FOOTBALL

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**Former football referee Pierluigi Collina made a huge impact on the game.**

The bald Italian with the famous piercing eyes was named ‘The International Federation of Football History & Statistics’ (IFFHS) best referee for six straight years between 1998 and 2003, and was considered his generation’s best match official.

Collina, 54, retired from officiating in 2005 and is now the chief refereeing officer at European football’s governing body Uefa.

He was invited by the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) and Singapore Telecommunications (SingTel) to deliver a talk, entitled “The Art of Decision Making: Transform and Stay Ahead”, at the Institute of Management (SIM) and SingTel Comcentre yesterday.

Here are snippets from Collina’s interaction with the audience and the media.

1. **How did you deal with the pressure of officiating at such a high level?**

   It’s something very personal. Everyone reacts differently. There are people who need a bit of pressure to perform.

   When I was a young referee in the third division in Italy, I knew a very famous referee who used to get to the stadium 90 minutes before kick-off. He would spend 10 or 15 minutes relaxing or even sleeping on a massage table. I thought: If it’s something that works for him, one of the top referees in Italy, why wouldn’t it work for me?

   So, in my next match, I went to the dressing room, I lay down on the massage table, I tried to do something similar. Unfortunately, I never woke up (in time for the kick-off)!

   I learned that kind of relaxing doesn’t match with my (personality).

2. **How did you earn respect on the field?**

   There are different solutions.

   One is to scare people – you are respected because people fear you. But that obviously doesn’t work.

   Respect comes from your reliability.

   If people trust you because you are reliable and make the right decisions, of course it is easier to be respected.

   If they don’t respect you, they won’t even accept a correct decision.

3. **What do you think of goal-line technology?**

   In July 2012, world football lawmakers the International Football Association Board decided that confederations or football associations can use goal-line technology to help referees.

   So far, there have very few occasions where it is needed.

   There have been about 380 or 390 matches in the English Premier League, but there have been only two incidents where goal-line technology was used to (determine if) the ball crossed or did not cross the goal-line.

4. **What was your biggest mistake as a referee?**

   I’ve said before that what makes a difference is the ability to come back stronger than before.

   To come back stronger, you need to understand why a mistake was committed... put in place a change and do something better so you don’t repeat the mistake.

   I certainly committed some mistakes, this is obvious.

   I tried to understand these mistakes, I found the solution, and I came back to the field stronger because I forgot the mistake... So I’m sorry, I can’t answer because I forgot!

5. **There are no full-time referees in the local Great Eastern-Yeo’s S.League. Do you think having professional referees would improve the standard of officiating, and the league?**

   I don’t know if being professional or not is the solution, but the referees have to be put in the conditions to be able to prepare.

   Very few countries in Europe have professional referees... For a big part of my career, I was not a professional, but I had a job that was very flexible, so I was able to handle my daily schedule.

   When I was a Fifa referee, I was away from home 185 days a year.

   So it’s difficult to handle with a job if you have to be in an office every morning.

6. **Referees frequently get brickbats when they make bad decisions. Why do you think anyone would want to be one?**

   This is a pity. A referee makes 100 decisions during a match and makes one mistake, but nobody remembers the 99 correct decisions.

   If I look back, I’m pleased and thankful to my schoolmate who had the idea to go for the referee course and invited me along.

   Not because I eventually managed to referee the Champions League final or the World Cup final.

   But because I learned a lot about making decisions, particularly when I was 17 or 18 years old... When I was 17, my father or my mother decided on my behalf.

   But, as a referee, I took decisions on players who were older than me, and that was something very unusual, but I learned how to decide.

   And in life, everything is about decisions.