

positive
Vibes
only®

REFEREEING
ISIN'T AS EASY AS
IT LOOKS



REFEREEING ISIN'T AS EASY AS IT LOOKS

Have you ever refereed a game?

If you have, you'll know very quickly that refereeing isn't as easy as it looks from the sideline.

You're constantly moving, doing your best to stay close to the action as it unfolds. You're watching for rule breaches, fair play, restarts, substitutions, and – most importantly – the safety of a group of energetic tamariki and rangatahi who are trying their best. You're required to make decisions in seconds, often from imperfect angles, with plenty of noise and emotion swirling around you. And all of this is usually done by someone who loves their sport and has volunteered so children can participate – not by a full-time professional official with multiple cameras, slow-motion replays, or a team of assistants.

Do referees make mistakes sometimes?

Of course they do. They're human.

Should anyone be abused for making a mistake?

Of course not.

What really matters is how parents, coaches, and supporters cope with decisions they don't agree with – because that is exactly what our children are learning from us. When adults yell at referees, question every call, or replay decisions loudly from the sidelines or the car ride home, young people absorb that behaviour. They learn that frustration justifies disrespect.

On the flip side, when adults model calm responses, perspective, and empathy, our kids learn how to regulate emotions, problem-solve, and move forward when things don't go their way.

If we want our children to develop emotional control and resilience – in sport and in life – we need to show them what that looks like in real time.