

Clear and Deliberate Communication

Officials experience a communication breakdown when what is said or signaled does not translate to the rest of the crew, the coaches, or the players. This is generally due to three factors.

Rushing to say or signal a call

Predominately an issue for less experienced officials who are already going faster than the situation requires. A routine out of bounds call should not cause confusion to anyone, and officials that rapidly signal and state the call turn:

Dead ball signal + whistle, "red ball," dead ball signal, restart

Into

Deadballsignalwhistle,ballisoffwhiteredball,restart

Everything is jumbled together into an unrecognizable mass of signals and statements. Leaving partners confused on where to run to, players unsure of whom gets the ball, and coaches trying in vain to determine if they should sub their long pole midfielder on or off the field.

Adjustment

Take a half or a full second between your signals. The clock is stopped and everyone is looking to you for what to do next. Allow everyone the time to process the directional signal by holding it clearly away from your body and loudly stating the color of the team awarded possession.

Right call, wrong signal

This happens to every official. There have been several up and down clears and eventually one player pushes an opponent on a loose ball and the whistle is blown shortly after the offended team cannot take advantage of the play-on. The official confidently signals and states:

Push, red ball and points in the wrong direction

All of a sudden the other coach is up in arms, the pushed player is angry, and your partner isn't sure what to make of it because he was watching for late contact on the passer and can't help.

Adjustment

Recognize the error and clean it up. If surrounded by players move to an open space and explain the situation:

I pointed the wrong direction. There was a loose-ball push, it will be red ball (point in right direction).

Be patient with the next restart as both teams might be subbing based on the incorrect signal given earlier and we don't want to disadvantage either team that may have the wrong personnel on the field due to the mixed up signal. Utilize your 20-second timer so this is not an excessive delay.

You are not being slow in this situation. You are clearly and deliberately explaining what happened and where we are going.

Correct explanation to the table, but everyone else is clueless

There are two distinct situations where this happens. First, is usually the bench side trail official calling a penalty and once play is stopped immediately turns to the bench and reports the foul. This is a bigger issue for your partner or partners on a crew because they don't know what the call is and cannot set the field for the next restart.

The second situation tends to occur when wiping off a live-ball technical foul following a good goal and one or both coaches doesn't hear or see your report. Then the timer goes off while the crew is waiting for a wing player to get to his spot, but he's taking a knee in the box because his coach didn't realize the flag was for a push and the goal brings his team back to even strength for the faceoff.

Adjustment

The common denominator in the above situations is a lack of awareness about who needs to know what. Before every penalty relay to the table the entire officiating crew should know which team the call is on, how long it is for, and where the restart will be. After wiping off a flag take a moment and notice the substitution area. Is there a player taking a knee who doesn't need to be? Does one of the head coaches look confused? If so a quick, *"coaches the box is clear and we're all even for the next face"* will prevent a problem before the game gets moving again.

If you pause and take the necessary time to communicate the situation you'll smooth over the rough edges of the game, and you will find that when you are smooth and deliberate the game tends to flow smoothly too.

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This article has been reviewed and approved by the Men's Officials Training Group