



Dealing with Harassment: Call the penalty

Referee Harassment is a problem that does not have a clear solution. In all cases, referee harassment is the fault of the person doing the harassing; never is the referee at fault for being harassed. However, in many cases, the referee does not help themselves by “being-the-nice-guy”, giving warnings, feeling the need to show that they have a “thick-skin” or “not-wanting to penalize the team for the coach’s behavior” (hint: the coach is part of the team so penalize as needed).

There is one rule in the rulebook used responding to referee harassment: Hockey Canada Rule 9.2. Here is a basic break down:

- 1) You should not warn anybody before you assess a penalty. You do not need to say “coach, if you don’t calm down you will get a penalty.”
- 2) You do not need to wait for anything to happen twice; you can assess a penalty the first time you are harassed.
- 3) Generally, you progress through three penalties to deal with referee harassment:
 - a. Minor Penalty-call this as soon as harassment happens. Think of the minor penalty as your warning for further penalties to the individual.
 - b. Misconduct Penalty-if the harassment is done by a player and continues then this is the next step.
 - c. Game Misconduct Penalty-this is the third step for a player or the second step for a coach if the person does not stop.
- 4) You do not have to use (a)→(b)→(c). You can go straight to whatever penalty fits the intensity of the situation.

The referee should not issue a warning before assessing a penalty for harassment under 9.2.

There are three penalties you may progress through for referee harassment: minor penalty (coach or player), misconduct penalty (player), game misconduct penalty (coach or player)

That is rule 9.2 in a nutshell. Here are four circumstances where each option may be applied:

- 1) As you skate by the bench the coach says loudly enough for you to hear “Hey that was a terrible call...”→Minor Penalty.
- 2) The coach comes on the ice to help an injured player. You take up a position far away from the coach and she yells at you loudly so the whole arena can see and hear. → Minor or Game Misconduct (up to you depending on severity, but call one of them)
- 3) A player tells you that you are the worst referee they have ever seen. → Minor penalty. After receiving the penalty the player keeps telling you how bad you are...→Misconduct. Upon being assess a Misconduct, the player begins banging the stick and screaming more. →Game Misconduct Penalty.

- 4) A coach has not received any penalties earlier in the game. He asks to speak to you but you are running out of game time and you decline without going to the bench. He starts yelling about the last call you missed very loudly and you can easily hear him from 150 feet away. → Game Misconduct

Now, here is where, we as referees need to protect ourselves. There is no such thing as helping out your buddy who is the coach or ignoring harassment from a player who is usually nice to you. There is no such thing as giving someone a free pass

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because "it was the first time" or "it was an emotional situation" or "maybe she was right." There is also no such thing as "not giving the coach a penalty because you do not want to punish the team". The coach is part of the team so assess the penalty. There is no excuse for harassing an official. EVER.

Our job, as referees is to keep the game fair and safe. If we allow game participants to harass us, even only once, then we are not keeping the game safe for ourselves (or other officials; or younger officials) and we are not keeping the game fair for the teams that do not harass officials. If the other team is harassing an official then the innocent team deserves a power play.

Call the impact penalty. Keep the game fair and safe. After all; Hockey is a game; Hockey should be fun; Harassment of any kind or in any amount is never fun.