

# REFEREE DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

FOR SOCCER LEAGUES  
AND REFEREE  
ASSOCIATIONS IN  
GEORGIA

# **REFEREE DEVELOPMENT**

## **PROGRAM GUIDE**

**F OR SOCCER LEAGUES AND REFEREE ASSOCIATIONS IN GEORGIA**

**GEORGIA SOCCER**

**STATE REFEREE COMMITTEE**

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# Introduction

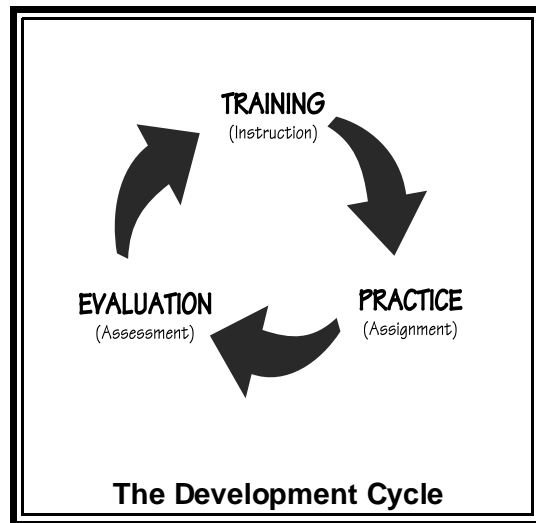
So, you've volunteered to be in charge of the referees for your league! Perhaps you have begun to realize how difficult the job can be. This guide is to help you get started in the right way. If you are an experienced referee administrator, perhaps you can pick up a point or two to help you enhance your program.

Beyond merely having referees show up for our games, most of us want to have the best refereeing we can get. The game is more enjoyable and play is better with high quality refereeing. Better refereeing doesn't just happen, it has to be worked at — by the referees and by the organizations that support them. If your goals are only to provide the required number of registered officials to comply with requirements, without regard to their quality, you can stop reading now. On the other hand, if you want to put the best possible teams of officials on games for your league, then this guide is designed to help you do that. We will give you the basic information about referee organization in Georgia and the United States; we will suggest some ways to organize your referee administrative team; and we will give you a variety of tools to help you attract, retain, and improve referees for your organization.

## The Cycle of Development

Any process of active skill development involves three simple steps: people are taught how to perform the tasks, then they practice the tasks, and they are evaluated on their performance. After the evaluation, they are coached on how to improve performance (more training) and are given additional practice and evaluation, and so on, each cycle designed to improve performance and add new skills.

In referee development, the three parts of the cycle of development are called Instruction, Assignment, and Assessment. The referee is instructed in techniques, is assigned appropriate games to practice them, and then receives feedback and is evaluated. To develop and progress, the referee should be learning new skills, becoming more adept at his or her craft, and facing new challenges. So the cycle of development is not a closed circle, but a helix, with each cycle of raising the level of performance and competition for the referee. This will not happen by chance; it is our job as referee administrators to make it happen through our active involvement.



## You Are Not Alone

The first thing you need to know about your referee program is that it doesn't exist in isolation. The Georgia State Soccer Association (GSSA) administers soccer in Georgia. The State Referee Committee (SRC) directs the referee programs statewide. The SRC has several duties, but the one that will most concern you is helping you and the referees you manage to develop and succeed. The SRC is composed of the Chairman, the State Referee Administrator (SRA), the State Youth Referee Administrator (SYRA), the State Director of Instruction (SDI), the State Director of Assessment (SDA), the Assignor Coordinator, and representatives from the youth division (GYSA), the adult division (GASA), and the support division. Although these administrators are appointed by the GSSA Board of Directors, in an odd twist they actually report to, and carry out the programs of, their counterparts at the United States Soccer Federation (USSF). With all those directors, you might guess that there are programs and staff under the SRC, and you would be right.

You can find out more about the SRC and its programs at the **Georgia Soccer web site**, [www.gasoccer.org](http://www.gasoccer.org), under the Referees section. You should become very familiar with the site, for most of the activities of the referee program are communicated through it.

NEWS is where the referee committee posts new procedures and policies and advertises events.

INFO is where the committee puts documents and announcements when they are not current news any more. It is a valuable compendium of information on procedures, policies, and programs.

DOCUMENTS is where you can find books and papers on refereeing in Georgia and the United States in general. This document is posted there, and so are the list of assignors, the Georgia Handbook for Referees, the USSF Referee Administrative Handbook, memoranda on administration and law interpretations, and much more. Certified assignors can view and download the list of referees registered in Georgia from that page.

You can also post questions there for the State Director of Instruction, the State Youth Referee Administrator, and the State Referee Administrator. You can request courses (entry, recertification, or in-service) and Assessor for a Day events. If you can't find an answer on the web site, you can e-mail the referee program at [referees@gasoccer.org](mailto:referees@gasoccer.org) with any request or question.

"Three percent of people will excel no matter what you do to them. Twenty-seven percent will excel if they are placed in the right environment."

Will Whitlow

Some useful web links are:

The USSF Referee Administrative Handbook at

<http://www.ussoccer.com/templates/includes/services/referees/pdfs/RefAdminHdbk.pdf>

or at

<http://www.gasoccer.org/Files/1168/documents/RefAdminHdbk.zip>

The Georgia Handbook for Referees at:

<http://www.gasoccer.org/Files/1168/documents/Handbook.pdf>

The list of certified assignors at:

<http://www.gasoccer.org/Files/1168/documents/USSF%20Assignors%2007-06-02.pdf>

## Administration

The State Referee Administrator (SRA) and State Youth Referee Administrator (SYRA) are responsible for registering referees and for overall program management. He or she reports to the USSF National Managing Director of Services. Referees are certified for one year at a time (January through December) and must recertify each year.

To become a referee, a person must complete a one-day entry course of instruction and pass a written test on the Laws of the Game. There is a fee for the course and an annual registration fee. There are no age limits and no physical requirements. The entry level referee will be a Grade 8. (Details on what the various grades of referees mean can be found later in this document.)

Each year, the referee must attend a five-hour recertification clinic where they will get in-service training, learn about the annual changes to the Laws of the Game, take a refresher test on the Laws of the Game, and turn in their registration form and fee. There are many clinics scheduled from July through December, and they are listed on the Georgia Soccer web site ([www.gasoccer.org](http://www.gasoccer.org)). Attendance at the clinic ensures that every referee will be instructed on changes to the Laws of the Game and instructions from FIFA and USSF for that year. The clinic fee includes both the course fee and the annual registration fee. Any referee may attend any class for recertification. It is important to know that **referees are registered with the United States Soccer Federation, not with a local club, league, or even state association.**

Note that the referee must complete **all three actions — clinic, form, and fee** — to be certified for the coming year. Note also that referees who take the entry level course and become referees for the first time in the fall will be registered for the coming year and do not have to recertify again in the same year. Those who take the course and become referees in the spring must recertify in the fall for the next year.

