

1. DESCRIPTION

This workshop describes the role of the referee mentor.

2. GOALS

The objectives of this workshop are:

- Understand the value of referee mentoring to the AYSO National Referee Program.
- Understand why and how to mentor new referees.
- Understand the characteristics of a successful mentor who can create a positive communication atmosphere between the mentor and the mentee.
- Understand the special characteristics of youth referees and how the mentor must adjust to their needs.
- Understand the mentor's role when working with referees who are attempting to upgrade their certification (badge level).

3. PREREQUISITES

None.

4. STUDENT MATERIALS

None.

5. INSTRUCTOR EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

Varies. This lesson plan may be presented as a webinar, as an Expo workshop, or as an in-class workshop within the Region.

6. INSTRUCTOR NOTES

None.

7. ATTACHMENTS

None.

LESSON PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Introduce self and co-instructors.

II. BODY

A. What Is Mentoring and Why Is Mentoring Important?

1. Every year, Regions recruit a new crop of volunteer referees. But every year Regions also lose a significant number of the referees that they recruited and trained the previous year. Why does this happen?
 - a. Lack of experience on the part of the new referee breeds a lack of confidence in what they're doing.
 - b. Criticism from coaches and spectators is publicly embarrassing, abusive, and reinforces the sense that they can't "do it right."
 - c. Actual or perceived lack of support from the Region can cause anger and frustration.
 - d. Our referees are volunteers. If they aren't happy doing it, or feel that they cannot "do it right," there's nothing that prevents them from "un-volunteering" themselves.
2. One of the ways Regions can combat this is by establishing a mentoring program for new referees. Mentoring occurs when a more knowledgeable and experienced person (the mentor) helps a less experienced person (the mentee). Mentoring builds both confidence and competence in mentees by allowing them to build their knowledge and skills more quickly than if they were learning solely on their own.
3. Referee mentoring is also an effective tool for helping referees who wish to attain a higher level of certification (a higher badge level). Experienced referees who are already refereeing at a higher level can mentor referees who want to upgrade by passing along their own knowledge and experience.
4. You are here because you want to be mentors. Thanks, because we really need you! Our goal here today is to help you understand the general approach that mentors should take as well as some specific concerns that mentors should have based on the type of mentee: new referee, youth referee, upgrading referee.

B. The Mentor Certification

1. A mentor can be at the same badge level as the mentee but will typically have more experience. Being certified at higher badge levels adds to the mentor's expertise and credibility. Being certified as a referee assessor is ideal.
2. While certification as a mentor is not required before helping other referees, it does provide the mentor with some basic tools for positive interactions. And the only requirement is the completion of this course.

C. Being A Mentor: The Basics

1. As a mentor, you're a teacher. The knowledge you pass along must be correct, so you'll need to fully understand the Laws of the Game, USSF "Advice to Referees", USSF "Guide to Procedures", and the AYSO program.
2. Whether you are mentoring a new or upgrading referee, you'll need to build a relationship of trust and respect. Greet your mentee with a smile and a handshake. Thank the mentee for their service to the Region and the kids. If you don't truly care about the mentee and improving his/her performance, the mentee will know it.
3. A mentor must be able to communicate in a way that encourages the mentee to listen. A mentor must be a teacher and a friend, and the mentee must see the mentor as a trusted, knowledgeable guide.
 - a. Guidance needs to be delivered positively, not negatively. Consider the difference between the following methods of conveying the same information:
 - i. "You're doing it wrong. You are almost always running straight up and down the field, chasing play. That means you have no angle to see fouls. And you're constantly missing your assistant referees' flags!"
 - ii. "You're doing a good job keeping up with play! Now try this: when you run on what we call the left diagonal, as much as you can, stay a little to the left of the ball. That way you'll have a better view of what the players around the ball are doing, and you'll be able to look through them to see your lead AR."
 - b. Which of these approaches would make YOU more willing to listen to the mentor's advice?
4. In order to mentor a referee, the mentor must understand the referee's strengths and weaknesses. This means that the mentor must actually watch the mentee in action, ideally multiple times. This seems obvious but it needs

