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2 **Beyond the technical: The role of emotion regulation in lacrosse officiating**

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21 **Abstract**

22 Emotions can influence the performance of referees leading to a need to examine emotions
23 experienced, and regulation strategies used by referees. The present study assessed emotions and
24 emotion regulation strategies of 19 referees officiating at an Under-19 Lacrosse World
25 Championship. Using survey methods and focus group interviews, officials responded to five
26 questions: (a) what emotions were experienced? (b) What events elicited emotions? (c) How did
27 lacrosse officials manage their own emotional states prior to, throughout, and following a
28 competitive game? (d) How did officials manage others' emotional states? (e) What were the
29 perceived consequences of these strategies? Results indicate that emotions fluctuated throughout
30 the tournament as referees encountered intrapersonal and interpersonal emotion-eliciting events.
31 These fluctuations are suggested to come from a progressively diminished capacity for emotion
32 regulation. Participants used emotion regulation strategies that could be classified into Gross'
33 (1999) families of emotion regulation strategies, often relying on suppression, emotion
34 contagion, and preventative refereeing. Collectively, the results offer new insights into referee
35 emotion regulation at international events.

36 *Keywords:* emotion contagion, preventative refereeing, umpires, psychological skills,
37 decision making

38

Introduction

39 Referees represent an important (though sometimes underappreciated) group of sport participants
40 with goals and roles unique from coaches and athletes. Given that referee performance is
41 partially judged by their management of competitive games and athletes, it is unsurprising that
42 referees experience stress during competition (Balmer, et al., 2007; Philippe, Vallerand,
43 Andrianarisoa, & Brunel, 2009; Lane, Nevill, Ahmad, & Balmer, 2006; Mahoney, Devonport, &
44 Lane, 2008). Officials are expected to make accurate decisions, and often whilst under immense
45 pressure similar to competitive athletes (Anshel & Weinberg, 1999). In an experimental study,
46 Balmer et al. (2007) found that emotional states and mental effort influenced the consistent
47 accuracy of referee decision-making. Therefore researching factors that influence emotional
48 states and mental effort represents a worthwhile line of enquiry.

49 The influence of emotions on behaviour in sport has been well established (Jokela &
50 Hanin, 1999; Lane, Beedie, Jones, Uphill, & Devonport, 2012). While there might be common
51 trends in emotion regulation throughout performance domains, emotion theory has suggested that
52 formal and informal roles within the sport context might have an influence on the emotion
53 regulation of self and others (Friesen, Devonport, Sellars, & Lane, 2013; Van Kleef, 2009).
54 Conceivably, for example, the authority over gameplay bestowed to referees might manifest in
55 different strategies to manage players and coaches' emotions. Similarly, the referee's goal is to
56 maintain fair and safe gameplay while the goal of coaches and players is to win the match. Given
57 the relationship between goals and emotions (Tamir, 2015), we suggest that the difference in
58 goals between referees and coaches and athletes might lead to different emotion eliciting events
59 and regulation strategies. Given calls to view referees as performers, and for a greater volume of
60 research to be focused on them (Philippe et al., 2009), examining the influence of emotion

61 regulation on performance among referees offers great potential in informing applied work with
62 sports officials. It is commonly agreed that interventions should be founded on theory and
63 research (Michie, Rothman, & Sheeran, 2007), and to date, there is little research examining how
64 referees regulate their own and players emotions experienced in competition.

65 Emotion regulation is proposed to be a controlled process that involves the initiation,
66 maintenance and modification of the occurrence, intensity, and duration of feeling states
67 (Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000; Gross & Thompson, 2007). This can include the
68 regulation of one's own feelings and the regulation of other people's feelings that are monitored in
69 comparison to a desired standard (Niven, Totterdell, & Holman, 2009). When an individual
70 identifies discrepancies between current emotion states and those preferred or deemed, optimal or
71 required, then regulation is required (Webb, Gallo, Miles, Gollwitzer, & Sheeran, 2012). In
72 refereeing, calmness is proposed to be an emotion state linked to optimal performance (Anshel &
73 Weinberg, 1995). Attaining this state may require the attenuation of intense emotions such as
74 anxiety and anger frequently experienced whilst officiating (Anshel & Weinberg, 1995, Balmer et
75 al., 2007).

