



Change History	
September 26, 2006	Lesson Plan First Developed
August 1, 2007	Update
November 25, 2008	Update
December 12, 2011	Update
September 3, 2012	Update
September 30, 2015	Minor update to tighten message and emphasize scenarios.
November 2016	Update

1. DESCRIPTION

This workshop will clarify what it is that makes soccer significantly different from most popular American sports.

This lesson plan will prepare an experienced referee instructor to train referees in techniques that emphasize the Spirit of the Laws over “book” refereeing. The Spirit of the Laws will be presented as a collection of principles that the referee must internalize. These principles are not explicitly written down; rather, they are passed on by oral tradition. Nevertheless, they may be glimpsed in the text of the Laws and inferred both from the text and from some aspects of play that do not appear in the Laws.

2. GOALS

Attendees will learn that “book” refereeing produces inferior results in upper level games. Through scenario training, they will examine real game situations in which the rigid application of the Laws of the Game is not the best remedy for the problem posed, and they will discover other practical techniques, rooted in the Spirit of the Laws and often unwritten, that will help them *manage* the game for maximum *safety* and *enjoyment*.

3. PREREQUISITES

There are no formal prerequisites, but the material is intended for referees with more experience dealing with higher skilled players.

4. STUDENT MATERIALS

SPECIAL INSTRUCTOR NOTE: When this lesson plan is presented at a Section EXPO, the handouts at the end of this lesson will not be available to attendees. In other settings, the instructor may wish to distribute the handout pages at the conclusion of the class.

5. INSTRUCTOR EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

A PowerPoint presentation accompanies this lesson plan, which includes slides for the recommended scenarios.

6. INSTRUCTOR NOTES

The lead instructor should be an Advanced Referee Instructor or above. Effective presentation of this material requires an instructor who is comfortable with the notion of flow and control as emphasized in the Advanced and National Referee Courses, and who has the knowledge and experience necessary to present scenarios in which the actions of the referee, in order to be consistent with the Spirit of the Laws, may deviate from the letter of the Laws.

The challenge for the instructor of this lesson is to begin the process of getting the students “beyond the book”. Many will resist, since it requires them to leave a comfortable, seemingly secure spot and venture into unknown territory. The instructor must be alert for signs of this resistance and be prepared to respond to it directly.

The target audience for this material is Advanced Referees. These referees, through AYSO training, have a firm grasp of the letter of the Laws of the Game. The purpose of this lesson is to expose them to the next level of referee development embodied in the AYSO National Referee Course, which contains a deep understanding of the *Spirit* of the Laws. Students who have reached the Advanced level are often secure in the belief that their thorough understanding of the letter of the Laws will get them through any situation. In this lesson, through practical scenarios, they discover this is not the case: there's more to being a referee than following "the book".

It is almost impossible to get through this workshop without referees raising questions on specific points of Law. The instructor should expect this and will need to manage time carefully to both complete the lesson plan and address the attendees' questions. A "parking lot" session at the conclusion of the class may be best.

7. ATTACHMENTS

PowerPoint presentation

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LESSON PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION [3 minutes]

- A. Introduce instructor and co-instructors
- B. Introduce the notion that the Spirit of the Laws and the letter of the Laws may occasionally pull in different directions, and when this happens the referee must be guided by the Spirit. For example:

Ever hear the players say, “Ref, what match are you watching?” Ever wonder if they might be right? Maybe they need something different than the officiating they’re getting. But you know the Laws, and you’re applying them – what’s the problem?

In this workshop, the objective is:

To explore, through scenario training, some *practical techniques* for referees in *older players’ games* to *manage* the game for maximum *safety* and *enjoyment*.

II. BODY [67 minutes]

A. Why [2 minutes]

Make the following points briefly, linking them back to the Spirit of the Laws:

- The game is for the players, and the referee should adjust his management of the match to provide what the players need.
- What the players need and what they think they need are not necessarily the same, and the referee must be able to detect when they differ and manage accordingly.

Fun, Fairness and Safety are not absolute notions; they are relative to the players in this match on this day. The referee must adjust to today’s players and their needs today.

