

A Parent's Guide for Youth Referees

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations to your son or daughter for successfully completing Georgia's Entry Level (Grade 9) Referee Course! During this course, the Laws of the Game were presented and discussed with additional practical instruction on mechanics and decision-making on the field provided. This document reviews other off-the-field areas that will be important for your new referee as they begin working as a Referee or Assistant Referee.

REGISTRATION

Referees must re-certify each year to insure they are informed of current changes in the Laws of the Game and continue their learning. Certification runs by the calendar year, from January 1 to December 31. This certification period is true no matter when your referee took their first class or when they re-certified last. The exception is that a referee who takes the Entry Level Course will be certified for the current year they took the class. For example, if the class is taken in August of 2011, they will be able to referee in the Fall of 2011 as well as all of 2012. They will need to take a Grade 9 re-certification class or Bridge Class (Grade 8) during 2012 to certify them for 2013.

The website (www.gareferees.com) is used in Georgia for referee class registration. The database created from the information provided by the referee or potential referee contains that referee's permanent link to their registration history. Each user of the website should record their username and password in a secure place as it will be needed for future registrations. Should there be more than one referee in the family, each referee will have their own unique username and password attached to their entire referee registration history.

EQUIPMENT

The importance of dressing properly for games cannot be emphasized enough. The referee should always arrive at the field with a uniform that is clean and neat. This will immediately send a message of professional competence to all the participants at the game. The referee uniform, including the standards expected of referees in Georgia, can be found in the Georgia Handbook for Referees, which is distributed at the class.

Many sporting goods stores carry referee uniforms, especially by stores specializing in soccer. They can also be ordered online. Official Sports (www.officialsport.com) is the official supplier of referee kits for US Soccer. Any source is good as long as the design of the uniform meets the requirements.

We recommend that referees keep all their referee equipment in a separate bag used only for that purpose. That way, they know all the equipment they need --- whistles, watches, cards, flags, and so forth will be with them when they go to the field. It is a good idea to put the uniform in the bag after it has been laundered.

TIMELINESS

Everyone knows the game can't start until the referees arrive. What they sometimes forget is that the game can't start until the referees have completed all of their pre-game duties, such as checking the rosters and players' equipment. Referees should report to the field 30 minutes before kickoff. This means that if the referee does not drive, their transportation team has to take their arrival time as seriously as they do. Remember that a lot of people --- the players, the coaches, the parents and spectators, as well as the rest of the referee crew --- rely on the referee and assistant referees being on time.

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

Napoleon said that an army marches on its stomach. It can be said that referees run on their stomachs, too. Always send your referee to the field with some snacks and plenty of liquids. While players often play only one game and get to go home after that game, referees commonly will be assigned several games in a day. Do not count on the concession stand being open or the water fountains being close to the field where your referee will be working their games.

GETTING ASSIGNED TO GAMES

Once your referee is registered, they will be on the list that any certified assignor can download from the website. Assignors may contact you by telephone or email to inquire about your interest in working for them, but don't rely on this method only. If you don't have a specific league in mind where your referee would like to work, the following are some tips on how to contact assignors:

- ⤴ Once your referee's registration has been processed (about one week from the class), you can log on to the website at www.gareferees.com. Click Reports and select Certified Assignors. This list will have an address (so you know if they are nearby) and contact information and contact information. Usually, it will say what clubs the assignor works with.
- ⤴ Go to the Georgia Soccer website (www.georgiasoccer.org) and click About Us, then Members Directory, then Youth Directory. Most of the affiliated youth leagues' entries have links to their websites. Once on a website, look for a link to Referees. That will usually lead you to an email link.
- ⤴ Call the Georgia Soccer office at 770.452.0505 or 877.231.2661 Ext 105 for guidance.

Ok, now what? To assign games intelligently, the assignor is going to have to know something about the referee. You will likely be sending an e-mail to them, entering information on the league's website, or placing your availability and preferences on their assignment website. In your communication with the Assignor, alert them to the referee's status e.g. referee is new Grade 9, what team they play for, what teams their siblings or parents play for or coach (we don't want a conflict of interest), and what the referee's preferences are ("I want to start out at U-10 or younger" or "I only want to be an assistant referee at first").

It is much better for your referee to communicate directly with the Assignor. Keep in contact with them each week, as needed, to make sure the referee communicates their availability. A common problem assignors face is when the referee thinks they are available and accept a game, only to learn from the parent later there is a family conflict – or vice versa.

Is the league we are looking at affiliated with Georgia Soccer? And what's the difference? These are two common questions. To find out if a league is affiliated with Georgia Soccer, visit the website as described above. If you are unsure, ask the league what affiliations they have. Your referee and you, via your registration, have liability coverage for things that might happen during the game; but only if the game is played between affiliated leagues in a Georgia Soccer-sanctioned game. You will also know that the referees at the games will be certified by US Soccer and those over 16 have been processed through the Kidsafe background check process.

STRESS

Refereeing is a stressful job. Referees are under a lot of pressure to get calls right when they have a very short time – and sometimes only a glimpse of the action – in order to do it. It has been said that refereeing is the only job where you are expected to be perfect at the start and then show steady improvement. New referees make mistakes --- LOTS of mistakes. It is not something you can take instruction in and then do perfectly. It is much more like music, art, or writing than like arithmetic. It takes practice and attention to become good at it. Some young people are not used to experiencing what to them will feel like failure.

Soccer is an emotional game. It is amazing how excited some people can become over a trivial incident in a U-10 game! In short, referees get yelled at when they make mistakes. What is worse, they also get yelled at when they get it right! Being yelled at by an angry adult may be a new experience for a young referee. You should be prepared to help your referee through this learning process. Someone has written that a new referee goes through predictable stages of reaction to the spectators:

I must really stink. Everyone is yelling at me.

The parents really don't know the rules very well.

Some of the things parents say are really funny!

CLOSING

It is our hope that this guide will assist the parents of new referees in helping their referees acclimate to the new experience of being a soccer referee. Being able to learn and grow in this profession will allow many referees to stay in the game longer and to have a possibility of advancing, if their career ambitions take them in that direction. We welcome any feedback and/or comments related to this document.

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