

# Football Tasmania

## WSL & NPL

### Referee Coaching Handbook

### 2026



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## **How To Use This Framework:**

### **Key Goals for Match Day Coaches:**

- Always aim to boost the referee's confidence.
- Keep feedback clear and constructive, focusing on no more than three main points.
- Make sure the feedback can be immediately applied to improve their performance.
- Tailor the feedback to the referee's age, experience, and level of football knowledge.
- Ensure the feedback aligns with current guidelines, and avoid personal opinions or outdated methods.
- Focus on helping the referee develop processes that will lead to better results next time.
- Use positive and forward-thinking language. Instead of saying "wrong" or "incorrect," say "work on" or "development point."

### **How to Provide Effective Feedback:**

Let the referee guide the feedback conversation. Ask them:

1. What three things made you feel confident during the game?
2. What three things made you feel less confident?

This helps the referee reflect on their own performance and decide where they need the most help, leading to more meaningful feedback.

Remember, as a Match Day Coach, your role is to support the referee in that moment. Your goal is to make them feel more confident, resilient, and inspired for their next match.

Refereeing can be overwhelming, and it's our job to help ease that pressure. We're not trying to make every referee the next FIFA official. Instead, we focus on meeting referees where they are right now, supporting their development, and keeping them in the game.

By providing the right support at the right time, we'll help referees grow, stay motivated, and continue progressing through the pathway.

### **Characteristics of good/constructive feedback:**

- Provides detail, such as 'Your positioning was effective because you...,' rather than just 'Good positioning'.
- Compares what a referee is doing now with previous assessment advice and reports, such as, 'I can see you focused on improving your positioning in the final 3rd, the result is much better now than when you pulled up just before the penalty area from the last time'.
- Provides specific coaching and guidance on how to improve, and not just telling referees when they are wrong.
- Conversational – Asking questions, and letting the referee provide an opinion.
- Invites discussion with the referee.
- Is framed to encourage and support the referee's further effort and improvement in performance.

- Is supported by effective professional learning for referee coaches.
- Ensures feedback is actionable.
- Uses measurable elements.
- Acknowledges effort from the referee team.
- Ties feedback to the referee's goals.
- Clear, concise, and focused.
- Timely, referees need to receive the information before their next match.
- Based on accurate and credible information.
- Actionable by the referee.
- Specific to the referee's performance. No need to include something out of the referee's control.
- Linked to impact. I.e., being close will help sell a decision.
- Offers examples for the referee to learn from.

#### **Ineffective Feedback:**

- Provides feedback that is about the person (such as, 'you are the best referee in the league') or vague (such as, 'just run faster', without context).
- Only provides feedback formally without understanding the context of the game, the impact of decisions, or the referee's decisions.
- Provides a one-way dialogue without the referee's opinion.
- A lack of clarity about what needs to change
- Feedback that inflates — or bruises — someone's ego.

#### **Our expectations of you:**

- Show empathy and compassion towards referees.
- Complete your report quickly so the referee will receive it before their next match.
- Ask questions so that the referee can help themselves learn.
- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of the Laws of the Game.
- Help referees develop their skills with effective solutions.
- Offer suggestions and advice rather than just problems.
- Support referees and their decisions when asked by members of the football community.
- An up-to-date Working with Vulnerable People check.

### **Pre-match:**

#### **In Person Matches:**

- Plan your day, just as you would while refereeing.
- Arrive at a time you feel the referee should be there. Most referees will look to arrive 30 minutes before kickoff.
- Find out if any of the referees are refereeing or playing before or after the game you have been appointed to. This will help you plan your day, particularly your debrief.

- If the referee has not arrived 60 minutes before kickoff, this is a good time to contact the appointments officer via phone to determine whether the referee will be at the ground on time.
- Reach out to the referee once you arrive at the ground, the earlier the better.
- Let the refereeing team prepare themselves as though you aren't at the venue. Don't interrupt when the referee is following their pre-match routine.

#### **Video Matches:**

- Let the referee know you will be watching the video, rather than in person.
- Confirm a time and day to complete the post-match debrief. This may need to be separate days for the Ars if they would like to receive a debrief.

### **During the Match:**

#### **Keeping a Record:**

During the match, you will need to keep a record of events, including but not limited to the following:

#### Coaching:

- Strengths of the referees and AR's
- Coaching Points for the referees and AR's

#### Key Match Decisions:

At a minimum you will need to include the following in your report:

- Serious Foul Play/Near Serious Foul Play
- Violent Conduct/Near Violent Conduct
- Handball:
  - Inside Penalty Area - Deliberate vs non-deliberate identification
  - Natural vs un-natural understanding
- DOGSO/Near DOGSO
- Management and justification of Foul and Abusive Language
- Penalty area decision making- Penalty given vs Penalty not given
- Simulation inside the penalty area
- Goal Awarded/Disallowed for foul/offside in the build up

We also ask for a judgement on whether the decision was correct, which will be shared with the referee in the report.

