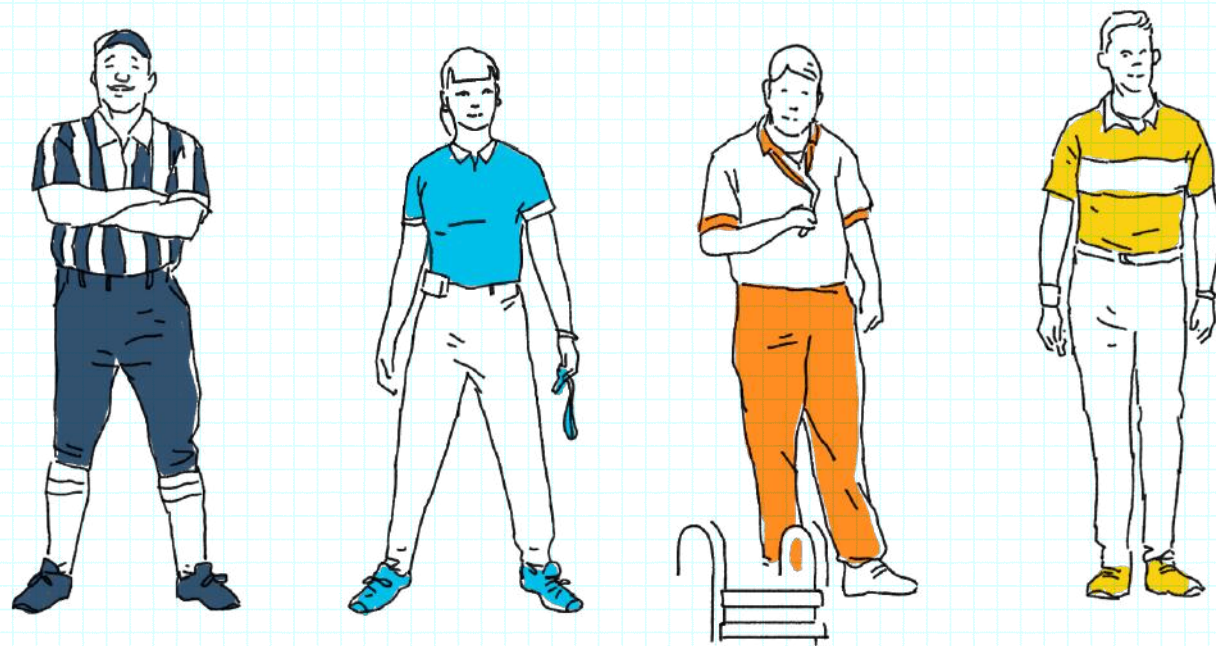
In The Netherlands the relevant partners in sports are working together to stimulate desirable behavior in sports and to prevent unacceptable behavior. Referees are an important link to ensure that practicing sports is safe and that players have fun. The Dutch Olympic Committee NOC*NSF developed the '4 insights for the modern referee' to support referees and judges improving their performance to create a safer sport environment.

The society changes and, in this respect, the role of the referee as well. This booklet will give you guidance to actively engage in this new role.

Good luck!

WHY 4 INSIGHTS FOR THE MODERN REFEREE?

Each sport, whether it be grassroots sports or professional sports, requires enthusiastic referees. People who are passionate about the sport, who ensure that the rules are adhered to and that players enjoy a fun sports experience. Because that's what it's all about: having fun together!



Sport is emotion

However, having fun in sports is not on top of mind in the heat of the moment at times. Decisions by the referee sometimes evoke much emotion. The referee is confronted with criticism – or even worse: swearing or physical threats – by players, coaches, parents or other spectators. It used to be in the past, and it is still the case right now.

Empowered players

In a society that is changing rapidly, we observe that the referee is under more pressure. People are used and trained to stand up for themselves because of the individualization. This is also shown in the rising

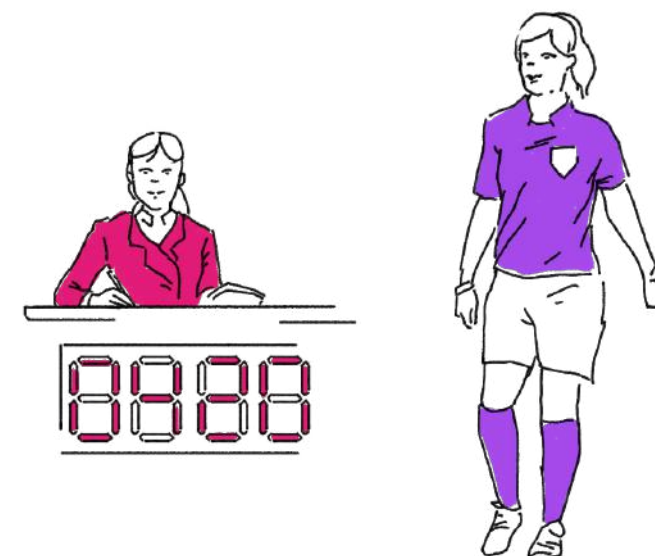
empowerment by the athlete, which conflicts with the referee's role. How can you address this empowerment as a referee?