- to be said because it represents a time commitment that mentors must be willing to make. Mentors don't have to watch entire games, though; an experienced mentor can usually pick up two, three, or more areas for improvement by watching just one quarter of a mentee's game.
5. Don't interfere with the mentee's game: wait for halftime or post-game to give advice. If you do talk to a mentee at halftime, give them only one thing to work on for the rest of the game. NOTE: there are certain techniques for brand new referees that violate these rules of thumb. These will be discussed in a bit.
 6. The mentor should use the following rules of thumb to conduct post-game discussions:
 - a. Find a quiet, private place to relax and talk.
 - b. Let the mentee get a drink and cool down.
 - c. Shake hands and thank the mentee for doing the game.
 - d. Ask about the game and any problem areas the mentee is concerned with. Answer any questions truthfully.
 - e. Provide a summary of performance, starting with the good things.
 - f. Provide guidance on areas that could be improved. In general, if a mentor gives the mentee too many things to work on at once, the mentee won't improve much in any of them and could possibly feel discouraged or overwhelmed. New referees should typically be given just one or two areas to improve; upgrading referees should typically be given no more than three or four.
 - g. Don't just tell the mentee what to change; explain why the change should be made and what the benefits will be. Use your own experiences to illustrate your suggestions.
 - h. Arrange for a follow-up observation.
 - i. Be available to answer questions between now and the next observation. Make yourself available by phone or email to answer questions that might come up later as the referee continues to think about how a game went.
 7. Suggest that the mentee watch the mentor work a game – or work a game together – and talk about it afterwards.
 8. We've discussed some of the basics of any good mentoring relationship. Now let's talk about ways a mentor should adjust his/her approach depending

on whether the mentee is a new referee, a youth referee, or an upgrading referee.

D. Mentoring New Referees

1. New referees are generally nervous about officiating games and making mistakes in public.
2. New referees have been trained and certified but are unsure of themselves and their ability to properly apply the Laws or even recognize when they should become involved in the game. It's easy for them to become confused and not know what to do next.
3. New referees may not be able to confidently handle criticism from coaches and spectators.
4. The mentor has a number of tools available to help new referees:
 - a. Meet with the new referee before his/her first game. Create a bond and answer any questions about the Laws, their application, player control, and sideline control.
 - b. A new referee is often unsure of how much authority they have and how to exercise it. Make sure the mentee knows that he/she will be in total charge of the game and will have ultimate authority over the coaches and spectators. Also make sure the mentee knows that irresponsible behavior from the sidelines should not be tolerated, and pass along the "Ask, Tell, Remove" toolkit.
 - i. Initially acknowledge negative comments with eye contact ("the look") and/or a gesture that conveys your displeasure.
 - ii. If the behavior continues, ASK the person to stop. If it is a spectator, ask the coach for help in controlling the negative behavior. If it is the coach who's causing the problem, ask the coach to stop the negative behavior.
 - iii. If there is another occurrence, TELL the person that the behavior is unacceptable and must stop immediately. Note: we can skip the ASK step and go right to TELL if we need to.
 - iv. If the unacceptable behavior continues, DISMISS the person from the vicinity of the field, suspending the game until the person leaves (or terminating the game if the person refuses to leave). Note: we can skip the other steps and go right to DISMISS for egregious behavior.

- c. Be at the new referee's first game to observe and help. Consider "shadowing" during the first game:
 - i. The mentor can offer to run the field with the new referee. The mentee should be allowed to decide whether the mentor will shadow or not.
 - ii. The mentor can start by refereeing the game and letting the mentee follow and get a feel for positioning and what warrants stopping the game. The mentee can then take over the game whenever he/she feels confident.
 - iii. Or, the mentor can simply run behind the mentee to offer advice and support, or to just be available to instantly answer questions.
- d. If the Region has the resources to afford headset communication devices, these can be used for discussions while the game is underway.
- e. At every game you observe, greet the mentee with a smile and a handshake. Do your best to help the referee relax and to instill confidence.
- f. Wear the uniform and be visible to parents and coaches. Your obvious presence as a knowledgeable, experienced referee will lend confidence to the mentee and may be all it takes to keep spectators in check.
- g. Remind the referee that you are there to support them and to help with Law application, positioning, signaling, and anything else.
- h. Also remind the referee not to be afraid of mistakes. Mistakes are nothing but learning opportunities. Besides, the new referee may already know more about managing a soccer game than most of the people who showed up for the game.
- i. Always comment on the positive things the mentee is doing and on any improvement you've noticed.

E. Mentoring New Youth Referees

1. New youth referees who have played or are still playing soccer may be more confident in their knowledge of the game and the application of the Laws than new adult referees. They may be more confident in their ability to handle a game being played by younger players.

