



SECTION 2

Qualities of an Official



An Understanding of the Qualities Necessary To be a Competent Official

Upon completion of this section you will be better prepared to:

- Identify and understand the positive qualities of an official;
- Discuss how one official's strength could be another's weakness;
- Accept the challenges of officiating.

Qualities of an Official

In order to assist new officials and/or officials trying to upgrade their performance, it is valuable to examine the qualities of successful officials. By examining the qualities of officials who have achieved success, is it possible to provide a formula for success? - Unfortunately not. Although it is possible to identify the qualities and strengths of these officials and, even though it is obvious that the qualities identified are significant in the success of that official, it is also very obvious that there is no common pattern. It appears that there are many different profiles for success. A major strength for one official could be a major weakness for another, yet both could be extremely successful.

It is possible to identify areas or qualities that are important and deserve consideration by any official who wishes to progress to his highest potential. The key to success is identified as the ability of officials to maximize individual strengths, while at the same time minimizing any individual weaknesses. A list of qualities for consideration includes the following:

Knowledge of the Rules	Fitness
Appearance and Presence	Skating Ability
Positioning	Signals
Procedures	Attitude - Off Ice
Reaction to Pressure	Rapport
Communication	Feel for and Understanding of the Game
Judgement/Consistency/Standard	Teamwork

Should the qualities listed above determine if all receive the same priority and/or emphasis? No; it is apparent that not all are of equal importance. Officials, coaches, players and referee supervisors were asked to provide a weighting of the qualities listed. From their input, an Official's Report Card was developed.

Common Misconception

Far too often when officials evaluate themselves, they focus on one or two areas. As a result, their base for judgment is too small to be effective or accurate. For example, an older official thought he was overweight and not as fit as he should have been to be most effective.

As a result, he thought he was not capable of being truly successful. What this official failed to remember is that fitness and appearance are only two of the criteria on the list. They are important, and the official should make every effort to minimize their negative effect, but he must not overlook the many other qualities listed.

A positive “attitude” or previous playing experience provides him with a “feel for the game”, which enables him to score high in these two areas, thereby compensating for a low score in “fitness” and/or “appearance”. It is important not to lose sight of all of the significant criteria for assessment. As another example, a younger official may have an exceptional skating ability but fail to understand that it is only one of the many criteria for success. Certainly skating is the basic skill for officiating, but there are many successful officials who are weak skaters. Every official should make an effort to improve his skating, however, officials who see skating as the key to success by overlooking the importance of “attitude” or the ability to develop “rapport and communication” with players and coaches, will never reach their ultimate potential.

A Perfect Rating

If an official self-evaluated himself in each of the categories, would he rate “outstanding”, the maximum rating? What does it mean to have a perfect rating? Can anyone ever reach a perfect rating? Can anyone ever reach a perfect rating in any one category? Is the rating an official receives relative to the level that that official is working at? If the qualities of an official are approached in this manner, there are some interesting questions to answer. First, it is reasonable that an official could get a perfect rating in one category and that the rating in any one category should be linked to the level of game that the official is working. To achieve a perfect rating in one category, an official should demonstrate the highest level of skill of any official working at that level, thus achieving a perfect rating for that quality. For example, an official who rates outstanding in skating is one of the best skaters to work in a particular league or at a particular level. All others would be measured against this bench mark. Better skaters officiating in higher leagues would not, however, be taken into account for the purposes of this exercise. It is unlikely that any one official would receive a perfect rating in all categories.

The key of this exercise is not to achieve perfect ratings, but rather to take inventory. It is important for all officials to identify their areas of strength and the areas that need development.

Ideally, a supervisor should help you with this exercise. A supervisor has a wide base of experience and will find it easy to rate you in each of the various categories. However, a supervisor is not your only option. A fellow official can help you with this exercise, and some officials have family or friends videotape them so that they can evaluate themselves. The important fact to remember is that officials require this information to enhance their development.

The key to success is to build on your strengths. Identify the areas in which you have exceptional abilities and maximize their impact. At the same time, identify areas of weakness and work

Knowledge of the Rules

Every official is capable of having a complete knowledge of the rules, but it is hard work and an official who has difficulty with the rules may take more time to develop. The IIHF Rule Book and Case Book are a real aid here and all senior officials should have a good working knowledge of these documents. This is the only quality that is either a perfect rating or a failure. If a rule interpretation error is made during supervision, the official would receive a failure in this category.