76 Strategies used to regulate emotions have been organised according to numerous
77 classification schemes (e.g., Parkinson & Totterdell, 1999; Koole, 2009). Gross and Thompson's
78 (2007) process model of emotion regulation highlights five families of emotion regulation
79 strategies along a temporal continuum of when the strategies are employed during emotion
80 generation. The first four emotion regulation families (i.e., situation selection, situation
81 modification, attentional deployment and cognitive change) are described by Gross (1999) as
82 antecedent-focused strategies because these strategies occur before appraisals give rise to full-
83 blown emotional responses. These strategies may be contrasted with the fifth emotion regulation

84 family, response modulation which occurs late in the emotion-generative process, after the
85 emotional responses are generated (Gross & Munoz, 1995; Gross & Thompson, 2007).

86 Situation selection involves taking actions to engineer circumstances that we expect will
87 trigger emotions we would like to experience. Situation modification involves modifying the
88 situation directly so as to alter its emotional impact. Attentional deployment involves redirecting
89 attention within a given situation in order to influence emotional responses. Regulatory
90 behaviors focussed on cognitive change seek to change one or more emotion-antecedent
91 appraisals in a way that alters the situation's emotional significance. This is achieved by
92 changing how we think either about the situation itself or about our capacity to manage the
93 situational demands. Finally, response modulation strategies influence physiological,
94 experiential, or behavioural responses relatively directly after the emotion has occurred (Gross &
95 Thompson, 2007).

96 Emotion regulation can further be distinguished according to whether strategies are
97 targeted toward the person's own feeling states (i.e., intrapersonal emotion regulation) or targeted
98 toward another person's feeling states (i.e., interpersonal emotion regulation). There has been
99 sustained research interest in emotion regulation (see Koole, 2009; Lane et al., 2012; Webb, Miles,
100 & Sheeran, 2012) although this has tended to focus on regulating one's own emotions. Recent
101 research has seen an increase in research examining interpersonal emotion regulation (Friesen, et
102 al., 2013; Niven et al., 2009). Given the interplay between intra and interpersonal emotion
103 regulation, there is a growing trend to simultaneously examine both types together (e.g., Stanley,
104 Lane, Beedie, Friesen, & Devonport, 2012; Tamminen & Crocker, 2013).

105 An example is provided by Tamminen and Crocker (2013) who examined intra and
106 interpersonal emotion regulation within a high performance female curling team. Their analysis

130 The authors obtained ethics approval for the study through the author's university ethics board.
131 The first author was sent to the tournament to collect data and spent the entirety of the
132 tournament with the participants and was able to build rapport during meal and leisure time away
133 from the competition. Mixed methods data collection consisted of emotion diaries that were
134 completed before each game, and focus group interviews that occurred following games. It is
135 worth noting that during tournament play, referees' judgements and actions were assessed by an
136 adjudication committee who would determine referee opportunities and groupings for playoffs
137 and championships matches.

138 Emotion Diaries

139 Participants were asked to record their emotions before each game throughout the course of the
140 tournament. Emotions were recorded on a 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5
141 (*extremely*) to report the extent to which 11 distinct emotions representing all areas of Russell's
142 (1980) circumplex model of emotion were experienced (i.e., happy, angry, calm, downhearted,
143 energetic, still, sluggish, enthusiastic, anxious, guilty and proud). Emotions were rated in terms
144 of "how participants were feeling right now" (Lane & Terry, 2000) These emotion diaries also
145 asked participants to measure the extent to which they had difficulty regulating their own and
146 others' emotional states and their confidence to regulate these emotions in the last 24 hours.
147 Lastly, participants were asked to rate the perceived extent their emotions helped their
148 performance and the extent to which they were satisfied with their performance. These
149 perceptions were recorded on a 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*).

