



The Flag and Whistle

Newsletter of the Soccer South Bay Referee Association

February 28, 2009

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www.ssbra.org

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BIG SURPRISE AT THE MONTHLY MEETING BIG ANNOUNCEMENT AT THE MONTHLY MEETING BIG CROWD OF NEWCOMERS INTRODUCED AT THE MONTHLY MEETING

A crowd was gathering in the library of North Torrance High School for the February meeting, with everyone eager to have President **Ed “Shirttail” McClure** get things started. Alas, he was nowhere to be seen, and was reportedly on a slow boat to China. With a sigh and shake of his head (and some shouted encouragement from the Members), Vice President **Paul “Mouthpiece” Kelly** agreed once more to chair the meeting. The first order of business was to introduce any newcomers to the group. Incredibly, there were 10 of those, all of whom in turn stood up, told us a little about themselves, and each received a warm SSBRA welcome in return.

No longer being able to wait in sharing the limelight, our Treasurer **Steve Brandon** then started talking, and told us there was \$5058 in the bank, more or less. He also claimed that all of the Members had been paid the game fees due them, and that the tax reporting had been done (editor’s note: there is a yearly requirement that SSBRA file forms with the government in order to comply with and continue our not-for-profit tax-exempt status, in addition to various other stuff, all of which falls on the Treasurer to handle every year).

Tired of hearing Steve’s voice, and perhaps eager to hear his own, Secretary **Warren Howell** took the floor, and made a surprise presentation to our Assignor **Bill “Comrade” Cook**. Noting that for years Bill has been using his personal contacts to get State and National Cup games for the Members, and then arranging for accommodations

and even finding unusual local eateries for us to enjoy while in Lancaster, Bakersfield etc., it was felt that it was time for Bill's extra efforts on our behalf to be recognized. At the end of a short speech, Warren handed Bill a special carrying case from the famous Karen's Kitchen #2 and #3 of Palmdale and Lancaster. Touched by the gesture, not to mention underwhelmed, Bill nonetheless was gratuitous in giving his thanks for receiving such a rare, valuable and useful item. For some reason Warren kept talking, and noted that there was an error in the masthead of some past newsletters as was pointed out by **Lloyd "Cabbage Stacker" Lehrer**, that would be corrected in the February edition.

Bill, taking over the meeting, then got down to more serious stuff. He thanked us for our efforts and good work at State Cup, and noted that some National Cup games might be coming up later in the year. He then shared with us that the informal game observer/assessor program has been underway with good results so far. Spring League is starting March 7, and those games are on a separate assigning system (the link is on the website) that is similar to the regular season CSL site. That system does NOT put out Emails when you have a game – you have to go into it yourself, see if you have new games, and accept/decline them. Spring League has lots and lots of schedule changes, even late in the week, so it is important that we keep looking at our assignments as the week-end approaches. **Veto Galati, Alex Mebane, Rudy "Chokehold" Chavez** and **Ed Beverly** also added questions and comments.

Paul Kelly made an announcement that, after a long process of considering a number of qualified candidates, **Larry Stern** was taking over as Training Director from **Heidi Garlick**. Paul thanked everyone who had shown an interest in the process, and asked for training areas of interest and ideas, as training is an area he would like to see us focus on. Getting into the spirit of things, Bill and **George Heggie** shared a few words with the Members.

Paul continued on with some random remarks after that, reminding us that we must show up at least 30 minutes before the kick-off of our games, and the May elections are coming up wherein the Vice President and Treasurer posts will be voted on (nominations will be made at the April meeting). He then started a discussion about our recent contacts with the MLS Chivas club, who wanted to sell discounted tickets to SSBRA and arrange for a player to come and talk to us at a monthly meeting. A show of hands showed a marked lack of interest in the idea, as was confirmed as the Members expressed their thoughts. Among those saying a word or two were Alex Mebane, **Vince "Fight-Night" Delmonico**, "Handsome" George Heggie, **Rick Gates, Dan Ayala, Derek Taylor, Suzanne Johnson, Larry Savell** and **Deepika "Pika" Saluja**

Larry "N.Q." Stern decided it was time for the training part of the meeting, and passed out a set of 7 questions/scenarios, which were worked on in small groups with a lot of arguing. After a while Larry asked that each group/table share their answers with the rest of the meeting, causing more comments and arguments. However the points did get across, and it was time well spent with Rudy, Alex, **Bob Foster**, Larry Savell, Ed Beverly, Paul, **Bill Mindlin**, Rick Gates, **Aaron Spicker, Greg Sirbu** and **Reggie Raleigh** being some of those expressing opinions.

