

# WHERE DOES FITNESS....Fit in?

*By Ed Rae, SDI*

The running, marathoning guru, Medical Doctor, and motivational speaker, the late George Sheehan said: "Fitness means you can do more work." The referee task requires physical work. So what does it do for referees?

## **Preparation**

If you are fit, you come prepared for the physical aspect of the task. If you have gained weight all winter, been a couch potato and not been active, it will show. If you have been running, playing indoors, active on stationary bike, then you will be ready to do more work. Even walking a mile, can give as much health benefit as jogging one. It can lower your cholesterol too. It will build confidence going into the soon to begin season. At least walk before you run. Do at least a 30 minute workout, walkout or jog-4 or 5 times a week.

## **Appearance**

Ever notice how a fit/unfit referee appears late in either half. Drooping sad shoulders or wobbly, lazy legs later in the game? Does not look good or inspire the players at all. That good 'look' of strong strides, upright carriage, confident legs, on the other hand, all stems from fitness. Players and spectators notice. It gives the referee credibility.

## **Attitude**

Ones' ability to remain calm, react proportionately; to enjoy the game - under pressure - is positive, if one is fit. If one is not, little things can be nagging, annoying. Out of breath refs make what kind of decisions? Inconsistent, inaccurate at best. While referees, who recover quickly after a running counter attack, can make under control decisions. They can make sense out of chaos.

## **Courage**

The ability to make prompt decisions, allow play to get going as the players wish, if quickly, are corollaries of a fit referee. Maintaining composure, when all others are skipping off into irrationality, is the hallmark of a good, in- shape official. Courage allows: bold non-calls, quiet, tough calls and matter-of-fact ho hum calls. Or can ease the 'ouch' impact of the controversial penalty kick .

## **Position**

Getting late to the right spot, being behind when players tangle, too far from the keeper in tense, tight action, can cause control problems. If the referee is fit, closeness to play is a good, a given. Play slows down for you. In simple adjustments, one sees all. You'll be standing where you need to be, if you are already there on the dime, on time.

## **Accuracy of Decisions**

Tired referees do not recognize what is deliberate vs. what is trifling or inadvertent. They are too quick to call offside, when they might well wait, until active involvement takes place. Blood flows to the brain with cardiovascular fitness. The mental strength, that pumps through the veins, yields proper read of misconduct. Warnings instead of cards perhaps. Or maybe stern yellow card vs. an unforgiving red card, when it is inappropriate to be hasty.

In shape refs can let go that which players do not need to be called. The game can fearlessly flow, as they say. Why? Because the ref is closer. All know the ref is close. They accept better then. The legendary Eddie Pearson: "Presence lends conviction."

## **Control**

Fitness is not an isolated attribute. It effects every aspect of the game. Players accept calls or non-calls, more readily from referees who: look fit, are close to action, get in position, assert authority with dignity.

Vince Lombardi said, "Fatigue makes cowards of us all."

An updated version might be: ***Aerobic & anaerobic fitness gives courage to us all***