150 Focus Group Interviews

151 Each participant took part in at least one semi-structured focus-group interview (some
152 participants participated in multiple interviews). These interviews were conducted onsite at the

153 tournament shortly following completed games and averaged 19 minutes in length. These
154 interviews focused on discussing emotion-eliciting events, attempts to manage own and others'
155 emotions, and consequences of regulatory efforts. The preceding game acted as a prompt for the
156 focus interviews. Specific questions included: "Please share some of the things that caused
157 intense emotions during the game;" "How did you attempt to manage your emotions during and
158 before the game;" "How did you manage the emotions of your fellow referees, athletes, and
159 coaches?" Responses from emotion diaries were also used as prompts for the interviews. The
160 interviewer tried to encourage verbal responses from each participant to ensure each participant
161 contributed to the discussion.

162 Data Analysis

163 In order to analyse the data in a concise manner, quantitative data detailing emotions experienced
164 and subsequent consequences were grouped together according to when they coincided with
165 changes in the tournament format: Round-robin (Day 1 to Day 4), Playoffs (Day 5 to Day 7), and
166 Finals (Day 8 to Day 9). The rationale for this grouping was based on the assumption that
167 because the meaningfulness of the games was changing because of when they occurred, so too
168 might the emotions experienced. As the aim was to investigate how emotions changed in
169 combination, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used. This option is preferred to
170 running multiple univariate tests (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Qualitative data analysis was
171 assisted using NVivo 9 software. Emotion-eliciting events were classified into intra- and
172 interpersonal sources of emotions. A deductive analysis following Gross' (1998) process model
173 of emotion regulation was used to contextualise intra- and interpersonal emotion regulation
174 strategies. There were no reported strategies that could not be categorised into any of Gross' five
175 families.

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Results

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Experienced Emotions

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Self-reports of collective experienced emotions indicate that referees' emotions varied through

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the Round-robin, Playoffs, and Finals. As detailed in Figure 1, the following emotions

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collectively peaked at during Round-robin: Anxiety, downheartedness and guilt. The following

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emotions peaked during Playoffs: Happiness, pride, enthusiasm, and calmness. The following

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emotions peaked at the Finals: Energetic, stillness, sluggishness, and anger. It is worth noting

183

that happiness, pride, enthusiasm, energetic, and calmness as show in Figure 1 remained the

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emotions perceived as most intensely felt throughout the duration of the tournament.

185

[Please insert Figure 1 here]

186

Consequences of Emotion Regulation

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Results from a MANOVA revealed the consequences of emotion regulation as they unfolded

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throughout the course of the tournament and indicated an overall significant effect (Wilks' $\lambda_{2.886}$

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= .521, $P = .002$, partial $\eta^2 = .278$). Results revealed significant differences in the perceived

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difficulty and confidence in being able to regulate one's own emotions throughout the

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tournament. Specifically, the perceived difficulty to regulate own emotions reduced (lowest

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during Playoffs) and perceived confidence to regulate own emotions increased (highest during

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Playoffs). Furthermore, perceptions of emotions helping performance and satisfaction with

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performance increased as the tournament progressed. See Table I.

195

[Please insert Table I here]

196

Emotion-Eliciting Events

197

Events and circumstances that triggered emotions in our referee sample are presented in Table II.

198

Emotion-eliciting events and circumstances were categorised into two higher-order themes

199 representing a dichotomy in the sources of the events: intrapersonal (emanating from situations
200 internal to the referee) and interpersonal (emanating from sources external to the referee).

