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Thank you

Thank you for refereeing games the last 3 weekends in Stockton.

February 28-March 1 the u14 girls Bill Meyer League end-of-season tournament had female center referees for 22 out of 24 games. Among them were last year's district 8 female youth referee of the year Ariel Olarte and this year's district 8 female youth referee of the year Alicia Mendoza. For those female referees who did not get centers, you hopefully saw the standard that is expected of center referees at this level. If we get similar games next year, you hopefully will have worked hard to be ready for them. For the male referees who were assistant referees, thank you for your high caliber support. For those of you who did centers, I know most of you could have handled older teams and higher levels of play. I hope you continue to progress. If you wonder what you can aspire to, check out the web-site www.cnra.net. Northern California female referees are among of the world's best: Kari Seitz refereed the bronze medal game in the Olympics in Greece and 3 women's world cups. Jennifer Bennett has refereed one women's world cup and two u20 women's world championships (see her blog at <http://u20wwcchilereferees.blogspot.com/>), Veronica Perez refereed in the most recent Olympics in China. And there are other "up and comers". How did they get good enough to do these games? They seek out feedback and they make use of it.

March 7-8 the Dennis Olson League u17-u19 boys end-of-season tournament had the best district 8 CYSA boys teams at those ages. I know the fields were small and led to physical games, and all the referees were up to the challenge. Thank you.

Now before you let all this praise make you conceited, realize that none of you did a perfect job. Following are some points that came up repeatedly in my observations and the feedback from mentors.

Tips from Games: Coordinating Signals

Assistant referees and referees were not always on the same page. Specifically, assistant referees were signaling one thing and referees were signaling something different. For example, the two were pointing in opposite directions on throw-ins. Or one of them signaled a corner kick and the other signaled a goal kick. It's nice the coaches and spectators cut you some slack. If they had been more intense, they might have been on your case. So how can you remedy this? First, we want to be right, so don't get distracted. Second, remember who has first dibs on the signals. If the assistant referee has first dibs because the ball went out in her quadrant, she had better be prompt with the call so the center referee does not pre-empt her. Even so, what if the center referee disagrees with the call? It's simple, in the split second before you raise the flag, make eye contact with the center referee. If she is already signaling, copy the signal. If you are not sure who last touched the ball, do what you agreed on in the pre-game conference. Center referees, when you have first dibs, and you are not sure, look to your AR for assistance and he/she should give you the signal agreed to in the pre-game conference. What might that signal be? It's nothing official, but a lot of higher level referees and assistant referees will point across their bodies with their forearms in the direction of the throw-in, (ARs using the hand without the flag). Hopefully these tips will help you work together better for the good of the game.

Half-time

Meet the other officials at the center circle. Assistant referees should retrieve the spare game balls so that spectators don't play with them or lose them. Don't play with the game balls yourselves. Make sure

you all agree on what the score is and who got carded. This is a good time to iron out any teamwork problems. Talk about poor communication (look my way). If you have first dibs on a signal and your colleague is signaling in advance of you and you disagree, remind them in a friendly manner who signals first in which quadrant. Center referee has final say. If your signals are being missed, your colleague needs to be reminded that all three of you need to make eye contact at all stoppages. Also, clarify circumstances when a missed offside flag should be lowered.

Running the Line

If you set the stage correctly and adopt certain habits, you will make your job easier and end up making better calls. First, make sure that coaches and spectators stay 1 yard or more away from the field. This is for player safety and yours, and also so you have an unobstructed view of the touch-line and this area. An accident is more likely to happen with an out-of-balance player crashing into spectators or coaches if they are crowding the touch-line. If they force you to run onto the field, obviously they are distracted from giving full attention to the game, and your presence on the field may take away options from the players as to where to run or pass the ball. If players aren't running too fast, face square to the field and side-step. Side-stepping gives you the ability to change directions quickly. Side-stepping also gives you a better view of the field and your peripheral vision will pick up players that you might not otherwise see. When the speed of play picks up, and you have to sprint, look over your shoulder. Resist the temptation to check that nobody is in your way because in that split instant when you have shifted your attention away from the field, an attacker might pull on a defender's arm/shirt/shorts to get an advantage and you would miss it.

Recording goals and misconducts

How would you feel if you were playing a tournament match with trophies at stake, you won a hard fought match, and then went to check team standings on the score board and found out that the score was reversed and your team was marked down as the loser? This happened during the Bill Meyer League tournament.