The SRA and SYRA are also responsible for administering the procedure by which referees upgrade. The grades, requirements, and responsibilities are given in the USSF *Referee Administrative Handbook*. A summary of some of the grades and their requirements follows:

**Recreational Referee Grade 9** – No age limit; must successfully complete grade 9 entry level course and pass written test with a score of 75%; authorized to referee recreational youth games U-14 and younger and to serve as Assistant Referee on all youth games U-14 and younger. Currently, this grade is not eligible to referee games for the Georgia Youth Soccer Association, and therefore is not used in Georgia.

**Referee Grade 8**— No age limit; must successfully complete Entry Level Course for grade 8; must pass written test with score of 75%; recommended to referee youth games.

**Referee Grade 7**— Minimum age 17; 12 months as Referee Grade 8; 75 centers, 25 lines on any affiliated USSF games; pass written test with a score of 85%; recommended for all youth games and mixed leagues, assistant referee (AR) on amateur Div II and below.

**State Referee Grade 6**— Minimum age 18; 12 months as Referee Grade 7; 100 centers, 25 lines on U-19 competitive leagues or higher; 19 hours advanced training; pass state level test with 75%; recommended for all youth and amateur through Div II, AR on Div I and cup games.

**State Referee Grade 5**— Minimum age 19; 12 months as State Referee Grade 6; 150 centers (at least 50 must be on Div I amateur or higher), 50 as AR; 7 hours advanced training; score 85% on state level test; recommended for all youth and amateur games and AR on professional league and international cup games.

Levels above grade 5 are administered by the USSF National Referee Committee.

## Instruction

The State Director of Instruction (SDI) is responsible for recruiting, training, and assigning instructors and for arranging training classes necessary for becoming a referee and becoming recertified each year. The SDI reports to the National Director of Instruction. Instructional programs include the following:

**Entry Level Referee Courses**— 18 hours of instruction and written test. Successful completion of the course is required to referee any USSF-affiliated games. Entry courses are scheduled by individual leagues through the GSSA Referee web site. Courses are usually held during the two months before each youth playing season, i.e., July-August and January-February. Scheduled courses are listed on the GSSA web site at [www.gssa.org](http://www.gssa.org).

**Recertification Courses**— 5 hours of in-service training, including annual changes to the Laws of the Game and refresher test. Completion of the recertification class is required each year for recertification of a referee. Recertification classes are arranged each fall (July - December) by individual leagues through the GSSA web site. A list of scheduled courses is also listed on the web site.

**In-Service Training**— variable. At the request of any league or referee association, instructors will be assigned to provide in-service training at the beginning, intermediate, or advanced level as desired. Instructional materials are available on a variety of topics, and presentations on any refereeing topic can be prepared. There is no fee. Courses may be requested online at the [www.gasoccer.org](http://www.gasoccer.org) web site.

**Advanced Training** — One weekend of training is held each year for recertification for grades seven through five. Additional advanced and intermediate training clinics are held from time to time in various locations in the state for any experienced referees who want to improve their skills.

**Assignor Training** — The state instructional staff holds assignor entry level training classes leading to certification as a USSF assignor. There are also periodic clinics and meetings for additional in-service training and sharing of information.

## Assessment

The State Director of Assessment (SDA) is responsible for administering the assessment program in Georgia. The SDA reports to the National Director of Assessment. An assessment is an evaluation of a referee's performance in a game, conducted by an assessor trained and certified by USSF. Assessments are required for all referees seeking to upgrade. Annual maintenance assessments are required for all referees grade seven or higher. In a maintenance or upgrade assessment, the referee is formally assessed and his performance is graded on a numerical scale. For each grade 7 and above there is a minimum passing grade. The referee may receive verbal comments from the assessor after the game, but certainly receives a written evaluation by correspondence after the game. Most youth referees do not receive this kind of formal assessment until they are ready to upgrade. Other assessment programs in Georgia include the following:

**Developmental Assessment** — The developmental assessment is less structured and less formal than a "full assessment." There is no numerical score and no follow-up feedback form for the official. Instead, the referee receives an abbreviated feedback form at the field immediately after the postgame conference. There is no fee for a developmental assessment.

**Assessor For a Day** — A team of assessors (up to four) can be assigned to your league or referees' association for one day or one weekend. The team covers as many games as possible with developmental assessments, giving referees feedback and guidance and giving your league specific information about overall strengths and weaknesses. Feedback can also be provided to your league on the ability of the referee and assistants to officiate at the level at which they were assessed. Since the Assessor for a Day program is subsidized by GYSA, the fee can be kept quite low. You can request AFD by contacting the GSSA office or on the GSSA Referee web site.

**Special Assessment** — An assessor may be assigned to observe a referee, with or without the referee's prior knowledge, at the request of the Referee Ethics and Grievance Committee, the SRC, or the referee coordinator of a local league or association. Purposes for special assessments include both evaluation and assistance for referees who seem to have problems or for promising referees who may be ready to move to a higher level. Contact the SDA for information on this program. There is a fee for a special assessment, and travel reimbursement may be required.

## Your Organization

There is no single "right way" to set up a referee program. Conditions vary, but most fall under two broad categories: those run directly by a club or league and those run by an independent referee association.

## League-operated Referee Programs

Your league may choose to run its referee program itself. In this arrangement, the board of directors of the league appoints a coordinator of referees. That person is responsible for recruiting, training, and assigning referees. That person also is the liaison between the league and the referees. All policies and programs are established by the board of directors of the league in accordance with USSF and GYSA or GASA policies. Payments to referees are handled by the league treasurer, based on reports from the assignor.

League run programs have these advantages:

- The league has direct control.
- There are fewer steps in handling money.
- It is easier to coordinate with league members for recruitment (e.g., requiring each team to put forward one new referee each year) and referee support (e.g., field marshals, drinks, free food).
- It is easier to fund a referee program since leagues have other revenue sources; referee associations must raise funds through dues or some other means.

## Referee Association-operated Programs

In a program run by a referee association, the league contracts with a referee association. The association is responsible for recruiting, training, assigning, and paying the referees. The referees' association must be established as a legal entity and should be incorporated. This is necessary for such things as limiting liability, establishing a bank account, entering into contracts, and ensuring continuity. In a program run by an association, the job of director of referees will be held by an officer or appointee of the association. The policies and programs related to officials will be the result of contractual obligations negotiated with the league and decisions taken by the referees themselves.

Referees associations have these advantages:

- Referees have direct access to those in charge and can elect new leadership if they feel they are not being adequately served.
- Referees have an advocate that they can trust to represent their views to leagues.
- A referee association has no other concerns, so decisions are made by people who understand the problems of referees and the Laws of the Game.
- Adherence to FIFA, USSF, and GSSA policies is easier to maintain.
- Several small leagues can share a larger pool of referees. There is more variety in referees seen by a team, referees gain a wider experience, and it is easier to assign referees to appropriate levels of competition.
- By setting down the needs of the league in a contract, it is easier to define exactly what is wanted.

Referee associations may be established with league-run programs. For example, key tasks, such as assigning and payment, can remain in the hands of the league while the association provides opportunities for the officials to meet for socializing and training. An association also provides a way for referees to report issues to the league through a person elected by them to represent their views. This can be valuable in keeping little problems that arise from time to time from becoming big problems.

