

Dear parents,

Like you, I am the parent of several players in the Blaine Soccer Club. I also help coach one of the traveling teams and have helped several recreational teams. I also am the State Director of Assessment and sit on the board for the State Referee Committee that runs the referee program for our entire state of over 3600 referees. There have been some recent local events that I, with the assistance of BSC, wish to bring to your attention in regards to our referees.

I have received word that in one of our rec league games, the young referee had one parent consistently criticize them throughout the game. Another parent had to tell this individual to stop the bad behavior when it became a complete distraction. In another game, the referee received so much criticism from parents that she was made to cry after the match. Mind you this one is more difficult to take because this referee comes from a family that has had all levels of soccer, including professional, as part of their lives.

These types of incidents also occur with other clubs. We in the SRC are tirelessly trying to combat irresponsible behavior because it is a cancer to our beautiful game. We, in Blaine, are fortunate to have a club with a philosophy that has certified referees on recreational games. A majority of other clubs use coaches, volunteer parents, or even no one to referee their games. But treating referees badly is one of the two top reasons referees quit. These kids are trying their best and usually you will see the newer and youngest referees on the recreational matches. They are learning and having fun just as the players are. For them to receive the criticism they sometimes get is just plain wrong.

The BSC staff does a great job in communicating that this behavior is not tolerated. I have personally seen less bad behavior the last couple of years of those within the BSC family. But there are still a few people out there that still believe it is their right to criticize the referee no matter what the circumstance is. Being at these games is a privilege, not a right. If the referee is making mistakes, there are ways of communicating that to the referee. But again, these are young kids most of the time. They will make mistakes and are learning as well.

I know what it is like to be treated this way as when I was a kid, one other metro area club went out of their way to try have me banned from refereeing. If they were successful, I would never have had the referee career I had of being a National Referee for 11 years, being chosen for over 100 professional matches, given the referee assignment for the U17 boys national championship, and being live on ESPN for an international match. What if one of these kids in front of us becomes a referee at a future World Cup?

Please join BSC and me in eliminating bad behavior towards referees. If you see it, say something to the individual. If you feel you need to report it to the club, the club will follow up. I can tell you from my playing days that the worst thing I hated is one of the parents of my team consistently criticize the referee. The kids can hear this stuff and they don't like it. It's embarrassing to them. As a referee, I have had kids come up to me and ask if I can remove their own parent when they would hear this stuff. It's an awful feeling to be asked to do this.

After all, we are doing this for the enjoyment of our kids. Most everyone has been very supportive of the referees and this is great. But we still have a few people that do not understand that irresponsible behavior is not acceptable. We want everyone involved to learn and grow up to be good people as well as enjoying the greatest sport. We all belong as part of the family of an excellent club. Let's be the positive examples our kids wish of us and give them an atmosphere where everyone is comfortable in giving their best.

Sincerely,
Bob Petersen
State Referee Committee