

## Samir's Scoop



*Let's chat with an Expert Sockey Referee*

**Samir** – I welcome here, today, the most valued referee in the game of Sockey at present. Thank you for agreeing to this interview, Ms Longbottom.

**Ms Longbottom** – *Thanks for the opportunity to be interviewed, Samir. I'm delighted to be here.*

**Samir** – Is Sockey the only game you have refereed? If not, which other sports have you refereed, when did you first start and for how long have you done this?

**Ms Longbottom** – *Good question, Samir. I've refereed a few sports over the years, including basketball, netball, volleyball, soccer and hockey. I started when I was fifteen and I won't say exactly how long I've been at it. That would reveal my age. Suffice it to say, it's been well over a decade.*

**Samir** – What is the most important skill for a referee to have and, with regard to refereeing Sockey, what makes you a good fit for this particular role?

**Ms Longbottom** – *I don't think there's one single specific skill that matters more than any other, but if I had to pick one characteristic that makes a ref good, I'd say it's their ability to embrace the role they play in ensuring*



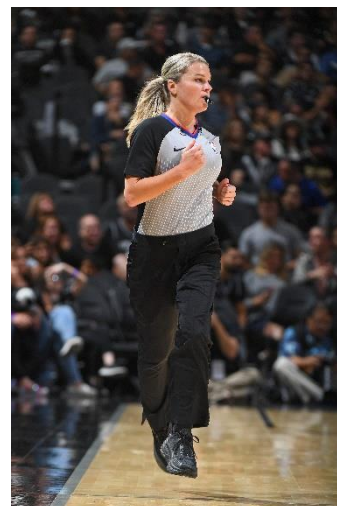
*any match is as successful as can be for the players. As far as Sockey goes, I feel that I'm a good match because I*

*understand and thoroughly respect the fact that this game is both unique and steeped in tradition. It's a once in a lifetime event for competitors and I do all that I can to ensure the tournament is successful and memorable.*

**Samir** – How well do you know the rules of Sockey?

**Ms Longbottom** – *Super well, Samir.*

**Samir** – It looks like a tricky game to referee. Are you comfortable making quick decisions in high-pressure situations?



**Ms Longbottom** – *All games have their challenges. I wouldn't say I'm necessarily comfortable with quick decision making under pressure all of the time, but that's okay. It's just part of the job, and I accept that.*

**Samir** – Can you provide an example of a time when you had to make a difficult call?

**Ms Longbottom** – *Oh, I could give you dozens and they are all pretty much the same. The most memorable, for me, is the fifth game in the first tournament I ever refereed. It was the very first time I had to pull up a player for touching the line with their stick, thereby ending the game and declaring their opponent the winner. I knew that they'd tried their best, like every player does, and that they hadn't wanted to make that simple mistake, but I also had to do my job. It crushes me every time I have to make that call.*

**Samir** – How do you handle criticism from players?

**Ms Longbottom** – *I don't recall players ever criticising me during a match. I think that's because they know I'm always doing my best. What they say off court and after a game may be a different story but that's not for me to worry about.*

**Samir** – Have you ever had to eject a player from a game? If so, what was the reason?



**Ms Longbottom** – *Other than calling an end to a game and a loss against a player based on breaking a game rule, like failing to lift their stick in time or sending their puck over the sideline, I'm pleased to say that I've not had to send anyone off for inappropriate behaviour. That doesn't surprise me, though. Nobody risks the one chance they have to be Sockey Champion.*

**Samir** – You are known for being eagle-eyed, but nobody can see everything. How do you try to avoid missing things?

**Ms Longbottom** – *You're right about not being able to see all, Samir. If, for example, a player stands in such a way that their feet obstruct my view, and I'm too slow to position myself so that I can see whether they touch the line with their stick, I might miss that. It's surprising how much I rely on spectator reaction for things like this. That said, it doesn't mean I let the crowd call the shots. I do what I can to see all that I can. It means I have to move the whole time.*

**Samir** – What strategies do you use to ensure that the game is safe for all participants?



**Ms Longbottom** – *I'm a hard taskmaster who doesn't stand for any nonsense anywhere, on court or off. Inappropriate behaviour means a send-off and that encourages people to play safely. The fact there are so many spectator eyes on players also helps. It means players don't risk breaking rules even if they think I won't see it.*

**Samir** – So, to finish up, how much do you enjoy refereeing Sockey?

**Ms Longbottom** – *More than you can possibly imagine, Samir. I'd say at least as much as the competitors enjoy playing it and then some. I'm pumped from the time I see the drawer go up right till I blow that last whistle. Refereeing is fun for me no matter what the sport but the Sockey tournament is the sporting highlight of my year. I look forward to it so much and hope I'm allowed to do it for a long time to come.*

**Samir** – That sounds like a win for everyone, Ms Longbottom. Thank you, again, for speaking with us today and for all that you bring to the game. We hope your refereeing continues for many, many years.

**Ms Longbottom** – *You're more than welcome, Samir. I wouldn't want to have it any other way.*