League-run programs are the most common in youth soccer in Georgia, but there are several successful referee associations as well.

## **The Referee Program Team**

However you decide to set up your organization, you should put together your referee program team. The team members are, at a minimum, the Coordinator, the Assignor, and the Advisory Group.

## **The Referee Coordinator**

**T**he referee coordinator, or director of officials, has the job of making sure all matters related to the referee program run smoothly. He or she has overall responsibility for managing the referee program. Key functions are:

- Hear referee complaints and carry them back to the league or board of directors.
- Hear league complaints and carry them back to the referees.
- Hear complaints from everyone else – coaches, parents, players, referees' parents, etc. – and figure out what is appropriate to do with them.
- Know the policies, procedures, and rules of USSF and the Georgia State Referee Committee, providing guidance to referees and league administrators about them.
- Arrange training and assessment for referees.
- Keep referees informed of events – clinics, tournaments, opportunities, etc.
- Give guidance to the assignor.

Needless to say, the referee coordinator has to be carefully chosen. As leagues or associations grow, it may be useful to assign assistants for certain tasks. Besides easing the load, having assistants assures a depth of knowledge if the coordinator is lost. Some positions you might consider are coordinators for recruitment, training, assessment, communications, and meetings.

Whatever organizational structure your league decides is best, responsibility for each task must be clearly assigned. Each official must know who will be assigning games for the league, who will be paying (and when and how), and whom to go to with complaints or suggestions. Coaches must know whom to contact with changes or cancellations. The league directors must know to whom they should address their concerns.

## The Advisory Group

You're going to need a lot of help. Some of it, as we've said before, can come from the SRC and the state programs, but not all. You will need to have some people to help you from within your organization. Look around your organization for sober heads who are willing to help. Look especially for:

- Higher level referees, preferably state referees, but Grade 7 referees as well.
- Coaches, team managers, and league officers with broad experience whose opinions you respect.
- The referee assignor.

Get feedback from these people about the referees who work in your organization. Take all the information you can get from reliable sources. The referee coordinator and the assignor then sit down and make a list of the referees with the levels of games to which they should be assigned. This is the **assignment plan**. It will be the assignor's job to carry out the assignment plan.

## The Referee Assignor

You will have to have a referee assignor. USSF policy requires each affiliated game to be assigned by a certified assignor. Certification requires a one-day class in assigning and an annual registration and fee. Certified assignors come under the USSF liability insurance policy, giving them up to \$1 million in liability coverage. They also receive important training in assigning policy and practice in the course.

The assignor need not be a referee (in fact, USSF policy states that assignors should not be referees in the leagues for which they assign officials, except in emergencies). While refereeing experience is help, they do not need to know a lot about refereeing or be able to judge the quality of officials – that information can come from the advisory group.

**This is very important: The assignor should not be the coordinator.** Why not? There are several reasons, and they all have to do with human nature, and conflict of interest.

### **The top five reasons to separate the coordinator role from the assignor role:**

5. If the assignor is the coordinator, **who is a referee going to complain to** about his assignments? If he complains to the assignor, he may get even worse games, so he'll keep his mouth shut. Or worse, he'll leave and work for someone else.

4. Ditto the coaches in your league. If they complain about a referee to the assignor, **coaches might believe that the assignor will "get even"** by giving them worse service. So they will only grumble behind your back and spread hatred and discontent. The coordinator gives them a buffer of anonymity for feedback.

3. The assignor should be **protected from perceived conflict of interest**. In most youth leagues, the assignor is a parent or coach or has some other connection or history with specific teams. They are vulnerable to the charge of bias in assigning referees for their "friends" or "enemies." Part of the coordinator's job is to make sure that the assignor is carrying out the **assignment plan** worked out by the whole referee team – not the individual choices of the assignor.

2. The assigning job is much harder and more time-consuming than all the other referee stuff put together. After getting all the games covered each week, assignors usually collapse. In the off season, they need a break. **They will never find the time to do the other stuff** like arranging assessor for a day, scheduling meetings, and so forth.

And the No. 1 reason not to make the assignor the coordinator:

**No matter how well-intentioned, assignors will tend to have favorites.** Any honest and experienced assignor will admit it. They want to reward the boy who never turns down a game, the girl who is always willing to do that extra game, the dad who is willing to ferry young refs all over town – they want to give them “big games.” Sometimes they aren’t ready for them. The coordinator’s job is to make them stick to the assigning schedule agreed upon, without regard to personal feeling.

The assignor’s role in referee development has been historically overlooked. Teaching and evaluation are useless without an intelligent process of assignment that puts the referee on games that will provide just the right balance of comfort and challenge. It is ironic that organizations that construct elaborate schemes to make sure that players are placed on teams where they will achieve maximum development (“playing with the best against the best”) often apparently assign their referees at random. Of course, the assignor hasn’t time to ponder the appropriateness of every assignment. That is the purpose of the **assignment plan** – to give the assignor a template for quickly matching each referee to his or her “best game” to give the teams quality officiating and the referee an appropriate environment where they can excel.

Sample Referee Assignment Plan							
Name	Age	Grade	Oldest age as R	Highest level as R	Oldest age as AR	Highest level as AR	Comments
Smith, Fred	32	8	10	Rec	14	Chall	Beginner, keep an eye on games
Jones, Alice	17	8	14	Chall	19	Classic	Ready to move up
Good, Bob	29	7	19	Classic	19	Classic	
Allen, Sam	15	8	12	Chall	16	Chall	

## Pay

**O**K, it’s a jungle out there! There are other leagues trying to steal “your” referees, rumors that the burger joint is paying \$45.00 an hour and can’t get enough help. How are you going to keep ‘em coming out on Saturday morning? How much should you pay?

Well, if you’re looking for an answer here, you’re about to be disappointed. The truth is, there isn’t any one answer. Some considerations:

- What are nearby leagues paying? “Well, duh,” you say, but we had to say it. It’s a free market. If your fees aren’t competitive, you will only be able to keep people dedicated to your league through

loyalty or lack of transportation. Of course, if yours is the only league within forty miles, lucky you! (But don't get too happy until you read on.)

- What other jobs are available (especially for kids)? (If you are a "remote" league and were looking forward to paying \$3.00 a game, sorry.)
- Do you have a lot of games to offer them, or only a few? Coming out there AT ALL has to be worth their trouble. For some people, three or four games at lower rates are ok, but they will want more per game for only doing one or two.
- Are there unusual costs for referees? Believe it or not, there are some associations in Georgia for which referees routinely drive 20 miles or more to a game. Travel costs may have to be figured in.