It was time for the raffle, with Vince complaining (again) that he never won anything. A bunch of people won some stuff, and, tired of his whining, someone gave Vince a set of flags, which finally shut him up. The Board stopped droning, the meeting was adjourned, and the Members broke into small noisy groups of friends enjoying each others company, which is probably why they came to the meeting in the first place.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING, February 5, 2009

- **Donner Castro** accepted as a new Member
- A Member was fined for missing two games
- A Member was fined and suspended for missing 2 games
- Three Members were suspended from further State Cup matches
- Steve reported there is \$6961.72 in the bank. All 1099s are out. An audit will be done after tax season

- Spring League will be starting soon, with other tournaments coming up in April, May and June
- The PSL games need to be “stacked”, as there are too many single games going off at the same time on Sunday morning, causing an excess number of referees being needed that are not always available
- The list of Training Director candidates was discussed
- Two candidates for the Sportsmanship award were named
- The next recipient of the Center Circle Award was determined
- Observer program is starting

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING, February 24, 2009

- Three applications for Membership accepted
- Three applications rejected
- Two Members have paid their fines
- A Member was late to a recent game
- Training ideas were discussed
- Six observation reports were reviewed

NEXT MONTHLY MEETING

THE NEXT MEETING IS ON TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2009 AT 7:30 P.M. IN THE LIBRARY OF NORTH TORRANCE HIGH SCHOOL, 3620 182ND ST. (AT YUKON - SEE SSBRA.ORG FOR DETAILED MAPS), WHEREIN BEVERAGES AND FOOD ARE PROHIBITED BY THE SCHOOL. THE AGENDA WILL INCLUDE ASSOCIATION BUSINESS, NEWS ABOUT THE STATE AND NATIONAL CUP TOURNAMENTS, TRAINING AND WHATEVER ELSE ANYONE WANTS TO TALK ABOUT.



This was the scene at the Lancaster NSC on 2/14/2009. The start of the first State Cup games of the day were delayed about 1 ½ hours till most of the ice and snow melted (photo courtesy of Steve “Show me the Money” Brandon)

Earn Points Playing the Concentration Game (from MyReferee magazine)

By **Bill Liedtke**

It's easy to tell yourself, "Concentrate and pay attention" when you referee. But it helps to have a few tools to work with. Psychology of Officiating, written by **Robert Weinberg** and **Peggy Richardson**, gives a good mental template. Paraphrasing their comments and adding in some new ones, here are some points to remember.

Concentration is focusing attention on the relevant game cues and keeping that focus through distraction and fatigue for the full 90-plus minutes. Break down concentration into smaller parts. The interplay of a few key factors determines the quality of your attention: your motivation at the time; the intensity of the stimuli you are dealing with, i.e., a tied, rivalry game versus a lopsided contest; fast physical play versus more technical styles. That is why some referees used to refereeing plenty of action and physical play sometimes have problems working other styles of play. They get deceived by the absence of wide-open, high-speed physical play and mistake it for a lack of intensity. Later, they learn to their chagrin that there was an incredible emotional intensity just below the surface ready to boil over. Too often it does because of the referee's lack of understanding.

Width of attention. Referees have to shift between a wide-vision sweep of the field, the assistants, play and peripheral movement and then quickly narrow focus on a challenge. Then the referee must sweep back wide to look for advantage, the next challenge, assistant signals, etc. Assistants spend more time in close focus on the second-to-last defender line, touchline, goal-line and expand to a wide focus when possible before zeroing back in on their narrow areas of responsibility.

Direction of attention. Is the referee focusing on internal (self-evaluation and planning) versus external factors? While a soccer referee is primarily externally focused, some positive internal focus promotes performance ("Tighten up," "Get wider," "Relax"); but allowing events, pressures or distractions to push the referee into too much internal focus can be damaging.

