



How your body reacts when you referee and how to manage that reaction to function at a high level

During evolutionary times (like cavemen) humans survived because nervous system activated the body to either fight or escape. So, if a sabre-toothed tiger came from behind a bush the body changes:

1. Black parts of your eyes (Pupil) get bigger to let more light in so that you can see more of what you are looking at;
2. Increased breathing to provide more oxygen to your body;
3. Decrease saliva in your mouth so that you do not choke;
4. Other changes: your nose will not run, lungs allow more air to enter, decreased bathroom need, heart pumps more blood.

These changes in our body are highly useful to respond to single and short-term threats. These changes are also useful in hockey games. However, in refereeing, you are operating in a permanent 'fight' response for up to 2 hours per game. Therefore, your bodily response can work against your ability to function as you tire yourself out.

Therefore, here are four suggestions to help you balance your need to be calm and your body's need to use the fight response:

1. The pupil gets bigger, which allows in more light. However, our visual system is designed to focus on one thing at a time; great for a sabre-tooth tiger, not so great when you are watching 10 players. **Keep your head on a swivel; you must overcome tunnel vision associated with being in the fight response.**
2. You are going to be breathing more to increase oxygen intake. While this will help you, you need to find a way to harness it and control so it does not spin out of control and lead to excess fatigue. **Try to use deep breaths or Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction during down moments such as line changes.**
3. You cannot trust your body to tell you that you are thirsty due to decreased saliva so **drink a little water at every opportunity even if you do not think you are thirsty.**
4. **Have fun.** If you can have fun refereeing then you can decrease your body's fight response. **Smile**; it decreases stress and helps you relax. **Say positive things** to others because positivity leads to positivity.