There are other things to think about besides your per-game fees. Here are a few other ideas that leagues around the state and country have used:

- Pay a bonus at the end of a season to referees who officiate a minimum number of games, thus encouraging referees to make themselves more available.
- Finance referees' costs of getting started by paying entry course fees, registration fees, or uniform costs up front and deducting the amount from game fees. Many leagues reimburse new referees for the course fee after they have done a prescribed number of games.
- Pay additional premiums for officiating select team games (Challenge, Classic and Athena games). Combined with an assignment plan that assigns the best-performing referees to select team games, this can be an incentive for improving skills and retaining referees.
- Pay premiums for higher grade referees (7's, 6's, and 5's), using the pay scale to attract experienced officials and to encourage referees to upgrade.
- Give away free stuff. Many leagues offer referees free food or drinks at their concession stands. Some provide drinks at the field. Bonuses or special awards for outstanding service can be made in the form of equipment, which you can sometimes persuade a sporting goods shop or manufacturer to sponsor.

And on behalf of your government, we want to remind you of your responsibilities to the referee and your organization to follow proper tax and accounting practices. Referees are independent contractors (which means, among other things, that they can officiate for other leagues and they can say "no" when you ask them to do a game). The referee will be required to report earnings to the Internal Revenue Service and pay taxes on them. When your payments to a referee exceed certain limits, **you** are required to report those payments to the Internal Revenue Service (on the dreaded Form 1099). With each payment, you should give the referee a statement of the games covered and the amounts. Before setting up your payment and accounting system, consult with your league's financial officer or a certified public accountant.

One last thing about the money: the assignor should never write the checks. The assignor should send the list of referees and their games to both the coordinator and the treasurer. The treasurer writes the checks.

## Activities and Communication

Referees should get together from time to time for training, to share experiences, to hear from the league and to air their grievances. How many meetings you should have will vary. The USSF Referee Program requires at least five hours of in-service training per year at annual recertification courses, held from July through December. You should aim for more than the minimum, however. These suggestions may help you to design your meetings:

One large league has two meetings each month. Referees can come whichever night is most convenient for them, and it keeps the number small enough for good interaction.

- Each referee, whether experienced old pro or novice, should go away from the meeting with something he or she can use on the field. Ask referees what topics they would like to cover in their training. Remember the three-part **cycle of development**? To improve, each referee should learn something new at each meeting.
- Keep meetings short and keep the time predictable. One to 1 ½ hours is a good time limit, allowing 15 - 30 minutes for business and 30 - 45 for instruction. Do not allow meetings to ramble past the time limit.
- If you meet during or just before the season, either choose a regular meeting night that everyone can come to or vary the night of the week you meet. Most teams practice on a regular schedule — Mon - Wed or Tue - Thu — and by thinking ahead you can "spread the pain around" and minimize conflicts.
- Have an agenda. Enter each meeting knowing what you are going to cover, who is responsible, and how much time is allocated to each item. "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." The person running the meeting must keep the group focused on the agenda. However, it is wise to leave time for "general discussion" or "other business."
- Provide an incentive for coming to the meetings. Some associations make assignments at meetings, so those who come get the "plums." Some distribute pay checks at meetings. The very best way to get participation is to make the meetings fun and instructional for the referees.

One league has meetings in two parts. To make sure each referee gets the most from the meeting, the first hour is geared to newer referees and youth referees. The second hour focuses on the problems faced in senior games and is designed for older, experienced referees.

Another way to communicate among referees is through a newsletter. You will probably want to send out notices of meetings, so why not include some news and information along with them? You can include notices of rules changes, brief instructional articles, what went on in the last meeting, and teasers about what will be covered in the upcoming meeting, to name a few things. E-mail makes this sort of thing easier than ever — provided your membership has e-mail capability. If you have a web site for your league or association, it is an excellent way of reaching your membership.

Remember that you should always put your policies in writing. Whether it is game fees, rules of conduct, or dues, each referee in your organization should be able to look it up, on a web site, in a newsletter, a brochure, or just an ordinary memorandum. To say "You would know that if you came to the meeting" may make you feel justified, but it doesn't put the information in the referees' hands.

## Referee Coaches

The USSF has designed a referee coaching program whereby experienced officials are teamed with novices to “learn the ropes” on the field. The coach does not assess the referee, but does give the referee tips on ways to improve, encourages good practices, and is there to answer questions. Unlike a mentor, a coach is involved with several different referees from time to time. The State Director of Instruction can give you more information on setting up a referee coaching program in your league.

## Mentoring

A mentor program teams a new referee with an experienced referee or mentor. The mentor does not critique the performance of the referee, although he or she may give advice if asked. Mentors provide someone for the referee to relate to regularly as they learn their trade. Mentors may accompany the referee to games or even be assigned to games with the referee. They support the referee and listen, giving advice from time to time if it is asked for. If you are interested in setting up a mentor program in your league, contact the State Director of Instruction, State Director of Assessment, or the State Referee Administrator or State Youth Referee Administrator.

# Getting and Keeping Referees

## Sources

Okay, now you are a referee coordinator. Where are you going to find referees? Probably 90% of our referees come from two groups of people: current players and parents of youth players. The rest are people, usually ex-players, who are irredeemably addicted to the game and enjoy being a part of it as a referee.

To recruit referees, you need to do two things: Let people know how to become a referee and give them reasons why they should do it. Advertising is critical. Post notices of upcoming referee entry courses at the fields, in the league newsletter (if you have one), and in the newspaper. Summarize the requirements. Don't forget to give some incentives; list pay scales or average weekend take-home, for instance. Don't forget that money isn't the only incentive; refereeing can teach people a lot about the game they play and watch.

To recruit players as referees, you must involve their coaches and team managers. Becoming a referee and remaining one take time — sometimes time away from practice. By getting the coaches on your side, you will make it easier for players to miss an occasional practice without being penalized. Who wants to sit in a classroom on Tuesday night if it means not starting on Saturday? Remind them that officials for their games come from the same pool of referees that their players will be contributing to. Ask coaches if you can have a few minutes at one of their practices to make a pitch for refereeing

Parents become referees for many reasons. Some find refereeing a way to share the soccer experience with their children. Others want a way to contribute something to their soccer community.

Some leagues require teams to provide a certain number of people to become referees as a condition of registering.

Some take up the challenge: "Put your whistle where your mouth is!" Whatever the reason, many of our referees come from among the ranks of parents who want to do more than cheer from the sidelines.

Is there a college near you? It may be a great resource of referees. Many of our referees stop officiating when they graduate from high school and go away to college. Where do they go? Do some of them come to your town? Many youth players go to college and do not participate in collegiate soccer. Do they miss the game? Would they like to regain contact with it through refereeing? Don't forget to advertise at your local college campuses.

## Retention

Once you establish a corps of referees for your league, the next challenge is to keep them. Nationally, we lose about 40% of our referees every year, and Georgia seems about average in that regard. Many reasons for referees not continuing involve a change in life — graduation, relocation, a new job, new family responsibilities or the like — that cannot be helped. Still others quit because, after trying it for a season or two, they conclude that they are not good at refereeing or they just don't like it. Their leaving, too, cannot be prevented.

Still, that leaves many fine referees who leave the program each year. The most common reasons are harassment and abuse at games, competing social interests, lack of challenges, and insufficient rewards. **You can do something about these.**

## Harassment and abuse

Someone has said that the role of the referee is to provide an environment in which players may exercise their skill without fear of intimidation.

