

Subject: Youth Soccer Insider: Ref Watch: Are All Games Equally Important?

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Ref Watch: Are All Games Equally Important?

By Randy Vogt

During the 1990s, I worked as a Senior Art Director at Manhattan ad agency Lowe McAdams. One of my first assignments there was for a pro bono client, the Pharmaceutical Advertising Council. Pro bono (meaning "for the public good") work was done on a voluntary basis by Lowe McAdams and other agencies as we received no compensation.

We worked very diligently on this account and produced excellent results. One of the clients, Ken Jones, sent a thank-you letter to Lowe McAdams stating that we worked as if "we were their top client." Our agency received great publicity, I received a promotion shortly thereafter and another client from the Pharmaceutical Advertising Council, Dick Sawyer, became a reference when I started looking for a new job at the turn of the millennium.

Yet not everyone at Lowe McAdams was pleased with our work. A longtime employee there who constantly made mountains out of molehills (any of my former co-workers will know exactly who it is if they are reading this!) complained about the time we spent on this account instead of just concentrating on the paying clients.

Still working in advertising and marketing but having left behind the many hours of ad agency life more than a decade ago (in part so I could concentrate more on refereeing), I find two very different attitudes on this topic. Many executives believe the \$10 million account is 10 times more important than the \$1 million account. Many employment agencies would rather place a position paying \$100,000 than \$30,000 as the commission would be much higher. And many realtors would much rather sell an apartment on Park Place than on Baltic Avenue.



Bringing this topic to refereeing our favorite sport, are all soccer games equally as important? My answer is an emphatic yes. The Division 6 game is just as important as the Division 1 game. You as the referee might be officiating six or seven games that weekend (in part because of a ref shortage in many places) but the kids are often playing one game that weekend and it means the world to them, no matter which division they are in.

Sadly, I have seen some referees place more importance on the games involving the better teams. Just as bad, I've seen refs officiating boys and men much more seriously than the same refs' often lackadaisical approach when refereeing girls and women. Their body language tells me and everybody else that they do not want to be there.

No matter what the level of the game, people talk. Officials who work hard for all games get good reputations. Officials who take off a game or two do not.

I advanced because soccer's version of Ken Jones and Dick Sawyer saw me working hard and realized that I had some potential so they wrote complimentary letters about me to the local referee association and league. If I had worked very hard only for the top teams or the highest-paying clients, I doubt that I would have ever moved up, both in and outside of soccer.

(Randy Vogt has officiated over 8,000 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 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 www.preventiveofficiating.com/)

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