

Consistency.....Possible?

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"A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

How often have we all heard coaches tell their players: **We need to be more consistent.**

Specify a sport. It is curiously common to all. How often, have we all heard coaches, spectators, call for soi-disant, consistency. By officials, by umpires, by referees. How often, have we all heard: Soccer Referees, Instructors, Administrators and Guest Speakers plead for: consistency. How often ?

They all, in their message- are all, certainly all, consistent. Often.

Is consistency possible?

Referees are implored, cajoled, pushed, shoved & suffer under the burden of being cruelly consistent. The religious exhorters in unison, want same call, same place, same Bat time, same Bat channel. Ever always. Every time. Every place.

They want a penalty kick called, down one end for an unfair charge—sure as sure , called down the other end, for a penalty kick. That seems to make sense. It smacks so of true justice. Yes , we should expect referees to do likewise , in both 44 x 18 areas. Good thing to do. All agree. Yes, all will, yes they will, yes.

We certainly want inadvertent grandparents' 'handballs' to be avoided. To be constantly non-calls. But if we have true, deliberate handling, in the middle of the field, we can see the referee calling a direct free kick. We also will well look inside the 44 x 18, to see a penalty kick called. Same thing. Sure. Reasonable. Yah!

Common sense? Yes? Of course.

Now that brings us to the broader brocaded, filigreed philosophy of the whispering, wiser world.

The erudite Rueben Thomas writes, *"Consistency is similar to rationality, but less extreme: it does require reasoning, but only that all equivalent situations are dealt with in exactly the same manner"*. He goes on to cite the Children Act (1989) which states that "a fixed policy regarding punishments {in schools} must be made accessible...."

Then he further emotes: *"accepting consistency means losing the ability to differentiate between individuals...to treat each on...own terms."*

Picture this: the score is 0-0. Two teams of relative equal, technical ability. A shirt is pulled by Blue. Call is made. A shirt, later, is tugged by Green, same call is made. Consistent. Now in 2nd half, an injury. To the Green keeper. The score mounts. Lopsided game. Blue is

crushing them, 6-nil. Five minutes remaining. A shirt is grabbed by Green. In the area. Ball goes over goal line immediately. No call. Huh ? No need? Goal kick.

Inconsistent?

Very mismatched teams. One, Division leader, undefeated, the other a team with no subs. Lost all its games, so far. The poor soul team ekes, maybe two runs at goal. Most of time it is in their end - suffocation. On one of their two breakouts, a forward appears to lose a bouncing ball, on a run, by the touchline. It looks to leap out by inches, then return elliptically in, as the player continued the run. Goal kick.

The leading coach says to the referee, *"In a different game I might have had something to say about that touchline call."*

Ref responds, *"In a different game, you might have got a different call."*

Both laughed.

What is going on here ? Sounds like, gulp...um..ahhh... **IN-consistency**.

Game is tight. 3-3 with 15 minutes to go. Two 'verbal' fights. Two red cards for language. Could have been more. But Aces had peacemaker player, who kept his team under control. While the Eagles had troublemaker, who made this even uglier. The Aces fell behind 5-3. The peace man for the Aces was exhausted. He fell to the ground and the call went against him.

He muttered, lackadaisically low to the referee... "You-----!!"

The referee ignored him. The game ended with no further incidents. **Consistent?**

According to Thomas, *"Consistency easily leads to inflexibility, narrow-mindedness, and an inability to change views. This results in a dull character, unlikely to succeed, if unlikely to fail, unable to take advantage of opportunities."*

So where are we? Consistency is a good attribute. It is particularly helpful to new referees, who want to follow known precedent Who want to do, as we 'always have done it.' Cuts off argument, like a plan of policy in a Boston bureau. Nothing personal, just policy.

We ARE consistent. We ARE consistent. We ARE consistent.

Consistence does give us a pretty potent, predictable path. Cozy comfort. Good for inexperienced referees for sure. It does make it easy, come complex game situations. Without consistency, one is vexed to find genuine generalities, to grip similar events, in future games. We do need constant principles for a baseline.

But what of the game we serve? What of 'outside the box' thinking. What of solutions to vexing human, emotional issues—on the field? What of we featherless bipeds, who relentlessly reveal our souls. What of crazy quilt work everywhichway of play? Or fault-filled, foibled, feeling humanity?

Can cookie-cutter approach work? Every case? Every time? Every permutation? Every combination? In snow or sleet, with aching feet? It is crunch time referee. This is a game like no other, you have never seen. Before. Or will again.

Make a unique decision !! Go ahead !! Run, walk, skip into this fleeting, flowing river of a game.

Greek philosopher, Heraclitus knew it all along, about 500 B.C. *"It is not possible to step twice into the same river."*

Consistency? IM-possible.