



THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

July's Newsletter

First I must apologize for the lack of a June newsletter. I owe one, and will hopefully have it up soon. It has been a non-stop few weeks of traveling and soccer. First spending some time at Regionals in Lancaster. Then doing a little trip to Hawaii for some ODP camps and trainings, and now at Linfield College for ODP's Region Camp. There has been a lot of quality soccer this summer and although tiring, it has been fun.

While watching the 95 boy's teams from Hawaii and Idaho play, the topic for this month's newsletter came to mind. Referees. Haha! I can practically hear the moaning and groaning as the word is read. Anybody that knows me has already started holding their breath just dying to know where I am going to go with this.

I walk a fine line with soccer as an administrator, coach, player and referee. As administrators we are supposed to support authority and the officials. FIFA's RESPECT campaign was a huge deal as an attempt to restore the referees place on the soccer field. The abuse from coaches and players the past few years has gotten out of hand. Thousands of referees quit each year and FIFA is trying to limit the amount of abuse referees take. Even the valley association has stepped up with a Code of Conduct asking players, coaches and parents to ease up on the refs. A great move in the right direction as refereeing is a tough enough job already.

As a coach I can tell you that nothing bothers me more than a referee that impacts a game in a negative way. I will not pretend to be an angel and freely admit that my behavior towards referees (as a coach) is poor at best. The referee in the Hawaii/Idaho game got an edited earful as he ruined what would have been a quality game. Now this is where most people get mad and automatically assume that I was being harsh on the ref. Take this scenario and see what you think: Player goes up for a header, fair play, one comes down with the ball, and the other comes down bleeding (half gushing) out of the mouth. Play continues and goes for a couple minutes. The trainer, standing 10 yards away, immediately pulls the boy off the field and starts tending to his wounds. Play finally stops over by the benches and the opposing coach asks if he can put a sub in place of the player that left the field. The referee starts reaching for his yellow card to card the coach for entry/exit. Thank god all the coaches on the sidelines jumped up and stopped him before he pulled the card, but yeah, that is the type of referee we had at the game. So were we wrong for giving the ref an earful?

Here is my thought. Referees are the only ones on the field being paid (sometimes the coach as well) and yet they are the least trained in their craft. Players practice constantly and coaches attend coaching courses and are always trying to improve. So what are the referees doing to get better? 6 hours of courses per year? And I have been to those "refresher" trainings and there really isn't much to it. So the real question is what are the referees doing to earn their respect? What are they doing to improve? Before I continue, I must note that I do not generalize this statement to all referees in our area. For what it is worth, we definitely have a few quality referees. Two names that come to mind are Phil A. and Saeed A. Though they are not perfect, they have made themselves



into two of the best running around in yellow at Plantes. Why is that? Because they take their craft seriously. Right alongside me at Regionals and ODP I see Phil and Saeed running up and down sidelines and all over the fields. They are attending classes and seminars with some of the top officials in the US. That is why they are good, and why you will never hear me yelling at them from the sidelines. They have earned the respect they ask for as officials and demand it with their presence on the field. I challenge all of our officials to do the same. Not necessarily go to Regionals and ODP to improve, but at least something. Go to a college game and watch the officials. See their mannerisms and learn what it is to be an "upper level" referee. We have too many referees that are content to

make it nothing more than a weekend job. I do not mind it if that is as far as a referee wants to take their job, but then don't stand in the center of the field and demand respect you haven't earned. An entry level course is not enough to make you a good referee nor do I think that is the point of the class. Those classes are to educate on the rules and basics of refereeing. It is up to the referee to obtain further education and experience.

I don't want people to think I am just complaining about referees. I have been refereeing for 15 years and it very tough job. You have seconds to make decisions that can change the entire outcome of a game, and either way it goes most likely somebody is going to be upset. The part of the problem I think we can change is through education. We need to educate the referees, players and coaches. In the works at the moment is a free/reduced cost referee clinic for all River City players and coaches. Also, with my own teams, I give the players a discount from their monthly coaching dues if they get their referee license (food for thought coaches). This helps in three ways. First, it educates the players and coaches of the rules. That might stop some of the abuse towards referees because I often find that people have no idea what they are saying when they complain. Knowing the rules as a player/coach means they will be broken less frequently and thus have to be called less. Second, it increases our pool of referees, allowing the "better" referees to do the "bigger" games and we don't have to stretch out our resources as much. Third, refereeing is a great way for kids to learn a lot of different things. Time management, rule enforcement, teamwork, leadership, confidence, money management and much more. As soccer gets bigger in America and becomes better and better, the referees need to do the same. With education and help, they will get better. It is our job as administrators to help that, our job as coaches to allow that, our job as players to respect that, and the job of parents to cheer positively and not yell at the refs.

Kicks n' Giggles,

Brandon Schreiner
RCSC President