You can mis-focus:

- **Dwelling on past events.** Instead of letting the inevitable mistake go, you lessen focus on current events happening right in front of you as your mind replays the past. A few might be emotionally tempted to correct their mistakes on the spot by looking for a call the other way. Let that stuff go until the game is over.
- **Over-anticipating the future.** I watched a friend with far more experience than I flag a ball into touch because he had already visualized it leaving the field of play. He didn't wait for the actual visual cue. You can "over-expect" a foul to occur. Worse, you can worry about future internal focus items such as your own possible shortcomings.
- **Thinking about the wrong things.** You may focus on the heat or cold, the crowd, that obnoxious spectator who seems to have your number or the coach who is subtly gaming you. As an assistant, you can overhear and be drawn into the conversations off the bench and coach, particularly during lulls in the game. Try to see if you can "go into the bubble" and tune them out by positively focusing on your cues in the game.

Anxiety affects concentration. Anxiety narrows the width of your focus. We have all not only seen, but have likely experienced, the hyper-focus that comes when a referee is under pressure — whether physical or mental — and anxiety sets in. The referee may see something with his eyes but not with his brain. The referee "loses sight" of the assistant while looking directly at the raised flag. That is tunnel vision. Anxiety makes the referee focus internally and away from the quick moving external cues in the game. It impairs your ability to shift focus, from wide to narrow, internal to external, distraction to game or cue-to-cue. As with any athlete, that is how you choke.

What to do? It is helpful to share with each other what works to relax and get your head into or back into the game.

- On a popular soccer forum, referee **David Albany**, Daytona Beach, Fla., writes, be “supremely confident,” a term that indicates when a referee has bolstered self-confidence through preparation — physical, rules knowledge, understanding the spirit of the game, understanding the emotions of the competing players.
- Relax. Wiggle your toes inside your shoes. Drop your arms to your thighs. Rotate your wrists and your neck. Pick a small item off the ground.
- Use positive trigger words to cue yourself. (“I’m OK. I can do this.” “I’m physically ready for 90 minutes.”)
- Focus on the present, not the past or future.
- Save the self-evaluation for after the game, i.e., be non-critical of yourself and your decisions.
- Develop routines. One U.S. FIFA referee always signals corner kicks from inside the penalty area. He may be 25 yards from the area when the ball went out of play, but he continues his run until his toes enter the penalty area, then he stops and signals. Another referee I know always uses the phrase “Leave him (or her)” when an attacker is running toward a goalkeeper who gains possession of the ball. That is a timing mechanic, but it lets the players know to prevent any contact — and it is a comfortable routine for the referee.
- Come prepared (physically, emotionally and mentally) and leave non-soccer worries until later in your day. And don’t arrive at the last minute — that makes the whole referee team start out under needless stress.
- Breathe big deep breaths, hold them for 10 seconds and then exhale forcefully.
- One referee I know says in his pre-game, “I want to see you smiling. You can’t be doing this for the money. It has to be for the fun.”

Train and prepare. Stay fit — fatigue is a killer on concentration. When exhausted, the legs aren’t the first things to go — it’s the brain. You can also try the mental exercises in *Psychology of Officiating*. The Madrid (Spain) referee committee last year gave a season-long series of weekly clinics on that subject. Psychological preparation and balance are important means of maintaining a referee’s ability to render the correct decisions at the correct times.

Referees have peaks and lulls of concentration ability at various stages and times in the game — as tension builds, as time passes, as events occur, as periods approach their ends, and as our mental processes operate. We are hit by external stimuli we can’t ignore because they’re part of the game or are keys to responding to player actions. The physical demands of refereeing influence concentration and affect every referee except Superman. It has been said that applying concentration is like using a muscle: “You can train it for endurance and strength, you can avoid wasted effort and you can exert special effort at times.”

Here’s a Coach Who Gets It (attributed to Irish rugby coach **Matt Williams**)

“We will put it in a report. I don’t talk to referees. It’s like complaining to your mother-in-law about your wife – it doesn’t get you too far.”