From 'police officer' towards 'facilitator'

In the past, people had the perception of the referee's role as a 'police officer' and the referees learned topics in their training like: 'Keep them at a distance', 'Do not start a conversation' and 'Show them a card'. The referee's role has seen a rapid development in the course of the years, focusing more and more on communication. This development continues to evolve now into empathy and searching for solutions together. The modern referee is a 'facilitator'.

The modern referee

As a facilitator, you try and keep interruptions in the game to the minimum, so as to enable that the players enjoy the game to the maximum extent possible. In this changing perception of the referee, you do not only bear the responsibility for a respectful continuation of the game, but you do so together with other officials, trainers, coaches, captains and players. When it goes wrong, you ask the question: 'How are we going to solve this together?'



WHAT ARE THE 4 INSIGHTS FOR THE MODERN REFEREE?

'Have a great game!' These are often your words as a referee at the beginning of a game to coaches, captains or players. But how do you ensure that practicing a sport is a positive experience for all individuals involved?

The ideal sport environment

Research has shown that an ideal sport environment fulfils two conditions. First, it is an environment in which each athlete feels socially safe. Everyone feels welcome, valued and everyone can practice sports feeling carefree and having fun. Secondly, it is important that players in this environment can learn, grow and develop themselves. Not only in practicing sports, but also in other fields, such as fulfilling agreements, respecting others and building resilience and self-confidence.

Pitfalls of sports

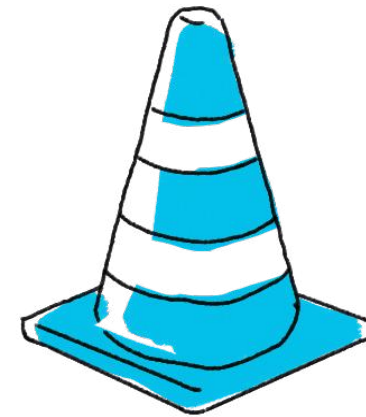
Practicing sports may also have a negative impact. A hierarchical order may develop or even worse: players are bullied and develop negative self-esteem. Or the focus is only on winning. This is a pitfall for many

coaches, parents and spectators as a result of which players become tense and develop fear of failure. Practicing sports whilst having fun vanishes and the athlete quits sports, sometimes even forever.

Having fun in sports and refereeing

Players who are having fun in sports obtain the best possible development results, which is shown in their performances. When the focus is on having fun, then progress is made by itself: players improve themselves, learn new competences and show more dedication and discipline. As a referee, you play a key role in creating a pleasant sport environment. So, how can you apply the rules of the game whilst maintaining fun in sports and keeping the momentum of the game?

The four insights for the modern referee may support you:



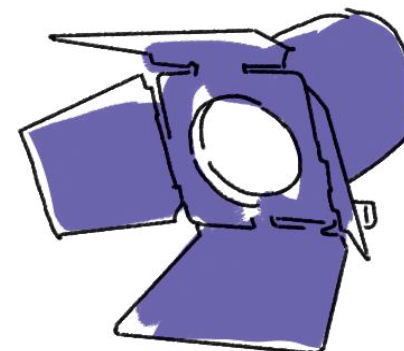
Provide structure

You provide clarity and structure. You fulfill all obligations from the sports federation which apply before, during and after the game. This way, everyone knows what is expected from them and everyone feels they are being treated fairly.



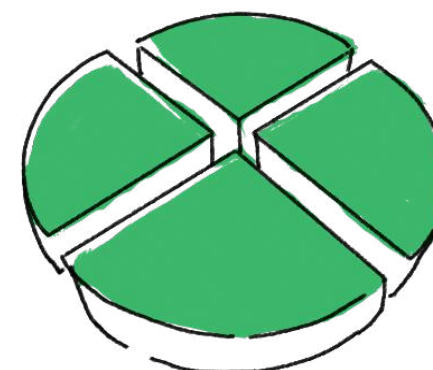
Stimulate

You stimulate players to show desirable and sportsmanlike behavior. You motivate, applaud and focus on all what goes well.



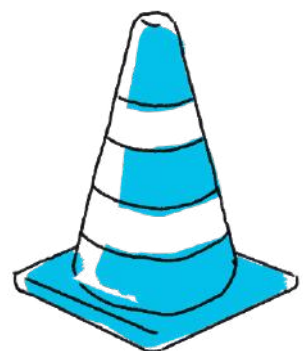
Give personal attention

You ensure that every athlete feels noticed, valued and respected. You show understanding for emotions. You align your instructions with the individual players without benefiting anyone.



