

The following information is provided to aid aspiring referees and players (who someday will hopefully become the nucleus of our referee cadre) in their quest to be "the best that they can be". It is meant to foster analysis, discussion and action by all participants in referee development activities. This is by no means an exhaustive list of techniques and methods to develop good officials for our sport, but rather are approaches that I have found very beneficial to my own personal development as a judo referee as well as successful tools utilized during the training of others.

## **Personal Referee Development**

### **Basic Premises**

- You want to referee and want to become a better referee.
- You are willing to spend time and effort to get better.

### **Scoping Your Goals**

- Be as specific as possible.
- Be realistic considering your background, available time and finances, age, and the effort you are willing to expend.

### **Developing Your Plan**

- Set your goals to a master time line.
- Determine the prerequisites needed to attain your goals.
- Set the prerequisites on the master time line.
- Every time changes are made to the master time line, review all tasks/activities to make sure everything can be accomplished according to the new master time line.

### **Picking Your Tools to Work With**

- There are many aids to becoming a better referee.

- Some tools are better suited for different personalities.
- Try as many as you can and pick those that work the best for you.

## **Tools to Improve Your Refereeing**

- Learn the rules.
  - Study the written rules often.
  - Read the USA Judo Rule Book [for domestic events] and the IJF Rule Book [for international events] (cover to cover) the day before every tournament you referee at or referee clinic you attend, in addition to intense study of small sections on a regular and frequent basis.
  - Attend as many referee clinics as possible to learn the standard interpretations of the rules.
  - Discuss the rules and their interpretation in great detail with different people whose opinions you trust.
  - Quantify and document all valuable information you gather at clinics and discussions and file in an orderly manner for future review (and review regularly).
- Attend Referee Development Clinics, Seminars, etc.
  - Attend as many as possible (especially by as many different clinicians as practical when you reach the intermediate and advanced certification levels).
  - If you must be selective about the clinics and seminars you attend, match the level of the seminar to your level of development to obtain maximum benefit.
- Attend Technical Clinics.
  - Study both commonly used and emerging techniques, concentrating on the moves used to set up these techniques (nagewaza and newaza) as well as the key issues of each particular technique that make it work. - Gain an understanding of position, movement and control required to make the technique effective.
  - Executing the various techniques yourself will aid in your understanding of what is happening in the matches you officiate.
  - If you are not physically able to execute or practice the technique, it is still beneficial to watch others perform the technique in a

clinic setting while breaking down the required movements and concentrating on "what makes it work".

- Attending competitor clinics is of great benefit when trying to determine a player's "intent" (negative judo penalties) as well as the correct timing of matte where a "feel" for the match is a definite necessity.
- Referee often.
  - You must perform refereeing often to perfect and maintain your refereeing skills.
  - Concentrate on events that require refereeing near the skill level you have attained.
  - Get feedback!!! Refereeing without feedback provides limited benefit to your referee development program. Feedback can be comments from officials you trust or having someone tape your performance for later review.
- Video tapes
  - Several excellent video tapes are available to help train all levels of referees.
  - Situations can be presented on a two hour tape that would normally take 10 years (or more) to experience during standard refereeing on the mat, even if you referee every weekend.
  - Throws and other situations can be reviewed over and over, including slow motion, with interactive discussion to not only agree on the "right" answer, but to also examine the decision making process and key issues leading to that particular decision.
  - Review of special video tapes of your refereeing.
  - Have someone video you as you referee. The tape should show the players in enough detail to determine what is happening. Your entire body should normally stay in the picture. It is helpful to include both judges in the picture when they are involved in the action (changing calls, hantei, etc.). Tape the entire match (including conferences).
  - Review the tape as soon as practical after the event.
  - Critique yourself - look at your movement, posture, positioning, etc. as well as review of the scores and penalties assessed.
  - Review the tapes with a referee you have confidence in. Let him/her provide a critique and discuss the action as the tape is watched again.

- To gauge your progress, occasionally review older tapes of your past refereeing and make comparisons with your current refereeing.
- Mentoring
  - Special teaming between someone who wants to improve his/her refereeing skills and someone of greater expertise who provides guidance, critique and encouragement as well as serves as a role model for the aspiring referee.
  - To be effective, mentoring requires the dedication of both individuals, teacher and student alike.
  - The mentor should:
    - develop with the student a plan and schedule for the skill improvement
    - Review in detail the progress being made by the student and compare it to the plan.
  - The student should:
    - Utilize as many of the above mentioned tools for improvement as possible.
    - Coordinate his/her schedule/activities with the mentor's schedule so that both will be able to attend as many activities together as possible.
    - Accept all critiques in a positive manner and document them for later review.
- Study Groups
  - Defined as groups of referees (of approximately the same certification and experience level) who travel similar tournament/clinic circuits and who band together providing many of the same benefits as the mentor program without having the teacher/student relationship.
  - Open discussion in great detail is encouraged.
  - Intense critiques are possible with resulting discussion leading to enhanced understanding of rules interpretations and common thought processes.
  - The group should continually seek guidance from other higher level officials to gauge their activities and assure they do not go off on a tangent.

- Miscellaneous additional tools
  - There may very well be many other valuable tools not mentioned above that can help you develop your refereeing skills. Make use of the ones most effective for you.
- Minimize negative impact on competitors, coaches, spectators and the sport of Judo as you develop your refereeing skills. You can do this by study and scoping your participation to gain the maximum experience at lower level activities before jumping ahead to very important competitions.

### **Continuous Improvement**

- Continually strive to improve your refereeing performance. Do not become complacent when you reach any of your goals, but instead set new goals and if age or some other obstacle blocks higher certification levels (or you become an IJF A Referee) there are still personal performance goals you can set for yourself outside of certification and the like.
- The better referee you become, the harder it will be to see improvement in your performance - Guard against Backsliding.

### **Issues related to teaching others to referee**

- Questions asked by those you teach can often lead to deeper understanding of the issue on your part through verbalization and further research.
- When you are called upon to perform additional tasks such as Chief Referee, Evaluator and Examiner often your personal time on the mat as a referee will tend to diminish. Don't let your personal refereeing skills fade. Remember - You are always setting the example (good or bad) to all aspiring referees of lower certification levels. Until you are ready to retire as an active (on the mat) referee, pay significant attention to balancing "additional duties" with "on the mat" refereeing time.

*I hope this will be beneficial to some of you who have taken the time to read this article. I would very much like to hear from those of you who have successfully used other training techniques, methods and approaches to improve your refereeing skills as well as the officiating skills of others. Please send comments to: Russ Scherer, 510 Silvercrest Terrace, Dayton, OH 45440-3300 or e-mail to: [rschererjudo@gmail.com](mailto:rschererjudo@gmail.com)*