

Subject: Youth Soccer Insider: How Refs Make Their Next Game Easier

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How Refs Make Their Next Game Easier

By Randy Vogt

For most youth soccer games, the ref would do well by being fit and in position, by smiling, having a good attitude, by enforcing the rules and knowing their application plus giving brief explanations when necessary. It's extremely important that the ref call the first foul, in part since an unwhistled foul could lead to retaliation. Refs who follow this formula can have a long career and most teams would gladly want them to referee their team again.

Coaches and players certainly remember how much that ref allows and will generally adjust accordingly. They will even remember months later what the ref clamped down on and what was allowed. So it's vitally important that the ref does not let players foul one another or retaliate or allow open dissent as their next game with the same team will be just as difficult. Reputations are formed and refs would not want their reputation to be that he or she does not control the game.

Coaches and players are happy if refs let them to have their say but many know that they cannot continuously dissent as the ref will lose control of the game. In [my article in August 2010](#), I wrote about how refs can keep coaches under control.

Let me give an example from a boys U-11 game that I refereed several years ago. The coach, from the visiting team, did not know me and was testing me even before the game to see what he could get away with. He complained about the fact that there were another sport's lines on the field besides the soccer lines. He then started yelling at me at the opening kickoff. Certainly, I could not allow that to happen throughout the match and retain control of the game. The coach yelled at me again and I verbally warned him to concentrate on coaching his team rather than on the officiating.



The next time he yelled, which was near the end of the first half, I cautioned him for dissent. (This was a league in which the coach has a pass and the league wants the ref to show a card to the coach.)

What do you think happened then? Nothing, absolutely nothing! The coach might not have been too happy about it, but he kept quiet the rest of the match. He knew that if he continued to dissent, he would have been dismissed for receiving his second caution in the same match.

The next year, I refereed three games one Saturday and was about to wash up when the assignor phoned me that a boys U-16 cup match, that he did not know about, did not have any officials so he asked me to go to the field. I was tired and did not pace myself that day for an extra game and had to ref this game by myself with no assistant referees.

And who was there? That same coach from the boys U-11 team coaching an older squad. He did not dissent at all in this game and just coached his team as he knew that I would not tolerate dissent from him. Even though I was very tired, the game was relatively easy to referee. I remember that game clearly because his team was down 4-2, yet they won 5-4 with the winning goal being scored with several minutes left to play. Perhaps his team won because he did not dissent and simply concentrated on coaching his team, not on the referee's decisions.

It turns out that I saw the same coach at a soccer convention a year later and he purchased "Preventive Officiating." I wonder if he recognized himself in the passage about him in the book? Some of which I just placed in this article.

(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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