

Subject: Youth Soccer Insider: Rating refs improves officiating

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Rating refs improves officiating

By Randy Vogt

Just as there are not enough referees to adequately cover every game, there are not enough assessors to help referees. So assessors tend to watch the games of the refs who are going somewhere as well as the refs who are the subject of many complaints.

Should refs be fortunate enough to have their game assessed, they should listen to what the assessor has to say, and it's probably a very good idea to act on the advice as well.

Yet every game, the ref is being assessed by players, coaches and spectators. Listen to criticism that they have of you. If you see patterns of criticism developing, act on them.

When I started refereeing, I heard comments like "Ref, let us play," "The teams are playing nicely, so could you call less fouls?" and "You meant well, but you interrupted play too much." I learned to whistle fewer fouls while still maintaining control of the game, to everyone's benefit.

I've been a member of the Long Island Soccer Referees Association (LISRA) for over three decades. For our games assigned in the Long Island Junior Soccer League (LIJSL), coaches are asked to send in their comments about the refs. Rarely have I ever been graded. But I have read the few comments about me by coaches and they are not nearly as informed as that of an assessor who knows the rules and how to officiate. Yet the ratings by coaches can still be significant. Just like the verbal comments by players and coaches, patterns can start to develop about an official. For example, if you as a ref read many comments that you did not cover the field, it's time to take fewer games or improve your fitness regimen.



A decade ago, LISRA started a phenomenally successful assistant referee program. Up to that point, most games had one ref and two club linesmen and the ref was responsible for being in position for spotting offside as well as fouls, which can be challenging, especially in the older age groups. Today, all games from U-13 to U-19 have two AR's who are generally teenagers. LISRA's AR certification classes have hundreds of students and are held throughout the year.

The assigning website we use is Arbiter and referees are told to evaluate each AR after every game: 10 is the best rating, 1 is the worst and the refs are encouraged to add comments on what the AR has to work on. Through these ratings after every game, the best and worst AR's are sorted out. The best are given choice assignments (such as cup finals) plus encouraged to become referees and the worst are watched more closely as AR's.

Rating every AR after every game works as I have refereed cup finals with the highest-rated AR's and they've been terrific. The only mistakes they made were subtle. I received very nice e-mails from coaches after the game from the last two cup finals that I refereed thanking me for my performance, yet they did not realize that the two excellent AR's made my job much easier. I'm also happy to write that I have been an AR for many youth games too and I never received a rating below an 8. Go figure!

One coach from every game needs to report the score on the league website. I believe that it would be beneficial to leagues and referee associations throughout the United States if every head coach, both home team and visiting team, are required to evaluate the ref using the same rating system and could rate the AR's if they would like to do that as well. All it takes is a few minutes after every game with the option to write comments on the website.

With ratings after every game, the best refs and worst refs would be sorted out pretty quickly and this could be helpful in helping fill in the blanks for assessment programs that are overstretched.

([Randy Vogt](#) has officiated over 9,000 games during the past three decades, from professional matches in front of thousands to six-year-olds being cheered on by very enthusiastic parents. In his book, [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 [PreventiveOfficiating.com](#))

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