

Testimony of a Young Referee

Testimony of a young referee (13 years old) of a U10 match (Indiana).

Please remember that a lot of these young referees are learning. Imagine if they were your child being "yelled" at!

My brother and I arrived at the game about 3:25 pm. I checked in the players of both teams, and then we talked about who would be the center referee. Another person was supposed to be the center referee, but he said that he was tired and didn't really want to ref this game because he had reffed all morning. I said that I was fine with doing it, although at this point I had no idea that it was a higher level travel game. I had reffed only Rec games previous to this one. I called for captains, and we started the game. In the first half, the game was a little rough, and I only called a couple things. The game was intense and aggressive, but nothing that happened was out of my control or unreasonable (18th law-common sense).

At half time the assignor came over to see how we were doing, and she told me that what I could do better was blow my whistle harder. Blue scored one goal in the first half, and Red scored zero. I had to blow my whistle in order for the Red team to know that it was time to take the field because they weren't doing it (usually teams will take the field after about five minutes but i let them have about 30 more seconds after Blue took the field). About ten minutes into the game the (Red) parents started to get a little rowdy and irritated, and there was definitely a change in attitude of the Red players, coach, and parents.

At one point in the game the Red coach said, "She has no idea what she's doing!" Then he directed his statement to me specifically and said, "You have no idea what calls you're making!" I was making my calls very consistent and made sure that it was always fair. One of my priorities is to always be consistent. What I call on one team is going to be called the same way for the other team.

On the sidelines the parents of the Red team were getting very angry because their team was losing. Lots of the comments that were made were directly addressed to me. I heard things like "Use your whistle!", "Do you know what your doing?!", "Open your eyes!", and very loud moans and groans and "come on ref!" They yelled, very clear, out-loud calls that they thought that I should have made such as, "That was a push!" and "He cant do that!". They always opposed every single call that I made, even if it was as simple as a throw in. The parents constantly complained and never stopped. The rudest and most obnoxious screams that I heard was the guy who kept on counting down the time. He said that time was up at 21 minutes into the second half. A couple of the parents said "Look at your watch!" and "Okay team we're playing overtime now!". The guy said, "One minute left!". Then he said, "30 seconds left!" After that he said, "10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, blow your whistle!". Then he repeated that when the time was still not up at 23:30. I blew my whistle 3 hard times when the time was out. I walked over to the sidelines, and I was really upset. I couldn't even fill out the game reports correctly, and now that I think about it I don't even think I did it right. Anyway, the Blue coaches told me that I called a fair game and did a fine job.

They even offered an escort to the car, but by then my mom had walked over. **(Isn't that last statement sad?)** The assignor said that I did a good job and I didn't do anything wrong and that I just wasn't at all ready for such an intense travel game.

Now that I reflect on the second half of the game I know what I would have done to keep me and my game under control. I was just so shaken up by the rude, sarcastic, and obnoxious yelling that I had convinced myself that I was calling everything wrong. I also couldn't even concentrate and focus on the last ten minutes of the game because I was so distracted and upset. I now know for next time to keep composed and just take a deep breath and not be afraid to "handle" the situation. The only reason I didn't confront the Red team's coach about his fans was because

there was no neutral adult there to back me up and support me, and so I was too scared as a beginner referee. I could barely even collect myself to walk off the field. I know for next time that if it ever gets that bad again then I should terminate the game if the coach can't control his team's fans after I have fair warned him or her. This was a terrific learning experience for me, but I definitely learned the very, extremely hard way.