



WHY OUR ACADEMY & RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS DON'T USE OFFICIAL REFEREES & COACHES ARE USED INSTEAD.

Let me start saying that the IYSA competitive league in Idaho cannot find enough referees on a continual and steady basis to fill their games.

There are two main factors why we have not had referees in our academy (U4-U9) (and then by extension in our newly created REC program for U10-U19 players in Fall 2021).

(1) We had referees before (assignments for rec leagues are mainly young refs and very much they came to simply point out the directions of the restarts (throw ins, goal kicks vs corner kicks) and generally did not call many fouls. They created more tension than solutions.

Our coaches can act as teachers of the game in a very non-invasive manner and focus on Law 12 (fouls and misconduct). What coaches do in their end of practice scrimmages, we ask coaches to do in games. These are very developmental leagues, and also internal. Teams should be flying the same banner - ReAl.

The philosophy is that coaches are on the field just to help when it is really needed, for example to call fouls or when the direction of a restart is not clear and players maybe confused. As players get older, we want them to try to manage the game/rules like in street soccer, where there are no coaches. This will empower players and make them more creative and independent. By GAME 4 on a given season, the club's expectation is that our U6-U9 players (and by GAME 2 our U10-U19 REC players) should manage: throw-ins, goal kicks, corner kicks, and kick offs without much help.

Our coaches protect better our players because they know them and they are there to teach the game and not to just simply judge like referees do. Our academy and REC are very formative years and we have a more relaxed environment where our players develop better in.

Coaches are asked not be coaching excessively during games anyways and just perhaps to be giving some indications, always related tp the topics being worked out during practices. This can be done inside the field and at the same time they help players with Law 12 (fouls and misconduct). Both coaches can be in the field helping with the laws of the game or just one coach per half.

This has worked much better and we only have had two complaints since we implemented this system many years ago.

(2) **Referees in our area are very very scarce**, including the IYSA competitive league, so can you imagine the situation for REC programs? [Here is the latest status on referees, a true crisis!](#) I really really encourage you to see what I am talking about in that link and how serious this issue is!

Even if we would want to reinstate referees, it would be very difficult to do so as even competitive games are lacking referees these days. We would be perhaps having referees in 10% of the games and then create more issues with the disproportion of coverage. The expectation of a referee coupled with the failure of the referee to show up is worse than coaches being the referees.

Our coaches put so many hours volunteering, studying the practices they receive to coach your kids, and they in addition receive this additional task on Saturdays. These are the true heroes of youth sports!

Now, we cannot expect from them a perfect job refereeing. However, safety is first so I will keep emphasizing how important is to protect players and call fouls (tripping, pushing, kicking an opponent mainly, even if these actions are unintentional).

Ensuring safety also include that kids in the programs U12 and below do not head the ball. I will reemphasize this to coaches.

I want to end saying that we are always striving to improve and in Fall 2021 since we were starting our REC program (U10-U19), we put an option on the volunteering box for refereeing. Only 3 people out of 338 families expressed interest in refereeing. We can't start own internal referee program.

In any case, as safety is always our first priority, we will continue to emphasize how important is for our coaches to freeze the game (and a scrimmage at the end of practice) when a "law 12" violation is committed (unless "advantage" can be applied) and explain to our kids what happened. Our goal in this area is that our players become very clean players and focus on playing the game rather on committing fouls to their opponents.

Thank you and let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Vamos Real!

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