B. What (Must Knows) [5 minutes]

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1. “Book” refereeing reduces options. Referees may know the Laws better than the players, but if they don’t know the Spirit, they will find themselves creating unfairness. The book guides the answer, but the book isn’t the answer.

While the Spirit of the Laws flows from the terms “fun, fairness, and safety”, it is rooted in the way the game is played. A referee must not throw out the Laws either, and must keep clearly in mind what is fair in the context of the game. This means weighing the relative severity of player actions in the context of the match.

2. Don’t give the players what they can’t handle. Look early and intently for signs that players don’t understand your calls and feel they are wronged. (The signs aren’t always obvious!) If it’s an isolated player, consider talking to that player; if it’s the whole team, consider adjusting how you’re calling the game.
3. Communicate decisions! Poor communication of decisions undermines the referee’s credibility and encourages the coach and players to believe that he/she lacks knowledge or confidence.
4. Older players have a more developed sense of tactics and greater skills to implement them. The referee at this level must have an understanding of what the players (and coaches) are legitimately trying to accomplish, and must adjust his officiating practices so as not to interfere.

C. APPLICATION [60 minutes]

Note to instructor:

This is the “meat” of the lesson, in the sense that the attendees who may be resistant to the notion that the Laws are pliable, will absorb the Must Knows only to the extent that the instructor uses compelling scenarios that support them. A set of scenarios is provided that have proved effective in this context. The instructor may substitute others, but the construction of appropriate scenarios for this lesson that clearly illustrate the Must-Knows is challenging.

While it is common to subdivide a group and give each subgroup a scenario to consider and report back to the whole group, this technique should not be used for this lesson. Instead, the scenarios should be presented to the group as a whole, with the instructor using guided participation to get to the answers. For students to come to understand the Spirit and the Must Knows listed above, they must have the opportunity to think about as many scenarios as possible in the time available. The small-group format does not lend itself well to this.

Do not present the following list to the students! They are for you, the instructor and are listed here for you to bear in mind as you read through the subsequent scenarios. Through guided participation, you must ensure that these points emerge from the scenario discussions.

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- When a foul or other event occurs that's outside the norm for this match, ask yourself "What is this telling me about the players right now? Do I need to go beyond routine handling of the event?"
- When the game seems quiet to you, be alert for little things that may indicate that still waters run deep. Grumbling on the touchline? Frustration by one team? Some vocal involvement by the referee will help people to know that you're not just watching passively.
- Be alert early in the match for gamesmanship that approaches unsporting behavior and make your disapproval known to the players. At the U-14 level and above, the players generally know what's acceptable and what's not, but they will push the boundary to see what you will allow. If the behavior seems to have been taught or tolerated by the coach, involve him/her in the rectification (that is, invoke the AYSO Team).
- Wherever possible, use informal warnings before whistles or cautions to tell the players where the boundary of acceptable contact lies. A particularly useful time for this is when an attack has been stopped by the goalkeeper and there has been contact, but not a foul. "Nice play, but easy on the keeper!" If the boundary of acceptable contact is crossed, punish consistently.
- Let the players know early, with your voice, how you deal with apparent handling of the ball. This clearly establishes an often obscure or inconsistent boundary.
- Be wary when enforcing technicalities that have a marked impact on the game. Remember AYSO NRR I.D.5 (formerly Law 5 IBD 8). For example, retake a penalty kick only for infringements (encroachment, keeper movement) that unfairly influenced the outcome. "Let the punishment fit the crime."
- Show the players early that you are there to support their game. For example, if the home team captain gives you a game ball at the coin toss, you can, after examining it, give the ball to the visiting captain and say, "Want to play with this one?"
- Keep your options open. Avoid saying things that commit you to later action. For example, saying "Number 2, I don't want to see that again." leaves more future options than "Number 2, if you do that again, it's a yellow card." However, when you draw a clear line, e.g., by cautioning for free kick encroachment, adhere to that line consistently throughout the match, otherwise you invite dissent and the loss of control.

