

Conflict Management – Pre-Elite/Elite

Purpose: To develop leaders in officiating at a pre elite/elite level

Strategy: To continue to develop strategies which assist in resolving conflict as an official

Conflict – what is it?

A quick recap:

The dictionary definition of conflict is ‘a serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one’.

The main thing to recognise is that conflict is a normal part of sport. What is important, is how we learn, as officials, to manage it.

Conflict - how can we identify it?

A quick recap:

There are generally five stages of conflict:

1. Latent stage – You are not yet aware of the conflict.
2. Perceived stage – Officials, players and spectators becoming aware of the conflict
3. Felt stage – emotional and physical responses (stress/anxiety/ body language cues)
4. Manifest stage – conflict is open and can be observed
5. Aftermath stage – outcome of conflict, resolution

The best officials in the world recognise conflict in its early stages (generally stage 2) and manage it appropriately. However, people perceive conflict differently dependent on their lived experience. We will explore this in a future worksheet.

Conflict - how can we resolve it?

A quick recap:

The first things we need to be conscious of as officials, are the mechanisms we already have in our sport to assist with managing conflict.

1. The rules of your game – know them, implement them, enforce them.
2. Technical Bench – understand its role and how it supports you..
3. Support person – access an official coach or manager for feedback or enter a formal mentoring arrangement

Conflict - management styles (based on Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument)

There are predominantly 5 management styles when dealing with conflict, they are:

AVOIDING – Unassertive and uncooperative. The person does not deal with conflict. Postpone or withdraw all together.

COMPETING – Uncooperative and assertive. An individual pursues their own concerns at the expense of others. Power orientated mode in which you use whatever power seems appropriate to win your own position.

ACCOMODATING – Unassertive and co-operative (opposite to competing). The individual neglects their concerns to satisfy the other. They yield to another's point of view even if they don't want to.

COLLABORATING – Assertive and cooperative. Work with others to find a solution that fully satisfies their concerns. Pinpoints the underlying needs and wants of the two individuals.

COMPROMISING – Is moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The objective is to find some mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties.

The best officials in the world **compromise** while still enforcing the rules of their game. They are experts in how they communicate **assertively**.

Activity 1: Consider your conflict management style. Where do you think your management style sits? Why? What do you think you need to do to improve your management? How will you achieve this?

If you do not self-reflect and implement a plan to improve, you will not succeed in your role as an elite official.

What is assertiveness?

Assertiveness is a manner of behaving that communicates respect for others as well as commands respect for yourself.

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When you are assertive, you are able to:

- Express and communicate your feelings accurately
- Ask for things you want
- Say no to things you don't want
- Have the opportunity to have your needs and wants met
- Attain the respect of others

Assertive people:

- Are concerned with their needs as well as other people's needs
- Are openly able to express themselves to other people
- Are able to respond in a respectful manner when there is a disagreement
- Are able to ask for help
- Are confident and able to make decisions
- Are able to say to people/places/things they do not want
- Are responsible for their own feelings/behaviours/thoughts

How can you develop assertive communication?

Use D.E.S.C.

D = Describe the situation/behaviour as completely and objectively as you can

E = Express your feelings or thoughts about the situation/behaviour

S = Specify what behaviour/outcome you would prefer to happen

C = Consequences. Specify the consequences (positive and negative) and make sure you can follow through.

To become effective, assertive communicators you must consciously practice the D.E.S.C process in the context of your sport.

Activity 2: Nigel Owens, Rugby Union referee, utilises assertive communication amazingly well. Google search Nigel (there are literally hundreds of examples). Watch his clips with a D.E.S.C lense on. Explicitly identify each phase. Identify how he uses compromise and assertive communication to effectively manage conflict.

Activity 3: Now consider your management and communication style. What do you need to develop? How will you do this? What is your plan?