It might equally be said that **it is the role of a league to provide an environment in which referees may learn their skills without fear of intimidation.** Criticism comes with the job, and any official in any sport must learn to deal with it. However, criticism sometimes goes beyond acceptable limits and becomes harassment or abuse. There **are** some things we can do to reduce its effects on referees. You should work with your league officials to implement some successful programs. Examples:

- **Training for coaches and parents** on proper behavior at matches. Remember that, under GYSA rules, coaches are responsible for the behavior of the team's spectators.
- Experienced coaches or league officers can be used to **encourage positive involvement** and to "counsel" those who indulge in abusive behavior.
- **Education about the Laws of the Game** can help, too. There are several excellent videos available, *Myths of the Game*; *Making the Offside Call*, and *The Laws of the Game: The Gray Areas*

A sportsmanship program can be very effective in improving the behavior of parents, coaches, and players. In one such program in Georgia, teams are rated by referees for sportsmanship, conduct toward officials, and fair play on a scale of one to five. Points are awarded or deducted based on the ratings, and they may affect league standings. The results were very good, and although the system was applied only to recreational games, the standard of good sportsmanship carried over to the select program, too.

by the United States Soccer Federation, and *Soccer Rules: A Guide to the Laws of the Game*, by the Scottish Football Association and FIFA, and several brief pamphlets have been published.

- **Do not tolerate irresponsible behavior.** The league should have strict standards and should deal with coaches and spectators who display unacceptable conduct. Leagues throughout the country have implemented programs to reduce abuse at the field. For instance, some leagues assign monitors or field marshals who patrol fields, interceding with abusive spectators and coaches. Failure to heed the warnings of the field marshals should result in guilty persons being asked to leave.
- **Help new referees cope** with the bad feelings generated by abuse and help them learn how to deal with them through mentoring, coaching, peer interactions, and assessment.

All of these techniques are especially valuable in preventing new referees from being driven away before they gain the self-confidence and skills to deal effectively with abusive people and their own emotional responses to criticism.

## Competing interests

You might as well face it. You are in competition with a lot of other fun and important activities. To keep referees interested, you have to make it enjoyable, at least most of the time, for them to work for you. Burnout is a common cause of referees quitting. Referees should feel that it is okay to take a weekend off or reduce their work load. Don't make it an "all or nothing" commitment, because that will never survive a competition with family, job, school, or team.

## Lack of challenges/intimidation

Check frequently with your referees and learn whether they feel that they are at the right level. A referee who is bored will find something more interesting to do. On the other hand, referees who lack confidence and are intimidated by the pace or intensity of their games may quit to avoid the stress. If a referee is stagnating at one level, find out if they are comfortable there or want to move on to greater challenges. However, don't push a referee, no matter how skilled he or she is, to a level where enjoyment and excitement go away.

## Insufficient rewards

All of us like to be rewarded for our work. Young referees, especially, may view refereeing as an important source of income. Constantly monitor your game fees to make sure they offer enough compensation. However, money is not the only reward. Make sure your referees are getting some positive and public feedback for their good work. Even a very mediocre referee may get an "Attaboy" for doing lots of games or being willing to step into the breach in an emergency. If someone has a particularly good match (or a particularly difficult one), someone should make a point of commending him or her.

The Georgia State Soccer Association makes several awards to referees each year: the Eddie Pearson award for the outstanding Referee of the Year and the Young Referee of the Year Award, Male and Female. Why not start local awards along the same lines? Indeed, why not nominate your outstanding referees for the GSSA awards? And there are other possibilities, such as "Most Improved," "Best Assistant Referee," "Best Referee Under 16", and so on.

The State Referee Committee has an Advanced Referee Development Program (ARDP). The purpose is to identify promising, serious referees and give them opportunities for advanced training and

refereeing in state-sponsored tournaments and other events. You should consider nominating your outstanding referees for the ARDP list.

What will work best for your organization? There is no one best way to run a referee organization. You might try a survey of your referees. Ask them what they like or dislike about refereeing in general and your organization in particular. Then set up programs to address their needs.

## Conduct and Discipline

### Professional Standards

It is a widely believed myth that to require good professional conduct in youth referees is to drive them away. So, the reasoning goes, we have to put up with any kind of poor behavior from our referees or WE WON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO COVER OUR GAMES (gasp). It ain't true. In fact, if you are strict about professional conduct, you will have more referees than you can find games for. And the reverse is true: if you don't impose standards of conduct, you will **lose** referees. People want to belong to organizations they can be proud to participate in. Parents want their kids to learn positive values from their activities.

Easier said than done, you say? It can be done. It is done by lots of leagues. First, let's see what you should be expecting. You can tell professional referees by the way they behave:

A Professional Referee Does ...	A Professional Referee Does Not ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Show up for every game he or she accepts. Only illness or emergency should cause a referee to back out of an accepted match.</li> <li>◆ Arrive on time, at least 30 minutes before kickoff.</li> <li>◆ Arrive prepared, mentally and physically.</li> <li>◆ Spend as much time talking with the visiting team as the home team.</li> <li>◆ Support and help the referee when acting as assistant referee. Never try to look good at the expense of the referee.</li> <li>◆ Dress in the correct uniform and look neatly dressed at all times before, during, after, and between games. (See the <i>Georgia Handbook for Referees</i> for uniform guidelines.</li> <li>◆ Completely fills out the game report and promptly returns a copy along with player passes to each coach.</li> <li>◆ Works hard during the game.</li> <li>◆ Attends clinics and referee meetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Accept an assignment for a team for which a relative is playing or coaching.</li> <li>◆ Accept an assignment for a game in the same age and division as one he or she is associated with as player, coach, or relative or significant other of a player or coach.</li> <li>◆ Criticize a fellow official or condone criticism of a fellow official.</li> <li>◆ Use language that could be offensive to anyone.</li> <li>◆ Use tobacco products or alcoholic beverages anywhere near the field where the referee is officiating.</li> <li>◆ Humiliate or demean any player, coach, fan, or fellow official. Wagging fingers, sneering, and taunting have no place on the field.</li> <li>◆ Be seen wearing the home team's uniforms or arriving at the field in the company of the home team.</li> </ul>

The Code of Ethics for Referees can be found in *The USSF Referee Administrative Handbook* and the *GSSA Handbook for Referees*. The latter includes some more examples of how ethics apply in real game-day settings. Notice that to judge these things, you don't have to be an assessor, or even know very much about refereeing. They can be observed by any ordinary person, and in a bygone age they were known as common courtesy. Now, here's some secret referee knowledge known only to a few thousand people in the country:

**If you have a referee who does all of those things at every game, there is a 99% chance that the technical performance of the referee – throw-ins, fouls, cautions, offside, all that sort of thing – will be somewhere between good and excellent.**

## Discipline

Having set standards, you will have to get compliance from the referees. Many administrators have found the best way to do this is through a method of progressive discipline. Simply put, you start out soft and get meaner. Follow these steps:

**Step 1. Tell every referee the standards of conduct that you expect. Very Important.**

**Step 2. Correct him**, quietly, and **help him find ways to meet the standards**. For example, if a referee is consistently late to games, offer to pair him with referees who can drive him to the game. Or if he can't afford a new uniform, finance it.