201 Emotion-eliciting events were further classified into 11 second-order themes.

202 [Please insert Table II here]

203 Emotion Regulation Strategies

204 Intra- and interpersonal emotion regulation strategies were classified in accordance with Gross'
205 five families of emotion regulation strategies. Interpersonal emotion regulation strategies were
206 further distinguished between those targeted at coaches and athletes, and those targeted at fellow
207 officials. This was deemed appropriate as interpersonal emotion regulation theory and research
208 has demonstrated the moderating effect of social-contextual factors (in this case, relationship
209 power differential) in regulating others' emotions (Van Kleef, 2009). Table III presents intra-
210 and interpersonal emotion regulation strategies.

211 [Please insert Table III here]

212 **Discussion**

213 Emotion regulation experiences and data were reported from lacrosse referees whilst they
214 officiated at an Under 19 World Championship tournament. The participants indicated that their
215 emotional states fluctuated throughout the tournament, as did their perceived difficulty and
216 confidence in managing their own and others' emotions. Additionally, participants reported
217 intra- and interpersonal events that elicited emotions and numerous strategies to help manage
218 these emotions that were grouped according to Gross' (1998) process model of emotion
219 regulation strategies.

220 Participants reported that pleasant and unpleasant emotions fluctuated throughout the
221 tournament. Such fluctuations in emotions have also been evidenced among athletes in the time

222 leading up to competition (Cerin, Szabo, Hunt, & Williams, 2000; Hanton, Thomas, & Maynard,
223 2004). This suggests that during longitudinal events, fluctuations in felt emotions are likely to
224 occur among athletes and officials; and consequently this might change the interpersonal
225 dynamics of emotion eliciting and regulatory processes. Pleasant emotions such as calm, pride,
226 happiness, and enthusiasm peaked during Playoffs thereafter decreasing towards the Finals. This
227 coincided with an increase in unpleasant emotions such as anger, downhearted and sluggishness
228 towards the end of the tournament. Concurrent to these changes in felt emotions were significant
229 changes in perceived emotion regulation abilities. Specifically, confidence in regulating own
230 emotions peaked and perceived difficulty in managing own emotions was at its lowest during
231 Playoffs. From mid to late tournament, perceptions of confidence in managing emotions reduced
232 whilst perceived difficulty in managing emotions increased.

233 It is conceivable that as the tournament progressed, referees might have been
234 experiencing a diminished capacity to regulate emotions, and that consequently emotion
235 regulation required more effort. In order to perform consistently, a referee must display self-
236 control, and according to the Strength Model (Baumeister, Vohs & Tice, 2007), all forms of self-
237 control; including emotion regulation, are proposed to use a limited resource (Gailliot et al.,
238 2007). Using the metaphor of self-control acting like a muscle, repeated use consumes a limited
239 resource resulting in temporary depletion—akin to a muscle becoming fatigued after exercise.
240 This compromises an individual's capacity to exert self-control in subsequent tasks. Nevertheless
241 much like a muscle, with rest and relaxation, the resource is replenished and the capacity for self-
242 control is restored (Gailliot et al., 2007). Thus, referees regulating emotions and making
243 decisions in stressful environments could be susceptible to performance decrements via resource
244 depletion. An indication of depletion is perhaps evidenced in the present study by an increase in

245 feelings of sluggishness, downheartedness and anger that were collectively demonstrated by
246 participants between the Playoffs and Finals. It may also be evidenced by an increase in
247 perceived difficulties in regulating own emotions, and decreased confidence to regulate own
248 emotions. Further research could examine these plausible associations under carefully controlled
249 conditions.

250 Referees concurrently reported significant increases in both the instrumental value of
251 their emotions and perceived satisfaction with their performance as the tournament progressed.
252 This seemingly contradictory finding may be partially explained by research exploring meta-
253 emotional beliefs regarding the functional role of emotions (Hanin, 2000; Robazza, Bortoli, &
254 Hanin, 2006; Robazza, Pellizzari, & Hanin, 2004). A referee might intentionally elicit an
255 unpleasant emotion state such as anger if they believe that it might assist in the pursuit of desired
256 performance consequences (cf. Robazza et al., 2004). In the context of the present study, in
257 seeking to manage increased intensities of sluggishness that might be anticipated as a tournament
258 progresses, we suggest that referees might have instrumentally elevated feelings of anger (or
259 allowed anger, elicited from an external event, to remain unregulated). Anger is known to be an
260 energising emotion (Hanin, 2000), and as such it might help manage increased feelings of
261 sluggishness. This contention might explain increases in scores for the instrumental value of felt
262 emotions. It might also help explain increased ratings of performance satisfaction across the
263 tournament as referees may take into account the stage of the tournament and anticipated fatigue
264 (physical and mental). Further enquiry to reconcile these seemingly conflicting perspectives is
265 warranted.

