

## **5 Tips to Improve your Game as a Youth Referee**

*By Lance Slichko; PCSRA Youth Representative, Grade 7 Referee*

It is always very exciting and it gives you a sense of accomplishment once you've passed the entry level clinic exam after a long day of sitting in the classroom. Being a soccer referee is a great way to get exposed to the working world, build new relationships, demonstrate being a responsible person and be a part of something that everyone loves worldwide. Conversely, it is hard to take what you learned in eight hours and execute every aspect of soccer refereeing perfectly. That's why it's important, as a beginner, to reach out to some of the more experienced referees in order to improve your own game. The vast majority of the more experienced referees are more than willing to give you a tip or share feedback with you on how you can improve your skill as a referee...and hopefully one day in the future, when you're more experienced, you'll pass that information on to next generation of referees too.

Before I start, let me give a little background about myself. I am 17 years old and I earned my Grade 9 badge right after I turned 11. Two years later, I upgraded to Grade 8 because I liked doing games and wanted to keep advancing. This summer, once again I upgraded to Grade 7 and if I have time in 2017, I want to upgrade to a Grade 7+. Additionally, I am also the PCSRA Youth Representative. The first year that I was a referee, I was just trying to get the basics down i.e. signaling throw ins, indirect and direct free kicks, managing the players and coaches, and keeping players safe. The next year I was ready to center ref my first big field game. In my first couple of years, the parents and coaches told me a number of times that I was good at teaching the players the proper way to play the game. During this time, I listened to advice from the more experienced refs to get me past my uncomfortable stage and then once I started feeling comfortable in the game as a center ref, before I knew it...I was out there doing U16-U17 centers with lots of confidence. Now, I am in my seventh year as a referee and I plan on being a referee for a long time. It has been a lot of fun working the games, meeting new people and now I'm excited that I can share a little of what I've learned. So if you're a new or younger referee, this is for you.

### **1. Use your whistle to talk to the players.**

This is pretty simple; if something serious occurred like a foul in the penalty area, or a violent or reckless foul, blow your whistle with authority. Imagine that there is a blind person sitting in the stands and only knows what happened based on the sounds of your whistle. You want to blow loud for the serious and controversial calls, a simple tweet for trifling fouls, a short puff to resume play after an injury or substitution, and a double tweet to get player's attention.

### **2. Communicate with your crew and be on time.**

Before the whistle blows for the game to start, the most important thing to do is to conduct a pregame meeting with the rest of crew. Go over your responsibilities, information about the teams, peculiar circumstances that might happen, and words of wisdom. Once you've done your pregame, your crew now knows what to expect. The

only thing that you have to do is execute what you talked about. It sets a poor example to not do this or to not arrive well before the start of a game. If you're a new referee, you're starting out badly in front of the other two referees...if you're a more experienced referee, you've created a negative impression of your competence to the younger referees.

**3. Adapt to the Flow of the Game.**

If the game is a 10-0 blowout don't keep calling loose, weak, tici-taci fouls. It makes the game more painful than it already is. The main priority at this point in the game is to protect the players. If the game is tight, call the game consistent with how you've been calling it. For instance, if you've been letting the players play through contact, don't throw a dagger into a team's gut by calling a weak penalty kick. Most coaches will realize that you have been consistent throughout the game and won't complain for a missed call.

**4. Don't panic and stay calm.**

If you make a call the players don't like, adapt to the situation and deal with it accordingly. If you made a call that could go either way and a player tells you he doesn't agree with your call in a polite way, just explain to him why you made the call. If there has just been a DOGSO foul in the penalty area and players are swarming around you demanding an outcome, figure out the situation first, pick out the player who committed the offense and deliver an outcome based on what you witnessed. If you're still having trouble talk to your AR and listen to what he has to say. Usually, if you are with good AR's, you take care of player management and the AR's worry about the coaches.

**5. If all else fails, just smile! ☺**

Smiling is the easiest way to diffuse a potential troubling situation. Now you're really not supposed to do this but sometimes what I do if a spectator says something naïve or stupid, I smile and give a thumbs up. This works about 85% of the time. Smiling works in tough situations and it also works to just get players and coaches to like you. When you're checking the players in, ask them how they are doing and try to break the ice by using a little appropriate humor. This sets the tone and makes it easy for you to communicate with players and handle their management better.

With fall coming up, the league games are just around the corner. Get out there and do some games because it's a great way to make money and build your skill. However, after the first few games, you'll find out it's not about the money anymore. You will get to the point in your career where you want to ref because you love doing it.

Lastly, remember all the FIFA law changes. Some key changes are the offside rule, DOGSO, and kick offs. If you have any questions about the changes, laws themselves, myself, or

you want to ref a game with me email me at [slichthree@earthlink.net](mailto:slichthree@earthlink.net). I'm looking forward to seeing new faces and working with you!