

# THE CENTER CIRCLE

MARCH 1, 2016

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## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Referee retention is a top priority of your RBSRA Chapter and the EPSARC organization.
- Knowledge of the rules is your foundation. Express that knowledge with referee confidence.
- Spring leagues and local assignments begin March 19th.

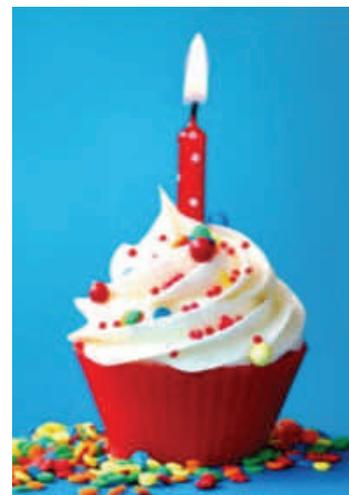
## THE BALL ROLLS ON - a word from the President

This marks the one year anniversary of *The Center Circle*. It's an important milestone for the Chapter and I hope that you are enjoying its content. The bulk of the articles come from RBSRA Board contributors. However, anyone can submit an article or an idea for an article. Let us know which topics you would like to see the newsletter tackle. In this issue we introduce our first guest author, Stan Nagle. Stan is the State Youth Referee Administrator for the Eastern Pennsylvania Soccer Association Referee Committee (EPSARC). He spends a lot of time with young referees who have been identified as having the potential and desire to rise through the referee ranks. Through EPSARC, he provides them with mentoring and opportunities to represent Eastern PA in ODP, state, and regional tournaments. Many of these tournaments also have National assessors who provide feedback on their game performance and evening chalk talks, after the tournament day is over. If you have a dream to be a State or National referee and the ambition to begin and follow the process, let a Chapter Board member know and we'll put you in touch with Stan.

Stan's article explores referee retention. He states that over 90% of referees drop out before their third season! This year, the drop out problem spread to experienced referees, too, due to Pennsylvania's new background check requirements. The result is that the referee base in Berks County is down 45% from last year's numbers. Your RBSRA Chapter is committed to providing the support you need to become a referee and stay a referee. Don't be afraid to reach out to us if you have a question or situation that you need help resolving.

Speaking of becoming a referee, I want to congratulate and welcome the newest group of RBSRA area referees. Last night, they took their test and received their certificates, badges, and equipment kits. The group had old and young, parent and child, siblings, returning referees, players and former players, coaches, and a wide variety of soccer experience. Many of these folks will be working games in the Hamburg area. Look for them and introduce yourself.

Carry on!  
Bob Geyer



It's our birthday!



## REFEREE CONFIDENCE *by Al Cross*

What makes a referee a good referee in the eyes of the players, coaches, and fans involved with a game? Confidence may be one of the key factors to being that good referee. Knowing the rules, moving with the flow of the game, and making correct calls are all needed to be a competent referee. However, sometimes that is not enough. Being confident in the way that you referee may be the extra factor that can help you through those closely contested games. When a tight game puts the spotlight on your calls, presenting yourself in a strong, confident manner will help you weather the moments when some of the participants may not agree them.

How do you present confidence in a game? Each of us works a game differently, so there is no standard way to "present" confidence. However, some actions can make others perceive you to be confident. Make the call promptly and use a strong whistle to emphasize your decision, when needed. Use

strong signals to indicate the direction the play will go, when restarted. Quickly move to the point of a foul to prevent confrontation or move promptly to the next point for the landing of the ball.

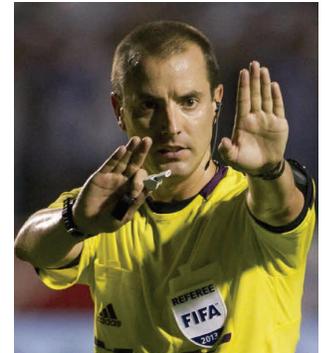
Gestures can, at times, be more useful than a verbal discussion. Use simple hand gestures to hold off continuing verbal disagreement from a player or coach and forestall the possibility of giving a caution for dissent. Hold up your hand in a stop gesture to acknowledge a coach but indicate you need to follow the play. Do not stop and engage the coach, as that either disrupts the game or takes your attention off the play in progress. The single finger wiggle can also be useful to calm a player that is sounding off.