Fitness

Fitness refers to the physical conditioning of the official. An official's fitness should be directly related to the players' fitness and the official should spend as much time and effort into getting fit as a player at the same level. This does not mean that the official will necessarily be at the same level of fitness as the players, but rather will have spent approximately the same amount of time working at it. An official must be prepared to skate for 60 minutes. Players and coaches will respect an official who has made the effort to ensure physical fitness.

When self-evaluating, an official must ask himself if he is capable of skating hard enough to keep up with the play, even in long stretches without a stoppage of play. Are you able to skate as fast in the third period as in the first? If you can answer "yes", then you are certainly on the right track to physical fitness.

An often overlooked aspect of physical fitness is that fatigue can have a direct negative effect on an official's judgment. It will slow down your reaction time and cloud judgment. Therefore, poor physical conditioning may reflect in other categories as well, particularly in the category of judgment.

Appearance and Presence

The appearance of officials when they arrive at the rink is significant. Did they enter the rink with their jerseys hanging over their shoulder or was their equipment carried in referees' bags? All officials must make every effort to look professional and be prepared to take officiating seriously. (Figure 1)

When an official steps onto the ice, his appearance will make a lasting impression. How you dress and the condition of your equipment will make a strong statement to players, coaches and spectators. Young officials may not have all the correct equipment, but they should step onto the ice looking crisp and clean. Officials should wear black pants and proper hockey officials' jerseys. Clothing should be clean and pressed. The crest should be properly displayed. Remember that skate laces can be washed and should be changed several times a year. Skates should be polished.

It is important that when you step onto the ice that you look as professional as possible. (Figure 2)



Figure 1 - Officials Entering Rink



Figure 2 - On-Ice Officials

Presence means, does an official look the part and carry himself in a professional manner? Can the official take charge in a difficult situation? Does the official command respect through his actions and/or mannerisms? For some officials, their physical size gives them an immediate presence on the ice. For others, the way that they handle and present themselves throughout the game will reflect their ability to display their presence.

Skating Ability

When judging skating ability there are many factors to consider: speed, turning ability, stops, agility, acceleration, crossovers, fluidity, style and skating upright.

The skating ability of an official should be directly related to the level of the players. The better the players and the higher the level, the better skater the official should be.

Some people believe that skaters are born, not made. There is, however, one thing for certain: everyone is capable of improvement. Power skating is available in most centers and there is no reason for any official not to take advantage of the opportunity. All officials, regardless of level, should be interested in improving their skating. Many officials recognize a weakness in this area and will make every effort to avoid exposing that weakness. They will try to position themselves or maneuvers themselves so that they can avoid their weak skills. The key to success lies in determining the weakness and working on it.

Positioning

Proper positioning can enhance an official's performance. Positioning is related to the functions that officials are required to perform on the ice. Positioning guidelines have been developed to assist officials to enable them to be in the best position to call penalties, to call offside or to make whatever call is necessary. It is critical for an official to know the proper positioning for both a linesman and a referee. Proper positioning comes from an accurate knowledge of what is recommended and then from putting that information into practice in a game situation. Proper positioning will make a difference. It is a skill that needs to become second nature. It needs to become automatic. This will take time, practice and coaching.

Signals

Signals are used for communication purposes. They enable officials to communicate with each other and with players, coaches and spectators. That is why they were developed and that is why they are required. It is critical that officials use the standard signals which have been developed and that they do not deviate into locally developed variations of the signals. This will not only be confusing for other officials, but also for players and coaches from different regions. Signals should always be given crisply and calmly and never in a showy style or antagonistic manner. Proper use of signals by referees and linesmen will create an appearance of confidence and competence. It is essential that every official understand the significance of signals.

Procedures

Procedures have been developed to assist officials on the ice. If an official understands and uses the procedures properly, they will enable the official to avoid making some of the most common mistakes. Procedures that are important for a referee include the penalty procedure, line change procedure and altercation procedure. For linesmen, there are also many procedures and techniques, including: the face-off procedure, the procedure for dealing with an altercation, calling icing, offside, clearing the zone as well as the procedure for reporting infractions to the referee. These are all contained in this manual under the appropriate headings.

Attitude

A good attitude toward officiating is essential to development. Officials who display a positive attitude tend to develop more quickly.

On the ice this is observed in a variety of ways. Officials with a good attitude show hustle, determination and enthusiasm for the game.



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They do not look bored or act like a particular game is beneath their capabilities. They work hard to establish rapport with players, coaches and other officials. They do not showboat, but rather give 100% effort, regardless of the game or situation.

