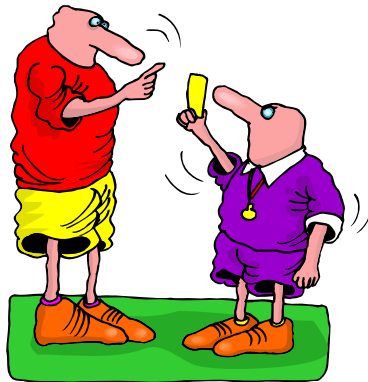


## **Building Your Umpire Confidence**

To umpire well, you need to be confident in your ability to umpire the match you have been given. How do you build your confidence to the right level?



The Dictionary defines Confidence as: - Assurance or self reliance, having faith in yourself. To be free from doubt with conviction and to have belief in oneself.

**Weinberg and Richardson (Psychology of Officiating) state that performance increases with confidence up to a peak, beyond which over confidence leads to a decrease in performance.**

Umpires who are over confident are actually falsely confident as their confidence is actually greater than their real ability warrants. This can result in an umpire's lack of preparation. For example, not taking the time to warm up or reading the specific rules that apply to the competition they are about to umpire. If you take things for granted this will eventually cause you to perform below your capabilities.



### **Firstly assess your own confidence**

**Ask yourself:-**

- How do I react to adversity?
- Am I afraid of certain situations?
- When am I overconfident?
- How do I recover from making a bad umpiring decision?
- Is my confidence consistent throughout the game?
- Do I look forward to a tough match? A promotion or relegation battle.
- Do I become tentative and indecisive in certain situations? If so when?

### **How to build your confidence**

#### **Know the rules**

Make sure you know the rules by reading them frequently and particularly after any break from umpiring. Are you clear how you are going to interpret the rules? Play “consequences” with

yourself to explore every situation you may come across. “If this happens then this is what I will do”. If two things happen at once decide which rule will apply? Of the two, decide which is the worst offence and the one that takes precedent. Ensure that you eliminate as much of the unexpected as you can. Fit the incident to the correct tool in your Control Tool Box.



### **Think confidently**

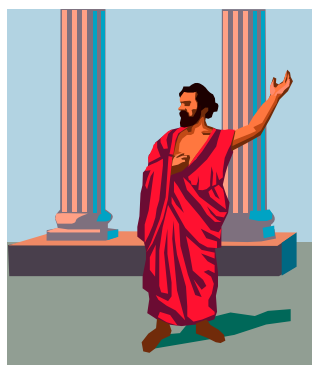
Make sure your self talk is positive. This glass is half full not half empty. Positive self-statements make you more confident when you umpire. If you think that you will spot the infringement and give the right decision you probably will. Think “I keep getting better if I work at it”. Your thoughts need to be positive and motivational not judgemental. At the end of a game, think about the good decisions you made not just the mistakes

### **Imagine Success**

See yourself doing things correctly. Visualise what you will do when such and such happens in a game. Work out how you will present the decision. Imagery will help you prepare for your next game. Imagine how you will work with your colleague.

### **Act confidently**

Have the right kit so that you feel good when you walk onto the pitch. If you look confident and act confidently you will begin to feel confident when the players see you their body language will tell you that they believe you can do the job. Blow the whistle and signal confidently even if you feel uncertain about what actually happened. Be decisive with your whistle, signals and body language. Most times your first reaction is the right one. Use your voice confidently - it will give you poise.



### **Gain Experience**

This is probably the best confidence builder of all. The more you practice umpiring at the level you have reached the more confident you will become that you can umpire that level well. Umpiring a top of the table clash at the end of the season, getting the crucial decisions right at the end of an important game, umpiring in front of a big crowd and coping well with player or coach outbursts

will help you to be confident that you can deal with these successfully in the future. Performance accomplishments build confidence.

This is most important when you want to progress to a higher grade. Ask to be appointed to the practice games arranged by the clubs in the higher league before the season starts. Can you arrange to go to training nights of one of these clubs so that you can train with the players and umpire their training game at the end of the session? Consider umpiring Schools and Youth games of the right standard as they often concentrate on learning skills rather than on winning. These games often do not involve the high pressure situations that can challenge your confidence.

Attend members coaching meetings as it is possible to talk and listen to more experienced umpire colleagues who can offer advice and tell you how they coped with some of their difficulties. It will also keep you up to date with modern developments and interpretations.

### **Get Fit**

Make sure you are fit enough to cope with the game you have to umpire. Can you last the whole length of the game and not be tiring at the end? If it is a cup game, can you keep running for extra time if it is required? If the body is tired, not only will you struggle to be in the best position to see but your concentration will also flag. Your judgement will become less accurate.



Players, club officials and spectators have more respect for an umpire who looks good and is obviously in good physical shape. This in itself will give you confidence.

### **Prepare well**

Do your homework before each match. Where are these teams in the league? Have they a reputation for skilful play or physical play? Have they any players with a reputation? How well do you know your colleague? Have you umpired together before? Have you talked during the week before the game? Have a look at the pitch and make sure you are on the pitch to see the teams warm up. Watch their Penalty Corner drill.

Work out your own pre-match routine so that you are physically and mentally ready to start when the first whistle blows. Make sure you allow enough time to go through your routine without cutting corners.

Confidence involves the way you feel, think and act and it can have a large effect on the way you umpire. Your confidence level will rise and fall with each umpiring experience. There are no bad games just learning games and experience gaining opportunities. You must strive to keep building confidence to perform consistently well.

John Litchfield

March 2008

Recommended reading - Psychology of Officiating. Weinberg & Richardson. Leisure Press