On the Other Hand, These Guys Don’t Get it (attributed to reporter **Andrew Wagner**)

“One thing that gets me more and more annoyed with every game I go to – either as a ‘fan’ or for work – is fans riding the refs. Every game, every single game, the same group of knuckleheads in the front row make absolute

fools of themselves every time a whistle is blown. They're ragging the refs, ragging the opposing coaches, harassing the players....even their own."

This Puts All of Us in a Bad Light (recent news article)

A man accused of fondling girls while he umpired an all-star softball tournament has pleaded guilty to three counts of misdemeanor sexual battery. **Stephen Turner Sr.**, 45, "was charged with sexually battering three minor (female) victims (under the age of 14) while umpiring a softball tournament here in Camarillo," said Deputy D.A. **Gilbert Romero**. "He touched their buttocks during the games in full view of the spectators, including the parents of the victims," and was sentenced to 204 days in jail, 3 years probation and must register as a sex offender. Turner had worked as an umpire for nearly 10 years and was considered a good official, according to Southern California Amateur Softball Association deputy commissioner **Linda Henry**.

Actually, It Might Be a Better Idea to KEEP Your Day Job (recent news article)

Ben Wade, the former woman's soccer coach at Southwest Baptist University in Missouri, was fired less than a week after he premiered on the CBS show "Survivor." The former coach told school officials he would be gone for one week in October shooting in Brazil, but his stay lasted eight weeks. "I'm going to be the next big thing on the big screen," Wade said.

Quote of the Month (attributed to soccer player **Steve Claridge**)

"You've got to put square pegs in square holes—not the other way round."

Games Change Too, Depending on Who You Talk To (attributed to **George W. Bush**)

"I think—tide turning—see, as I remember—I was raised in the desert, but tides kind of—it's easy to see a tide turn—did I say those words?"

Can't We All Just Get Along? (MyReferee article)

During a recent exchange of e-mails, another experienced referee and I found out we both tell our assistant referees much the same thing during our pre-game conversations. After we've covered the basics of offside, penalty kicks, bench management and covert signals to be used that day, we get into how an assistant can best assist with fouls.

Variable to time allotted. There is often an assumption that your referee team will have time for a lengthy pre-game. But if you are in a tournament setting, hydrating and changing shirts as you move from field to field, the referee may have to resort to shorthand: "All my mechanics are straight out of the Guide to Procedures. Offside is yours 100 percent of the time. To help me with fouls, give me a few moments to set the tempo and then make sure your flags match the type of contact I'm whistling."

Here is another version that is slightly longer but is short enough to say while drinking water, walking out to the field and while the captains have been whistled out: "I need your help the full length and width of the field. Give me a flag, even on my end. If you do not want to give a direction signal, simply put the flag straight up, but in the hand of the direction it is going.

“Offside. Make sure there is participation. If I miss your flag, keep it up until one of three things happens ... the ball goes to the keeper, goes over the goal-line for a goal kick or totally comes out and changes direction. If I miss your flag and the ball goes in the goal, keep it up. Let’s get it right.

“Fouls. As long as it is consistent with the way in which I am calling the game, and I will let them play really hard, feel free ... and give me direction.

“I will try to make eye contact most every dead ball. Any questions?”

At half, and after the game, I always ask, “Did I miss any flags?” That keeps it open, lets the assistants know I need and want their help and keeps me accountable. And the eye contact is wonderful to keep them in the game.

Variable to their skill. The following comments are for experienced and capable assistants. These instructions would not be given to a first-year referee, nor to assistants working at a new level. Also, as the referee, you need to assess the personality of the assistant — are you a let-them-play referee dealing with a by-the-book assistant? With those considerations, if the first portion of your pre-game discussion has gone well, and you think their skills allow them to focus 80 percent of their energy on the offside decisions you need them to make, you might ask the assistants to do more. You might ask them to help you by indicating foul play. Of course, the final rulings are for the referee, but they can be big assets to your overall game control.

First five. During a lengthy pre-game (say for an assessment or an amateur contest), I’ll ask the assistants to watch what contact I’m whistling and what contact I’m allowing the players to play through. I’m asking them to look at the tone of the game. What are those players, on that day, willing to accept in the initial stages of the contest?