2. Conversely, new youth referees are typically unable to handle irresponsible adult behavior from the sidelines – nor should they be asked to. More even than with new adult referees, the youth mentee should see the mentor as a protector.
3. In addition to the guidance we've discussed for mentoring all new referees, mentors should keep the following in mind when mentoring youth referees:
 - a. When you are observing a game, be fiercely protective of the youth referee. Be visible to the coaches and spectators. Proactively quell any sideline dissent.
 - b. Suggest that if you aren't there when a game must be stopped to deal with sideline issues, the youth referee should go find another appropriate adult (board member, field monitor, referee) to deal with the irresponsible behavior.
 - c. The youth referee is likely looking at you as an authority figure. Be generous with your praise and gentle with your suggestions.
 - d. Youth referees often have "weak whistles." Work on this over time and be patient.

F. Mentoring Referees Who Are Upgrading

1. Referees who are interested in upgrading obviously have some different characteristics when compared to new referees:
 - a. They enjoy AYSO and/or refereeing enough to want to become better referees.
 - b. They are more experienced and confident.
 - c. They are typically more knowledgeable (although not necessarily always with completely *correct* knowledge).
 - d. They have developed certain refereeing habits (although not necessarily *good* habits).
 - e. They probably haven't been mentored in some time and are no longer used to that type of relationship.
 - f. The higher the mentee's certification level, the more experienced and confident they are. This can actually present a potential challenge to a mentor. It's often tougher to convince an Advanced Referee who's working on the National badge that they have an area of potential improvement than it is to convince a Regional Referee who's working on the Intermediate badge.

- g. Unlike the new Regional Referee, the upgrading referee will need to demonstrate certain specific minimum skills and abilities in order to achieve the goal.
2. The mentor of an upgrade candidate should keep the following in mind:
- a. Be very familiar with the minimum skills and abilities listed in the National Referee Program manual for level of certification that the mentee is pursuing. The assessor/observer will certainly be expecting to see that level of performance from the candidate; it's a serious disservice for the mentor not to prepare the candidate to deliver at that level. Talk in terms of what the observer/assessor will look for when you offer corrective suggestions. This serves two purposes: it legitimately prepares the mentee for the observation/assessment, and it takes the heat off the mentor.
 - b. Remember that it's the mentee's game, not yours. Referees have different styles, and what works for one may not work for another. Share universally accepted advice freely (e.g. positioning, signaling, mechanics, Law interpretation), but don't try to turn the mentee into 'another you.'
 - c. Instead of giving the mentee only one or two things to work on (as you would a new referee), offer all the suggestions you can. One technique that usually works well is to take notes while watching the mentee, prioritize two or three areas for the post-game discussion, then offer the rest of the notes for the mentee to read later.
 - d. Be patient. It can be hard to break old bad habits and replace them with new good habits. Sometimes it can be hard to get a candidate to uncross his/her arms and even start listening to suggestions. But the potential reward of seeing improvement is worth the effort. Patience is a virtue in a mentor.
 - e. We've all heard that you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make him drink. Unlike the proverbial horse, though, you can't even lead an upgrade candidate to the water. The candidate first has to want to hear your advice and then has to be willing to see if it works for him/her. If your mentee argues about your recommendations or otherwise seems unwilling to change his/her approach to refereeing, try changing your communication style. Worst case: you may need to help the candidate find a different mentor that can form a more fruitful relationship.

G. Scenarios

1. Break the class into groups of two. Assign a scenario (located at the end of this lesson plan) to each group. One person should assume the role of 'referee' and another the role of 'mentor'.
2. The items within the scenario are things that the mentor observed during the match. The mentor must decide what to say to the referee after the match and how to present the information. The instructors and the rest of the class will offer feedback.
3. The scenarios intentionally present too many points for the mentor to talk about to the referee. Guide the feedback to reinforce the that the mentor must limit their debriefing to no more than two areas needing improvement and should offer at least two or three positive comments

III. CONCLUSION

- A. In conclusion: referee mentoring is vitally important to the AYSO National Referee Program.
 1. It helps us retain referees.
 2. Once word of mouth spreads that we are supporting and protecting our referees, it helps with recruiting, too.
 3. It helps our new referees quickly become capable and confident.
 4. It helps experienced referees upgrade.
- B. So thank you all for becoming mentors!
- C. Ask for and answer any questions.
- D. Thank everyone for participating.