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SCENARIOS

Scenario 1

[Illustrates Must-Know #1]

In the first 5 minutes of a BU-16 match, the referee awards a free kick near midfield. An opposing player immediately plants himself 3 yards from the ball, hands crossed over his groin.

Points for the instructor to develop:

1. What would a book referee do? *Answer:* Either nothing or routinely caution the encroaching player.
2. If referee does nothing, he invites encroachment on a free kick near goal later. If referee immediately cautions, he forces himself either to use cards for later similarly minor transgressions or to be viewed as inconsistent.
3. *Recommended action:* The referee should keep his future options open. He should promptly tell the encroaching player to give 10 yards, but he should avoid giving a card unless the player fails to cooperate.

Scenario 2

[Illustrates Must-Know #1]

In a GU-19 match, Red is taking a corner kick. The ball comes to an attacker centrally located in the penalty area, who immediately shoots toward the left post. The ball hits the post and bounces to a Blue defender who, under pressure from a Red player, deliberately kicks the ball to the goalkeeper, who picks it up in the goal area about three yards from the goal line. The referee whistles and signals IFK; the goalkeeper immediately drops the ball and retreats to the goal line to defend. As she does so, a Red attacker, immediately takes the free kick from where the keeper dropped it, passing it to her left. The teammate shoots and the ball goes wide of the goal. The players begin to position themselves for a goal kick.

Presentation Note: *the slides use animation to illustrate the scenario. Be sure you are familiar with it in advance!*

Points for the instructor to develop:

1. Is anything wrong here? What do the Laws say about this? *Answer:* The kick was not taken from the proper spot (it should have been on the goal area line, not three yards from the goal). Thus, according to the Laws, the kick was not properly taken and should be retaken.
2. That's the book answer and it's correct. The instant that the ball was placed down in the wrong place, the referee should have stopped play, since by attempting to take

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the free kick from the wrong location, the attackers forfeit their right to a “quick kick”. But, as the scenario tells us, the referee didn’t act quickly enough. This happens sometimes in real life, which is the point of the scenario. So...

3. What do the players need? A fair game. Would it be fair to have the kick retaken? Red had the opportunity to score and Blue did not unfairly prevent the score. In this context, the infringement by the attackers can be viewed as trifling. What is particularly important here is that the players, by their body language, believe that justice was done. The referee should probably “let sleeping dogs lie” and allow the game to be restarted with a goal kick.
4. It must be emphasized that the referee is bending the Law here in context. The kick is not retaken because it is the fair thing to do *in context*. Changing the context changes the appropriate action: if the ball had entered the net, the kick would have to be retaken.
5. Note to instructor: Of all the scenarios in the lesson, this one “pushes the envelope” the most.

Scenario 3

[Illustrates Must-Knows #2 and #3]

It is 25 minutes into the first half of a BU-14 match. The referee has noted that the Blue players have only average skills, but seem to like “tricky” stuff: deception on corner kicks, standing 3 yards from free kicks, trashy talk that is loud, but not directed at opponents, half-hearted offside traps accompanied by raised arms. There has been moderate “participation” from the touchlines too, with opposition freely voiced to throw-in decisions. During an attack near midfield, a Blue defender is beaten by an opponent, and deliberately trips him to stop the attack.

Points for the instructor to develop:

1. A book referee will deal with the incident at face value, calling a foul and perhaps issuing a caution. A referee imbued with the spirit of the game will go farther, because there is more going on than just a reckless foul. These players, perhaps with the inadvertent help of their coach, don’t have a clear sense of the spirit of the game. They are more intent on bending the rules than on fundamental skills.
2. A referee can easily be caught by the “pearls before swine” syndrome: granting of advantage and bending the rules will probably not produce good results in this game. Book refereeing will be challenged too. This will be an unpleasant afternoon for the referee, who will be caught between strict application of the Laws that are repeatedly challenged, and application of the Spirit, which will be unappreciated and perhaps viewed as weakness or inconsistency.
3. *Recommendation action:* This foul can be the referee’s moment of truth – providing the opportunity to step outside the role of enforcer and enter the role of educator. Possible continuation of the scenario: Referee cautions Blue defender who smirks “All ball, ref” and turns, laughing, to his teammates. Referee speaks with #5