#### Discipline Incidents:

At a minimum you will need to include the following in your report:

- Careless v Reckless v Serious Foul Play
- Not SPA v SPA v DOGSO
- Any other caution or send off issued during the match.

We also ask for a judgement on whether the decision was correct, which will be shared with the referee in the report.

#### Laws of the Game Application:

At a minimum you will need to include the following in your report:

- Injury Management
- Substitution Management
- Penalty Management
- Restart Management

We also ask for a judgement on whether the decision was correct, which will be shared with the referee in the report.

#### **Things to look for:**

##### Referees:

##### Match Management:

##### Referee Game Plan:

- Has the match official prepared themselves and their team well enough for the game?
- Warm Up
- Pre Match Instructions
- Tactical Awareness/Preparation
- Has the match kicked off on time?
- Has the referee been surprised by the level of the game?

##### Flow of Match and Time Management

- Has the referee used advantage effectively during the match?
- As the referee looked to allow play to flow where possible?
- Has the referee used proactive body language and verbal communication?
- Has the referee taken their time to ensure correct decisions are made?
- Has the referee managed stoppages appropriately?
- Is the referee proactive when managing time wasting?

##### Game Empathy:

- Does the referee allow for the passion of football, while correctly and consistently balancing between this and dissent?
- Does the referee show empathy when communicating with players?
- Does the referee correctly apply injury management processes.
- Does the referee appear actively engaged during the match, through their:

- Body Language
- Smiling
- Keeping up with play

#### Decision Making and Control:

- Has the referee made decisions in the spirit of the game when required?
- Has the referee shown a level of understanding between balancing football expectation and the laws of the game?
- Has the referee maintained a strong and consistent approach to managing players and heated situations?
- Has the referee dealt with verbal confrontation with players and/or team officials, by:
  - Dealing with dissent appropriately.
  - Dealing with players frustration appropriately.
  - Dealing with technical areas appropriately.
- Has the referee identified the importance of changing their approach to the level of the game?
- Has the referee been proactive in calming down tense situations which has added their match control?
- Has the referee taken evasive action to prevent a situation from getting out of hand?

#### Teamwork/Communication:

- Has the referee taken the right moments to engage with their assistant referees to aid their control of the match?
- Has the referee been consistent with how they communicate and support their Assistant Referees throughout the match?
- Has the referee worked well with players and coaches and shown proactive communication towards them, which helped their match control?
- Has the referee exercised conflict resolution and active player management controls to help bring the game to a safe conclusion?

#### Positioning, Movement & Reading:

##### Anticipation:

- Has the referee shown an awareness of how play will develop, adapting their positioning to increase their decision-making credibility?
- Has the match official taken advantageous positions at set pieces to aid their ability to see what will happen next?
- Has the referee shown awareness of their position in terms of playing area?
- Has the referee looked to scan ahead of play to enhance their positioning during the match?
- Has the Match Official constantly adapted their positioning throughout the game in line with the development of play?

##### Dynamic Movement:

- Has the referee demonstrated varying speeds in line with how play has developed?

- Has the referee shown awareness of how different positions on the field of play are more advantageous at varying times?
- Has the referee used a full range of movement (side stepping, backwards running etc) to make sure their physical presence has no impact on the flow of the game?
- Has the referee used advantageous positioning in and around the Penalty Area to aid the credibility of decisions within that part of the field of play?

#### Strategic Positioning:

- At all times is the referee working as hard as they can to ensure that they remain credible based on where they are situated on the field of play?
- Has the referee adapted their set piece positioning by reading and anticipating play?
- Is the referee taking up positions which allows them to work with their Assistant Referees in a positive manner?

#### Penalty Area Movement:

- Is the referee working hard to remain credible in the penalty area, without blocking play?
- Is the referee correctly identifying when to press into the penalty area?
- Is the referee working towards getting behind a shot at goal when handball might be a possible decision?
- Is the referee moving in and around the penalty area at attacking free kicks
- Is the referee moving in and around the penalty area at corners so that they can remain alert to the Drop Zone?

#### Assistant Referees:

##### Match Management:

#### Signaling and Technique:

- Does the AR show confident and engaged body language for the duration of the match?
- Does the AR show confidence in the way they use their flag?
- Does the AR show accurate judgement in the speed of their decision signaling?
- Does the AR prepare correctly for the execution of their signal when reading the game?
- Does the AR show awareness of the flash lag effect? This relates to the understanding that a moving player may be perceived as more advanced than their actual position when judging offside.

#### Attacking Phase:

- Does the AR recognise early enough when an attacking phase is about to begin?
- Does the AR communicate tight or difficult offside decisions to the referee?
- Does the AR, in a tight decision, give the benefit of doubt to the attacking team?

#### Control:

- Does the AR stay within their area of credibility when providing assistance?
- Does the AR present as calm and collected when making decisions?