THE REFEREE MENTOR

A Helping Hand for New and Developing Officials

- ❖ As **Friend**, the advisor must be persuasive in his or her comments to the officials. The official must trust the motives as well as the judgment of the advisor and believe that the advisor gives freely of time and effort.
- ❖ As **Observer**, the advisor must provide sound, simple advice and assistance that leads the trainee on the shortest path to success. The official must believe in the sincerity and credibility of the assistance given.
- ❖ As **Supporter**, the advisor offers encouragement in unlimited supply. In this view, the official can do no wrong, but can always be encouraged to do better. This is unconditional support for the person, not for everything the person does.
- ❖ As **Advocate**, the advisor is obligated to take the part of the official in all encounters. No criticism or dissent can go unchecked; no party can challenge without the proactive, positive involvement of the advisor.
- ❖ As **Choreographer**, the advisor helps the new and developing official to stage the officiating process. From the opening (arrival and inspection of the field) to closing (post game ceremony and bookkeeping), the advisor helps the official to move with purpose and direction from one part of the process to the next. The advisor also encourages and assists the official in moving through up-grades in certification to the highest level desired by the official.
- ❖ As **Mentor**, the advisor provides accurate, factual information that gives the official additional insight and understanding.
- ❖ As **Coach**, the advisor offers tactical instructions that help the official to operate at the top of their game, and provides the official with practical suggestions to improve performance.
- ❖ As **Role Model**, the advisor gives the developing official a real person to emulate. The advisor's attitudes, values, and behaviors set the example that the official is likely to follow on the field.

Scenarios

Scenario #1

The mentor watched a new referee work a U-10 girls match. The referee diligently inspected the field before the match, and asked the home team coach to help fix a hole in one net.

While inspecting the players, the referee discovered a girl wearing earrings. He told the girl she had to remove the earrings but the girl said she just had her ears pierced and if she took them out the holes would close up and, besides, the referee last week let her play with them in. Hearing this, the referee “relented”, told her she could play with the earrings in, until one of the ARs pointed out this was not allowed. At that point the referee reversed himself and said the earrings would have to come out or the girl could not play. The girl took out her earrings and played.

As the players were ready to start the match, the referee realized he had no ball. He appeared momentarily flustered, but one of the coaches quickly noticed and threw a ball out to him.

The referee pointed the correct direction for throw-ins – most of the time.

In the second half, a girl was hit in the head with a hard-kicked ball. The referee hesitated briefly, but then blew the whistle and went to check on the girl. He then summoned the girl's coach onto the field, and the coach helped the girl off the field and sent in another girl to take her place. The referee appeared very concerned about the girl's well-being.

Scenarios

Scenario #2

The mentor was assigned to watch a new referee work a U-10 boys match. The referee team appeared to check the field but during a casual walk of your own you noticed that one goal was not staked down. You enlisted help to make it safe. The referee didn't notice what you were doing.

You note that the referee seems to have a good grasp of general game management, understanding when to stop play and how to restart. The ref manages the substitution opportunities and halftime break well.

One potential problem you notice is that the referee is consistently waiting much too long to start moving when play moves away and downfield, and must then sprint to catch up with play. Often by the time the ref gets there possession has changed and play is headed back the other way. In the second half you see that the referee is tiring from all the sprinting and is often quite far from play. Several fouls, as perceived by the mentor, are not called by the referee – probably due to the distant vantage point – and frustration is apparent on the players' faces.

Scenarios

Scenario #3

The mentor is watching an experienced Regional Referee work a U-12 girls match. The referee is calling a pretty good game. Positioning is generally fine and foul recognition seems good, as does restart knowledge. This referee seems in tune with what the players are doing and what they need from the officiating team.

However, the referee is obviously not looking at the assistant referees. Several times in each half an assistant referee raised the flag for an offside but the referee failed to notice. On the few occasions the referee did recognize the assistant referee, the whistle was blown but the referee did not raise an arm for the restart.

Scenarios

Scenario #4

The mentor was watching a new Regional Referee work a U-10 girls match. At the opening kick-off, the Red player who took the kick-off played the ball a second time before any other player touch it. The referee did nothing.

Ten minutes into the match, a Blue player fairly tackled (from the mentor's perspective) the ball away from a Red player, and then the Red player tripped over Blue's feet and fell to the ground. The referee blew the whistle and awarded a free kick to Red.