Your posture and dress code can also be used to show that you are a good referee. Always be dressed neatly, with a clean appearance. Slouching, slack shoulders, and shirts that are partially

out, are an invitation for game participants to show you less respect than the position deserves. Keep your head raised and attentive to what is going on around you to show you have control. If you have a habit of dropping your head to look at the ground after making a call, you will lose that respect and may have the coaches and players question your calls more vehemently.

One last item that can help your confidence is to be prepared for your game. Leagues mostly follow a common rule set, but may have slight variations in some of them. Know the rules for the leagues you work. Use the league website to research team records before your match, to prepare for the potentially high intensity game.

Emphasizing your motions, using gestures, being mindful of your appearance, and knowing the rules and the teams all contribute to you presenting yourself as a confident referee.



American World Cup referee  
Mark Geiger

**“Being confident in the way that you referee may be the extra factor that can help you through those closely contested games.”**

## IGNORE THE UNRULY FANS *by Eric Balash*

For new or younger referees, one of the hardest parts about reffing the game doesn't even involve the players; it's the fans! I remember when I first started reffing, I was nervous that I wasn't going to make the right call, or that I was going to forget a certain procedure. I didn't think that fans would be such

an issue. Even if you do make the wrong call or mess something up, the biggest thing to remember is that you know more than the fans. Do not let them intimidate you. Do not be afraid to stop the game and dismiss a fan. It can take a lot of courage, but people will respect you for it. Obviously, it is easier said

than done, but do your best to stay calm, deal with the situation, and focus on the game. There is a reason why you're wearing a badge and why they're on the sidelines. If there is ever an issue that you would like to talk about, please feel free to contact myself or anyone of the board members. We are



## REFEREE RETENTION *by Stan Nagle*

*[EPSARC State Youth Referee Administrator]*

“Almost every sport, at every level, in every country faces the same dilemma about the shortage of qualified officials to work their games and how to correct it. How to recruit and retain officials are always brought to the forefront of these discussions. Recruitment is only a small fraction of the issue. Walk up to any 14-17 year old kid and offer them \$25+ per hour, for a job in soccer, that they can be their own boss and make their own schedule and I doubt you will receive many rejections. Recruitment of adults is a completely different beast though. The lure of ‘easy’ money doesn’t attract as many adults as it does kids. Most adults become referees to stay in the game they love, or because they have children that play and think the game deserves ‘better’ than what they are getting.

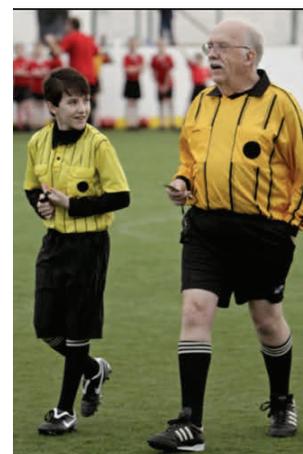
Referee retention (or lack thereof) is by far the more serious cause of the shortage of officials, and more importantly, the shortage of competent officials. There are many reasons for this, but the two that have stood out and are tried and true consistent answers over several decades are people quit because of 1) the inability to get games from assigners, and 2) the abuse they suffer at the hands of coaches and

parents. To first look at the assigner issue, many assigners are afraid to give new officials that they have no knowledge of games. Assigners also too often take the easy way out. Instead of working with the new kid that also plays and may not be available the whole day, they assign one person to 6 games in the same day. Sure that gets them to sleep every night at a reasonable hour, but it is not what is best to service the game and to develop officials. Both of these excuses are way too common, and something that EPA’s referee committee is actively trying to solve through mandatory assigner training on a yearly basis. Some of the responsibility for allowing these practices to thrive is that the teams and leagues do not hold their assigners accountable. Currently, the main goal for both the assigner and the league is that there is a body at the field. This is unacceptable and needs to be corrected.

