

Unconscious Bias

Korfbal is inclusive and rooted in gender equality, but players and referees in our area are not very diverse. This means there is a risk of unconscious bias when refereeing.

Unconscious bias is the automatic, unintended tendency to judge or treat people differently based on who they are, often without realising it. This is why others may sometimes see it in us before we do.

As referees, our job is to keep the game flowing, ensure everyone has a positive experience, and never tolerate racial or other forms of bias. We must apply the same standards to everyone and treat every player as we would want to be treated.

If we see particular behaviour, address it early through explanation. We can also involve the captain so they can speak to their players. Repeatedly blowing the whistle without clear signals or explanation is neither good refereeing nor inclusive, because it ignores the impact on players. Equally, we must listen when a captain or coach raises a concern.

We are responsible for our own actions and for managing behaviour on court. We need to step back and consider how our decisions and actions (or lack of them) are affecting the match and players, and adjust early when needed.

We also have a responsibility to each other. Welcome feedback on your own refereeing, and share observations with fellow referees, particularly where unconscious bias may be involved. Bias is usually unconscious, so others may see what we cannot. Opening with "As a referee, may I make an observation?" is a positive way to start.

Have a great year reffing. We appreciate everyone who volunteers for what can be a lonely and difficult role. If you are concerned about any situation, please reach out.