



Smooth Operators Make the Best Refs

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Sit straight up. Place your hands in your lap. Take a slow deep breath in through your nose, and sigh it out through your mouth. Repeat this twice.

Feel calmer? More relaxed? Good. You just spent a moment coming to a pause in your busy day, and if you're not in the habit of taking a little break, then this short exercise probably felt unnatural and unproductive. Our daily lives are filled with so much going so fast that slowing down doesn't feel right unless we've done a ton of work that justifies a break. After a long day, lacrosse officials don't get to put our feet up. We finish up our hectic day and then drive to ref the fastest game on two feet.

It's difficult to switch from work-and-family mode to referee mode, especially if a lot happened between 6 a.m. and your evening game. If you don't take the time to settle and focus your attention, then it is very easy to get caught up in the energy of the game and start rushing.

And when you rush, you increase the likelihood you will make a mistake. The best officials make fewer mistakes because they operate at smooth pace. Quick, not hurried. They move with purpose and stay calm, even when everyone screams at them to go faster.

If we rush along with everyone else, sooner or later the game will careen out of control. So we need to take advantage of the pause points built into every game.

Pregame

- Arrive at the field five minutes earlier than usual. Put on a playlist of your favorite songs or a good audiobook. Relaxing for a few minutes will help put your busy day to the side and focus on the game.

After the lineup

- Go up to your partner and shake hands, and remind each other to have a great game. This builds a firm foundation with your partner before the game starts.

Every timeout

- Stand near midfield with your partner. While keeping your eyes on the players —this can sometime be a volatile situation — do a quick check-in with each other. Talk about any close calls or no-calls to make sure you are both seeing the same things.



Halftime

- Don't sit down. Keep moving so you stay loose.
- Also, stay near your partner and review how the first half went. This is the time to note if anything went awry so both of you can make corrections before the third quarter begins.

When you feel overwhelmed, take three deep breaths during one of these four pause points. You'll feel yourself get calmer and decrease the likelihood of rushing into a mistake.