A minute later, a Red player tackled the ball away from a Blue player, and the Blue player tripped over Red's feet and fell to the ground. The referee did nothing. The Blue coach yelled loudly, "Call it both ways, Ref!" The referee then blew the whistle.

Late in the game, with the score tied 1-1, there was contact between the ball and the arm of a Red player in his own Penalty Area. The ball fell to the Red player's feet, and he cleared the ball out of harm's way. The referee yelled, "No foul, not deliberate," and let play continue. The Blue coach yelled, "Handball, Ref! Are you blind?" The referee looked unsure of himself, but did nothing.

Scenarios

Scenario #5

This new referee moved competently through the field inspection, the player check, and the pre-game discussion for a U-10 boys game. The mentor relaxed and settled back to watch an apparently confident referee in action.

Once the game started, however, the referee consistently took several seconds before blowing the whistle after obvious fouls, then another several seconds before indicating the direction in which the free kick should be taken. As the game progressed there was no change: after each whistle for an apparent foul, anywhere from 6 to 9 seconds passed before the referee pointed one direction or the other. You saw the ref talking to the players who seem to be hesitating before taking up their positions. The players and coaches looked confused, and the spectators were getting restless.

Scenarios

Scenario #6

You were assigned to mentor a new referee who was working a U-10 boys match. The game was going strong and play on both sides was fast and very spirited. The referee had no problem keeping up with play and appeared to be calling fouls correctly during the first half and into the second half.

Going into the fourth quarter the score was tied 0-0 and the heat of the match increased with play becoming more physical. Several times the referee yelled 'play on' when players collided and fell to the ground in the middle third of the field. You noticed the coaches getting anxious and parents starting to ask when the referee was going to call fouls. Meanwhile, the players seemed to be concentrating on the game and got up soon after they fell.

Scenarios

Scenario #7

The referee has 1 year experience and is working U12 boys for the first time. The assistant referees are new, recently through the AR course, on their first match.

The referee and the 2 ARs inspected the field together, very professionally and thoroughly. They smiled and spoke with coaches and players and spectators while walking the field. The referee was overheard to be giving instructions to the ARs.

While inspecting the players, one snarky player asked, "How do you call offside, Ref?" The referee gave a 1 minute dissertation on the offside Law.

Early in the match, the ball crossed the touch line apparently last touched by Blue. The AR on that side raised his flag and pointed for a throw-in by Blue. The referee looked unsure as to whether the AR was correct, but pointed in Blue's direction and said "Blue throw-in." There were complaints from Red team's parents.

Ten minutes into the match, a Blue player tackled the ball away from a Red player, and the Red player tripped over Blue's feet and fell to the ground. The referee blew the whistle and awarded a free kick to Red.

In the second half, a boy was hit in the thigh with a hard-kicked ball. The referee hesitated briefly, looked at the boy, and then ran on to catch up with the play. Twenty seconds later the ball went across the touch line, and the referee blew the whistle and went to check on the player. The player said he was ok, and stayed in the game. The referee appeared very concerned about the boy's well-being.

Late in the match, a Red defender cleared the ball to his teammate in the attacking half of the field. The referee was near Red's penalty area when the counter-attack began. The Red attacker was in the clear when he received the ball, past all defenders except the goalkeeper, and streaked down and shot the ball into the goal. The AR was out of position when the ball was passed to the Red attacker and did not raise the flag or signal in any other way as to whether an offside occurred or whether the goal should count. The mentor clearly saw that the Red attacker was offside. The referee allowed the goal.

Scenarios

Scenario #8

The match is an AYSO BU-12 match. The referee has 2 years of experience as a Regional Referee. You are mentoring one of the assistant referees, a brand new Regional Referee.

In the first half the Red team was defending in your AR's half of the field. Blue had the opening kickoff. At the kickoff, the AR was standing at the halfway line while the second-to-last Red player was about 25 yards from his own goal line.

Early in the match the ball hit a player's arm clearly with no intent by the player to play the ball. The event was close to the AR, who raised the flag and waggled it. The referee could not see the contact between ball and hand, but on the advice of the AR blew the whistle and awarded a free kick to the opposing team.

