

Subject: Youth Soccer Insider: How Refs Work With Club Linesmen

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How Refs Work With Club Linesmen

By Randy Vogt

Club linesmen are those volunteers who help a solo referee determine if the ball is out-of-bounds. The ref should tell club linesmen before the game, "Raise the flag only when the entire ball goes over the entire line. Do not give me the direction of the throw as I will determine it."

They are not to signal direction as this can create a perception that they are cheating for the team they want to win. The ref should make sure that he or she thanks them both before and after the game as they are volunteering their time to help.

No matter if the club linesmen say that they want to help you even more, even if a club linesman says that he or she is an international referee, the only responsibility of the club linesmen is to signal when the ball went over the touchline -- not to raise the flag for fouls or for offside or when the ball went over the goal line.

It might seem simple enough to raise the flag when the entire ball is over the entire touchline but club linesmen have an important role to play in the match. I have seen games where unfortunate issues develop from club linesmen who either were not paying attention or wanted to do too much.

First, the club linesman who stops paying attention to the game, the ball just goes over the touchline and the players nearby stop. Yet the flag is not raised. If I catch a club linesman not paying attention, I either admonish that person to do so or ask the coach to find me another club linesman.

But the bigger issue is the club linesman who wants to do too much. Yes, I have caught club linesmen raise the flag for direction, even though it's exactly what I told the person not to do, and a few of them were cheating for the team they were rooting for. Thankfully, this has not occurred as much as you might think.



The club linesman who believes that the role is to signal offside creates problems. In almost all cases, the teammate of the attacking player with the ball was standing in an offside position and the flag went up in the air, sometimes with the club linesman yelling "Offside." I try and be nice in telling the club linesman to lower the flag as offside should not be called as the player in the offside position is not interfering with play or an opponent nor gaining an advantage by being in that position. Should a club linesman want to argue about this, I ask the coach to get me another club linesman.

Thankfully, the teams do not take any unwanted decisions of the club linesman as seriously they would take decisions of assistant referees who are dressed for the role.

Finally, there are a few club linesmen who are trying to intimidate the referee. When I was young and starting out as a ref, I had a few club linesmen who told me of their vast experience as referees and assessors in other states and that they would assess my performance. Well I never received an assessment from these false friends who were simply trying to intimidate me in favoring their child's team without success.

(Randy Vogt has officiated over 9,000 games during the past three decades, from professional matches in front of thousands to 6-year-olds being cheered on by very enthusiastic parents. In "[Preventive Officiating](#)," he shares his wisdom gleaned from thousands of games and hundreds of clinics to help referees not only survive but thrive on the soccer field. You can visit the book's website at www.preventiveofficiating.com.)

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