

Effective Game Management - August 2014

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In a game where contest may be tight and teams are competing hard for a win, an umpire needs to be confident and alert at all times. If an issue or incident occurs they should have a number of techniques to keep the game under control. This article provides an insight and some helpful tips and tricks to use when dealing with Game Management.

What is Game Management?

Game Management along with Vision and Position and Timing form the three main techniques of umpiring netball. The term was developed to bring together section five (Discipline) of the Official Netball Rules including; 19.1 - Breaking of the rules, 19.2 - Deliberate Delaying of Play, 19.3 - Dispute with an Umpire, 20.1 – Warning, 20.2 – Suspension and 20.3 - Ordering Off.

While the rule book makes Game Management appear black and white an umpire that officiates with empathy and an understanding of play will manage situations far better. However, there are lots things you can do before going to the higher level disciplinary measures.

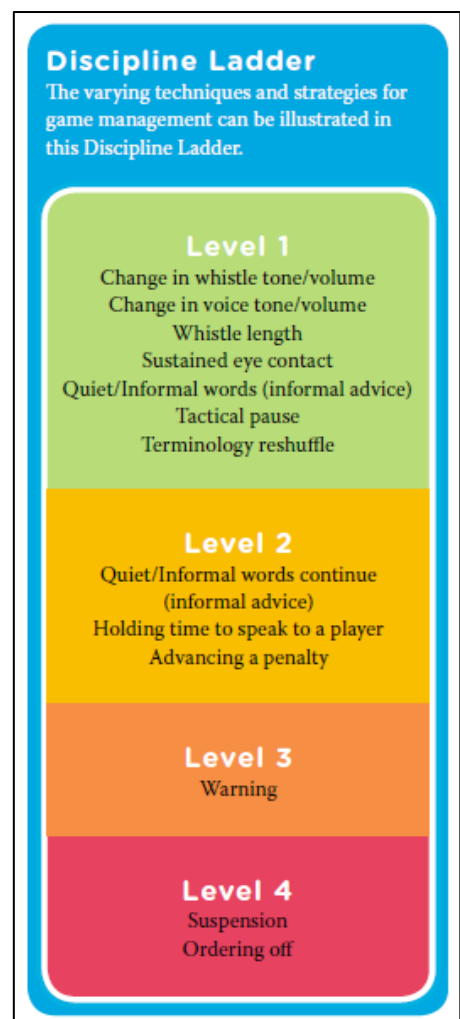
The Discipline Ladder

The varying techniques and strategies for Game Management can be put into a Discipline Ladder, which you can use at any level of match to effectively manage discipline.

These techniques include:

Whistle

One of the most important tools an umpire has is their whistle. Varying the tone and volume of your whistle can often let a player know they are reaching the end your tolerance for a particular action or actions. Having a whistle with a pea is invaluable. Pea-less whistles are harder to change the volume and tone and even harder to roll for the beginning and end of play. A whistle with a pea will cut through the noise of a crowd and will appear more sharp and crisper to players and spectators alike.



Voice

When delivering any terminology a voice that is calm, clear, non-confrontational but firm is key. Confidence in your decision making will serve to reinforce to players that you are making sound judgements. If your voice is quiet and indecisive players can often lose confidence. If you don't believe what you are blowing how will anybody else! When delivering terminology keep what you say to a minimum. Blow the whistle, state the infringement, state the player and state the penalty. "Contact Goal Keeper, Penalty Pass or Shot". Indicate clearly where you want the penalty taken and which direction play is to continue. Doing this clearly and with confidence is an easy way to manage the game effectively.

It should be noted that you will often hear umpires at international matches or on the television not delivering their full terminology – do not copy them! When you are working your way up through the awards you will need to tick all of the boxes the assessors are looking for. In high paced, elite level games there is often not enough time to deliver full terminology. In the ANZ League umpires will often only say "contact" or "obstruction" if it is obvious which player has committed the infringement.

The 'Quiet or Informal Word'

The use of the 'quiet or informal word' can help players to adapt quicker to your decisions. Use short and clear phrases like "tidy up your Contact", "get the right distance", "wait for the whistle" (for breaking at the centre pass). Try and avoid phrases like 'no more Contact' or 'stop breaking' as they could be misinterpreted by players and coaches as a warning.

Changing the tone of your voice or the way you deliver your terminology may also help the player to become more aware of your decisions. "Wing Defence (pause), Contact. Penalty pass". By saying the playing position first you immediately get the attention of the player. Wait for them to turn and look at you before you deliver the rest of your terminology.

Holding Time

Holding time to speak to a player adds a degree of seriousness and can make the penalty more effective. It also draws the attention of the coaches and other players to the action so they know it won't be tolerated.

