

“We Need Better Referees”

This is a statement I have heard over and over again throughout the years, and if we were all to sit down and contemplate the situation, I think everyone would be in agreement.

Having quality officials on every match conducted here in North Texas would be a tremendous luxury! Wouldn't it be great to go to a game where nobody wonders what the referee has just called? No complaints about offside. Everyone could see every call clearly, including the referee in the middle. All calls would go the obvious way, and there would be absolutely no reason for anyone to get upset during a game.

Unfortunately we do not get to live in this dream world, but are yanked back to reality when the assistant referee calls for a throw-in when you knew perfectly well the ball never totally crossed the line. Recently I attended an under 8 game where the referee was informed by all the non-referee people in the crowd whenever he missed a call. Oh what a tremendous example we set for our children when we yell at the person having jurisdiction over a match over something as silly as whether a ball went out of bounds; where the player was standing when the ball was kicked; or even whether or not the player used their hands to play the ball! Wouldn't it be a great thing to be able to share with the youngsters, and believe it yourself, that sometimes you do everything right and you still lose? What is the harm in telling your kids “Sometimes the referee misses some, sometimes they're wrong, and sometimes they're right?” Aren't we building a better world for our future when we teach our children to work through adversity rather than stand up and yell about something that won't matter two hours from now, much less two years?

This past year has been extremely difficult for referees. Referee assault and abuse cases are way beyond where they were a year ago. What is especially troublesome is that many of the referees are our younger ones themselves. Players, who have taken the basic referee course, and are learning the game from a new angle.

Knowledge of the game and experience will tell you that generally the best referees come from people who have played the game. Understanding how the game is played helps in reading the game, knowing what to expect, and what does not matter. Our up and coming young referees are just embarking on a new era in soccer here in North Texas, and across the country. We are just now beginning to see referees coming from the ranks of players, bringing with them understanding and knowledge of the game.

Let's give them time to learn the game from a different perspective. Before we jump up and yell, “You must be joking”, why not say “Oh well” instead? By doing just this very thing we can reduce our chances of getting heart attacks, and simultaneously teach our children to respect authority while all the time allowing the young referee to learn the game. If we don't protect our young referees and allow them to learn, we will never get the people who know the game best in the middle, and consequently years from now we will still be saying, “We need better referees”.

David Crawford

Vice President, North Texas Soccer