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explaining he is already cautioned for unsporting behavior and his dissent towards you, the Referee, will be his second of the game. Explain you would like to see him remain in the game but it depends on his behavior. If #5 is respectful in his answer, his behavior has been modified for the moment. If not respectful, caution him a second time, then send off for receiving a second caution in the same match. If #5 stays in the game – be watchful of his dissent toward your calls. This player's attitude endangers others on the field and can manifest in others. Be ready (but not seeking out) to caution #5 if his behavior becomes dissenting again.,

Scenario 4

[Illustrates Must-Knows #2 and #3]

This is a BU-19 game, a physical match with considerable skill on both sides. The referee has called a fair number of contact fouls and warned a couple of players, and there has been some mild dissent. In the 35th minute, a high ball is descending near midfield. A Red forward and a Blue defender, intent on playing the ball with their eyes skyward, are running in at high speed from opposite directions toward each other. They jump simultaneously to head the ball and collide, chest-to-chest, falling on the ground.

Points for the instructor to develop:

1. A book referee, seeing no foul, will do nothing, or perhaps announce "No foul".
2. The referee should have a genuine concern for the players' safety, and should also anticipate the possibility of retaliation for an imagined foul. At the same time, these are skilled players, and at the U-19 level one typically does not stop play for a hard but fair collision. What do the player's need, and what's fair in this context?
3. *Recommended action:* If the referee is concerned for the players' safety, then that takes precedence. He blows the whistle right away, loudly. Now each player probably thinks a foul is going to be called. The referee momentarily observes their reactions. If anger is immediate, the referee of course steps in and deals with it. However, if not, an appropriate expression of concern followed by a dropped ball will be well-received. (Indeed, when this incident actually happened, the Blue player extended a hand to his opponent and said, "You OK, man?" The Red player said "Yeah" and, turning to the referee immediately, asked "What's the call?" The referee was then able to say: "That was a hell of a collision – I just wanted to be sure that nobody was hurt. Let's have a dropped ball.")

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Scenario 5

[Illustrates Must-Know #3]

There is no score in a BU-19 match. The players are below average skill, and the match has been quiet and uneventful. There has been some jostling as players challenge for the ball, but no penal fouls have been whistled. The end of first half approaches. An attacker with the ball 5 yards outside the penalty area is knocked over by an opponent's hard, clumsy charge. The attacker gets up quickly and "gets in the face" of the player who fouled him, cursing.

Points for the instructor to develop:

1. What does a book referee do? *Answer:* Whistle the foul, and use cards. Perhaps a caution to the defender, perhaps a caution or even a send off of the attacker for his behavior after the foul.
2. The foul is out of proportion with rest of play, as is the player's reaction. Perhaps the jostling that the referee has been allowing has actually been more than the players could play through? Has fatigue led to an isolated incident?
3. *Recommended action:* A caution or send-off will probably make matters worse. The referee should certainly express his displeasure, both with the foul and with the attacker's language, but he should seek to settle the situation, making mental note of the need to tighten up his calls, without formal discipline for misconduct.

Scenario 6

[Illustrates Must-Knows #3 and #4]

It is a BU-16 match on a hot day. An attacker brings the ball down the left wing. As he approaches the goal line about 2 yards outside the penalty area, he drives a hard crossing pass into a defender standing just inside the penalty area in a normal defensive posture. The ball strikes the defender's upper right arm and goes out over the goal line. The referee is close to play and immediately signals corner kick. The attacker turns to the referee, holds out his arm, points up and down it with his other hand, and says, in a sarcastic tone, "What's this, ref?"

