



## CORNY'S CORNER

### *Communication Spawns Perceptions*

*Corny Galdones, January 1998*

How you express yourself and appear in officiating intercourse through conduct, speech, motion, sound, and sight influences the regard and repute bestowed on you. Wise application of these communication vehicles fosters favorable perceptions.

***Demeanor.*** Your behavior reflects your character. Each match is meaningful to someone. Appearances count. Look sharp, work hard, and do your best; first impressions can be lasting. Treat all match participants with absolute respect. Body language and facial expressions say a lot. Smile, show pleasantness and a sense of humor. Have an upright, poised carriage. Manage in a dignified, business manner. Provide order with modesty. Style matters. Be fair not partial, decisive not hesitant, approachable not confrontational, confident not arrogant. Opinions of credibility or unreliability will depend on whether you're sensed respectively as an expedient or an impediment to the match.

***Dialogue.*** Verbal communication is a two-way street. Listening is critical. Before the match, as the first referee or second referee interact with the match administrators, team captains and coaches, scorekeeper, and within the work team to exchange the vital information to conduct the match efficiently. It's essential to talk. It's never suitable to chatter. As the first referee address, do not ignore, any questions or concerns of the team captains. Think before you speak. What you say and how you say it will determine whether the situation is eased or aggravated. Be calm not excited, precise not inconclusive, congenial not abrasive, tactful not blunt, brief not protracted, firm not autocratic. Do likewise as a second referee in dealing with the coaches.

***Whistle and hand signals.*** These evident modes for the start and end of each play and match interruptions set the tone for your public portrait. Your whistle should be audible to everyone present and be blown promptly to end a play. Every signal should be displayed separately, long enough, and high enough for everyone to observe and understand. Execution should be with unrushed, crisp, natural motions and conform to standards. (During the play customized signals between the first referee and work partners should be brief and discrete). A sharp whistle and proper, polished signals present a professional image.

***Eye contact.*** Eye contact is an effective communication tool during the match, not only among work team members, but between the officials and teams as well. For example, eye contact can be productive in getting a subtle warning or point across without speaking. A first referee can build teamwork by maintaining visual contact with work partners to verify their readiness before each play and to obtain their input for calls within their respective jurisdictions at the end of each rally, and not to be overlooked, during the rally. A prompting whistle or gesture may be necessary at rally's end. Neglect of visual communication could lead to indifferent support from work partners. A second referee in turn should have regular eye contact with the coaches between plays in anticipation of requests or queries from the bench. This small practice reaps huge benefits in building a client rapport and trust.

Appearances through communication form perceptions which become reality. Every official should be skillful in applying the relevant types of communication to produce affirmative results, especially an esteemed match presence.