How would you feel if your team was getting pounded physically all game long and the referee gave yellow cards to your opponents as appropriate but goofed and did not send off a player after they got their second caution?

No matter how good you are at maintaining control in the match, no matter how hard you work staying close to play to make the right calls, these sorts of referee mistakes will undermine your efforts and send teams home really bitter about what happened. And these problems can be taken care of with just a little teamwork among the referee and assistant referees.

Center referee: Before the game, write both the team city/name and their jersey color on the front of the game card. This should help you avoid reversing the score. During the game, record all goals, cautions, send-offs, and injuries that require a player to be removed from the field. The simplest way to record a goal is to write a "1" in the column of the team that scored, in the row for either the 1st or 2nd half. At the end of the match, total each team's column and write both the digits and the words, for example "3 – three". Some referees record the time of each goal--this helps them keep the sequence of all match events--goals, cautions, and send-offs--accurate. For example, "1-3m 1-17m" means two goals were scored in the 1st half: one in the third minute and one in the 17th minute.

When you give a card, try to have the player separated from the pack so that your ARs can see his/her number. If you are unsure they saw it, yell it to the near AR. This has the added benefit that when you look their way, you will see if they have the flag up for something else, say, the initial foul and you just carded the retaliation. When you record cautions, send-offs, and injuries, include team, player #, time, and very brief description of the incident -- Brief so that you don't delay the restart of the match unnecessarily, but with enough information that it will trigger your memory if you have to write up a longer description later. Best if you use abbreviations for the offense and the "incident" (what the

person did, e.g. slide tackled from the side with no attempt to play the ball). Below is a list of commonly-used abbreviations for caution and send-off offenses. We suggest that you commit these to memory.

<u>Cautions</u>	<u>Send-Offs</u>
Unsporting behavior (UB)	Serious foul play (SFP)
Dissent (DT)	Violent conduct (VC)
Persistent infringement (PI)	Spits at another person (S)
Delays restart of play (DR)	Denies obvious goal-scoring opportunity by handling ball (DGH)
Fails to respect distance on free kick (FRD)	Denies obvious goal-scoring opportunity by foul (DGF)
Enters field w/o referee's permission (E)	Uses offensive, insulting, or abusive language (AL)
Leaves field w/o referee's permission (L)	Receives second caution in same match (2CT)

At half-time and after the match, confirm the score and the identities of all carded players with your ARs. The strong referee makes good use of ARs not just in making calls in the match, but making sure the game records are right.

Why record these things? Cautions may affect points that teams earn. In some competitions if a player accumulates x cautions (not all in the same game), they have to sit out a match. Lastly, if you trust your memory, and you forget, you might allow a player to stay on the field after receiving a second yellow card in the same match. This clearly has a bad effect on the other team who should have a numerical advantage and they are likely to be harder to control for the rest of the match, and all future matches you have with them.

Assistant referee: Have you noticed this with high-performing referees? All three officials record information about the match, not just the center referee. The assistant referees have little game sheets that they fill out, too. The *Guide to Procedures* outlines who in the officiating crew records goals when. After goals, use the TLC (trail-lead-center referee) sequence for recording goals. Recording cautions and send offs is trickier. Officials need to sequence their bookwork so that 2 pairs of eyes are on the field at all times, not all 3 officials having their heads down writing at the same time. This applies to all situations when you need to make game records. At the u17/u19 boys Dennis Olson League tournament, the game ended in a tie. There was no goal scored in the overtime periods. The kicks from the mark went to the seventh kicker from each team. The last kicker scored and all three officials took their eyes off the players momentarily. The kicker made a vulgar gesture at the goal keeper and none of the three referees saw it. It was a red-card offense and he got away with it. Let me emphasize: You need to record what happened, but you also need to have at least two pairs of eyes on the players at all times.

At half-time ARs make sure they have the same record as the center referee, including player numbers for cautions. After the match, they check again. When you bought your red and yellow cards, they probably came in a wallet with a pad of little game sheets. When the game sheets run out, you can use the template here, photocopy it, and trim it to fit the wallet. Aside from benefiting the match (you ensure that the right team is recorded with the win, players with 2 cautions get sent off, etc.), you also have a record to make sure we pay you correctly.

Lastly, do not sign the game card until you have cross-checked its information with your record after the match. Your signature on the game card is your vouching that it is correct. Signing it at half-time is like signing a blank check. You don't know what is going to be written there.