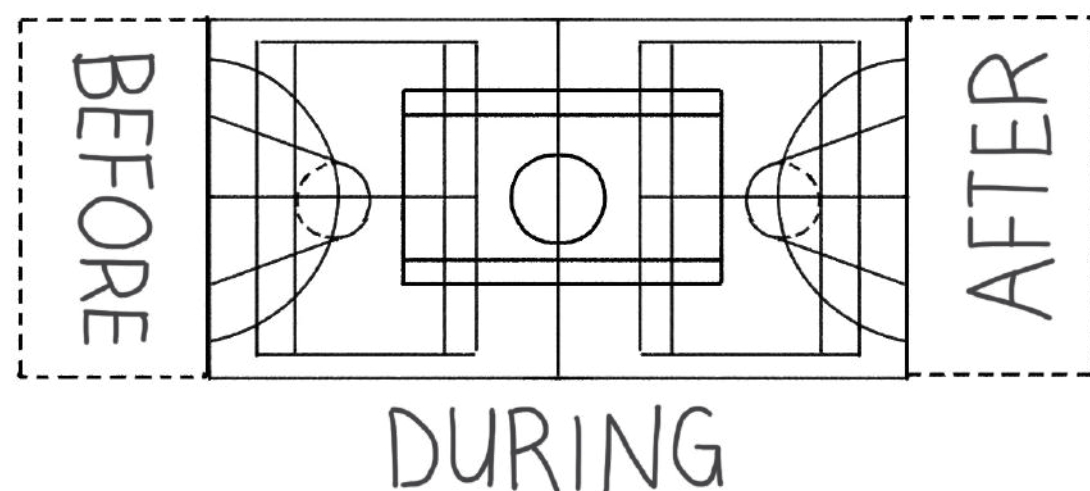
Share responsibility

You closely involve coaches, captains, players and other officials in creating a safe and fun sport environment. You clarify that you share responsibility in the process and progress of the game.



1. PROVIDE STRUCTURE

Players need structure and clarity to enjoy practicing sports. Confusion and unhappiness arise in the absence of clear norms, rules and regulations: what is allowed and what isn't? Who is responsible for what and when?



Before, during and after the game

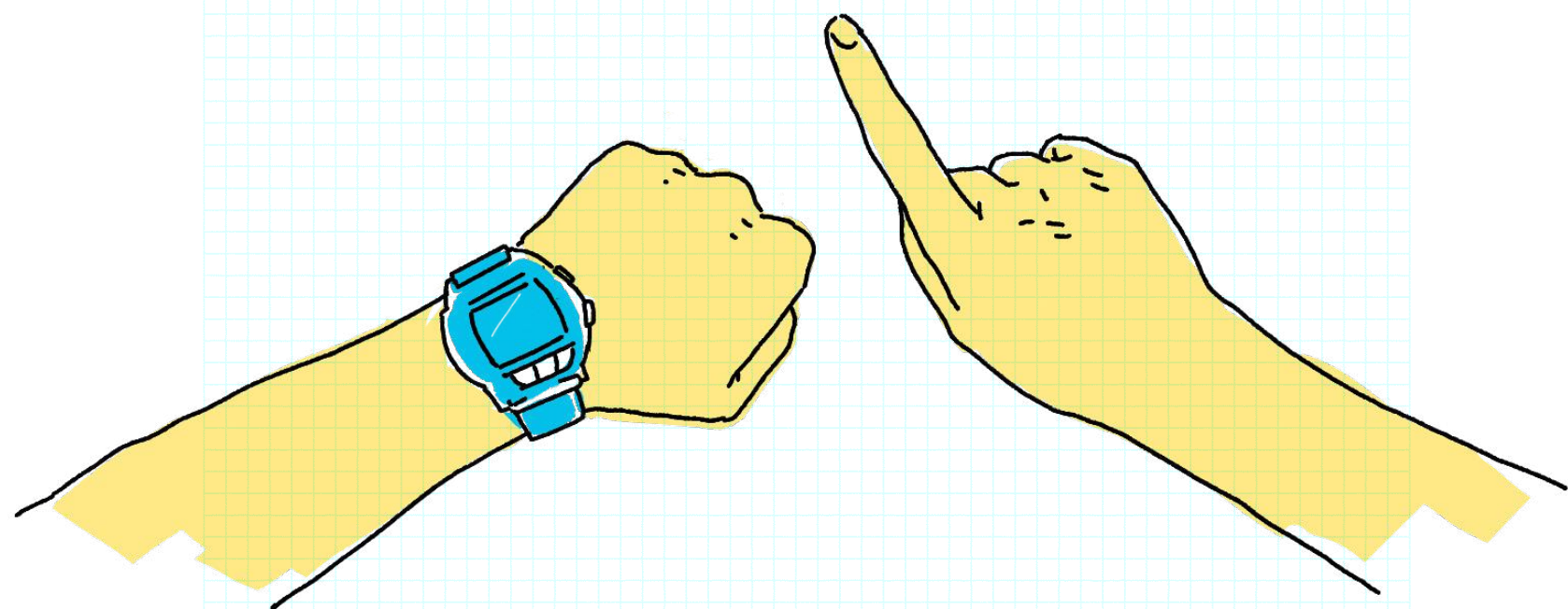
Clarity and structure are not only needed during the game, but before and after it as well. If you clearly state your expectations to other officials, captains and coaches before the game, then they will know what they agreed to and you can more easily refer to that during and after the game.

Let the game flow

Apply the rules of the game in a consistent, clear and impartial way, so that everyone feels they are being treated fairly. But that does not mean that you have to whistle for every offense. When you make the right choice to stop the game or let it continue, you give the game the space it needs to develop and flow.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Apply the rules of the game following the agreements reached by your sports federation.
- Prepare the game with all individuals involved: co-referees, coaches and captains. How do we tackle this? Who is responsible for what? What do we agree on when an incident takes place?
- Confront players or their coaches in time when they overstep the bounds, to ensure that everyone feels they are being treated fairly.
- Be consistent, accurate and clear in your decisions.
- Reach decisions in a neutral way, show that you are impartial.
- Postpone blowing your whistle at times, know when continuing the game has a greater positive effect than intervening.
- Clarify decisions by clear communication, expressed through words and gestures, so that everyone can understand – also the players further away in the field.
- Suspend the game when needed and invoke the agreements reached, as a result of which you create a safe sport environment.





