

Hockey Umpiring Top Tips and Guidance 1

by

Chris Todd

Level THREE Umpire Coach and

FIH Grade One International Umpire (retired)

World Cup and Olympic Games Panel, 1975 to 1995

I am preparing a series of umpiring tips for umpires at all levels of the game based on my own experiences over the past forty years of my umpiring, together with my observations of umpires in recent times. This is the first of those guidance tips.

WHISTLE

I have noticed during the past couple of seasons the habit creeping in with certain umpires, some of whom are quite senior, of keeping the whistle in the mouth. A lot of things relating to umpiring involve developing good habits, but this is not a good habit for the following seven reasons :

01. It looks awful. The FIH are concerned about a number of umpiring issues and “**Presentation**” is certainly one of them. Moving round the pitch with a whistle in your mouth looks just like the umpire has a dummy in the mouth and it gives completely the wrong impression to players and spectators.
02. It is a well known medical fact that babies breathe through their noses, but children and adults breathe through their mouths. Keeping the whistle in the mouth increases the risk of the umpire blowing the whistle accidentally while simply breathing normally.
03. The umpire could swallow the whistle!
04. The umpire may blow the whistle too soon and inadvertently spoil a potentially good advantage. Already this season I have seen a good national league umpire do precisely that no less than three times within ten minutes in one match.
05. Umpires are being encouraged more and more as part of their match management skills to **talk** to players. **If** the whistle is kept in the mouth, then the umpire cannot talk to the players. This season I have observed one instance where an umpire attempted to talk to a player while he still had the whistle in his mouth and that created quite the wrong impression.
06. The whistle could drop out of the umpire’s mouth onto the pitch and while the umpire is trying to pick it up and recover the situation, that umpire will of necessity have to take his eyes off the players which is not good practice. I have seen this happen this season in more than one top match. It was quite embarrassing for the umpire.
07. There is a view that it looks arrogant. This may or may not be true, but most importantly it certainly does not convey the correct image to the players.

The solution is quite simple and it is to have your whistle on a lanyard or nylon cord with the lanyard or cord attached to your wrist. If the whistle is then held down by the umpire’s side until it is needed, then this looks better and gives the umpire time to bring the whistle up to the mouth and consequently reduces the risk of blowing too early. The other negative points about keeping the whistle in the mouth are therefore eliminated.

Tie your spare whistles on lanyards as well and keep them in a pocket.