Any time when there is a dispute about what happened in a match, and any time you end up having to write up a report for a disciplinary committee, it helps if all three officials have kept a record of the key events during the game.

Working Cooperatively with Coaches for Better Games

How do you regard coaches on most of your games, as allies who are there for the good of the game, or as annoyances? How do you think they regard you? Much of the attitude that you get from coaches is due to how you interact with them. Treat them with respect, and you will get respect in return. Allow games to become unsafe and not deal with obvious misconduct, and you will earn their disdain. Following are some tips gleaned from top coaches and top referees for working together better.

Prior to the game. Make sure you arrive at the field early and check your appearance. You only get one chance to make a first impression. Introduce yourself to the coach and ask them to bring their team over to be checked in. If they are intensely coaching their team, you can make your presence known without interrupting them. If you got to the field early enough, the moment or two that you have to wait won't cause the game to start late. Ask the home team for 3 game balls and if they balk, let them know that they will get more playing time if there are 3 game balls. If there are any particular game rules that are different for this competition, make sure the coach knows them. Treat both teams' coaches in the same friendly, business-like manner.

During the game. Make eye contact with both your fellow officials at every stoppage. Coaches who need to substitute a player and whose request gets ignored have a legitimate complaint. If they have a legitimate question, such as "Why wasn't that off-side?" Give them an answer "The right defender #3 held them on side." If you are sensing that a particular player is getting out of control, let the coach know in polite terms so they have a chance to deal with the player. Use the cues from a previous newsletter to judge whether you need to tighten up your calls. Certainly no coach wants his/her players getting hurt, and if you've not dealt with misconducts and unsafe play, he/she will feel that you are partly to blame.

After the game. Return all the game balls. Center referee retrieves the ball being played with and the ARs retrieve the spare balls. Shake hands and return player passes. It's fine to exchange a few pleasantries but don't hold a long conversation and rehash game details. Little to no good will come out of this. If the coach insists on complaining, let them know in a firm but friendly manner that this is not the time nor the place to do it. They can contact your assignor.

If you have problems with the coach. USSF recommends a 3-step approach: Ask-Tell-Remove. The first time a person causes a minor problem, ask them to change their behavior. "Coach, you're not allowed to coach down by the penalty area. Please go back to within 10 yards of the half-say line. OK?" The second time you have to deal with the person, you tell them the consequences of non-compliance. "Coach, I asked you to stop doing x. Now I'm telling you. You have a choice: either stop doing x or the game will be stopped (or you will be asked to leave)." The third time, I recommend that there be at least two officials together: "Coach this is the third time I've had to speak to you. Please leave. You have 30 seconds to go or this game is over." You will need to retain the coach's pass, record this on the game card, and write a full send off report.

Do not let people in the technical area (coaches, team personnel, substitutes, substituted players) behave irresponsibly and detract from the overall game. Examples of failures to control their behavior are:

- Abusing referees;
- Coming onto the field without permission;
- Throwing objects onto the field;
- Hitting or kicking objects;
- Antagonizing opposing team's coaches/players;
- Leaving the technical area;
- Interfering with the AR or 4th official in performance of their duties.

These actions may call for immediate dismissal.

Techniques for the referee to deal with problems in the technical area:

- In the pre-game conference, empower the AR/4th official to call the ref over;
- Listen or watch with heightened awareness;
- Make eye contact with assistants and people in the technical area;
- Body or hand gestures;
- Proximity to technical area – presence lends conviction.

Techniques for the assistant referee or 4th official to use:

- Introduce selves before game;
- Give space for the coach to vent;
- Find a peacemaker on the bench;
- Be a positive presence;
- Give equal time/attention to both benches;
- Be a sounding board without the coach crossing the line. What you can say: “I hear you. I understand you. Coach, talk to me. I can listen to you but not the rest of the bench. If I have to call the referee over, you’ll be dismissed.” (If that was agreed to with the referee.)
- What you can't say: Avoid open ended phrases that conjure up debate or add fuel to the fire. You can't curse or use abusive/insulting language or gestures.

The bottom line: Have a plan for dealing with coaches to make them allies and if they don't behave: Ask-tell-remove.

Upcoming Events

- April 2-8: Referee class in English. Details are on www.StocktonYouthSoccer.org referee page.
- April 11 – June 6 SYSA spring season (u10 only age group needing referees).
- April 11 – in-service clinic in Livermore. See www.CNRA.net for more information
- April 24 – 25. Referee class in Spanish.
- August 20-26 Referee class in English.