With very little time remaining in the match and the score tied 1-1, a Blue attacker received a pass from a teammate and shot the ball into the goal. At the time he collected the pass, he was running fast and was past all defenders but the goalkeeper. The AR was standing in correct position with the second-to-last-defender at the time of the pass. When the ball was in the net the AR did not raise the flag and did not move, but pulled out a line-up card and started writing (presumably to record the goal). The referee looked at the AR and, seeing this, awarded the goal. The mentor is certain that the attacker was not in offside position when the ball was passed by his teammate.

Scenarios For Instructors

Scenario #1

The mentor watched a new referee work a U-10 girls match. The referee diligently inspected the field before the match, and asked the home team coach to help fix a hole in one net.

While inspecting the players, the referee discovered a girl wearing earrings. He told the girl she had to remove the earrings but the girl said she just had her ears pierced and if she took them out the holes would close up and, besides, the referee last week let her play with them in. Hearing this, the referee “relented”, told her she could play with the earrings in, until one of the ARs pointed out this was not allowed. At that point the referee reversed himself and said the earrings would have to come out or the girl could not play. The girl took out her earrings and played.

As the players were ready to start the match, the referee realized he had no ball. He appeared momentarily flustered, but one of the coaches quickly noticed and threw a ball out to him.

The referee pointed the correct direction for throw-ins – most of the time.

In the second half, a girl was hit in the head with a hard-kicked ball. The referee hesitated briefly, but then blew the whistle and went to check on the girl. He then summoned the girl’s coach onto the field, and the coach helped the girl off the field and sent in another girl to take her place. The referee appeared very concerned about the girl’s well-being.

Suggested Approach

- There is no limit to the amount of complimenting a mentor can give to a mentee for a job well-done. Start by congratulating the new referee for inspecting the field and fixing a defective net before the start of the game. Remind the referee that part of the pre-game routine is to get a ball, usually from the home team coach. Emphasize that the fact it wasn’t done early in this case is no big deal, especially at this level.
- Give the referee full credit for handling the injury properly. Emphasize that this might well have been the most important officiating action of the match, and that it was well-managed.
- Also give the referee credit for getting throw-ins correct most of the time. Suggest methods for deciding which way the throw-in should go in cases where there may be indecision. Possible guidance includes positioning (getting a close look with the right angle) and using the players’ sock colors.
- Also congratulate the referee for not allowing the girl with earrings to play until they had been removed. Remind the referee that if this happens again, it doesn’t matter what the last referee allowed – stand firm and give the player the choice to remove the earrings and play, or leave them in and not play.

Scenarios For Instructors

Scenario #2

The mentor was assigned to watch a new referee work a U-10 boys match. The referee team appeared to check the field but during a casual walk of your own you noticed that one goal was not staked down. You enlisted help to make it safe. The referee didn't notice what you were doing.

You note that the referee seems to have a good grasp of general game management, understanding when to stop play and how to restart. The ref manages the substitution opportunities and halftime break well.

One potential problem you notice is that the referee is consistently waiting much too long to start moving when play moves away and downfield, and must then sprint to catch up with play. Often by the time the ref gets there possession has changed and play is headed back the other way. In the second half you see that the referee is tiring from all the sprinting and is often quite far from play. Several fouls, as perceived by the mentor, are not called by the referee – probably due to the distant vantage point – and frustration is apparent on the players' faces.

Suggested Approach

- Complement the referee for obvious good knowledge of the Laws (stopping and restarting the match).
- More than that, congratulate the referee for understanding how to handle the match overall: time management, substitutions, and halftime.
- Talk about how to recognize when the referee needs to move in order to keep up with play. Talk about how to recognize when play has started moving in a particular direction and how quickly the referee should start moving to follow. (Discussion of anticipation is premature for this new referee.)
- Discuss goal safety and specifically what you had to do in order to stake down one goal to make it safe.

Scenario #3

The mentor is watching an experienced Regional Referee work a U-12 girls match. The referee is calling a pretty good game. Positioning is generally fine and foul recognition seems good, as does restart knowledge. This referee seems in tune with what the players are doing and what they need from the officiating team.

However, the referee is obviously not looking at the assistant referees. Several times in each half an assistant referee raised the flag for an offside but the referee failed to notice. On the few occasions the referee did recognize the assistant referee, the whistle was blown but the referee did not raise an arm for the restart.