Match my calls. After the players have shown what they will accept and what they will not (after the overall tone is established), the assistants will then start to indicate foul play. They will show a flag when one player cheats the opponent or hurts the opponent. Cheating and hurting are not part of the game and the officials must act to stop those misdeeds before the players take matters into their own hands. That cheating might be called handling the ball or impeding an opponent. That hurting might be called kicking or tripping an opponent, but the officiating trio will catch and punish the misdeeds. The referee team will let the little stuff go. If you, as the referee, have been allowing minor shirt tugs and “riding” an opponent (under the guise of a shoulder-to-shoulder charge) and the players accept that contact, the assistants should allow that same contact. If you have been allowing some decent thumping and bumping because the players are skilled enough to deal with that contact, the assistants should allow that. If they do not flag that contact, they are matching your calls.

Things change. The astute assistants will follow the changes in the game. After you give one card for persistent infringement, the assistants will focus on other player combinations that have proven troublesome. If you’re calling the defensive midfielder for holding a jersey as she tires in the late stages of a half, the assistant will also flag the defender of the same very tired team for subtle holding on your blind side. The good assistant will know to watch the goal-scorer more closely, not because the goal-scorer is liable to be a problem, but an upset defender might try to “punish” the opponent who caused the score-line to move to 1-0. If you’re smart, you’ll stay a step closer to that same scorer.

Referees go into the contest assuming both keepers are competent. However, after the first several captures of the ball, if the assistant realizes that the keeper doesn’t have good hands — the ball is getting dropped or bobbled a lot — there is a need thereafter for closer observation of problems. The assistant should tell the other assistant at halftime, if he or she discovers that fact in the first half.

Disaster. Many of you may be able to recall a time when a partner wanted to flag almost all contact (or whistle it in a dual or double dual). In spite of players protesting, “Let us play, ref,” those whistles or flags continued. Players will notice a split between the referee team and try to exploit it by dissenting. They will try to put doubt in

the referees. They may try to pit referees against each other. Rather than let the disaster happen, talk about it first. Discuss your approach toward foul-sorting in the pre-game discussion. If an assistant asks a question, answer it honestly.

Written by **Carl P. Schwartz**, Referee's soccer coordinator.

That Still Leaves the Other Six Days of the Week (news article)

Kevin Bond, manager of the English soccer club Bournemouth, after losing at home on Saturday. “I’m enjoying being manager – except for Saturday afternoons.”

Don’t Even Try These Excuses for Missing a Game

- My dog swallowed my bus pass.
- I couldn’t find my shoes.
- A buffalo escaped from the game reserve and kept charging me every time I tried to leave the house to go to my car.

Hey, Not so Fast! (recent news article)

An English amateur soccer team recently mourned the death of one of its former players. Tributes by the club to the 86-year old man were covered in the local media. There was only one problem: He is still alive.

An official of the club called **Tommy Farrer’s** wife to offer condolences. **Gladys Farrier** said that her husband had indeed “departed” – but only for a few minutes to buy a newspaper. Farrer was quoted as saying: “We are not upset, but we did think it was a bit of a joke at first.” Farrier says he wants to play down the mistake, saying it was time to “let it die.”

This Shows That It Could be Worse (news article)

The Public School Athletic League (New York City) this fall required all sports officials to pay \$115 for fingerprinting as part of a mandatory background screening. Most officials proceeded with the fingerprinting, though some were not thrilled with the requirement. “It was a typical city of New York Department of Education bureaucratic baloney,” said basketball official **Scott Low**. “Thank goodness it’s a one-time situation. Everybody was disappointed. This came out of left field on us this year.” Anyone who did not comply is not allowed to officiate PSAL games. Along with getting fingerprinted, officials also were required to complete forms authorizing employment verification, permission to forward any criminal history to the city school district and submit a postal money order for \$115. PSAL Executive Director **Donald Douglas** said that many officials chose not to submit their fingerprints and information. “At least a third, if not half, of the people were not there from last year” he said.

Another Quote of the Month (attributed to **Pamela Anderson**)

“I don’t think about anything too much...If I think too much, it kind of freaks me out!”