Advancing a Penalty

The advancing of penalties is an effective way to make very clear that a behaviour or action will not be tolerated. However, it has been noted by many umpire mentors and assessors from all over the country that it is often over used, used too early or the advancement

doesn't actually mirror the severity of the infringement. These issues will more than likely lead to a more in-depth discussion surrounding advancing penalties when the rules come up for review in 2015.

The rules state that you can currently advance a penalty (amongst other actions) for;

- Dispute with an umpire (often referred to incorrectly as dissent)
- Incorrect setting of a penalty where this deliberate action is regarded as a player disputing

The only other reference is made in Rule 20.1.1 where if a player continues to infringe after earlier penalties, or the umpire considers the normal penalty (including the advancing of a penalty) is insufficient the umpire may issue a warning to the player concerned.

*This has been interpreted that the umpire **may** use the advancing of a penalty as a measure before a warning is issued. This includes as a consequence of persistent or deliberate infringing where if it were to continue a warning would be issued. Using an advance penalty should be the immediate sanction before a warning.*

Advance Penalty Check List

- Do not over use advancing as it will lose its effectiveness.
- Your voice should be clear so all participants involved know why the penalty has been advanced.
- It is the actual penalty you are advancing so it must be set correctly. **The player that infringed must come to the new position.** If they cannot enter the area they need to stand at the edge of their playing area and takes no part in the game until the ball is thrown.
- As a guide advancements should only be made over a distance of half a third.
- The umpire can only advance in their area of control but the co-Umpire may choose to take on the advancement into their area. If this occurs it is advisable that the complete advancement is no longer than half of a third.
- When advancing a penalty from goal third to inside the goal circle it should not be assumed the ball will be placed under the goal post.

Warning a Player

The rule book is clear that for rough or dangerous play, persistent and/or deliberate breaking of the Rules, misconduct or any other conduct which is considered inappropriate an umpire may choose to Warn, Suspend or Order Off a player. Applying these rules is a big deal and should not be done lightly. However, an umpire should not be afraid to apply these rules should a situation occur.

If used effectively the application of the discipline rules should allow a player to understand they need to adapt to your rulings or that they are approaching the end your tolerance for a particular action or actions.

For a player who continues to infringe after earlier penalties or if the normal penalty (which could include the advancing of a penalty) is insufficient the umpire may issue a warning to the player concerned. It is advisable to only use the word 'Warning' when you are going to issue one. Players, coaches and spectators can become confused if you say things like 'if you do that again you'll get a warning' or 'player you are getting close to a warning'. Keep your dialogue short and to the point.

Warning Check List

- Remain calm and non-confrontational but firm.
- Hold time? The rules do not explicitly say you should or shouldn't hold time for a warning. Sometimes it is advisable to hold time as this can reinforce the impact of the warning and allows you to take a breath and gain composure before you deliver your terminology.
- At the same time as you blow the whistle for a warning remember where the ball was and who has possession.
- Indicate to the player what they were doing wrong. "(Player position) you are persistently going offside, you are persistently contacting, your comments are inappropriate, you are persistently obstructing, that contact/action was not in the spirit of the game or you were deliberately delaying play"... "As a result I am warning you". No further dialogue should be required.
- Set the penalty in the position where the game was stopped.
- Indicate to the timekeepers you are ready to restart the game
- Blow the whistle to resume.

Suspending a Player

The rule book states that 'A player may be suspended from a game for a specified period. Except in extreme circumstances, this will not be done unless an appropriate warning has been given'. A continuation of an action that triggered a previous warning may warrant a suspension being issued or if serious enough a one off incident may trigger a warning.

An umpire can decide the length of a suspension in two ways, time or a number of goals. In my experience I have found that it is better to suspend a player for a number of goals rather than time as this is easier to keep track of. However, you should take into account what is happening on court and that the length of suspension is appropriate to the level of seriousness of the behaviour concerned. If you are suspending a goal defence for persistent contact but the following outcome will be a penalty pass or shot a two goal suspension may not meet the seriousness of the suspension. In this case it may be pertinent to suspend the player for three goals.

Suspension Check List

- Remain calm and non-confrontational but firm.
- Signal to the time keepers to hold time and remember where the ball was and who had possession.
- Indicate to the player what they were doing wrong. "(Player position) I have previously warned you for (state what your warned them for) persistently going offside into the goal circle"... "As a result I am now suspending you for (however long you feel is necessary) No further dialogue should be required.
- If a suspension is to be issued for an extreme incident you will only need to state what that incident was followed by how long the suspension is for.
- Indicate to the timekeepers how long the suspension is for.
- The suspended player should sit in the chair next to the reserve umpire or (if in a local league situation) somewhere away from their team bench.
- Set the penalty in the position where the game was stopped.
- Indicate to the timekeepers you are ready to restart the game.
- Blow the whistle to resume.
- At the end of the suspension the player may return to the position they left vacant immediately after a goal has been scored or an interval.