Suggested Approach

- Game management is good – let the referee know it! Compliment general positioning, foul recognition, and restart knowledge.
- Since the referee is missing flags in spite of being in good position to look through play at the lead AR, the odds are good that the ref is focusing on the ball and the players' legs surrounding the ball – a common mistake that blinds the referee to other issues.
- Let the referee know that a number of flags were not acknowledged. If the referee is surprised to discover this, suggest that the referee adopt a more general “look through play” approach that allows a view of the ball, the players' lower and upper bodies, and the AR on the far side of play.
- Also suggest that the referee look at the lead AR every time the ball is played forward by the attackers. Even if the referee falls back into the habit of ball watching, this advice may help to get an offside flag noticed.
- Discuss the restart for an offside infraction, and the signal for the indirect free kick. This one is fairly straightforward and will likely cause the referee to experience a “Duh!” moment.

Scenarios For Instructors

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Suggested Approach

- This new referee has demonstrated courage during a "moment of truth." The mentor's lead should be to congratulate the referee for not whistling for handling that was determined to be non-deliberate, and for not caving in when the Blue coach applied peer pressure for a call.
- Suggest that if a coach says something similar in the future, the referee can and should have a word with the coach about it to ask for more positive behavior.
- Talk about the kickoff and remind the new referee that aside from the dropped ball, no restart allows the player taking the restart to touch it again before it is touched by another player.
- Finally, discuss the tackles and the referee's actions. These were "judgment calls" and it's important that the mentor uses questioning to determine what the referee saw and why the decisions were made. It may be the case that the referee and the mentor saw things differently. Depending on what the referee says, the mentor may wish to review the aspects of tackling fouls and, possibly, the need to be consistent in foul calling.

Scenarios For Instructors

Scenario #5

This new referee moved competently through the field inspection, the player check, and the pre-game discussion for a U-10 boys game. The mentor relaxed and settled back to watch an apparently confident referee in action.

Once the game started, however, the referee consistently took several seconds before blowing the whistle after obvious fouls, then another several seconds before indicating the direction in which the free kick should be taken. As the game progressed there was no change: after each whistle for an apparent foul, anywhere from 6 to 9 seconds passed before the referee pointed one direction or the other. You saw the ref talking to the players who seem to be hesitating before taking up their positions. The players and coaches looked confused, and the spectators were getting restless.

Suggested Approach

- Because the game management discussion will mostly consist of areas for improvement, complement all pregame activities as separate strengths (field inspection, player check, pre-game).
- Discuss the referee's calls and your perception that it took some time after each infraction before the whistle was blown. Try and determine why the referee waited. It's possible that the referee is unsure of what to do; it's also possible that guidance has been given for a "slow whistle" and that this is being taken to an extreme.
- Also discuss the amount of time between the whistle and a signal for the restart. There are several possible reasons for this; the most likely are uncertainty as to the correct restart and/or uncertainty as to the correct direction for the restart.
- Let the referee know that both types of uncertainty are normal in the beginning. Pledge to work with the referee on how to make correct decisions quickly.
- A simple tip for knowing how to signal correctly after a foul is, "Always point at the team that fouled (their goal). Then, if it wasn't a foul that involved contact, hold your arm straight up."

Scenarios For Instructors

Scenario #6

You were assigned to mentor a new referee who was working a U-10 boys match. The game was going strong and play on both sides was fast and very spirited. The referee had no problem keeping up with play and appeared to be calling fouls correctly during the first half and into the second half.

Going into the fourth quarter the score was tied 0-0 and the heat of the match increased with play becoming more physical. Several times the referee yelled 'play on' when players collided and fell to the ground in the middle third of the field. You noticed the coaches getting anxious and parents starting to ask when the referee was going to call fouls. Meanwhile, the players seemed to be concentrating on the game and got up soon after they fell.

Suggested Approach

- Compliment the referee for keeping up with play and managing a hard-fought match.
- Praise the referee's foul recognition.
- Ask about the "play on" incidents. Was the referee awarding advantage or just indicating that no foul had occurred?
 - If the answer is advantage, talk in general about when it makes the most sense to call the foul by awarding advantage (e.g. in the attacking third of the field).
 - If the answer is "no foul," mention that the phrase "play on" is reserved for awarding advantage and suggest that saying something such as "No foul, play" is appropriate.
 - In any case, try not to debate whether fouls were or were not worth calling. Talk about the effect of the multiple advantage calls on the players (minimal) and on the sidelines (stronger, and possibly unseen by the referee).