- Does the AR use other techniques to help the Referee keep match control?
- Does the AR decision help or hinder the overall control of the match?

Teamwork/Communication:

- Does the AR proactively listen to the pre-match briefing?
- Does the AR execute the instructions in the pre-match briefing?
- Does the AR use varied communication techniques to aid match control?
- Is the AR interested, when inactive as an Assistant Referee, in the success of the overall team?
- Does the AR use their presence wisely throughout a match?

Positioning, Movement and Reading:

Anticipation:

- Does the AR show awareness of how play will develop and prepare their movements accordingly?
- Does the AR show proactive communication to aid the flow of the match?
- Does the AR move in line with the progression of play to aid positive decision making?
- Does the AR use their physical presence to help aid match control either with players or technical areas?
- Does the AR help advise the referee, before the final decision is agreed upon?

Dynamic Movement:

- Does the AR show varying speeds of movement in line with play?
- Does the AR use side-stepping and sprinting appropriately to aid the flow of the match?
- Is the AR positioned in a place where players would expect them to be to aid the flow of the match?
- Does the AR make decisions in movement or in stillness?
- Does the AR turn their head towards the field of play as they sprint down the line?

Strategic Alignment:

- Does the AR react correctly to changes in set piece execution from the players?
- Is the AR at the correct position for set pieces?
- Does the AR accelerate to the corner flag when appropriate?
- Does the AR position themselves on the halfway line when appropriate?

Offside Alignment:

- Does the AR demonstrate agility when tracking the defensive line for an offside decision?
- Does the AR use a combination of side stepping and sprinting appropriate to the speed of the attack?
- Does the AR show explosive speed when an attack is developing?
- Is the AR better prepared for offside by making themselves alert to the kick point of an attack?

## Half Time:

- Any contact with the refereeing team at halftime should be kept to a minimum.
- Ensure the refereeing team has ample time to get a drink or something to eat. This is their time to recover from the first half and prepare for the second half.
- Ask if you can do anything for the refereeing team, something as simple as filling a water bottle can make the experience a lot better for new referees.
- If you make contact with the referee team, this is a good opportunity to ask them how they feel about their performance. **Ensure you remain positive and supportive throughout.**
- Development points should only be discussed if they will make a large change to the referee's performance.

## Post-Match:

### **Conducting the post-match debrief:**

#### Regardless of In Person or Video Viewing:

- Have a plan for how to do the debrief and have information ready before starting.
- Allow the referee to self-assess first by asking them how they feel they have performed and what they feel they could do better.
- Ensure that you are positive and supportive of the referee team.
- Ask questions if unsure why key decisions were made.
- Use 2 or 3 key points for discussion, from both positive and negative areas of your report.
- Keep feedback short and concise. Keep in mind whether the referee or ARs have other commitments or games to go to.
- If needs be, use examples like videos to demonstrate your key learnings.
- Avoid speaking about anything that will not be on the report.
- Ensure the referee understands everything that has been discussed.
- Encourage the referee to read your coaching report.
- If you don't know the answer to a referee's question, don't be afraid to ask someone who may, or direct the referee to the appropriate person.
- Ensure all key match decisions are discussed, as well as any discipline or law interpretation incidents that you will make as incorrect to give the referee an opportunity to provide their viewpoint.

#### In Person Matches:

- Confirm the time for the debrief with the refereeing team prior to kickoff.
- Determine a suitable place to complete the de-brief. Remember, the changing room may not be the ideal environment for a discussion.
- Check if the referee has another game or is playing shortly after. If this is the case, then you will need to keep your feedback very short and potentially meet with the referee another time.

#### Video Matches:



- Confirm the debrief time and method with the referee prior to the matchday.
- If needed, Nathan can schedule a teams meeting for you to complete your debrief.
- The debrief should always be completed prior to the report being submitted.

### **Writing your report:**

- Maintain encouragement and support for the referee.
- Keep points short and concise.
- Ensure clarity and consistency between your debrief and report.
- Use no more than 3 key positives and development areas.
- Give solutions to development areas so that referees can easily work on them.
- Use the comments box at the end of the report to be supportive and encouraging of the refereeing team. Ensure to clarify anything discussed during the debrief.
- Provide solutions for development areas to assist the referees learning.

Once you've submitted your report, touch base with the Referee Development Manager a few days after, to ensure the referee has received your report. Please refrain from sending the report to the referee personally.

### **Why there needs to be a written report:**

- To help the referee improve their performance.
- To allow the referee to remind themselves of the feedback before their next match.
- To motivate the referee to adopt good advice.
- To raise standards of refereeing within Tasmanian football.
- To provide critical information to Football Tasmania about refereeing trends.
- To ensure you get paid for your work.

### **2026 Payment for WSL & NPL Referee Coaching:**

Full Assessment \$90

Payments for Mentoring/Assessing are processed each fortnight with referee pays, based on reports submitted. If you haven't submitted your report by 5 pm Tuesday, you may not be paid that fortnight.