2. STIMULATE

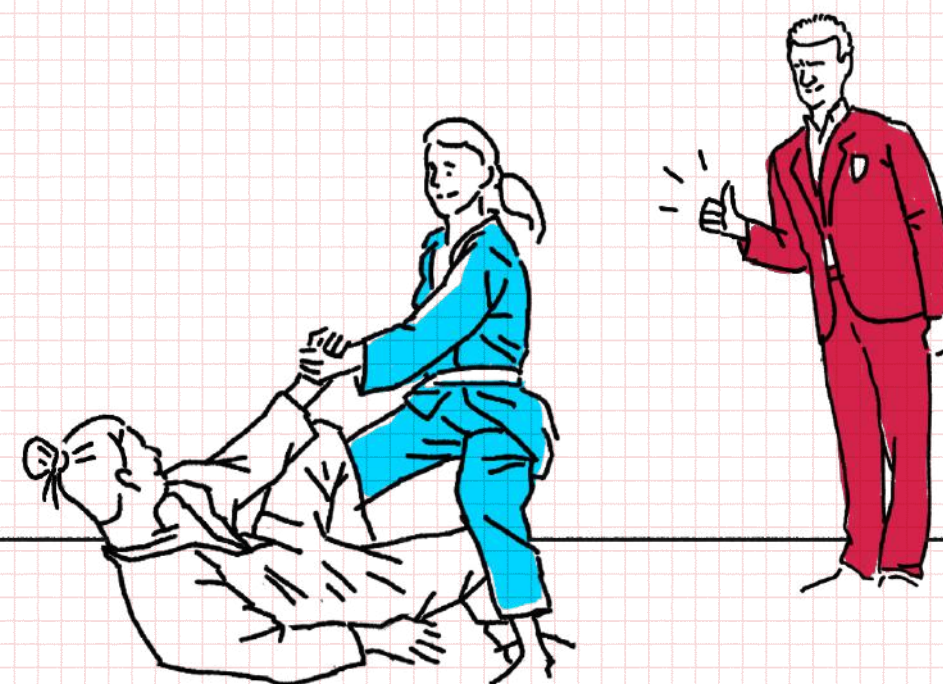
You can stimulate players to show acceptable and sportsmanlike behavior by giving them compliments and to focus on what goes well. A positive climate draws the best out of players and of course, you as a referee too!

Focus on what goes well

'Don't lose the game, OK?', 'What a bad cross!', 'No, don't do that!' On and around sports venues, you see players and coaches talking a lot about what is not going well and what players should not do. By nature, people tend to emphasize what goes wrong. While the effect of this is completely counterproductive. It is precisely positive encouragement that brings out the very best in an athlete and ensures desirable behavior.

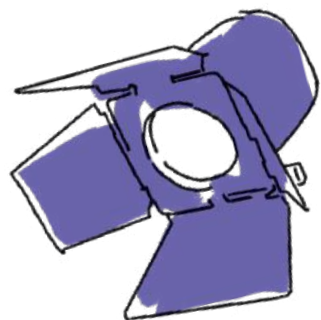
Giving compliments

Of course you have to intervene in case of unwanted behavior, but you can also reward desirable behavior with a compliment or a simple nod and smile. When you do this for both parties, you remain neutral, with the advantage that the self-confidence of athletes increases and they immediately learn what behavior you do like.



PRACTICAL TIPS

- **Be positive, respectful and sporty with everyone, because good example follows.**
- **Radiate energy and positivity before, during and after the match: you clearly feel like it! Also show during the game that fun and enjoyment is part of the game.**
- **Emphasize the desired behavior and also the progress, for example, image that you think it's good that a player honestly indicates that the ball is out.**
- **Give compliments aimed at the effort of an athlete instead of the result, for example, indicate that someone has solved a situation well or has tried to solve it well.**
- **Also think of non-verbal communication as a simple way to approve behavior of athletes, for example with a nod or smile.**
- **Formulate points of improvement in the form of a concrete assignment or tip, so not too general 'Hurry up!', but specific 'Throw in faster!'.**
- **Always be sincere, because athletes see through fake compliments, tricks and double messages.**