Scenarios For Instructors

Scenario #7

The referee has 1 year experience and is working U12 boys for the first time. The assistant referees are new, recently through the AR course, on their first match.

The referee and the 2 ARs inspected the field together, very professionally and thoroughly. They smiled and spoke with coaches and players and spectators while walking the field. The referee was overheard to be giving instructions to the ARs.

While inspecting the players, one snarky player asked, "How do you call offside, Ref?" The referee gave a 1 minute dissertation on the offside Law.

Early in the match, the ball crossed the touch line apparently last touched by Blue. The AR on that side raised his flag and pointed for a throw-in by Blue. The referee looked unsure as to whether the AR was correct, but pointed in Blue's direction and said "Blue throw-in." There were complaints from Red team's parents.

Ten minutes into the match, a Blue player tackled the ball away from a Red player, and the Red player tripped over Blue's feet and fell to the ground. The referee blew the whistle and awarded a free kick to Red.

In the second half, a boy was hit in the thigh with a hard-kicked ball. The referee hesitated briefly, looked at the boy, and then ran on to catch up with the play. Twenty seconds later the ball went across the touch line, and the referee blew the whistle and went to check on the player. The player said he was ok, and stayed in the game. The referee appeared very concerned about the boy's well-being.

Late in the match, a Red defender cleared the ball to his teammate in the attacking half of the field. The referee was near Red's penalty area when the counter-attack began. The Red attacker was in the clear when he received the ball, past all defenders except the goalkeeper, and streaked down and shot the ball into the goal. The AR was out of position when the ball was passed to the Red attacker and did not raise the flag or signal in any other way as to whether an offside occurred or whether the goal should count. The mentor clearly saw that the Red attacker was offside. The referee allowed the goal.

Suggested Approach

- Praise the referee for the pre-game inspections and discussion. Suggest that the referee not cover the Laws during player checks. The question "How do you call offside?" can be quickly answered "Per Law 11" or "As we were taught."
- Praise the referee for handling the minor injury when the boy was hit by a hard-kicked ball.
- Talk about tackles in general, and in particular the one that occurred in this game. A referee with one year of experience is likely still unsure how to evaluate tackles. If the Blue player was able to touch the ball away and made no other unfair move as Red tripped over Blue's feet, no foul occurred. This is a good learning opportunity.
- Discuss the offside no-call. The referee was let down by the AR, but once again this creates a good learning opportunity. Referees must learn to evaluate offside and be ready to call it when the AR cannot – or when there is no AR.

Scenarios For Instructors

Scenario #8

The match is an AYSO BU-12 match. The referee has 2 years of experience as a Regional Referee. You are mentoring one of the assistant referees, a brand new Regional Referee.

In the first half the Red team was defending in your AR's half of the field. Blue had the opening kickoff. At the kickoff, the AR was standing at the halfway line while the second-to-last Red player was about 25 yards from his own goal line.

Early in the match the ball hit a player's arm clearly with no intent by the player to play the ball. The event was close to the AR, who raised the flag and waggled it. The referee could not see the contact between ball and hand, but on the advice of the AR blew the whistle and awarded a free kick to the opposing team.

With very little time remaining in the match and the score tied 1-1, a Blue attacker received a pass from a teammate and shot the ball into the goal. At the time he collected the pass, he was running fast and was past all defenders but the goalkeeper. The AR was standing in correct position with the second-to-last-defender at the time of the pass. When the ball was in the net the AR did not raise the flag and did not move, but pulled out a line-up card and started writing (presumably to record the goal). The referee looked at the AR and, seeing this, awarded the goal. The mentor is certain that the attacker was not in offside position when the ball was passed by his teammate.

Suggested Approach

- Congratulate the AR for an excellent offside no-call towards the end of the match. Discuss the need to communicate that decision to the referee, and what the proper signal is for that communication to happen.
- The non-deliberate handling that was whistled is a great learning opportunity for both the referee and the AR. Start by talking about the referee's positioning: was the ref in the right spot to have an angle to see the trouble area? Thank the AR for having the courage to call the foul. Talk to both in general about handling fouls and the need for the handling to be deliberate. Was it this time? Don't worry if the AR insists that it was; the key is to teach the concept.
- Talk about positioning during static restarts. In particular, discuss positioning during kickoffs and the need to be with the second-to-last defender, and how this positioning can be crucial for making the right offside call – especially as the players get older and can run faster and kick farther.