Points for the instructor to develop:

1. The attacker obviously doesn't know what "deliberately handling the ball" is, but this isn't the time for a clinic. The referee should try to get out of this without giving a card for dissent. "The handling wasn't deliberate; as I'm sure you can tell." (Or perhaps "If you were the defender in that situation, would you expect me to award a penalty kick against you for handling?") If the player persists, a warning is appropriate, with a caution following only if the warning is ignored.
2. To avoid this in the future, the referee could be proactive, shouting "No foul!" when the ball strikes the arm. Players at this level get very inconsistent treatment of "handling" from referees, and a wise referee will take every available opportunity,

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particularly early in the match, to make his viewpoint clear. This requires verbalizing in “no foul” situations and being consistent in calling deliberate hand-to-ball contact.

Scenario 7

[Illustrates Must-Knows #3 and #4]

In a BU-14 match, a Red attacker with the ball is inside the penalty area near the goal area, and crosses the ball to a teammate (who is onside). The Blue goalkeeper tries to intercept the pass by diving, arms extended, for the ball. There is a collision between the goalkeeper and the second attacker, who seemed to be a step closer to the ball than the goalkeeper. The Blue coach and spectators are yelling for the referee to protect the goalkeeper.

Points for the instructor to develop:

1. How do AYSO National Rules influence the referee in this situation? *Answer:* NRR I.D.2 says “Referees shall officiate in a manner inducing clean competition and good sportsmanship, *placing great emphasis on the welfare of the players.*” and NRR I.D.4 says “It is the duty of referees to protect the goalkeeper against dangerous play.” If the referee does not blow the whistle, he must believe that he is not violating these rules.
2. Should the referee stop play? Why? *Answer:* As presented, no foul has been committed. Both the attacker and the goalkeeper have played the ball in appropriate ways (that is, neither is guilty of dangerous play). Unless there is an injury (and the scenario doesn’t give any indication that there is), play should not be stopped.
3. Does the referee acknowledge the coach and spectators? *Answer:* Just because play is to continue doesn’t mean the referee should be silent. This is an ideal moment to announce, loudly, “Fair play! No foul!” This should be done loudly enough that the coach and spectators can hear it, but the referee should not take his eyes off of play. The referee thereby communicates to the players and everyone else that he has seen the event and decided that it was fair.
4. The referee may find it necessary, if approached by the coach after the half, to explain his decision. In doing so, he should be aware that the coach may have perceived the sequence of events differently, and the referee should take pains to avoid a discussion/argument about the facts. He should simply explain what he saw and why his decision to continue play is appropriate.

III. CONCLUSION [5 minutes]

Slide 13

A. Restate the Must Knows briefly.

Tell the students that if they enjoyed this class, they should plan to attend the AYSO National Referee Course, where the matter of refereeing “beyond the book” is examined in much more detail.

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B. Confirmation (Testing, Assessment, Evaluation)

Ask which ideas and concrete techniques were most helpful to the attendees. Ask what they feel is the most valuable tool they learned today.

Note to instructor: The material on the following pages may be useful to distribute to the attendees in settings where handouts are feasible.

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I.

Scenario 1 – What action should the referee take?

In the first five minutes of a BU-16 match, the referee awards a free kick near midfield. An opposing player immediately plants himself three yards from the ball, hands crossed over his groin.

Scenario 2 – What action should the referee take?

In a GU-19 match, Red is taking a corner kick. The ball comes to an attacker centrally located in the penalty area, who immediately shoots toward the left post. The ball hits the post and bounces to a Blue defender who, under pressure from a Red player, deliberately kicks the ball to the goalkeeper, who picks it up in the goal area about three yards from the goal line. The referee whistles and signals IFK; the goalkeeper immediately drops the ball and retreats to the goal line to defend. As she does so, a Red attacker immediately takes the free-kick from where the keeper dropped it, passing it to her left. The teammate shoots and the ball goes wide of the goal. The players begin to position themselves for a goal kick.

Scenario 3 – What action should the referee take?

It is 25 minutes into the first half of a BU-14 match. The referee has noted that the Blue players have only average skills, but seem to like “tricky” stuff: deception on corner kicks, standing three yards from free kicks, trashy talk that is loud, but not directed at opponents, half-hearted offside traps accompanied by raised arms. There has been moderate “participation” from the touchlines too, with opposition freely voiced to throw-in decisions. During an attack near midfield, a Blue defender is beaten by an opponent, and deliberately trips him to stop the attack.