266 The emotion-eliciting events derived from focus interviews were broadly themed as
267 intrapersonal and interpersonal emotion-eliciting events. Findings of the present study offer

268 support for previous research that has identified the following emotion-eliciting events among
269 sports officials: interpersonal (i.e., peers, coaches, athletes) interactions or conflicts; conflict
270 between officiating and work or family demands; fear of failure; making errors; making
271 controversial calls; verbal abuse; internal physiology; evaluation by a supervisor or assessor; and
272 meaningful (e.g., playoff) games (Anshel & Weinberg, 1995, 1999; Balmer et al., 2007;
273 Goldsmith & Williams, 1992; Mason & Lovell, 2000; Rainey, 1995; Stewart & Ellery, 1998;
274 Voight, 2009). The two most reported emotion-eliciting events were interpersonal interactions
275 and game meaning. Interpersonal interactions represent a noteworthy finding as it suggests that
276 referees might be susceptible to interpersonal emotion regulation strategies implemented from
277 coaches and athletes. If the purpose of interpersonal emotion regulation in sport is to bring about
278 behavioural (i.e., performance) changes (see Friesen, Lane, et al., 2013), then the findings
279 suggest that coaches and athletes might be able to influence the performance, decision-making,
280 and subsequent calls of referees and officials. An applied implication of this study then is that it
281 might be beneficial to educate referees about possible strategies coaches and athletes might use
282 to bias referees' calls.

283 The meaningfulness of the game was also frequently reported as an emotion-eliciting
284 event. This is unsurprising as the context for this study was of World Championship calibre.
285 Complementing the athletes' perceived meaningfulness of the tournament, one of the referees
286 also reported, "this is a World Championship for us too." As such, the tournament represented a
287 significant amount of prestige and source of pride for the referee participants. This was
288 supported in the results as pride was the highest reported emotion throughout the tournament.
289 Although sport psychology researchers have studied instrumental performance effects in sport
290 (e.g., Lane, Beedie, Devonport, & Stanley, 2011), studies have largely ignored the potential

291 performance effects of pride. Given that broader psychology has begun to research the
292 behavioural effects of pride (e.g., Carver, Sinclair, & Johnson, 2010; Tracy, Shariff, & Cheng,
293 2010; Williams & DeSteno, 2009), the results of this study suggest the performance effects of
294 pride would be a worthwhile line of enquiry for sports psychology researchers.

295 Referees utilised strategies from Gross' (1999) five emotion regulation families to
296 regulate their own emotions as well as the emotions of others. Some of these strategies are
297 common to the sports psychology vernacular, for example attentional control (e.g., Wulf, 2013)
298 and self-talk (e.g., Hardy, 2006). Participants also reported a number of strategies that represent
299 new avenues for study in sport. For example, many of the referees reported instances of
300 controlling their emotional expressions to hide their experienced feelings. For example, the
301 referees reported that a common emotion-inducing event was making judgemental rulings (i.e.,
302 the "50/50 call"). Despite the brief anxiety that these calls stimulated, referees reported the
303 benefit of maintaining a composed, confident and even aggressive demeanour. Referees believed
304 that this type of emotional labour or surface acting (e.g., Totterdell & Holman, 2003) precluded
305 athletes and coaches to second-guess their judgements and deterred heightened unpleasant
306 emotions. Typically in work psychology, emotional labour has been associated with unpleasant
307 feelings and intrapersonal consequences such as exhaustion and burnout (e.g., Kenworthy, Fay,
308 Frame, & Petree, 2014). In our study, however, referees reported intense pleasant emotions
309 throughout the duration of the tournament (i.e., pride, happy, enthusiastic, energetic). Our
310 finding that referees could consistently employ surface acting strategies yet maintain heightened
311 pleasant emotions represents an opportunity for future research.