**Step 3. Warn him**. If the referee continues to fail to come up to expectations, explain what will be the consequences.

**Step 4. Follow through with the consequences** if Step 3 doesn't correct the problem. Make sure the referee knows what is happening. Examples of consequences are not assigning as many games and not assigning higher level games. Find out what the referee wants and take it away.

**Step 5. Sometimes, you just have to lose one**. If nothing seems to help, simply stop assigning the referee at all. You will be better off without his services, and the morale of the rest of your referee corps will be raised.

**Step 6**. If the derelictions rise to the level of unethical behavior, you may file a complaint with the **Referee Ethics and Grievance Committee** of GSSA.

## Referee Evaluation

Once you have recruited your referees, they have taken the entry level training course, and they have done some games, you will have to determine how well they are doing. Assuming you, as referee coordinator, are not a trained assessor or instructor, how can you evaluate the performance of the referees? There are three avenues for evaluation: general observation, formal assessment, and miscellaneous feedback.

We have already discussed the first of these above. You, the assignor, and the advisory group you have put together should observe the referees as often as possible at the fields. Good conduct, professionalism, the way they carry themselves and behave toward others – these are not qualities unique to refereeing. People don't change their characters on and off the field. Those who study their duties, work hard to do them well, and pay attention to details in dealing with people also study the Laws, work hard to apply them correctly, and pay attention to play. So, your first point of reference is to observe the general behavior of the referees.

The Assessment Program was mentioned above. Referees need feedback about how well they are performing. You should arrange for an Assessor for a Day at least once a year and preferably twice a year. Special assessments can be arranged, also, for either exceptionally promising referees or those who present problems. Although assessors will not share the results of an assessment with you, they will share their general impressions of the needs of your organization. They will also give you valuable feedback on the appropriateness of the assigning process.

You will receive plenty of feedback from "miscellaneous sources," too, whether you want it or not! Coaches, parents, players, and others will all want to share their opinions. The problem will be sorting them out. Of course, many of the comments are simply whining and griping about losing, but there are specific things to look for that can be useful. Some examples:

- Listen for the same comments about a referee from many sources. Whatever their motivation, when many different people give similar reports of a referee's game, it may be a key to the referee's strengths or weaknesses.

- Pay special attention to comments from neutral observers, who have no special interest in the game. Weigh the quality of the source.
- Always ask for specifics. If someone tells you the “ref today was lousy,” ask them how? What did the referee do that seemed wrong? Don’t argue their opinions, but make a note and check with a responsible authority (an instructor, assessor, or SRC member, for example) to see if, in fact, the actions described were incorrect. (Actually, most of the actions of referees that generate complaints turn out to be correct. I know, it’s hard to believe, isn’t it?)
- Follow up specific comments with the referee crew. This is not only a chance to verify the “story,” but also lets you gauge the awareness of the referee to what was going on in the game. Many times, it will generate questions from the referee seeking guidance and feedback. You don’t have to give it to them, but you can arrange to get it to them. Take it the same “responsible authority” mentioned above.
- Keep confidential comments confidential. Make sure that people have an avenue to your referee program that can, if they wish, keep their feedback anonymous.

Whatever your sources for evaluation, keep in mind the **cycle of development**. Has the referee mastered the skills at the level at which he is officiating? If so, is he ready to be challenged at a higher level? Is it time to raise her up a notch on the helix, or give her more practice and instruction at the same level? For your purposes, the reason for evaluation is to give feedback to the assignor through **review and modification of your assignment plan**.

## Tournaments

**M**anaging the referees at tournaments is a difficult job. Referee administration is often a task overlooked or given short shrift by tournament organizers. This is unfortunate, because effective referee administration can make all the difference in giving teams a positive experience.

### Administration

**A**s when setting up your league referee program, each task should be assigned to a specific person and every aspect of referee coordination should be planned. Here is a step-by-step guide to organizing referees for a tournament.

- Assign **one person to be in charge** of referee operations for the tournament. That person must have no other duties; do not make this person the tournament director. That person should report to the tournament director.
- List tasks and **assign each task to a person**. There may be some crossover between team or field management and referee management. For instance, if water is provided to teams at each field, the same people can be assigned to provide water for the referees.
- Decide **how referees will be paid**. It seems to work best if payments are made at the tournament rather than through the

Are you operating on a tight budget? Don’t overlook opportunities to reward referees by means other than cash. Investigate sponsorship by sporting goods dealers or manufacturers. You may be able to obtain equipment, such as referee uniforms, warm-ups, or other items free or at reduced rates and give them to referees for their services. Free food is another perk to consider. If you have out-of-town teams at your tournament, you can probably receive complementary rooms from motels to provide free to visiting referees.

mail afterward. It is much easier to resolve any discrepancies between the referee's records and yours in person at the site. There are many ways of doing this. Whatever method you use, it should include three things: independent verification by a tournament official that the referee completed the assignment; reconciliation of the referee's records with yours; and a written record of the assignments done and payments made. Here are some specific examples:

- Referees are given cards on which to list their games. At the designated pay station, the referee presents the card, which is checked against the master referee schedule. The records kept by field marshals are also reconciled to the master schedule. Any discrepancies are resolved. The paymaster consults the pay schedule, adds up the amounts, and writes a check to the referee, keeping a record.
- Three chits are prepared for each game and given to the field marshal. After the game, the field marshal gives the referee and assistant referees a chit, which may be initialed by the field marshal. At the pay station, the referee presents his or her accumulated chits, and a check is written as above. In a variation of this, the field marshal keeps the record signed by the referee (it can be done in a notebook) and presents the record to the paymaster at the pay station.
- An envelope is prepared for each official's position for each game. Cash for the fee for that assignment is placed in the envelope. On presentation of a chit for that game, the paymaster presents the envelope to the referee and records the payment in a ledger. You may have the referee sign for the receipt of payment.
- If payments are made after the tournament, the best method is for the field marshal to keep a written record, signed by the officials, for each game. After the tournament, the records are compiled, pay calculated, and checks sent to the referees. Any discrepancies must be resolved by correspondence or telephone.

## Recruitment

**H**ardly any tournament has ever had enough referees! Recruitment of referees is a big part of making your tournament a success. Do not assume even that your "regular" referees know about the tournament. Remember that most people make plans for the off-season, especially the summer. You need to give them plenty of advance notice if you want them to include your event in their off-season plans. These steps will help you get the referees you need to your tournament.

- **Determine the size** of your tournament. The tournament director should be able to tell you early on the maximum number of teams. Also ask what the structure of the competition will be. (For example, round robin play in 4-team groups followed by finals). You will have to plan for your biggest day.
- **Determine the work load.** If you want the optimum performance, of course each team of officials will work only one game. In real life, that will not happen in an ordinary youth or amateur tournament, but keep in mind that **the performance of every official will decline with each additional game they work.** It is an inevitable law of physiology. On average, no referee should work more than 300 minutes of "game time" in a youth tournament under good conditions. That might mean as many as five games of 30-minute halves or only three of 45-minute halves. [Note: The 300-minute guide is only an average for youth games in good weather. The higher the level of competition, and the hotter the weather, the fewer games can be worked in a day. As an example, at youth regionals and state cup matches held in summer, referees work no more than two games per day, one center and one line, or two lines.]