3. GIVE INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION

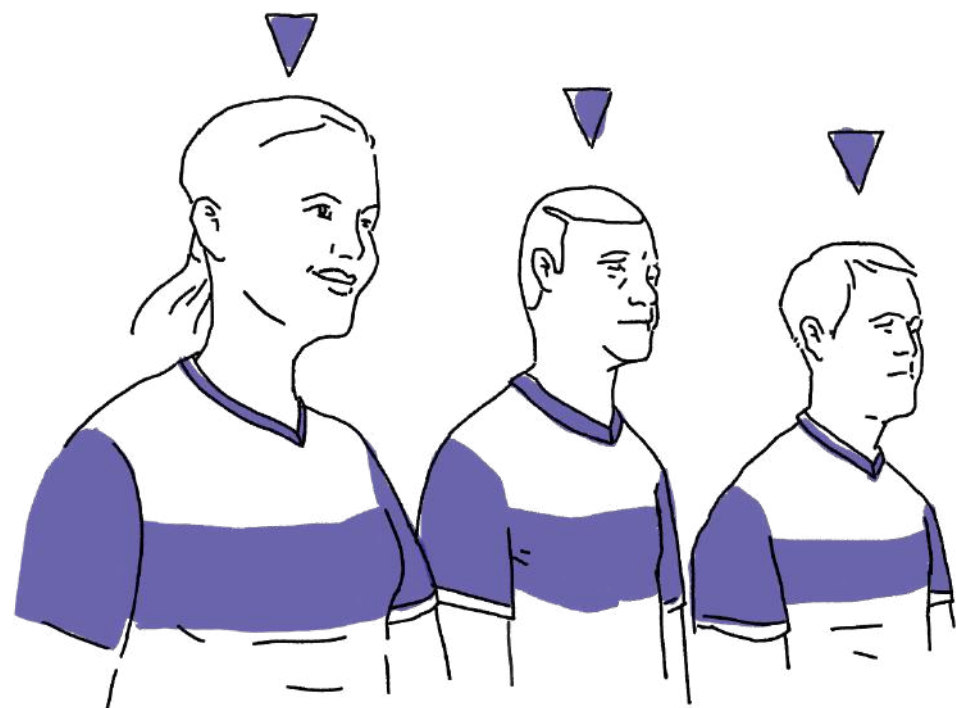
Every player wants to be noticed and valued, especially by someone who is of great importance, like the referee. Treat each player in a respectful way, because all what you give personal attention will grow. And you will receive it back!

Giving attention is receiving it

Highlight during and after the game the positive impact of each athlete. It goes without saying that you do so with the captains and players who catch your attention, but also try to acknowledge and appreciate other players as well. Ask for feedback yourself at times as well. It is a learning experience for you and you give someone the chance to praise you.

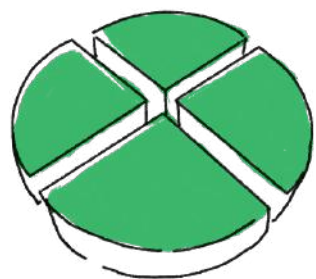
De-escalate in your response

Keep the – mostly good – intentions from each player in mind. Some players will remain calm whilst others will become agitated. It doesn't always help to apply the rules strictly, because this can cause the situation to escalate. It could help to ask what is going on which will often help to calm the situation and it may give you new insights.



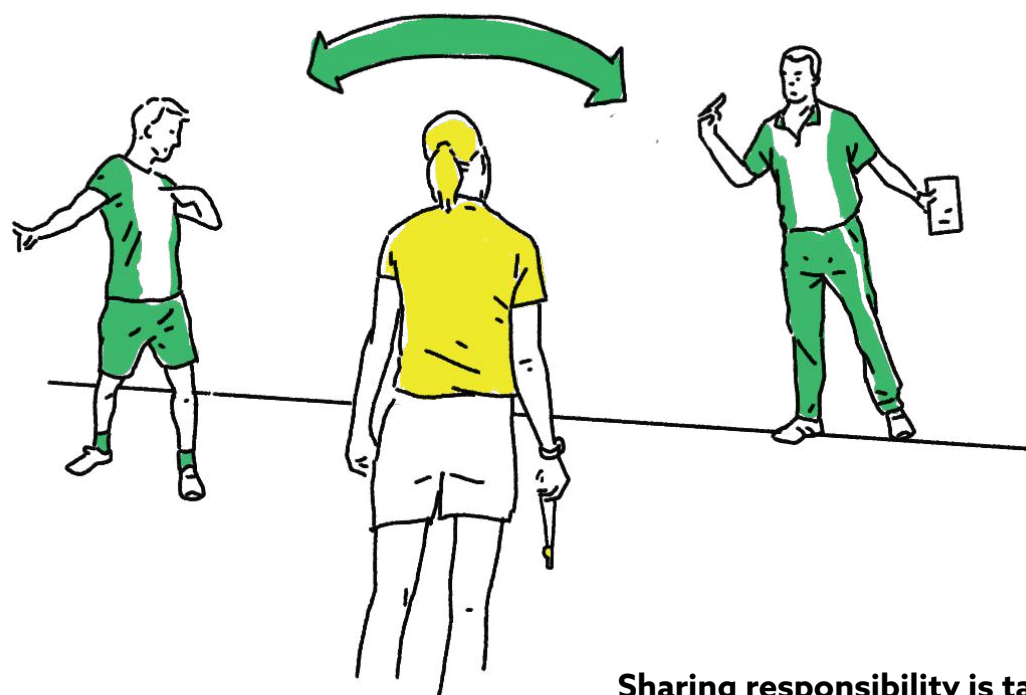
PRACTICAL TIPS

- **Choose a quiet moment for a short chat with a player, for instance during a time-out or injury.**
- **Also connect with players by showing small gestures during the game: a smile, eye contact or a simple nod can already make the difference.**
- **Make contact with a player who is in pain or who is agitated, because players appreciate to be heard.**
- **Also focus on more modest or quieter players, because you may expect quite some mutual appreciation and respect from them in particular.**
- **Be sensitive to the different emotions from players. When the tension rises, emotions can run high and sometimes it may be better to ask a question first, such as 'What is going on?'**
- **In case of a dispute, ask direct, but also open questions to the players. For instance, 'How can we prevent this from now on?'**



4. SHARE RESPONSIBILITY

Share the responsibility with other officials, coaches and captains, so that you closely involve them in creating a fair course of the game. This contributes to their motivation and fun in sports and to yours as well.