Scenario 4 – What action should the referee take?

This is a BU-19 game, a physical match with considerable skill on both sides. The referee has called a fair number of contact fouls and warned a couple of players, and there has been some mild dissent. In the 35th minute, a high ball is descending near midfield. A Red forward and a Blue defender, eyes skyward and intent on playing it, are running in at high speed from opposite directions and nearly head-on. They jump simultaneously to head the ball and collide, chest-to-chest, falling on the ground.

Scenario 5 – What action should the referee take?

There is no score in a BU-19 match. The players are below average skill, and the match has been quiet and uneventful. There has been some jostling as players challenge for the ball, but no penal fouls have been whistled. The end of first half approaches. An attacker with the ball five yards outside the penalty area is knocked over by an opponent’s hard, clumsy charge. The attacker gets up quickly and “gets in the face” of the player who fouled him, cursing.

Scenario 6 – What action should the referee take?

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crossing pass into a defender standing just inside the penalty area in a normal defensive posture. The ball strikes the defender's upper right arm and goes out over the goal line. The referee is close to play and immediately signals corner kick. The attacker turns to the referee, holds out his arm, points up and down it with his other hand, and says, in a sarcastic tone, "What's this, ref?"

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In a BU-14 match, a Red attacker with the ball is inside the penalty area near the goal area, and crosses the ball to a teammate (who is onside). The Blue goalkeeper tries to intercept the pass by diving, arms extended, for the ball. There is a collision between the goalkeeper and the second attacker, who seemed to be a step closer to the ball than the goalkeeper. The Blue coach and spectators are yelling for the referee to protect the goalkeeper.

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Summary – Some Principles and Techniques

- “Book” refereeing reduces options.
- What is *fair* in the context of this game?
- Don’t give players what they can’t handle.
- *Communicate decisions!*
- Don’t interfere with legitimate playing tactics.

Some Specific Applications

- When a foul or other event occurs that’s outside the norm for this match, ask yourself: “What is this telling me about the players right now? Do I need to go beyond routine handling of the event?”
- When the game seems quiet to you, be alert for little things that may indicate that “still waters run deep.” Grumbling on the touchline? Frustration by one team? Some vocal involvement by the referee will help people to know that you’re not just watching passively.
- Be alert early in the match for gamesmanship that approaches unsporting behavior and make your disapproval known to the players. At the U-14 level and above, the players generally know what’s acceptable and what’s not, but they will push the boundary to see what you will allow. If the behavior seems to have been taught or tolerated by the coach, involve him/her rectifying it (that is, invoke the AYSO Team).
- Wherever possible, use informal warnings before whistles or cautions to tell the players where the boundary of acceptable contact lies. For example, when an attack has been stopped by the goalkeeper and there has been contact, but not a foul: “Nice play, but watch out for the keeper!” If the boundary of acceptable contact is crossed, punish/make the call consistently.
- Let the players know verbally, at the first occurrence of ball-to-hand contact, that you don’t call that a foul. This establishes clearly how you will deal with an event that is treated inconsistently by referees. Continue to do this until the players accept your judgments.
- Be wary when enforcing technicalities that have a marked impact on the game. Remember AYSO NRR I.D.5 (formerly Law 5 IBD 8) For example, retake a penalty kick only for infringements (encroachment, keeper movement) that unfairly influenced the outcome. “Let the punishment fit the crime.”
- Show the players early that you are there to support their game. For example, if the home team captain gives you a game ball at the coin toss, you can, after examining it, give the ball to the visiting captain and say, “Want to play with this one?”
- Keep your options open. Avoid saying things that can constrain you later. For example, saying “Number 2, I don’t want to see that again.” leaves more future options than “Number 2, if you do that again, it’s a yellow card.” However, when you draw a clear line, e.g., by cautioning for free kick encroachment, adhere to that line consistently throughout the match, otherwise you invite dissent and loss of control.