

# Football referees cope by thinking they are better than other refs

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(Medical Xpress)—Football referees at all levels think they are better than their colleagues – and that may be how they cope with the pressures of this difficult and often thankless task, according to researchers at Northumbria University.

That is the conclusion of research presented by Dr Melissa Anderson and

Dr Sandy Wolfson, from Northumbria University, at the Annual Conference of the British Psychological Society.

Past research with referees suggests that one way they cope with the pressures is by comparing themselves favourably with other referees. This new study set out to see if the same is true of referees at Premier League level.

Dr Anderson and Dr Wolfson surveyed 11 [Premier League](#) referees and 183 who officiate at county level. The two groups were asked to compare themselves with other referees at the same level on positive (e.g. well prepared, confident, decisive) and negative (e.g. anxious, under pressure, apprehensive) characteristics.

They found that both elite and county referees saw themselves as superior to their colleagues and to a similar degree. The older and more experienced a referee was, the more likely he was to see himself as superior.

Dr Anderson said: "Referees at all levels need to feel good about themselves. They believe that they are skilful and hardworking, and they can't imagine that their fellow referees are superior to them. This helps them to cope with the considerable unrestrained, abusive comments about their competence, fitness and even their [honesty](#) from the crowd, players, managers and the media.

"But obviously not every referee can be better than every other ref! More experienced referees are more likely to have learnt strategies to help them deal with the pressure. Or it could be that [referees](#) who are not able to do this drop out before they ever become experienced."

Provided by Northumbria University

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