- If you are suspending a Centre follow the same procedures outlined previously.
- An on court player must move to the Centre position.
- When the suspension has finished the suspended centre must return to the Centre position and the player that moved must return to their original position.

Ordering a Player Off

If an umpire arrives at the decision to order a player off this should be done with confidence and belief that they have done everything within their power to keep the player on the court. If you order off or suspend a player your league or completion may have additional paperwork for you to fill in.

Ordering Off Checklist

- Remain calm and non-confrontational but firm.
- Signal to the time keepers to hold time and remember where the ball was and who had possession.
- Indicate to the player what they were doing wrong. "(Player position) I have previously suspended you for (state what you warned them for) persistently going offside into the goal circle"... "As a result I am now ordering off and you will take no further part in the game. No further dialogue should be required.
- If the order off has been issued for an extreme incident (it would need to be very severe to go straight to ordering off) you will only need to state what that incident was and that the player will take no further part in the game.
- The player needs to report to their team bench and will take no further part in the game.
- No substitutions may be made for a player ordered off.
- The position will be left vacant except if the player was a centre which should be filled by an on court player.

Top Tips

- Don't go into a match with any preconceived ideas about the discipline of a team or a particular player. Treat every game as a fresh start.
- Develop a thick skin. Don't assume that a player that slams the ball down in frustration is frustrated with you or your decision.
- Remain calm and non-confrontational but firm.
- Practice your dialogue in the car on the way to your match.
- Don't jump straight to level 2 or 3 sanctions before you have tried a combination of the techniques in level 1.

The Game Management Ladder

Discipline Ladder

The varying techniques and strategies for game management can be illustrated in this Discipline Ladder.

Level 1

- Change in whistle tone/volume
- Change in voice tone/volume
- Whistle length
- Sustained eye contact
- Quiet/Informal words (informal advice)
- Tactical pause
- Terminology reshuffle

Level 2

- Quiet/Informal words continue (informal advice)
- Holding time to speak to a player
- Advancing a penalty

Level 3

- Warning

Level 4

- Suspension
- Ordering off

A change in whistle tone or volume can make players aware that you are reaching the end of your tolerance of a particular action.

A change in voice tone or volume can also make players aware that you are reaching the end of your tolerance of a particular action.

Varying the length of your whistle will immediately draw the attention of all participants to an action.

A sharp and quick whistle will make you appear decisive and confident in your decision making.

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Level 2

Quiet/Informal words continue (informal advice)
Holding time to speak to a player
Advancing a penalty

Level 3

Warning

Level 4

Suspension
Ordering off

Sustained eye contact can hold a player's attention for longer which will reinforce your decisions.

The 'Quiet or Informal Word'. These can include;

- Stay on side at the pass
- Address your distance
- Tidy up your Contact

When you blow your whistle, waiting for the player to look at you before you deliver your decision can reinforce it.

Reshuffling your terminology to say the playing position first will immediately draw a players attention to you.



Continuing to use 'Quiet or Informal words' will make taking discipline sanctions further easier because you have done everything you can to modify player actions.

Holding time to speak to a player adds a degree of seriousness. If it involves more than one player you could also involve the Captain.

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Terminology reshuffle

Level 2

Quiet/Informal words continue (informal advice)
Holding time to speak to a player
Advancing a penalty

Level 3

Warning

Level 4

Suspension
Ordering off

Keep calm and non-confrontational but firm.

Advancing a Penalty adds a degree of seriousness to an infringement. However, do not overuse Advancing as it will lose its effectiveness.



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Level 3

- Warning

Level 4

- Suspension
- Ordering off

You should only ever use the word 'Warning' when you are issuing one. Saying things like 'if you do that again it will be a warning' could lead to confusion.

An Umpire should not be afraid to issue a Warning if they deem it necessary. Applying interventions from Level 1 and 2 consistently will mean you have done everything you can.



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Level 3

- Warning

Level 4

- Suspension
- Ordering off

A Suspension can occur due to a continuation of an action that previously triggered a Warning. It could also occur following a one off incident.

Time or goals? Although the rule book gives you two options when suspending, doing it for a number of goals is more easily administered.

The length of a suspension should match the seriousness of the action that triggered it

A suspended player should **always** be sent to the suspension chair next to the reserve umpire.

Ordering a player off should be done with confidence and the belief that you have done everything within your power to keep that player on the court.

Tell the player what they have done wrong. '(Position), I have previously suspended you for'... I am now ordering you from the game and you will take no further part.

A player that has been ordered off needs to report to their team bench and takes no further part in the game.

If you order a player off you may need to fill in additional paperwork for your league or directly to England Netball.

