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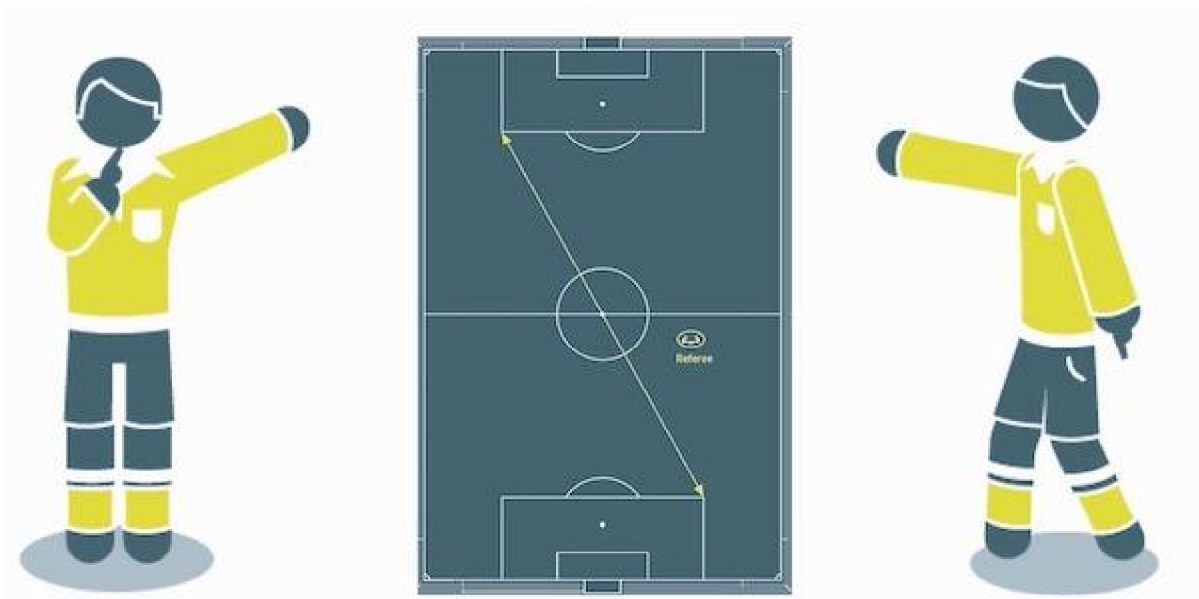
YouthSoccerInsider

Thursday, January 2, 2020

Highly Recommended New Year's Resolutions for Referees

by Randy Vogt

We heard the word "whistleblower" throughout the second half of 2019. But this year we celebrate another form of whistleblower as we honor soccer referees. Right here, right now, I've just proclaimed 2020 to be the Year of the Referee as we know that all refs need to have 20/20 vision. And those without, such as myself, use an aid such as contact lenses to see clearly on the soccer field.



Here are some ideas to make the new year and new decade everything and more:

Be a fit official. The referee who physically trains for officiating and watches officials during other soccer matches will most likely be a good deal more successful than the person who does not think about these assignments all week until putting on a referee uniform that weekend.

Many new refs are surprised at the commitment needed to become a successful official. As I like to say, based on Galatians 6:7, "You reap what you sow."



So if you believe that refereeing one or two days per week will make you fit without physically training for it, you are sadly mistaken. Soccer is played at its own pace -- some games are fast, others are slow-moving. With relatively unskilled players, there is even some acceleration of play in spurts, especially if the match is on artificial turf. Games will be played at a given pace whether the officials can keep up with play or not.

Those refs who reside in the kickoff circle and don't move up or down the field are the first to complain about overly enthusiastic spectators and often quickly determine that refereeing is not for them. If you are properly prepared for the physical demands of soccer, you will enjoy it much more.

If you have led a sedentary lifestyle, please get the approval of your doctor before becoming a soccer referee and taking on all the physical training that goes with it. The [fartlek training method](#) works best for me, as it mimics a soccer game. Rather than just jogging, you jog, sprint, jog, with an all-out sprint at the end. If you are currently out of shape, start slowly and gradually work up to a mile.

As officials need to run backward and sidestep during the course of a game, try to incorporate both of these moves in your training.

Also, Rocky Balboa and Kenyan marathon runners are on to something as running up and down steps or hills helps endurance. In the Rocky movies, Rocky concluded his runs through the streets of Philadelphia with a sprint up the steps of the south entrance of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Kenyan marathoners run up and down the hills of their country. Jogging and sprinting up and down some hills or steps will make running on a flat soccer field easier.

Is there too much snow or ice currently on the ground where you live for jogging to be safe? Then an exercise bike or treadmill is an excellent substitute, but go fast in spurts to mimic the fartlek system, especially toward the end before you warm down. Much of my winter training is on an exercise bike at my health club as running outside is often not safe.

On game day, take the attitude that you are being given the privilege to officiate. After all, you will meet new people, have the opportunity to make a positive difference in other people's lives, get exercise and, hopefully, have fun, all while earning a little money.

The best refs bring out the best in everyone, including themselves. With officiating, you can help others while you and they are having fun.

Officials should be well-groomed with a clean uniform. Arrive at the field 30 minutes before kickoff with a smile on your face. Perhaps you don't feel like smiling. Maybe you don't feel so well or did not get a good night's sleep. Smile anyway. It could even put you in a better mood.

Certainly, show some enthusiasm. On a recent business trip to Texas, I took flights to Houston and Dallas and was served by happy employees. My luggage and I arrived safely, without any drama, as happens on nearly all flights every day. But the airline differentiated itself through their employees' enthusiasm and I will gladly look to fly them again. Although I did not mention that airline's name, frequent flyers will probably be able to figure it out by what I wrote above.

On youth soccer fields, many people don't know the rules or even whether the ref did a good or a poor job, but everybody can figure out very quickly whether the ref cares about the players and what he or she is doing. I can remember refereeing a futsal youth game with a FIFA ref who made some good decisions but was complained about by one of the coaches as his attitude and body language clearly demonstrated that he did not want to be there.

Attitudes are contagious. If you're having a very good time, you would be surprised how many other people you are affecting with your positive attitude. Those song lyrics often come true, "When you're smiling, the whole world smiles with you."

With some slight variations, I've done the above since I took up the whistle when I was a teenager and it has worked for me as it's now over 40 years and 10,000 games later.

([Randy Vogt](#), the author of "Preventive Officiating," has [officiated more than 10,000 games.](#))



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