

Let's Blame The Referee!

When the final whistle goes there is one winner and one loser, there are no silver medals! On the winning sideline and in the winning club house you will hear disussions of skill, teamwork and determination. More often than we would like discussions on the losing sideline can focus on the referee.

Ultimately the referee does not kick any scores or stand on the goal line to block any shots. While of course at times they will make mistakes – they are human – they will not stand in the way of a team kicking the ball over the bar. How a team

is coached and managed will dictate what type of performance they produce on the pitch, this performance will be the crucial factor in whether they win or lose. Blaming the referee is often a smoke screen or a defensive strategy rather than taking responsibility for shortcomings or underperformance in the team.

Referees make decisions based on what they see and how that relates to the rules of Ladies Football (and not the rules of mens football). For players and coaches, having a full and thorough understanding of the rules of the game is essential.

It is easy to question the decision of a referee but too often the comments being shouted from the side-line are incorrect. 'Fair shoulder ref' or 'that wasn't the near hand' are heard regularly amongst coaches and mentors on the side-line. It is essential for the development of all our players that coaches upskill themselves on the playing rules of the game and coach accordingly. When coaches and players are fully aware of the rules they can use these to their own advantage.

Coaches attend courses to develop techniques enabling them to improve players' skills and this is extremely positive but they also must be keenly aware of the rules of the game. An example of this in ladies football was highlighted above as many coaches think you can only tackle with the near hand. The 'near hand tackle' is a skill and is exquisite to watch when executed well. This is a skill that coaches can assist their players to become competent at however a player may tackle with the other hand also as long as it is within the rules – the hand is open and the ball is being held away from the body of the player in possession.

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LGFA is committed to continuous education and support for our referees to ensure as much consistency as possible. Coaches and players can also play a part in this by learning the rules of the game and not using the referee as a scapegoat for inadequate performances or bad skill execution.

conversation with a coach was extremely interesting and highlighted the benefits of increased knowledge of the rules. The coach gave an example of a game that the team was involved in and three players got sin binned. The coach was aggrieved at the time but agreed when these were reviewed that the decisions were correct. So what did the coach do in the sessions that followed? They focused the upcoming sessions around the tackle and ensured by the next game the players were fully aware of the rules surrounding dispossessing the opposition but more important that they were competent in executing these skills. The team excelled and there were no sin bins received in the matches thereafter. It would've been easier to keep blaming the referee for punishing the players but is that player development?

