

Subject: Youth Soccer Insider: Ref Watch: Player Pass Check Provides Chance to Make a Good First Impression

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Ref Watch: Player Pass Check Provides Chance to Make a Good First Impression

By Randy Vogt

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. For referees of youth soccer games, that first impression generally comes when checking player passes.

It seems simple enough. Each team has a player with a pass and each player must give the pass to the ref (or assistant referee) in order to play. Most youth soccer leagues now have passes for coaches and sometimes for trainers and that is a very good thing as the officials know who is allowed to coach the team.

A growing number of referees call players by their number. This might work for those refs (since each player has a distinct number) but it seems very impersonal to me. I prefer to call players by their first name and even introduce myself to them by my first name. After all, I will know their first name plus the captains of the team will know the names of the opposing captains when they introduce themselves during the coin toss.

What to do if I do not know exactly how to pronounce the name of a player on the team? As the coach hands you the roster, look it over and if you are not familiar with a first name, listen as the coach gives out the passes. The coach could say that player's name as in "Kryanna, here's your pass."

It's a simple technique that has helped me and I've heard many comments from the teams such as, "You are the only ref who has pronounced everybody's name correctly."

As the player's name is called, they approach and give you the pass.



The ref checks the photo on the pass and that the info on the pass is correct. The ref checks to make sure that the number on the roster corresponds to the number on the uniform and that the player is wearing legal cleats plus the correct-sized shin guards and the shirt is tucked into the shorts. All players must have shirts tucked in, including goalkeepers. Very importantly, the ref checks that the players are not wearing anything dangerous such as earrings, an uncovered cast, etc.

If you are unsure that the player's photo on the pass is that player, and I have seen thankfully just a few coaches try to get away with using an ineligible player or a ringer not on their team, ask the player what his birth date is as that's on the pass as well.

When checking the player's pass against the roster, mark the players who are there, such as using a checkmark. If the coach says the player will be late, put an "L" by the name. At halftime, recheck to see if in fact the player did show up.

Some teams are quite disciplined in lining up: their players are standing in alphabetical or numerical order, the shirts are tucked into their shorts, all socks correctly cover the entire shin guard. The Felix Unger teams.

Then you will check teams that do not seem to care and are an absolute mess. The Oscar Madison teams.

Just as with referees, the attitude of players go a long way in determining the type of match it will be. It will most likely be much more challenging to referee the Oscar Madison teams than the Felix Unger teams.

When checking the teams, many referees, particularly new ones, make the mistake of telling them how the game will be called.

Saying things such as "When the goalkeeper has the ball, you leave her alone, otherwise I'm going to call a foul" or "Gentlemen, I heard that you don't get along with the other team so I'm going to call a tight match" or any other such instructions is a bad idea and can open a can of worms.

After all, as soon as the ball is legally in play near the keeper and you don't call a foul, the keeper's team will complain that you contradicted yourself. Or as soon as you don't call a perceived foul in a game that you said that you were calling tight, players will complain. Besides, who told you that those teams do not get along?

(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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