Off the ice, these officials recognize that everything they do from the time they leave home until the time they return home reflects on the impression they make. Far too often officials believe that the only thing that should matter is the job that they do on the ice. Nothing could be further from the truth. The way that officials treat the off-ice officials, the way they talk to people as they enter the rink, the way they dress to go to a game, etc., will ultimately have a bearing on how others view them as officials. It will indicate to all involved how seriously the officials take their commitment to hockey officiating.

It is important for officials to want to work each and every game that they are assigned. If officials do not want to referee at a certain level, then they should refuse those games but, at the same time, be prepared to accept the logical consequences of that decision. The problem is that far too often officials will agree to work a game and then by their appearance and actions tell all who watch that they are not happy about having to do that game. The reason could be anything from the fact that they may think that the rink is too dark, or the fans too noisy, to perhaps the most common reason, which would be that the game in question was beneath them, or inferior to the quality that they should expect at this point in their officiating career. What they fail to understand is a phenomenon called “Law of Return”. If an official arrives to do a game and gives the impression of looking forward to working that game in that rink with everybody there, of being happy to be there, there is a general rule of return that seems to apply. Most often others will respond by saying and feeling that they are happy to have that official there to do the game as well. On the other hand, if an official arrives at a rink complaining about the level of hockey or the size of the rink, more often than not, before the night is out, everyone there is complaining as well. It is a rule that some officials find very difficult to learn. Officials who understand the “Law of Return” can overcome some major weaknesses in other categories.

Reaction to Pressure

Not every game will test this. Some games are more difficult to officiate, and sometimes an official is in a no-win situation. However, when faced with a tough situation, one aspect that becomes very important is how well the official handled the pressure. Some officials will emerge stronger in tough games, while others will weaken and fold in the face of a tough call.

It is important to have officials who have courage. Officials must make the tough call, even on the home team when it is necessary. In the long run this is critical if they are to earn the respect of both teams involved.

It is also important that officials are able to take charge in difficult situations. They must have the ability to exhibit a presence that the players can feel and respect. They must have the ability to sell their decision to the satisfaction of both teams. They must exhibit a confidence that enables them to be in complete control.

This is a very difficult area for all officials. However, the very good officials will learn techniques and strategies to handle the stress and tension that a game can bring. The ability to handle pressure effectively is very important.

Rapport

This is an area that is often overlooked. It is an area that, in the past, has not received enough attention, in spite of the fact that there is general recognition that it is extremely important.

Officials who can establish good rapport with players and coaches give themselves a very decided edge in difficult situations or in situations that require the tough sell. An official who can display openness, a friendly attitude and a good sense of humor has a definite advantage. There have been a few officials who have emerged at the highest levels who have used this quality as their greatest strength. It cannot be ignored. It does not happen by accident. It is very carefully orchestrated by the good officials.

It is important to note that in trying to establish rapport, officials must at all times be professional. However, they may want the players and coaches to know that officials can laugh when it is appropriate, even when the joke is on them. They can appreciate a pretty play, a nice goal or a good save. It takes them beyond the stripes and the whistle into being people. However, through it all they must always be viewed as professionals who are impartial and non-partisan.

Communication

Verbal communication with the players and team staff (head coach) during the game is also very important. Referees and linemen are encouraged to talk to players as the game progresses. Encouragement to play the puck or keep the sticks down will help them to understand what is expected. Players generally accept and respect such communication from the officials.



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Under no circumstances should you lose control of your actions or words. Profanity is **NEVER** acceptable. There are appropriate penalties for any coach or player who uses profanity towards you during the game and, if this happens, officials should assess it; however, it is never acceptable for an official to use profanity to a player or coach. It will not only set a double standard, but will most certainly cause a loss of respect in the eyes of your fellow officials as well as the players and coaches involved.

There will be times when things will heat up. The ability to communicate effectively and calmly in these situations is a skill that will help to make you a quality official.

When it comes to communication, always remember to strive to be professional. If necessary treat disrespect with respect. When talking to the head coach, respect his position, carefully choosing your words in a manner, which leaves him an option to react to your message.

Feel for and Understanding of the Game

This area is regarded by many as the most important. Many coaches have expressed the belief that it is by far the most important quality of an official. Although it may be very difficult to define, certainly few deny its existence. It does not always come from previous playing experience, but that may help. There is no doubt that many officials who have “feel for the game” can work their way up the ladder very quickly in spite of weaknesses in many of the other categories.

To rate highly in this area, officials must understand what the players and teams expect from the officials on the ice. The officials must be able to deliver that and yet, at the same time, work towards making hockey a safer and fairer game to play. They need to be able to anticipate changes in the game’s pace and intensity. Good officials will read these changes and have a feel for when they must assert themselves and when they can fade into the background and let the players and teams have the spotlight. For younger officials, this is a very difficult skill to acquire. It takes time.