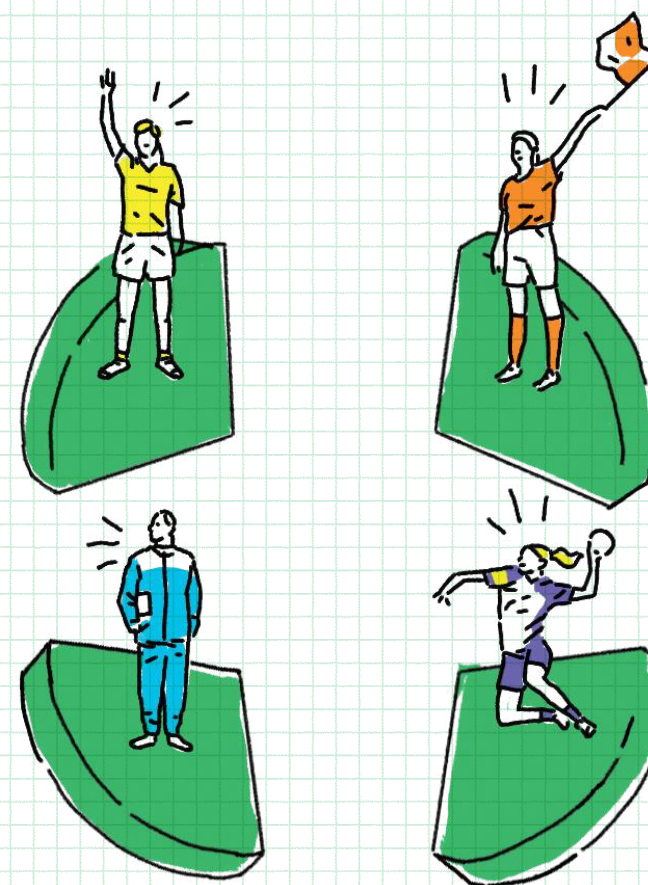


Space for their own solutions

As a referee, you do not have to carry all the responsibility alone. Involve players and coaches, so that they experience the space to find their own solutions. This will allow you to blow your whistle a little less and you will notice that the game will run more smoothly.

Sharing responsibility is taking responsibility

If you explicitly give someone responsibility, it is far more likely that this person will take responsibility. Thus, think about which situations you would expect from a coach or captain to take responsibility and discuss this beforehand. This way, you can ask them to cooperate during the game.



PRACTICAL TIPS

- Agree upon taking responsibility at a quiet moment, so that you can take a moment to discuss and agree upon this, and avoid having to do this later on in the heat of the game.
- Make a list of important concerns and risks before the game, so that you set up a 'responsibility-checklist' for yourself.
- Agree upon the communication process as well, for instance whether the captain is the only individual who may ask questions and which are the limits of the coach in communicating to the players.
- During the game, ask the cooperation from players and coaches for the result to be achieved, because players will change their behavior more quickly when their coach or teammate asks them to.
- Take a moment once in a while to evaluate after the game how the individuals involved experienced sharing responsibility. For instance, discuss a specific situation which you found difficult, so that you can learn from this for future games.

THE MODERN REFEREE

Each referee is driven by a passion for his sport and a drive to work together with players. Use the 4 insights to ask yourself how you can improve your refereeing and how you can get even more enjoyment from your role.

