

## Thriving in Summer Tournaments

Summer lacrosse tournaments present several challenges to even the most level-headed official. The day starts and ends hot, and if you're on turf fields you get bonus heat radiating off the black bits. Most officials will work anywhere from three to seven games in a single day, and some without a single break. Games might be the same age level or a different level every hour, requiring the official to perform mental gymnastics to keep the correct rules in mind and be able to manage coaches of varying experience levels. To thrive in this hostile work environment it is necessary to prepare yourself physically and mentally for the exertions that lie ahead.

### Physical Preparation

The best officials are fit officials. When you accept summer tournament games you need to be realistic with your own physical capabilities. You may be able to run for three hours in the spring and fall, but can you give that same effort on a sweltering, 95 degree day? Consider the following from [competitor.com](http://competitor.com):

Hot weather raises the body's core temperature, making running feel harder.

Humidity is also a challenge. High levels of humidity prevent sweat from evaporating from our skin—a potent cooling mechanism. But even low levels of humidity, often felt in more arid environments, make running difficult because they increase fluid loss and dehydration. This leads to thicker blood, requiring more energy to pump the same amount. The condition is often called cardiac drift, where the heart needs to pump more quickly and forcefully to move viscous blood.

A fit official will have a better time on the field than an out of shape official on a hot day. Both will feel their RPE increase, but the body of the fitter official can recover more rapidly than the out of shape official. Also remember that each athlete works on their fitness (speed, agility and strength training) throughout the week along with practicing in preparation for the games. To officiate these players well you must also mirror the work they put in before games.

Bring a large water cooler filled with ice water and easily digestible snacks, a few towels to wrap around your neck, a folding chair, and an umbrella. Use every available break to get off your feet and under some shade. Remove your hat, shoes, and socks to further dissipate body heat. Drink water regularly, [wrap your neck in a cold towel](#) and dunk your wrists in cold water if possible. Cold water on your neck cools the blood pumped through your carotid arteries, and the same is done through the thinner skin of the wrists.

Officials' organizations are encouraged to order custom referee shirts made out of dry-fit or similar material. The less the official has to wear on the field the better they can sweat. Getting rid of the polyester black-and-white stripes and a black undershirt significantly helps each of your officials stay cool in summer games.

Blisters will happen, even to those officials who rarely get blisters. Being on your feet for several hours a day with rapid changes in direction will result in hot spots and blisters. Bring extra socks and change into a fresh pair during longer breaks. A few blister band aids and tape packed away in your bag will be extremely helpful when your feet start fighting back against the constant pounding.

Finally, start drinking water and stop drinking any alcoholic beverages a few days before your tournament weekend. You want to hydrate your body as much as possible before stepping onto the field.

Heat stroke occurs when the internal temperature of the body goes above 105 degrees Fahrenheit resulting in the symptoms of headache, nausea, vomiting, rapid pulse, and disorientation. Needless to say, it would be hard to think straight at that point, but what effects does heat have on our decision making before getting to a life-threatening point? Consider the following from the [Scientific American](#):

Warm temperatures, then, are more likely to deplete our resources—as our bodies work to maintain homeostasis, we use up large amounts of glucose. Because glucose is also used for mental processes, it may be that the physical demands imposed by excessive warmth reduce our capacity for cognitive functioning, thereby adversely affecting our decision-making abilities.

As our bodies struggle to maintain a healthy internal temperature, they use up resources that would otherwise be available for mental processes. As a result, we are less able to make complex decisions—we give up early, make mistakes, and even shy away from making these decisions in the first place.

Just being in a hot environment depletes the physical resources we use to think, and officials need to know that officiating games during summer tournaments is a harder mental challenge than officiating in cooler parts of the year. An official that makes the correct crease violation call in the first half of their first game may not make the same call in the last half of their final game of the day due to the drain on their cognitive resources from the heat. What is worse is the effect heat has on our interactions with coaches and players.

The phrases “cooler heads prevailed” and “hot head” make good sense. The problem is that everyone has a hot head during summer games and yet the officials are expected to remain cool. No one will remember the three games you did a great job on. They’ll remember the one minute you lost your cool and verbally dressed down a player or a coach for a comment that a few hours earlier would not have gotten a rise out of you. Heat and fatigue give rise to the big whistle phenomenon.

**Big Whistle:** An official who gives the impression that he or she is bigger than the game through comments, action, and body language.

Common signs of an official becoming a Big Whistle are:

- Walking everywhere
- Sloppy signals
- Needlessly argumentative with players and coaches
- Trying to explain everything about their decision making during running time
- Making obviously one sided calls against a team following an argument with that team’s coach
- Threatening ejections for behavior that warrant starting lower on The Ramp

You need to have a few stock phrases in your back pocket. Limit yourself to those phrases when you feel yourself getting tired. Otherwise you will say something that you will regret forever.

Men’s Officials Development Task Force

Special thanks to Jay Dyer of [Dyer Strength and Conditioning](#) for lending his expertise about how officials can take care of their bodies during summer games.

