

MENTORING TIPS

for working with youth referees



1. Don't be turned off by apparent indifference or tardiness. Sometimes kids don't outwardly show enthusiasm because they are shy, because friends are watching, or just because they're in an adolescent "mood." Sometimes they are late because their ride was late or because they poorly estimated the time it takes to get to the field.
2. It's a good idea to introduce yourself to the coaches before the game and get a "we're on the same team" feeling going. This will help you avoid problems during the game.
3. Do NOT give advice to the youth referee during the game. It weakens the confidence of the referee and he or she will start to look to you for approval after each call. If the referee blows a major call - let him or her make the mistake. Talk about it at the end of the game. The only exception would be if the game comes to a complete halt and the referee "freezes" and doesn't know how to restart the game.
4. During the game, try to "blend in" with the crowd so you are not a distraction to the referee. Position yourself on the sideline that has the most potential for trouble.
5. Positively intervene if sideline dissent becomes an issue. Try to first make them feel that you are on their side. Talk with the parent/coach about keeping things positive and how it's easy to get overly excited. Do not explain "bad calls" or get into defending the referee - focus on the parent/coach's misconduct not the youth referee's performance.
6. Half time should be used for quick words of encouragement and letting the referee get a quick rest. Save constructive criticism for the end of the game.
7. At the end of the game, give NO MORE than three constructive suggestions. Kids will tune you out if you start a laundry list of "improvements." Decide what the three most important things are and talk about those. Three is the number - the number is three!
8. Constructive criticism is the key. Be honest. Don't "sugar coat" criticism, but remember to keep it positive.

9. Use the "complimentary sandwich" method. Start with a positive thing, then offer constructive criticism, then finish with another positive statement. For example; "I like the way you stayed close to play...when you are down in the corner, try to keep the ball between you and the AR...you were in great position on free kicks."

10. If you use these last three suggestions, the youth referee will leave with six positive compliments, three things to work on, and excited to referee another game!