- Do the math.. Knowing the maximum number of games on the heaviest day, and how many games each referee will do, you can determine how many referees you will need. Let's look at a few different ways to do the math for a typical youth tournament with ages 10 - 19.

Example one: A 200-team tournament will play round robin on Saturday and Sunday morning, with finals Sunday afternoon. The "big day" will be Saturday. 200 teams will play 200 games. (Each will play twice, but they play each other, so  $200 \times 2 \div 2 = 200$  games.) You will need three officials for each game for a total of 600 total positions. Multiply the number of games in each age group by their duration and divide by the number of games to find the average game length. Here's a shortcut: for a typical youth tournament U-10 through U-19, the average will be about 60 minutes.  $60 \text{ mins} \times 200 \text{ games} \times 3 \text{ officials} = 36,000 \text{ minutes}$ . Divided by 300 maximum minutes per official yields a need for 120 officials. (Keep in mind that is an absolute minimum.)

Example 2: Assign a team of referees to a field for a day. Depending on the number of kick-off times, you will have four or five referees per field per day and have them rotate. For example:  $200 \text{ games} \div 6 \text{ kick-off times} = (\text{approximately}) 33 \text{ fields}$ . You will need  $33 \times 4 = 132$  or  $33 \times 5 = 165$ . So, depending on the ages and game lengths, you will need between 130 and 170 referees.

Example 3: Assume each official will work four games.  $200 \times 3 / 4 = 150$  referees.

Note that **you do not need to know what teams are coming to the tournament or what the schedule will be to calculate how many referees you will need.**

- **Decide what your "market" is.** Once you have a rough idea of the number you will need, examine your resources and decide where you will get referees. Do you have enough referees in your league or association? Will you look for referees nearby, throughout the state, or from other states, too? Will you have enough referees of adequate grade and experience for the quality of teams that you will be inviting to your tournament? Remember to take into account other tournaments that may be competing for referees.
- **First contact** should be by mail or e-mail and should be made at least **two months** before your tournament. Prepare a mailing list. You can obtain mailing labels from the GSSA office of all the referees in Georgia. Adjacent states will often provide their mailing lists as well. If you can have the labels sorted by zip code, referee grade, or other criteria, it will help. Get at least two sets of labels (you will see why below). Always keep a list of the referees you use. The best place to start your recruitment is with the referees who came to your tournament the year before. Another source of likely invitees is from your fellow assignors .

The contact should be a letter describing your tournament and asking the referee to participate. Be sure to tell them the pay scale (or other compensation), the levels of competition, and the conditions. (Do you have rooms for out-of-town referees? Will there be field marshals, tents, water, food?) Include a form for the referee to fill out and mail back. Ask for the referee's age, experience, grade, desired level of game as referee and assistant referee, name, telephone number and address, e-mail address, times and dates available, need for lodging (if applicable), and the name of any team they are affiliated with. If you are inviting referees from another state, they will need to notify their State Referee Administrator that they are going to referee out of state; you should remind them of that or supply a place for SRA approval on the form. If referees are coming from another country, they will need permission from both their national federation and USSF. Contact GSSA or USSF for instructions about how to get these clearances.

Another effective way to contact referees is through the internet. The GSSA referee web site (at [www.gssa.org](http://www.gssa.org)) hosts a referee assignment posting area. Many tournaments establish web sites. Make sure if your tournament has a web site that potential referees visiting it can find out how to contact you.

- **Follow-up** when you receive the form back, acknowledge its receipt and confirm that the referee will be assigned for the tournament by a certain date. This can be done with a phone call, but it is probably easier to do through the mail, electronic or snail. **This step is essential.** People forget, or they assume that if they have not heard from you, they are not wanted. If you assume they will show up just because they mailed the form back, you will have a terrible shock on the first morning of the tournament!
- **Make the assignments.** Some tournaments have a meeting of referees or a referee check-in at tournament headquarters (usually a hotel or a room at a field complex) the night before or first thing in the morning the tournament begins. Tournaments that use this method usually have substantial out-of-town participation. In that case, your follow-up responses can be used to tell the referees where and when to report, telling them they will receive their assignments there. (By the way, this method helps solve one of your worst problems: the no-shows and last minute cancellations. You can reassign referees or get people to volunteer to do extra games on the fly.) This practice also makes it easy to distribute tournament rules and the information discussed below under Referee Support.

Many tournaments using mostly local referees make assignments by telephone or e-mail. Try to do this several days before the tournament begins. Do not wait for the schedule to be complete — book what you have early. The reason is that some percentage of your referees will inform you when you assign them that they are not coming after all. Murphy's Law says all of the no-shows will have games at 8:00 a.m. on the first day.

## Referee Support

Once the tournament is under way, it will run much more smoothly if there is strong referee support. Here are some guidelines (and the reasons why they are good for the tournament to do):

- The tournament staff should handle the validation of teams and players. The best method is to check in the teams at headquarters, validate a team roster (stamps, distinctive stickers, signatures all work for validation), and have the team present the validated team roster to the field marshal at each game. To resolve any question of player eligibility, you only need to compare the validated roster with the game roster submitted by the team to the referee (a roster is required by the Laws of the Game). Why do it? Checking passes takes about five to ten minutes per team. Between games, the officials must drink fluids, use the bathroom, snack, fill out paper work from the previous game, check field and player equipment, and organize their team for the next game. Tournaments usually don't allow enough time for all that, and adding pass-checking pretty much guarantees a late start for every game.
- Have field marshals at every field or group of fields (no more than two or three fields per marshal). The field marshal should be prepared to do whichever of the following tasks are appropriate for the tournament setup:
  - Collect player passes from teams, resolve any questions of player identity, and retain passes of those sent off during the match. (Why? See above.)