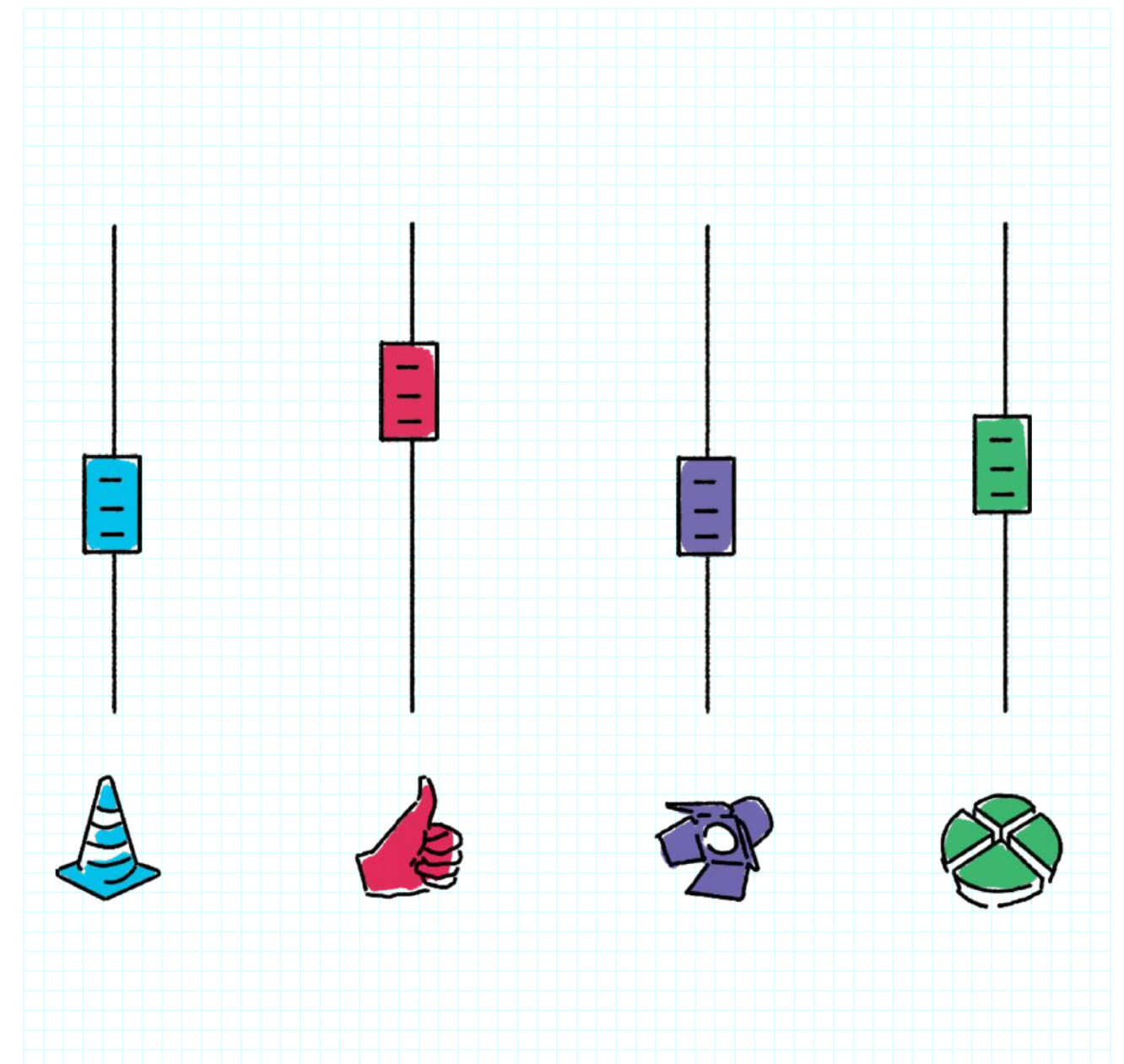
Be true to yourself

Whoever you are as a referee, it is important to do what suits you as a person. Some referees are better in providing structure, stimulating, giving personal attention or sharing responsibility. Some referees use their experience and strictly apply the rules whilst others benefit more from their charm and making contact with players. There is no right or wrong. The most important thing is: keep an open mind to learn.

Ask questions

If you want to learn, you have to ask questions. As a referee, you are confronted with all kinds of questions and dilemmas nowadays without instant answers:

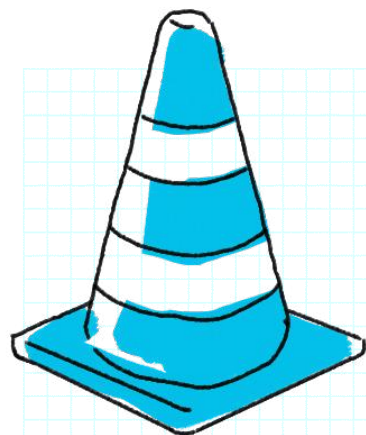
- How can you be a facilitator and stimulate fun in sports ... if you also have to maintain the rules?
- How can you give compliments to a player ... and be neutral at the same time?
- How can you manage the game ... and cooperating and handing over responsibility to others at the same time?



Dare to look in the mirror

You are the best teacher for yourself. So reflect on games and discuss your dilemmas with others. Ask yourself how you can become an even better referee. What are your development points? What is difficult for you? And which steps could you take to improve this?

This way, you continue to learn and have fun in refereeing!



PROVIDING STRUCTURE

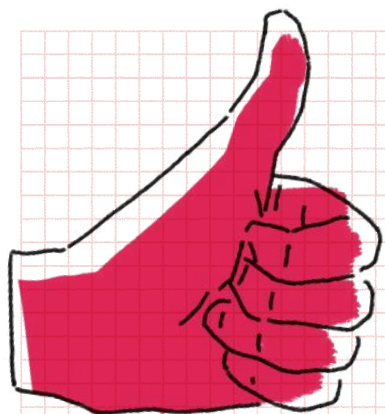
questions/notes

How can I clarify my decisions even more for all individuals involved?

How do I determine the right moment to blow the whistle?

How do I stay firmly on the ground in this respect?