It comes partly from experience and partly from a greater understanding of the game and how it is played. You must remember that hockey officiating is an apprenticeship and that is most evident in this area. Honest discussion with supervisors and fellow officials can help you to gain an understanding of this very important quality.

Some officials use this “feel for the game” area as an excuse for not calling penalties. They simply ignore infraction after infraction with a rationale that they are displaying some form of game management. This is unacceptable. All officials must work towards improving the standard of play and our senior officials must lead the way.

Judgement / Consistency / Standard

There are three aspects to this category. First is judgment. The idea is to look at where the official draws the line when making a call. Does the official select the right penalties to call? Is the official applying adequate stick work guidelines? Does the official call checking from behind closely enough? Is the official making the game safer to play?

The second aspect is consistency. Regardless of where the line is drawn, has the official been consistent in the application of calls? It is possible that an official has good judgment but poor consistency. Ideally, you would like to have an official consistently apply good judgment.

The third aspect is that of the officiating standard. The IIHF annually publishes the IIHF Officiating Standard and the IIHF Rule Emphasis Bulletin.

Each game official should ask himself the following questions concerning his officiating:

- Did the official set a good standard right from the start of the game?
- Are the areas of emphasis being applied?
- Is the official making an attempt to raise or at least maintain the standard of rule enforcement in this league?

By setting a standard early in a game, the official will send a message to both teams as to what is and what is not acceptable in this game.

Teamwork

In order to do a good job of officiating, the referee and linesmen must work as a team. The officiating team will perform better when all members know that they are supported by their fellow officials.

The game officials working the 2 and 4 Man Systems must remember that the systems demand more **teamwork** from the Referees to reach consistent judgement and standard in a game.

Game Management

Feel for the game where do you find it and how much does it cost? The answers to these questions can be summed up as follows: you can't and there is no charge!



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A guide or manual of instructions does not exist to direct officials through this elusive area. “Feel for the game” is a difficult skill to evaluate and to instruct. It is best taught through open and honest group discussions and through effective game supervision. Game management cannot be defined in such concrete terms that officials follow a pre-determined menu of instructions for penalty selection where each infraction represents an automatic penalty. An official must be prepared to constantly adapt to the various faces a hockey game presents. What follows is an attempt at discussing the concept of game management so that a heightened level of awareness of its basic principles can be achieved.

Introduction

Officiating a hockey game can be accomplished by assessing penalty after penalty until the final buzzer sounds, but both teams and all the spectators would likely be totally frustrated by the end of the game.

It must be recognized that, although officials play a critical role in each hockey game, they should not endeavor to become the central focus of the game. The official ought to recognize that his/her role in a given hockey game is as a “manager” of that game. The official that realizes this role is far richer than the official who regards hockey officiating as a means of asserting power in a hockey game. When officiating, remember that each team has a decided vested interest in their success in a game. The only people involved in the participation of the game who do not have such an interest are the officials.

Game Managements’ Principles

The common element between the two opposing teams and the official is likely their desire to have a hockey game that is both safe and fair.

Sound mechanics and knowledge of the playing rules are important criteria in game management; however, we must not overlook the official’s “feel for the game”. Since it is recognized that officials cannot call every penalty in the rule book, calling the most significant infractions that ensures safety and fairness in the game becomes the focus. The official who is able to read the game and react to difficult situations while maintaining a good standard (without being too rigid) will handle an intense, emotional game with relatively few problems. Throughout the course of a game, a hockey team will attempt to discern the extent to which the respective official will judge potential infractions. In essence, the team will take cues from the official as to how safe or fair they will play the game. The official who recognizes that teams will be aware of the types of penalties called and adapt their style accordingly is the official who manages his/her game well. The timing, type and frequency of penalties called during a game will impact greatly on a team’s style of play.

The game officials should remember that good communication skills, good anticipation and reaction on critical situations, are key factors for successful game management.

The Time of Penalties

The time in which an infraction is called can either assist or defeat an attempt at good game management. The face of a hockey game normally changes over the span of the three periods in that the intensity builds from the drop of the puck to the final buzzer. Officials should not expect to have success in managing a particular game by commencing their penalty enforcement late in the third period. In order to ensure the hockey teams are aware of the type of infractions permitted in a hockey game, officials must enforce those unacceptable infractions early in the game. It is the role of the official to define the parameters of a specific game early through penalty selection, and gauge the impact of such parameters on the teams' style. There is no defined time period of how long an official should be aware of setting the parameters (for instance the first call of the game may be sufficient to set the desired tone) but the official must be prepared to maintain such awareness if the teams do not relent.