- Validate the referee's completion of the assignment via a sign-in sheet, game chits, etc. (Why? To assure proper payment and decrease referees taking time to shuttle to and from the HQ for their game chits.)
  - Provide security for officials and their equipment, including intervening to prevent harassment, abuse, or assault on officials, with authority to expel persons from the site, to engage law enforcement agencies if necessary, and to summon medical assistance as required. (Why? You want the referees to come back to your tournament. Lack of security support is the number two reason referees will forswear a tournament forever. One ugly incident can lose you a dozen referees at your next tournament.)
  - Maintain the referees' area (tent, dressing room, or other area as designated) free of unauthorized persons. (Why? Referees need down time and a place of refuge and relative quiet for paper work, relaxation between games, and re-supply of vital substances. There is no rest in a place of stress.)
  - Maintain communication between the field and tournament headquarters for the exchange of information, reassignment, and queries. (Why? This should be self-evident. The success of tournaments from the participants' point of view is judged on how situations are handled when things go wrong. Something always goes wrong.)
  - Have a copy of the tournament rules and support the referees in enforcing those provisions that are within their jurisdiction. Provide referees with copies of the rules. (Why? Fairness of treatment is very important to your participants. Different teams playing under different rules is not fair, and it will reflect on your tournament's success. Referees don't make up rules on their own because they want to, they do it because they have to.)
- Give referees an unlimited supply of fluids within easy walking distance of every field. Water is a necessity, sports drinks are often included. Depending on the distance from the field to food vendors, food may be made available as well. (Why? Besides avoiding delay while referees hike to the nearest water hole, not providing basic necessities is the number one reason that referees avoid returning to tournaments.)
  - Give referees an area sheltered from the elements. The area should provide protection from the rain, sun, wind, or cold, depending on conditions. The area should be away from teams and spectators and should be kept clear of people who are not referees. (Why? Remember, every referee's performance declines over time due to physical depletion. The worse the conditions, the more it declines.)
  - Have materials and personnel available at every site to repair fields that become unplayable. Lining equipment, extra corner flags, string to repair nets, and sand for wet spots are all useful. (Why? The referee has a responsibility to assure that playing conditions are safe and fair. They MUST delay the start of the game if the field or it's equipment become unplayable.)

## Assignment

Referees should be assigned by an experienced, certified USSF assignor. The chaos of a tournament played during a rain storm is no place for on-the-job training! It is a good idea to have one or more assistant assignors as well. That will provide continuity if the assignor is not available the next year, and they can be put in charge of separate venues.

## Referee Development Opportunities

While the work load often seems overwhelming, a tournament also offers excellent opportunities to improve your referee program. Look for these opportunities for your referee corps:

- To referee teams from other parts of the country or other nations with different traditions, skills, and styles;
- To referee with new team-mates from around the state or from other states;
- To get together with those officials in an intermediate or advanced instructional clinic;
- To arrange for field assessments.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*I've got a referee that's just terrible. Can I take away his badge?*

No. A referee's certification can only be removed after due process through the Ethics and Greivance Committee of GSSA or USSF. You are free, of course, to contract with (assign) whomever you wish for refereeing services.

*We lost a game because the referee made horrible decisions. What can we do?*

All leagues and state-run programs (Classic, Challenge, and Athena) and many tournaments provide for game protests. There is usually a nonrefundable fee required. Protests based on a referee's misinterpretation of the Laws of the Game may result in a replayed match, but protests based on a referee's judgement may not.

If, in your opinion, the referee simply displayed poor judgement, you should communicate directly with the home team's league referee coordinator. Local leagues and associations do pay attention to the reasonable comments of coaches and team officials. Perhaps they will arrange to have the referee assessed to correct weaknesses or find the right level for him or her to officiate. Keep in mind that nothing you can say will change what has already happened. Make your comments constructive, so they can be used by the local referee coordinator to help that referee improve.

The GSSA has set up the Referee Ethics and Grievance Committee to hear complaints about unprofessional and unethical conduct by referees. Only complaints made in writing by coaches, managers, league officials, or referees are considered. Complaints should be addressed to the committee chair in care of the GSSA office.

*Our league board of directors voted to add a new playing rule, that all unintentional handballs must be penalized, and they have directed our referees to enforce it. Can we do that?*

No. You should inform your board of directors that only the International Football Association Board has the authority to change the Laws of the Game. Modifications are allowed under the Laws of the Game for certain conditions (for example, the size of the field may be changed for youth players), but such changes must be adopted by the National or State administrative body (the United States Youth Soccer Association, the United States Amateur Soccer Association, and their Georgia affiliates, GYSA and GASA). Referees who fail to adhere to the Laws of the Game and their authorized modifications may be subject to discipline. Remember, too, that under certain conditions, ignoring or changing rules may have implications for the insurance coverage enjoyed by participants through USSF or GSSA affiliation.

*Our league doesn't want to use the Georgia Youth Soccer rules for Under-6 or Under-8 play. They want to have a different number of players and use goalkeepers in U-6. Can they do that?*

GYSA allows leagues to modify some rules, such as the number of players and field size for games within their own leagues (intramural recreational games). However, when games are played between teams from different leagues, the GYSA rules must be followed. Referees for U-6 and U-8 games should be provided with the specific rules adopted by the league if they differ from GYSA rules.

*Sometimes we only have two officials show up for a match. Is it all right if they work a "two-man" system with two referees, each having a whistle?*

No. *The Laws of the Game* and the *USSF Referee Administrative Handbook* makes it clear that only the Diagonal System of Control, with one referee, is acceptable. The officials should do their best to recruit someone to assist on one line. A neutral person, not connected with either team, is preferred. If the assistant is not a certified USSF referee, that person should only indicate when the ball has gone out of play and should be instructed not to signal for offside or fouls.

*What games should we not allow our referees to officiate? I know parents shouldn't referee their own children, but what other rules apply?*

You are correct, parents should not referee their own children's games. A referee should not officiate in a game in which any relative of the first degree — brother, sister, spouse, child, or parent — is playing or coaching. A referee may not officiate in a youth game for a team with which the referee had a connection (player, coach, team official, parent) within the past year. To avoid any appearance of conflict of interest, referees should decline games in which a boyfriend or girlfriend is playing, as well. Coaches (or assistant coaches, even if only "unofficial" or part time) should not referee their team's games. Avoid assigning any referee who is a coach, player, or player's relative to games in the same age group and competition as his or her team, as that might raise a question of conflict of interest.

Georgia Youth Soccer rules allow officiating by relatives in select games (Challenge, Classic, Athena) only when one of the assigned officials does not appear and **both** coaches have been informed and have agreed to play the game.

*Is it true that as a referee registered with USSF I may not referee for any other organization?*

No, you may referee for other organizations. However, USSF policy states that the primary duty of a federation-registered referee is to officiate games among teams affiliated with the Federation. Referees who take the benefits of the National Referee Development Program and do not assist affiliated teams by refereeing at least as many affiliated games as unaffiliated games may lose their privileges to register with and participate in programs sponsored by the Federation. (Note: school-sponsored games are not considered either affiliated or unaffiliated for this purpose.)

*Our league has said that our referees can only officiate its games. We aren't allowed to referee for anyone else. Is that okay?*

It is absolutely not okay. Referees are registered directly with the United States Soccer Federation and are free and independent contractors. That is, they may accept or decline any match offered to them and may officiate any game for any league or association. A league that restricts the freedom of "its" referees to contract independently may risk violating federal tax laws, as well as violating the intent of the USSF referee program.

*What other things should referees consider when asked to referee an unaffiliated or unofficial match?*

Referees are encouraged not to referee for unaffiliated teams, although it is not prohibited. Besides discouraging those teams from becoming affiliated, there are some risks. There will be no liability insurance for the referee's protection. If the referee is assaulted or if there is serious misconduct, there is no assurance that any disciplinary body will review and act on it.

Referees are sometimes asked to referee preseason or friendly warm-up matches for affiliated teams. A referee should only accept such a game if it has been assigned through an affiliated league by an assignor certified by USSF and the referee is assured that the teams and **all** players are in fact registered with USSF. The assignor should also be assured of this before referees are assigned.