312 Pertaining to the regulation of others' emotions, referees in this study exhibited instances
313 of emotion contagion whereby they would try to regulate their own emotions in an attempt to

314 facilitate a “contagious” effect whereby their crewmembers could also experience the desired
315 emotion. Zaki and Williams (2013) referred to this process as intrinsic interpersonal emotion
316 regulation, and this has already been identified in sports team research (e.g., Tamminen &
317 Crocker, 2013). Given that teammates (i.e., both athletes and officials) have shared goals in
318 competition, it is likely that an individual desiring to bring about perceived performance effects
319 by regulating their emotions might desire to have their teammates experience the same emotions,
320 intrinsic interpersonal emotion regulation represents a valuable avenue for new research in sport.

321 Additionally, referees in this study talked at length about a strategy used to regulate
322 athletes’ emotions called “preventative refereeing.” This strategy, classified within the situation
323 selection family, was focussed on refereeing in accordance with the game score in lopsided
324 games where the end result is already anticipated (e.g., a score of 10 to 1 with mere minutes left
325 to play). This was a preventive strategy mainly intended to control and prevent aggression from
326 the losing team. Here referees would look to ensure that the trailing team was given enhanced
327 opportunity to maintain ball possession or tactical advantage. By doing so, the referees hoped to
328 avoid situations where the losing team would act inappropriately on their feelings of anger or
329 desperation and commit a violation that resulted in an injury on a player from the winning team.
330 Naturally, the winning team often objected to this perceived favouritism and the referees
331 responded with additional interpersonal emotion regulation strategies to calm down athletes and
332 coaches on the winning team. Usually, this was in the form of changing cognitive appraisals of
333 the situation by reminding the winning team that the desired effect of the referee’s actions was to
334 ensure the losing team would not injure any of their players. This approach was reported to help
335 reduce tensions in the winning team. This is not a new revelation as a study examining refereeing
336 in handball found that referees and officials sometimes adapt the rules of the game to suit the

337 conditions and skills of the players (Souchon, Cabagno, Traclet, & Rascle, 2004). Nevertheless,
338 this type of judgemental refereeing, embedded in the art of officiating, has not received much
339 scientific scrutiny and represents an intriguing avenue for future research on referees, umpires,
340 and officials.

341 A number of limitations from the current study need to be underscored. Firstly, there is a
342 possibility that emotion diary data might have been influenced by the focus group interviews.
343 For example, if one referee learned about a new strategy for regulating emotions early in the
344 tournament from an interview and subsequently applied this strategy for the remainder, this
345 might have influenced their ratings to such emotion diary responses as confidence to regulate
346 emotions because they had been provided with a new resourceful strategy. Additionally, the
347 study relied on self-report data. This might be problematic as it relies on the participants'
348 awareness to answer questions as to what might have triggered their emotions and the extent to
349 which they were successful in regulating others' emotions. The use of self-report data also
350 precludes us from determining whether there were any measurable effects of regulation. While
351 acknowledging the small sample size, the current study has provided some valuable insights into
352 the refereeing experience at a World Championship tournament. The intra- and interpersonal
353 emotion regulation strategies reported in this study represents a valuable resource for future
354 intervention-based empirical work that might attempt to test the efficacy or moderating factors of
355 these strategies. Admittedly, this study utilised a predominately male sample as was only
356 permitted by the tournament circumstances. Given the gender differences in emotion regulation
357 as reported by the literature (e.g., Gross & John, 2003) future research should seek to have equal
358 representation between the sexes.

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