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YouthSoccerInsider

Friday, April 27, 2018

A ref's incorrect striving for perfection

by Randy Vogt

Why is it that I might be a relatively average looking guy but I look very good in my photos, including the images in this space? It's because that I'm good at Photoshop.

But at least I know when I'm retouching images in Photoshop too much. I remember working at a Manhattan ad agency at the turn of the millennium and we created a brochure to promote our agency to potential clients. There were photos of the three partners in the brochure. The partners came to the art director designing the brochure and stood over him, making sure that their skin and hair looked absolutely perfect. But human beings are not perfect and the photos were retouched so much they looked fake so I dubbed it the "Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid" brochure, even if one of the partners was a woman.

Nobody is perfect, including referees, and I've had to learn to chase excellence and not perfection as I will continuously disappoint myself if I do the latter.

When I was growing up and as a young adult in New York, I refereed nearly all games solo. I learned that although I wanted to get every decision correct, I would not be able to get many close offside decisions correct. And as long as I was trying my best, I should not beat myself up over a goal being allowed that was marginally offside. Even if I had a coach on the touchline, often with a better position than me to spot offside as I was on the field, pointing out to me about my error.

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That coach needed to let it go and move on, just as I needed to do the same. I certainly needed to concentrate on the next decision, rather than thinking about possibly missing my last one.

If the coach had problems moving on, the coach needed to understand that one ref cannot get every decision correct. And if the coach did not want to move on, the referee needed to control the behavior on the touchline.

But most people on youth soccer fields, then and now, are very fair. I can remember one boys U-16 game that I refereed solo in my early days where a team pulled an offside trap but Johnny did not get the memo and he pulled up after the ball was passed. The attacker that the ball was passed to went in alone on goal and scored although it looked to nearly everyone that player was way offside. The goalkeeper and his teammates ran up to me dissenting but one of their teammates saw exactly what I saw and said, "The player was onside as Johnny pulled up too late." It was the actions of players like that who have made officiating a pleasurable experience.

Besides having to move on in my mind when I know or think that I've made a mistake, I also should get play restarted quickly. If play is restarted quickly, there's much less chance for dissent as the teams need to follow the ball instead of arguing.

I'm lucky as very few of my games are taped. Not so for pro refs who, even if they restart play quickly, will have videos of all their decisions analyzed and broken down by assessors and commentators, with the note that many of those commentators sadly never opened up a rulebook.

Besides not looking back at potential errors during the game and restarting play quickly, I've learned that I cannot whistle a make-up call. I lose the respect of players and coaches as well as my colleagues when I make something up. And it encourages dissent.

So, if I whistle a handling offense but the player is adamant the ball struck the chest rather than the arm, it looks ridiculous if I whistle an extremely marginal handling foul shortly thereafter on the opposing team.

([Randy Vogt](#), the author of "Preventive Officiating," has [officiated more than 10,000 games](#). Go [HERE](#) for the archive of Vogt's referee Soccer America referee articles.)



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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