Thought of the Month

What's important is to learn from your mistakes, not to dwell on them.

Well, She Was There, So I Guess She Would Know (attributed to **Penka Stoichkov**, talking about her son, Bulgarian soccer great **Hristo Stoichkov**)

“He was born with a ball between his feet.”

This is a Sight That We Would Rather Not See (from Referee magazine)

After (Italian Serie A) team Catalina was awarded a direct free kick near the top of the penalty area, four (Catalina) players moved 5 yards into an offside position. They formed a side-by-side wall and were directly lined up between the ball and Torino goalkeeper **Matteo Sereni**. All four players dropped their shorts toward their knees, distracting Sereni. As Catalina's **Giuseppe Mascara** started his run-up for the free kick, the players scattered out of the line of sight. Mascara scored.

Catalina's chief executive **Pietro Lo Monaco** told Italian radio, “(Is this) a trick? I wouldn't say so. It's up to the referee to decide if it should be penalized, otherwise I don't see where the problem is.”

Former Italian referee coordinator **Paolo Casarin** called the move “unsportsmanlike and in bad taste. It's a trick that should not be tolerated anymore by the referees.”

Maybe He Would Be Better Off Standing Around the Center Circle (actual interview)

Reporter: Where does the President stand on that?

Secretary of State **Colin Powell**: It's not where some people say where the President is, or people who are not even in the government who claim to know where the President is. The President hasn't decided yet where he is. So I think we've been able to put it into perspective.

Some Things Just Can Not Be Explained (attributed to rapper **Nelly**)

“I could turn on just about any television channel in Europe and see full nudity. And their crime rate is a lot lower than ours. Go figure.”

This Could Work (news article)

Bulgarian premier soccer team Litex has ordered striker **Ivelin Popov**, 19, to get married within a year with the hope that it will curtail his wild lifestyle. “I accept the order and I promise to do it,” said Popov. “My bosses are right to want such a thing from me because they know my temper.” Popov claims he is willing to clean up his act and ready to settle down with his current girlfriend. “She's very nice and very smart. I think this will be the woman of my life, so don't remind me of the past....the marriage will probably calm me down. I know I'm a very bad boy and I want to meet my 20th birthday as a married man.”

The chart below, representing the financial status of SSBRA, was submitted by Steve Brandon

Income/Expense Comparison by Category				
7/1/2007 through 2/23/2009 (as of March 1, 2009)				
Category Description	7/1/2007- 2/23/2008	7/1/2008- 2/23/2009	Amount Difference	
INCOME				
Interest	31.71	14.99	-16.72	
Membership Dues	4,920.00	4,985.00	65.00	
Fines - Referees	-	27.00	27.00	
TOTAL INCOME	4,951.71	5,026.99	75.28	
EXPENSES				
Uncategorized	-	-	0.00	
Assigning Expenses	90.00	-	90.00	
Checks & Bank Charges	-	258.67	-258.67	
GAMES - ADULTS				
7 v 7 Leagues	(223.00)	2,763.10	-2,986.10	
Men's No-shows	(138.00)	-	-138.00	
Men's Tournaments	-	12.60	-12.60	
Other GAMES - ADULTS	-	(38.06)	38.06	
TOTAL GAMES - ADULTS	(361.00)	2,737.64	-3,098.64	
GAMES - YOUTH				
Kid's No-shows	-	-	0.00	
Kid's Tournament	(3,205.00)	101.06	-3,306.06	
Other GAMES - YOUTH	-	(76.58)	76.58	
TOTAL GAMES - YOUTH	(3,205.00)	24.48	-3,229.48	
Insurance	1,034.00	1,066.74	-32.74	
Meetings	986.42	1,298.80	-312.38	
Stamps & Supplies	206.00	211.43	-5.43	
Parking & Exp Reimbursement	69.75	563.05	-493.30	
Telephone & Fax	339.00	252.00	87.00	
Training	-	210.00	-210.00	
Uniforms & Equipment	130.33	-	130.33	
TOTAL EXPENSES	(710.50)	6,622.81	-7,333.31	
OVERALL TOTAL	5,662.21	(1,595.82)	-7,258.03	