The second, and the most common reason that over 90% of referees drop out before their third season is because of the abuse they must endure. In the past decade, this problem has become much more prevalent. No longer is mom or dad coaching the average

team. Nowadays an ever growing percentage of coaches are professionals. Professionals whose livelihood depend on how many wins their under 9 team can accrue in one season. Many will stop at nothing to get that competitive edge over their opponent even if it means crucifying some young kid that happens to be that day’s referee. And if the coaches are not trouble enough, add in the parents on the touchlines constantly yelling insults at the referee. This theory that referees are expected to have thick skin and let all of these negative aspects just roll off is absurd. I’d give odds that most people if they think back to when they were a teenager and an adult berated them for any reason, that a vast majority of you would want to go somewhere and cry. And even if it didn’t bring you to tears, it’s not a position you would volunteer to be in week after week, year after year.

So how do we go about combatting the issues of recruiting, retaining, and developing better officials? First off, we must get these referees past the 3 year mark. No matter how easy being a soccer official appears from the outside, it takes 3-5 years to become even marginally competent. If 1/3 of our



Antonio Vitale, then youngest referee in Ohio history and his grandfather, Tony Vitale

**“Referee retention (or lack thereof) is by far the more serious cause of the shortage of officials, and more importantly, the shortage of competent officials. ”**



## REFEREE RETENTION *(continued)*

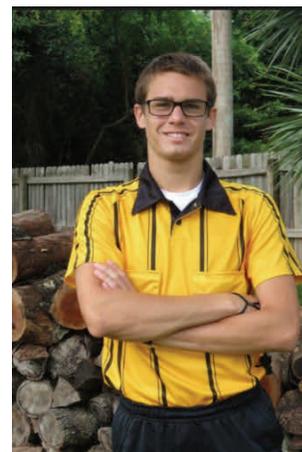
"If 1/3 of our referee base is in either their first or second year, it is ridiculous to think that they will be at the level that is expected by coaches, players, and spectators. How do we go about this?? Once again the answer is multifaceted. We must start by taking seriously and strictly disciplining any coach or parent that is disruptive to the game. This means multiple game suspensions for coaches that are dismissed from games. It means having team and league representatives present at games that are willing to stand up to the 'bully' on the sideline and say that's enough. It takes teams banning parents that are not part of the solution from attending games. It takes treating that 14 year old referee like he or she is your own son or daughter, because believe it or not, that kid is someone's son or daughter. Imagine what you would do if you were standing on the sideline watching your kid play, and a parent from the other team screams obscenities and insults at your child while they are playing.

How would you react? Can anyone honestly say they would not confront that person and maybe even go as far as ending up in jail defending your kid? Why is it different just because it's someone else's child, and that child happens to be wearing a funnier looking uniform and carrying a whistle??

Improving our retention rates will also require the referee committee to take attack the problem head on and not just accept the losses as part of the business. The EPA referee committee has put into practice several programs to help retain officials. We are stressing to our senior officials how important it is to help the newer people. Every clinic this topic is discussed and each official is asked to take personal responsibility for two new referees each year. Another program we are starting is having our core mentor group contact every new official at the 3, 6, and 9 month mark after their initial entry level class. Both of these pro-

grams will help the newer official by making sure problem number 1, getting assignments, is eradicated as reports will be sent to the committee and assigners that are not utilizing newer officials will be contacted. The programs will also aid the new official by answering questions, giving feedback after matches to correct deficiencies, and shielding them from some of the abuse they would suffer if going it alone.

The goal in EPA is to double our three year retention rate within the next three years. We hope that everyone that reads this article will be part of the solution, and also share these ideas with others they come into contact with. With soccer continuing to gain popularity, the number of games increasing year after year, and the hassle of Pennsylvania's background check requirement, this increase in retention is vital. Without it, we are headed back to mostly one official games utilizing parent's as club linesman. That scenario is a lose-lose for all involved.



