

The Second Referee's Role in Match Control

It's imperative a match is always kept under control with adept handling of adverse situations, i.e., disagreement with calls and misconduct. As second referees, we need to be unruffled and address adverse situations in conjunction with the R1 by using a judicious use of sanctions without taking the enjoyment and spirit of competition away.

Obviously, the best way to minimize disagreements is by striving to make correct, consistent calls. If questioned, we need to be approachable, but only by the head coach or floor captain. Respect and listen to their opinions. Know what the call was and explain it (using the language of the rules) without being confrontational. If discussion goes on too long, bring it to a close by saying something like, "We're going to play now." Don't answer statements, however. You are not obliged to respond to every comment or remark. Remember, silence can't be quoted.

One of the primary roles of the Second Referee is to "serve and protect" the R1. You're part of the third team on the court - don't throw your partner under the bus. Even on those rare occasions when I'm tempted say to a coach, "When he does things like that I can't help him", my response will be, "That wasn't where I was looking," "Coach, he has a different angle from the stand" or "Coach, you've made your point. We're going to play now."

Do not ignore misconduct or else it could escalate, but misconduct does not mean an automatic sanction. Looking for opportunities to request a sanction or relying on sanctions as a crutch creates an unneeded, negative atmosphere. Determine if the conduct is deliberate or unintentional/detrimental or harmless, before requesting a sanction. Allow some leeway but take preventative measures. Use a cautionary toot-toot or a "settle down" motion to deal with spontaneous, inappropriate actions without malice that does not delay the game, inconsequential criticism, minor complaints and similar conduct. Use

“the lizard look” when appropriate. (The one you use on your children.) Warn the captain about borderline misconduct such as griping or trash talking. (Humor or a smile often can defuse such situations.) However, request a sanction if these actions persist.

While what irritates you may not irritate me and vice-versa, I believe that these actions warrant a sanction:

- Abuse directed at you, other members of your work team or opponents.
- Disrespectfully addressing you or another official.
- A demonstrative action induced by an officiating decision.
- Screaming at full volume (on the other hand, if you were the only person who heard the comment, consider ignoring it or addressing it in some other fashion).
- Someone requests “a card”. (I oblige by requesting a red card.)
- Any action that threatens to cause you to lose your temper (for me it’s when the hair starts to stand up on the back of my neck) – but try to look calm regardless of the response.

Although individual sanctions of warning, penalty or disqualification can be requested, use the minimum viable sanction. (Yellow cards typically retain order, while red cards regain order.) Unlike most other sports, volleyball allows use of an intermediate sanction – the yellow card – which does not influence the score of the game. Yellow cards are like getting a D in a class – it doesn’t affect your ability to graduate, but expresses your instructor’s utter contempt.

During the pre-game discussion with your partner, the R2 needs to clarify with the R1 how to request a card.

1. Signal - Specify a gesture, such as pulling a card from a shirt pocket, that tells the R1 that a card is needed. Since the R1 is supposed to call the captain over to give the details the R2 will need to indicate that information to the R1.

2. Verbally – “I’m requesting a card for the head coach” and indicate the team.

During the match use whichever technique is agreed upon to request a card. The R2 should **not** show a card. If the R2 is having issues with an Assistant Coach let the assistant know that only Head Coaches are allowed to communicate with the officials. If he/she continues then request a card. Do not allow misconduct to fester without addressing the issue and later request a red card at a crucial point in the match. Nip the problem in the bud.

The R2 must keep the R1 informed of any problems he/she is having with players or coaches. With masks on it is difficult for the R1 to tell if there is a problem or just questions and answers. One way to communicate potential issues is wave your hand by your ear to indicate, “I’m taking a lot of heat over here.” Another way is for the R2 to inform the R1 during a timeout.

When the R2 requests a red card there needs to be a conversation OR at least an escalation from verbal warning to YC to RC. Going straight to a RC leaves the R1 not knowing what is going on especially if there has not been any conversation with the R2.

A couple of final points:

Do not allow a coach and his assistant to play the divide and conquer game. Only the head coach can talk to an official – if the assistant chimes in, say “Your coach is here, let him handle it”. If that doesn’t work, request a card.

Don’t let the coach have a crosscourt conversation with the R1 about anything. Block the way and answer his/her questions yourself. As you step in to intercept say something like, "Coach talk to me."

Don't let the coach cross the attack line extended to talk to you. The coach's home is between the attack line and end line extended – make sure he/she stays there. If they start to cross it, try walking toward their bench out of the substitution zone (it's amazing how they will usually follow you).

Only allow one question per discussion. A conversation's path should proceed along the lines of 1) Coach asks a question. 2) The R2 answers the question. 3) Coach responds to the answer. 4) The R2 says nothing (or "We're going to play now.") We're playing volleyball not engaging in a debate after all.

And finally, if a coach is given a card by the R1, make sure they know it. You never want a coach to say, "If I had known I had already received a yellow card, I wouldn't have acted out to pick up a red card."