

# BAD GAME ELIXIR.....

by Ed Rae, SDI MA

**Ever had a "Bad" game? Sure. All of us have had one... or more. Well here is a tonic for what ails your game prowess. There is no known cure for "Mad Dog Breakout," but some things we can control, in our own sweet, special way.**

**Scholarship.** Study Laws of Game, Advice to Referees, Memoranda. Websites: USSF, FIFA, USA State sites. Position Papers are key to interpretation of the laws. Read all. Then read them again. Keep checking the web for updates, new issues. Attend every instructional, recertification, educational session you can. Talk with colleagues about games. Hang around tournament tents.

**Fitness.** Get, be, stay in shape good enough to match the game level you are assigned. Accept only those games, in which you are fit enough to make proper decisions. When fatigue impedes, brainpower fades. It fast fades like light at sundown when you are unfit & tired. Do you have running/training program year round? If not.... it will doom your game, at even a modestly competitive level. Lombardi truism: Fatigue = cowardice.

**Attitude.** Find a way to like these players. If not, they will find you out. They are reason we officiate. Cooperation begins with mutual respect.

**Assessments.** Peer discussions. Formal assessments (or informal ones). Feedback of all kinds. Listen to what people are saying. Discount all you want, but take-away the things you can work on. No one lives long enough to make all the mistakes. Learn from others' peccadilloes; others' effective tools.

**Don't be too cute.** Pulling ball out to the 19, when everyone, even the beneficiary, knows it is a dishonest lack of courage, gets you bad karma. Indirects when DFK's are called for: bad news. Refs love to call handballs in middle of field. But get cute in the penalty area....whoa!! Most 'hand' calls are crap. Ignore inadvertent stuff. Give the players a break - penalize only deliberate, obvious, hand-on-ball, actions.

**Protect skilled players.** Watch for PI (*Persistent Infringement*) Pattern of fouls by one person—or a team—deal with it. When flurry of fouls force facing up to them.... yellow cards beckon you. Caution boldly. Protect players.

**Goalkeepers.** Foot in face is not 50-50. Crashing keepers as tactic, is killing the game. Stop it: speak-yell-whistle-give free kicks-jump up & down – caution card- send off—but stop the violence....NOW!! Keepers are at risk, watch over them.

**Be human.** If you make a mistake, admit it. Tell players you blew it. 'My bad'. Just don't make many. Work hard. Hustle. Players however grudgingly, respect it.

**Talk.** You can speak with players. Exchange is OK at appropriate time. Just do not try to reason with unreasonable people. High emotional moments, once calm, then can be dealt with. All speech is not dissent. Sometimes it can help you. Sometimes players just vent. Let it out. It may be rude but not unsporting. Then it is over. So move on. Get the ball in play.

**Manage the game, not the minutiae.** Game is BIG. Ref is small part of it. Service is ref's task. If it is 'your' game exclusively; if you are imperious, condescending, haughty -- players will display umbrage. It will not go well. Ignore inconsequential details in the main. Overlook here-and-there slights to your authority, when your game impact decisions are being respected. A complaint about a throw-in at midfield needs to be ignored. Free kick decisions complied with promptly, means your authority is intact.

Context cogently viewed allows the referee to think BIG.

**If you can use the book to get justice, use it.** But no matter what, you better get justice! Advantage is in the book. Woes betide the official who uses it foolishly. It is for experienced players, with game savvy refs. It is not possession. It is a sophisticated team concept. *Use it blue moon sparingly or else!!*

**Try many techniques.** You should have 5-6 tools to use. Help players to help their self-control. Foul recognition. Whistle. Physical presence at key spots. Voice. Pre-game contacts. Hustle & hard work. Extreme positions. Facial expressions. Gestures. Silence. Tonal variation: of whistle, of voice commands, of simple conversation.

The players will appreciate it. When they do, they will appreciate you.

*Then you will have a good game.*