



Staying at the top of your game

by Dr Michael Lloyd, Performance Psychologist

Motivation is the driving force behind an official's desire and determination to achieve their goals. Being motivated can help to ease the pressure and demands that come with being an elite official, particularly after a long and taxing season. Those who sustain their motivation over a longer period of time are more likely to experience positive results.

To remain successful and cope effectively with the additional demands of elite officiating, you need to:

1. *enjoy what you are doing*
2. *remember where you have come from, and*
3. *keep it all in perspective.*

To achieve this, you can take some specific actions:

- know what works for you, what doesn't, and work hard toward your goals
- believe in yourself, think positively, and stay on a track that has been successful
- be well rested physically and mentally
- avoid accepting the pressure of other people's expectations
- create new challenges and let the politics of sport pass by
- recognise what is important and what is not
- develop a good support network of friends and family to help you through the highs and lows, and give you advice when needed, and
- perhaps most importantly, create a system for dealing effectively with the demands.

Dealing with demands

You will have a better chance of continuing to perform well and enjoy life if you respect the following guidelines:

Stay in control of life

- Set priorities for your time and activities.
- Take care of your own needs and the needs of your loved ones first (for example, find time for rest, relaxation, proper nutrition, physical activity, and simple joys).
- Keep things in perspective.

Set a plan for dealing with demands

- Expect additional demands and create a system for dealing with them.
- Decide how many demands you can reasonably handle at different times of the year.
- Establish times when you are not available for any external demands and stick to them.
- Approach demands that you want to accept as opportunities and set a reasonable timeframe.
- Accept a reasonable number of demands that are important to *you*, and let the others go.

Respect the patterns that allowed you to excel

- Remember the basics about how you got to where you are now.
- Reflect on what allows you to excel (for example, hard work, adequate rest, believing in yourself, accepting new challenges, being well prepared mentally and physically, and enjoying what you are doing).

Plan strategies for dealing with distractions

- Focus on what you want and on what you can control.
- Draw from the wisdom of others in planning your path (including your peers, your mentor, sport psychologist, etc.).

By following these guidelines you will be better equipped to manage the demands of elite officiating, maintain your physical and emotional wellbeing, and stay at the top of your game.