Conrad Redlitz  
Florida Youth Soccer Association  
Young Referee of the Year

**"The goal in EPA is to double our three year retention rate within the next three years."**

## YOU MAKE THE CALL *by Hank Arbo*

A ball is played into the penalty area with a striker in close pursuit. The goal keeper gets there first and a collision is avoided. The keeper, while looking around for a place to distribute the ball, is tossing it three feet into the air and catching it. The striker sees an opportunity and

heads the ball away as it comes down. A scramble occurs. Was the heading legal or has there been a violation?

When a keeper takes hand possession of the ball, he has several options. He can just hold it. He can dribble it like

a basketball. He can toss it into the air and still be considered to have possession as long as he catches the ball before it hits the ground. The striker, heading a tossed ball as it comes down, has committed an illegal challenge. The restart is an indirect kick for the keeper's team.



We're on the web, mobile devices, and Facebook!

<http://www.rbsra.com/>

<https://facebook.com/RBSRA>



BE INVISIBLE...  
UNTIL YOU'RE NEEDED

## READING BERKS SOCCER REFEREE ASSOCIATION

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Trustee:	Denny Dornes	610-926-4714	dornden@aol.com
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## DEALING WITH PARENTS<sup>1</sup>

- Remain calm.
- Do not get into discussions or arguments with the sidelines.
- Enlist the support of the coach. Ask him to speak with the offending spectators and let him know that, if the behavior continues, the game will not. This will usually be enough to quiet most parents (other parents may understand the consequences and help with the problem spectator).
- If you have asked the coach to deal with problem parents and the situation continues, ask the coach to have the spectator leave the area. If the spectator refuses, tell the coach that, if the spectator is not removed, the game will end. Give the coach a reasonable amount of time (a few minutes) to deal with the situation. Remember, you cannot dismiss a spectator directly but must work through the coach or a tournament or league official.
- If the parent does not leave, you should feel free to end the game. Include any misbehavior on the part of the spectators in your game report to the league so that this type of behavior can be disciplined and stopped. Most leagues and state associations have methods for dealing with bad behavior, but doing so often requires a written report from the referee.

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Soccer Federation, (2010), Information for New Referees 2010, p8, [Document]. Retrieved from <https://ussoccer.app.box.com/shared/ruqcsf0671k1bcf6dzwf/1/348010025/36811345070/1>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Spring league start dates
  - RBJSL March 19th
  - Delco March 19<sup>th</sup>/20th
  - EDP March 19<sup>th</sup>/20th
  - Lanco April 2<sup>nd</sup>/3rd
  - PAGS April 10<sup>th</sup>/11th
- RBJSL coaches meeting Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 7:00pm @ Fleetwood High School
  - Don't let the coaches pull a fast one on you! Listen to an RBJSL rules discussion and hear what the coaches are told about sideline behavior, substitution, player cards, checking in, etc

The RBSRA mission is to increase the knowledge and performance level of all Association members through training, mentoring, and assessing. We seek to promote, foster, and perpetuate the game of soccer and its officiating. As we interact with members, coaches, players, and fans, we strive to instill a spirit of good sportsmanship, honesty, respect for authority, and fair play. We actively develop, teach, promote, and regulate soccer for individuals of all ages. Our members generally come from Berks County, but are not limited to living in that area.

The RBSRA is affiliated with the Reading-Berks Junior Soccer League (RBJSL), the Eastern Pennsylvania Youth Soccer Association (EPYSA), the Eastern Pennsylvania Soccer Association Referee Committee (EPSARC), and the United States Soccer Federation.

**PA CHILD ABUSE CHECK**

**PA STATE CHECK**

**FBI BACKGROUND CHECK**

Three background clearances must be obtained and **mailed** to EPSARC before you can register.

Remember, you can email any chapter officer if you have any questions about the Laws Of The Game, registration, game reports, or any other situation you need assistance with.