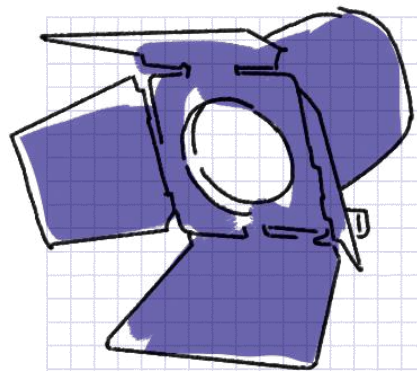
STIMULATE

questions/notes

How do I radiate positivity and energy?

Do I pay enough attention to desirable behavior – and how do I show this?

What have I already accomplished in this respect?



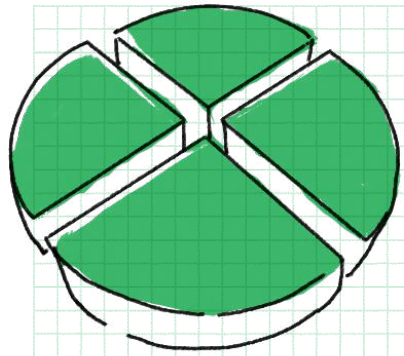
GIVING INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION

questions/ notes

How do I find out which athlete needs more attention?

How do I react when players/ coaches are agitated?

What is your need to improve yourself?



SHARE RESPONSIBILITY

questions/ notes

How can I stimulate the involvement of the coaches
in sharing responsibility?

How do I start the conversation when the game has ended?

What do I want to change next time?

Developed by:



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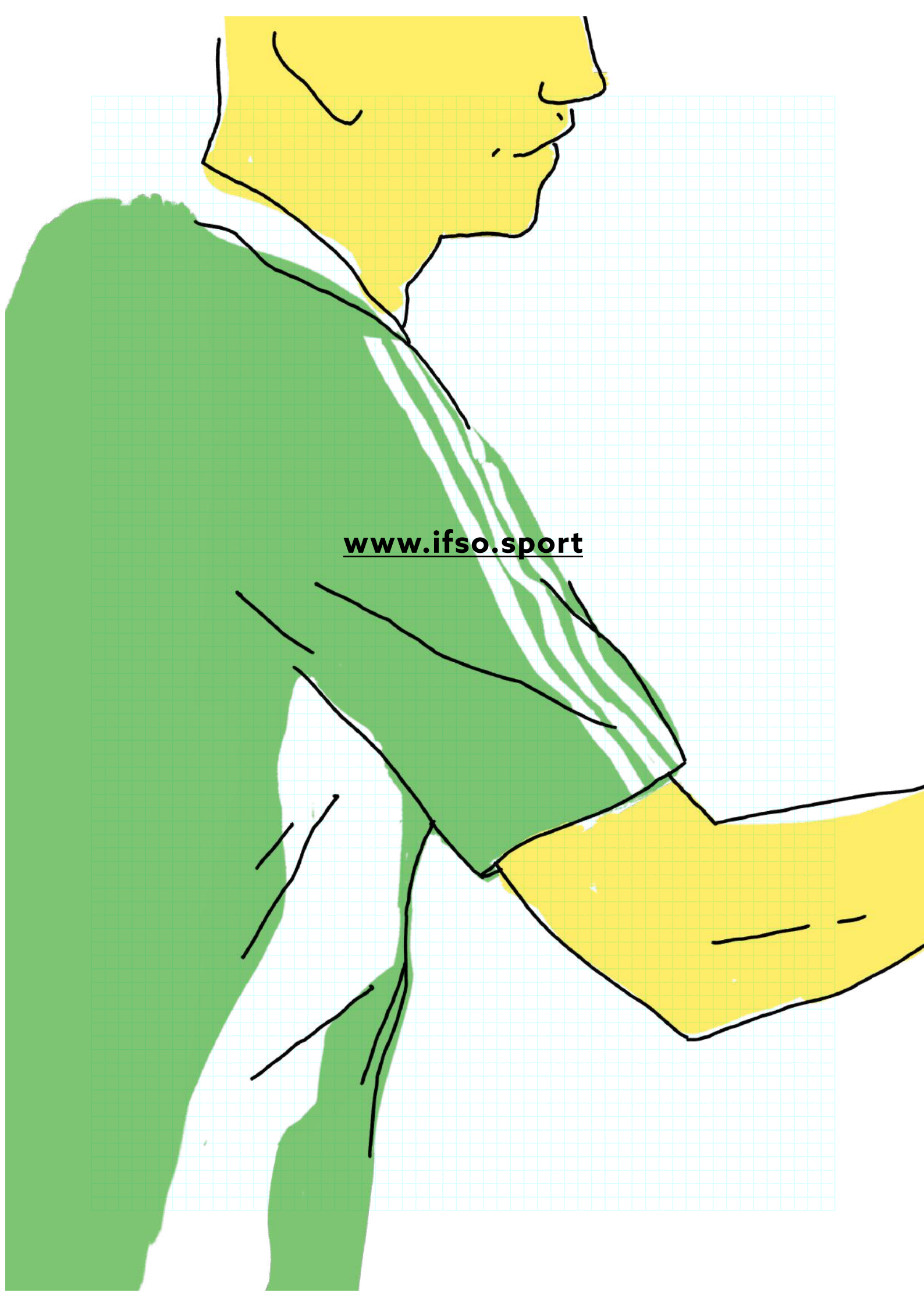


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