

# Mad Dog Breakout

by Ed Rae, SDI MA

Ever had a '**BAD**' game?

If so, is that a referee failure?

Whose judgment made it "bad?" Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of US President Franklin, admonished, generally, that no one could make you feel inferior unless you let him or her. Do referees bow to biased managers? Caustic coaches? Unpleasant players? Permit partisans to pass judgment? Rude remarks in the heat of the game? Or with punishing after words?

In *When Smart People Fail*, by Carol Hyatt & Linda Gottlieb (Penguin Books, New York, 1988) the authors empathize with that 'bad day' feeling: *"...in the short run there are few things worse than feeling you have failed. You feel pummeled, destroyed, distressed, violated, betrayed, terrified, angry, guilty, depressed, vengeful, lethargic, impotent, and occasionally relieved and resolute."*

According to this insightful book, this is called a 'narcissistic loss.' You have suffered sadly sinking self-esteem. Self worth is summarily nonplussed. Helen Kubler Ross in her renowned tome, *On Death and Dying*, describes some stages of mourning. Players often race through these stages, when a call goes against them. A penalty kick might trigger a 'mourning.' These same steps are experienced by referees, fans, and coaches. A little loss of some sort befalls them. Or a big one. They mourn metaphorically.

Do you dare to take the, at times cheerless, challenge of officiating? You will enjoy boundless destined days, full of sun & cheer. Yet, we all have some sorry sequence of 'bad' days. Rains rail. Cold comes. Examine the failures. Detail the deficiencies. Review the few, as they may be.

"Failure," as Hyatt & Gottlieb have it, "is a judgment about events." Simply put: events. If you, yourself, accept this judgment, then you may travel tentatively, through the Ross listed sorrowful stages: shock, fear, anger & blame, shame, despair. It may not occur to you at the moment. It may pass in minutes. Or it may drag slowly on and on, for days. Sometimes weeks.

Hopefully, universally & thankfully, it is a process of renewal and regeneration. Normal it is. Natural it is. Hurt it is? Hurt it is. Human, it is.

It has happened; it is happening; it will happen, to officials all over the globe. We eventually acknowledge. We invariably accept. We inevitably move on.

Lets' look at some reasons why a 'bad' situation has our emotions tempest-tossed. Some self-examination is part of the renewal requirements and real.

**>>> Task Oriented Style.** You do not read people well-or want to. The human side of the enterprise escapes your notice. You are task focused-only. It seems this is a discomfort for the players. They often react negatively.

Well, one can learn to consider the players, as a special, particular part of play. Network with referees who benignly blend with people. Go to clinics and ask about warm & fuzzy feelings. About person-to-person interaction. Put yourself in the players' boots. Consider the Golden Rule. Respect works both ways. Try this: Listen to coaches and players. Discount for bias, but listen. Assessors & feedback too, can be a big help. Adjust to the players.

**>>> Negative fit.** You just do not match up well, with a particular group. At one level or another (older, younger, adult women, master men, competitive, intra mural, etc.) you simply do not mix well. Incongruence.

If you are not psyched for any particular category, then you turn down the assignment! Be available for just those alone, that seem to fit mutual styles. You do not have to run against the wind all the time. These times have tons of games to do. Go to that five o'clock some soccer somewhere.

**>>>> Volunteer-of-the Year.** You line the fields. Coach your kids. Run errands for a church group. Do a local game as referee-all in the same day !

Are you are too busy? Ill- prepared mentally & physically for a game ? Surrender something. Refereeing on a fine fall, spring, summer day should be positive therapy. Not so ? Hurried ? Unfocused ? Great--give up the game or something else. You owe it to yourself & the players. Be selective: with your time, with your schedule, with your commitments. All will be the better.

**>>>> Quick Success Syndrome.** Ego. Pride. Ambition. False, feigned or flippant, you want to be the 'go to' person. You are in a hurry. Yet you somehow know it is not going that well for you. Peers notice with alarm.

There is no quick fix. No potent potion to take. No Alice in Wonderland elixir. Take your time. Do a good job on games you are given, of whatever measure. Polish your craft. Go to many, many clinics. Watch other officials. In good time and soon, you'll get there. There, with confidence earned. Acumen learned.

**>>> Mad Dog Breakout.** Ill wind. Satan ex machina. Bad luck. Poor timing. Stars misaligned. Witches' brew. Mad dog breakout.

Some days you cannot win. Get over it. Organic refuse composts. Wash mindless madness away, with your uniform that night. Everyone endures mad dog days. Reason not with the unreasonable. Ugly endings are gone. Be sure to talk about it with someone. Then get your attention-fully- to the next assignment. We all experience the null set. Edmund Burke warned us that at times, "Forbearance ceases to be a virtue." New beginnings beckon.

**>>>> *Mismanagement.*** The skills - set is just out of your reach. Mastery eludes you. Maybe colleagues do not seem to mesh with you, when doing 3-person game sets. Flag work; eye contact; foul recognition or some clumsy human relations skill slips. You trip. You fall. Maladroit whistle? Angry atmosphere? The fault dear referee is not in the stars, but in ourselves.

Management techniques can be learned. If you do not manage well now, you may with short, progressive planning steps. Advancement awaits. Via educational opportunities. Via assessments. Via peer discussions. Cut yourself some slack. You can learn. It takes time. That's all, a little time. And leaven time with some prodigious application on your part.

At long last, this unique effort is not for everyone. Try coaching or playing. Maybe refereeing just does not suit you. You'd be in numbers-up company; the majority of the many good folks, involved in the game, are not referees.

But please do stick with it, there is help going forward and galore. FIFA, USSF, state and local resources are anxious for you to succeed. Referees are a scarce, human, cared about commodity. Seek out that help. You are high value. The Laws, the game is organized around you.

Ever seized by a setback, squashing your attitude? Consider the golfing great Jack Nicklaus. A sloppy shot got the master into tricky trouble, in a major tournament. He was quizzed about it later.

"What were you thinking about, after you had that nasty, bad shot ?"

He replied, "the next shot !"