



Post-match events revision

In recent years, football has achieved unprecedented media and economic power. Media coverage of sport events generate huge TV broadcasting revenues which, shared by the top clubs in scheming ways, represent their main source of income.

To maintain their revenue stream, teams need to win as many matches as possible in order to reach the leading positions, or at least to avoid moving down in ranking, which all teams fear. A fall in rank has a huge negative economic impact and could result in missing essential TV income, leading to circumstances where the team may have to sell their most valuable players, which could cause the disappearance of the club itself.

Pressured by this prospect, players, coaches and club executives are willing to use all the tools at their disposal, including some that are questionable. To "win at any cost" is now acceptable and any type ruse, trick or scheme has become normal practice, especially in the last games of the season.

The problem is exacerbated when, following the model of top team's players, junior players at training stages adopt similar behavior in their own categories. Repeated poor behavior by the first division sets an example to be adopted by lower division players. Therefore, it is essential that the behavior displayed by players of the major leagues is exemplary and sets an example for younger players and the public in general.

One of the ways a team can bend the rules is by trying to unfairly influence the referee's decisions. Although it is against the rules, players commonly gesture to the referee, demanding that the adversary be cautioned or penalized. Players may attempt to persuade the referee to change his decision by overstating the severity of tackles or by claiming nonexistent fouls in order to have the referee grant a penalty kick in favor of his own team.

The frequency of such underhanded practices, brought to light later by TV instant replay, has led to some organizations like the Premier League to consider a post-facto punishment to players who deliberately, either for their own benefit or to the detriment of the adversary, successfully had deceived the referee during the game. Such post-match sanctions would also apply in the event of mean-spirited attacks and actions that clearly show cowardice and poor sportsmanship, such as when one player tries to hide his bad behavior from the referee in order to escape punishment. However, in a controversial decision made recently, the English Football Association (FA) decided not to review disputed situations if such actions were witnessed by any of the referees on the field.

Another underappreciated aspect is the emotional impact suffered by the referee himself when, after the end of the match, he realizes through TV replays that he was deliberately misled by a player and had made a wrong decision. His frustration is understandable; he has been asked to do his best under difficult circumstances and then discovers he has been deliberately misled by a player. This can lead to extreme measures such as not making similar decisions in the future unless the situation is beyond reasonable doubt. The sense of outrage at being mocked by the cheating player can also cause a desire for revenge at the next match in which referee and player meet



Inglés. Comprensión de textos

again, worsening a situation initiated by a player who believes "winning at any cost is acceptable" without evaluating the negative consequences for the opposing team or for referees.

In addition, footballers' play-acting isn't the only strategy utilized to bias the referee's decisions or to influence the fair progress of the match. Unfortunately, it is also common to see in the major Spanish League particular players continuously complaining the referee's decisions, whether against his team or, when in his team's favor, requesting additional punishment for the opponent player.

In most cases, it is always the same players (the so called "Jiminy Cricket") who pursue a predesigned strategy, remaining on constant alert to pressure the referee as soon as the opportunity arises, even when that means he has to run tens of meters to approach the referee. The choice of the players is not accidental; the team's Captain generally participates, even though the Rules of the Game forbid him to dissent and obligate him to collaborate with the referees. Other players, particularly those who have celebrity status, also participate as they often enjoy a greater leniency by the referee.

It is also quite common to witness some players engaging in unnecessary roughness to further their team's interest - for example, persistent rule-breaking, exaggeration of the other team roughness, feigning injury, instigating brawls, anything intended to delay the game and waste time to prevent the opposing team from legitimately executing its strategy, especially when the score is favorable to them.

These "toxic" players, whose mission is to spoil the game, do not care about how they are perceived by the opposing team, the people attending the game, or the wider television audiences in other countries.

Feigning, deliberate deception, pretending to have been fouled, ceaseless tumultuous dissents, unsportsmanlike strategies - all these attitudes negatively affect football. This behavior is rarely seen in other sports, and its eradication lies in the hands of the disciplinary committees through appropriate and exemplary post-match sanctions, as it is unfair and inadvisable to leave discipline solely to the match referee.

With that aim, in his column in the FIFA magazine, the president Blatter stated recently his opinion in favor of using video to punish foul play and lack of sportsmanship, such as spitting to rivals, verbal abuse, simulation of injury, and incidents of racism, noting that Article 96 of the FIFA's Disciplinary Code allows the use of audio or video recording as a proof.

Carlos A. Bacigalupe
April 2014



Text comprehension test

a) Junior players are always aware that they should not take as an example the unsportsmanlike behaviour of some top team's players.

True False

b) To bias referee's decisions is part of the game and one of the responsibilities of the team's captain.

True False

c) President Blatter is prone to accept video recording to judge disputed play situations (e.g. penalties not awarded by the referee during the match)

True False

d) The Rules of the Game request the team's captain to collaborate with the referee.

True False

e) Even when the referee realizes that he has been fooled by a player, he always takes it as a part of the game and does not harbor any resentment against such player.

True False

f) Top players do not take into account the bad image they convey to the audience with his improper behavior.

True False

Whats the meaning of:

BIAS:	opinión	soporte	predisposición	comentario
CELEBRITY:	autoridad	periodista	colaborador	figura destacada
BRAWL:	reunión	reyerta	comentario	sugerencia
ABUSE:	saludo	indicación	insulto	admiración