Types of Infractions

The types of infractions assessed have a direct impact on the game parameters set by the officials. There are certain penalties in the rule book that, by definition, carry a specific meaning as to their severity. For instance, a Minor penalty for tripping has less effect than a Minor penalty for checking from behind. It is irrefutable that certain penalties have more impact than others. "IMPACT" penalties, when enforced, send very clear non-verbal messages to teams about the type of play that will be permitted.

These include checking from behind, stick infractions, high hits, restraining fouls and roughing after the whistle. Linesmen conducting face-offs must apply the rules on encroachment in a consistent fashion. By not enforcing these types of infractions, the officials non-verbally communicate to the teams that this style is permitted in the hockey game. As previously stated, teams will adapt their style to the penalty standard adopted by the referee.

Therefore, it is part of the job of the referee to focus on those infractions that have the most "IMPACT" rather than those infractions that are inconsequential. It is likely that the longer the referee waits to enforce impact penalties, the more concentrated the enforcement will become throughout the game. If the official assesses "IMPACT" penalties early in the game and remains consistent early the frequency of assessment will likely decrease over the span of the game. The teams will become aware that this referee will consistently assess infractions and they will adapt their style to match the parameters set out by the referee. The linesmen who choose to ignore or fails to react to key situations by enforcing the rules for which he/she is responsible can easily communicate the wrong message to the teams.

Yet calling a “too many men on the ice” penalty, which has no impact on the play may also communicate the wrong message.

Evaluate

The reaction of the two teams to the time and type of penalties assessed should always be evaluated. Throughout the game, referees should always be asking themselves how the team has responded to the penalty and what effect the standard has had on the flow of the game. The evaluation period is critical because it can prevent the referee from falling into the trap of calling a weak penalty after calling a strong “IMPACT” penalty. It is important for linesmen to be constantly aware of the penalty selection. They too must learn to evaluate the impact of penalties called, know how to react, and how it affects the game. If the officials condition themselves to constantly evaluate the impact of their penalty selection, it is likely that they will be better prepared to react to adverse situations should they arise.

Conclusion

Making use of the “bird” analogy is the best way to summarize “Game Management”. If you squeeze the bird too tight, you can kill it; hold on to the bird too loosely and it will get away. This image clearly illustrates a game under control and should be able to provide you with a visual reference for the subject of “Game Management”.

Fair Play Initiative

As a result of the IIHF’s focus on fair play and improved communication between officials, coaches and players, the following process has been implemented:

In all games, the captains of both teams and the officials shall meet at the referee’s crease and introduce each other.

This process should take not more than 15 seconds and will be completed prior to the game, at the end of the pre- game warm-up. Officials are encouraged to shake hands with the captains.

Official's Code of Ethics

The International Ice Hockey Federation provides guidance to registered officials around the world. National Associations and their members should expect the highest possible standards of personal integrity, competence, sound judgment and discretion from National Association officials. The Official's Code of Ethics developed by the International Ice Hockey Federation Sport Development Program is a public declaration of an official's obligation to himself, his peers and the game. It is advisable also for the game officials to follow the Codes of Ethics provided by their National Associations.

I will...

- Do the best job I can in each game, no matter what the category of hockey.
- Always show respect for my fellow officials, the players, coaches and fans.
- Study and continue to improve my knowledge of the IIHF playing rules, policies and procedures.
- Represent myself and the rules of the game as fairly and as accurately as possible at all times.
- Always be unquestionably impartial, keeping a professional and appropriate distance from teams.
- Understand that the use of alcohol is not encouraged and is totally unacceptable on game days. The use of illicit drugs is against the law.
- Uphold the philosophy and right of all hockey participants and penalize accordingly all violent acts.
- Raise the standard of play in each game that I officiate.
- Be supportive of my fellow on-ice and off-ice officials at all times, even when I am a spectator.
- Accept the fact that I will make mistakes, but I will not get frustrated or let this learning process affect my performance or my professionalism.
- Contribute to the continuing growth of the IIHF Official's Development Program and its officials within my National Association through support, encouragement and positive attitude.
- Respect and accept constructive feedback from supervisors and the assignments I receive from my administrators.



Summary

Every official must take the time to examine their individual strengths and weaknesses. Every official who steps onto the ice will bring together different skills and yet at the same time minimize and work to eliminate weaknesses.

The fact that there is not a magic formula or any one right way to succeed makes the challenge all the more interesting.

Recognizing the variety of qualities needed to be Successful is one major step on the road to developing your maximum potential.