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# YouthSoccerInsider

Friday, June 29, 2018

## A Ref's View: Parents say the strangest things

by Randy Vogt

In my last article, "[Kids Say the Darndest Things](#)," I wrote about how I am recovering from a torn medial meniscus in my right knee and started reffing again, going slowly at first by doing U-9 games on a small field as these games involve less running than matches on a big field. There was a wonderful innocence with these young players.



Yet there can be problems with a couple of these kids where whistling a few fouls and smiling is just not enough for the ref to do. For example, you will find

1% or 2% of young players who have real social issues and are more interested in pushing other kids than playing soccer.

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If somebody is causing an issue, the ref could cheat his or her position to stay near the problem player or coach, which is easier to do on a smaller field.

For example, if there is a dissenting coach, the referee can cheat positioning so the ref is closer to the coach and sometimes has a similar angle and view. This reduces the possibility of two people having two very different interpretations of a situation based on two very different views. Plus, if the ref is near the coach, it would be difficult for the coach to dissent without the ref hearing it and dealing with it -- because a dissenting coach, if ignored, will most likely lead to a loss of game control.

Parents who take these games way too seriously can be issues too and they are the dark cloud that hang over this age group. I was refereeing a boys U-9 game in a tournament and one of the parents approached me before this round-robin game and said, "Ref, this game is for first place so could we switch with other teams to a better field?"

The grass field was as good as could be expected after a day of rain with just a little mud by one touchline at midfield and, not one field was better than the others at this school. That comment was my clue that who wins this game is very important to those at the field and, sadly, I had to be much more of an enforcer at this boys U-9 game, all because of the parents' poor attitude.

The innocence of those other U-9 games were completely lost in this one. There were many fouls in the game and the comments made by the so-called adults during the match were rather sad. Their over-exuberant remarks stopped after they realized that I was not paying attention to what they were saying and was ignoring when they pointed in their team's direction when the ball went over the touchline.

I officiated four small-sided championship games during this time and, thankfully, this was the only one where the parents acted quite privileged.

Let me conclude this article with a word of warning. I was refing these small-sided games as I was recovering from an injury and could not yet cover a game on a large field. Generally, the newest refs are assigned small-sided games in the youngest age groups, which works fine. They don't work fine with overenthusiastic parents and the game mentioned would have been too much for a new ref to work. It's nice for your son (or daughter) to win a trophy but it's

much better to be a good role model.

We lose most refs in their first two years of officiating with the comments from the adults in youth soccer being the number one reason for quitting. There is no way to be positive about this as the parents at that game are ref-killers.

([Randy Vogt](#), the author of "Preventive Officiating," has [officiated more than 10,000 games.](#))



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