


Will You Have A Referee At Your Next Game?

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I'd like to start by introducing you to our referees, they are in fact you: parents, players, coaches, managers, and spectators. Over 95% of your referees come from the Southern California Soccer Community. So, the next time you have a reaction to a referee's decision, please "taste your words" and ask yourself this question, "If that were my son, daughter, coach, mom, dad, team manager, ... how would I want them to be treated?"

Our problem is that Southern California has a significant shortage of referees to officiate our youth soccer matches. There are over 5000 teams in Southern California, and we currently have only 3000 referees. In comparison in 2019 we had over 5000 referees and 10 years ago, 8000. In all honesty, the referee community will not be able to handle this shortage without your assistance.

How are we going to handle this referee shortage? How about we use the successful actions Southern Californians have learned to handle a water shortage? In a water shortage we are first asked to conserve; change our watering schedule, replace our lawns with water-wise plants, and reduce overrun. If the water shortage continues, we may experience restrictions and rate increases and possibly even fines. Using the lessons learned from water shortages, what can we do to survive this referee shortage and grow better and stronger?

STEP 1: CONSERVATION - REDUCE AND ELIMINATE DISSENT

How we treat each other will have an enormous impact on whether you have a referee at your next game or not. I want to make this abundantly clear; referees are not perfect, watch any televised match. (I will give you an opportunity to test your knowledge in a minute.) Remember each participant has a different viewpoint of the play. Refereeing is all about angles, so have we missed a call or two, of course. Consistency is something referees strive for; with the continual law changes, different competition rules, age groups and competitive levels this is an enormous challenge. I also do not believe in any way that every coach or spectator is bad, in fact it is quite the opposite, statistically over 90% of our games are perfectly fine.

How can we conserve and retain our current registered referees and have them recertify next year? The reason referees quit is due to dissent, irresponsible behavior and from threats by spectators and coaches. Please remember, the majority of our games are youth matches



Consider the example we are setting for our children, when a participant calls a referee "Pathetic, or the worst referee ever, or you are terrible," or threats like "You'll never referee again, I am reporting you, ..." or claiming bias "Call it both ways, how much did they pay you," or blaming the outcome on a referee, "You lost the game for us, ..." or being called a racist. Isn't there enough hate in this world, do we really need our children to experience it at such young and impressionable ages?

These are the major reasons why we have a shortage, especially when over 50% of our referees are youth. When it comes to our youth referees, ask yourself this question, if that were my son or daughter how would I want them treated?

It all starts with the adults. At the younger ages the spectators can be a handful, as the players get older the need to win is greater so the coaches, let's just say get a bit more "enthusiastic." The older players learning from the examples set by their role models can react to game situations and sound exactly like their parents and coaches. Give this one some thought, have ever seen a referee change a call after someone yells HANDBALL! or that's a foul? I haven't. So, what have you accomplished? Remember your actions speak louder than your words.

On the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's website there is a saying "Every Drop Counts." Think along these lines in regard to your referees, "Every Referee Counts." Ask yourself if that were me out there, how would I want to be treated? There is the answer to our referee shortage, then and only then will others decide to Become a Referee.

STEP 2: RESTRICTIONS

If a water shortage continues restrictions are imposed, for example: landscape watering only on odd or even days, or M/W/F. The State Referee Committee (SRC) announced before the season started that all 12U (2010) and younger games are now 1-Ref.

In addition, some assignors are refusing to assign referees to teams that continue to act in an irresponsible manner.

Referees were normally assigned three or four games per day. With the shortage referees are now doing five or more games in a day. Consider the physical demands on your referees and the impact it has on them emotionally, especially if there is an intense situation or the added stress that comes from critical and dissenting individuals. If things continue as they are we may see the added restriction to have 14U (2008) and younger games with 1Ref.



STEP 3: RECRUITMENT

In the water shortage example, step 3 is to charge higher usage rates and fine those who do not comply. Adding more water is a little challenging unless mother nature decides to let it rain. To solve our current referee shortage all we must do is add more referees, train them, encourage them and have them gain experience as they referee more and more games. Please allow them to make mistakes as they learn, in the same way players make mistakes as they learn and grow.

What we are asking is for you to Become a Referee. The reasons why we referee are: for the love of the game, friendship, fitness, earn a few extra dollars, and to give

back to the soccer community. Most referees are dedicated and have an immense pride in their performance. Their objective is to call the game in a fair and safe manner for the enjoyment of all the participants, including the referee crew.

I would like to see our coaches register and take the US Soccer Online Grassroots Referee Course, it is three hours and there is valuable information on the laws and game management that I believe would be very valuable for our soccer community. Some may even want to continue and participate in a field training and become a certified referee.

Dissenting and criticizing the referee is not going to solve the problem. The next time someone starts to complain or blame the refs, how about suggesting to them that they Become a Referee and be part of the solution rather than the problem.

To register as a Referee you can visit: <https://calsouth.com/us/referees/>

As promised test your knowledge with a quick quiz on the following page

