

So You Want to be a Referee?

This article is to give a little insight for adults and youth as they consider whether or not they want to become a referee for the West Seattle Soccer Club, or elsewhere. There are a number of things to consider, so I want to make sure to answer the most frequently asked questions here. This article is an attempt to describe the process of becoming a referee, from the thinking beforehand to getting on the field, and all things in between.

Let's break it up into a few different sections:

- Deciding to become a Referee
- Certification and Continuing Education Process
- Assigning Process
- Reporting Process
- Common Complaints

Deciding to become a Referee

So who decides to become a referee? What is the normal personality type, and what are the reasons to put yourself out on the field? Referees come in all personality types, but usually the first motivation is money. For a youth referee, it is the promise of a good paying job and being out on the field around a game they love. For an adult, it is much of the same, plus they usually want to help make sure the games are covered.

For a youth though, it is much easier to make the decision than to actually follow all the way through to getting on the field. The personality type of a successful youth referee is normally a little outgoing, bold and someone not intimidated by loud sidelines. And it is also someone who is open to mentoring and coaching to become a better referee.

Certification and Continuing Education Process

Initial Certification - Just like any quality job, every new referee must dedicate some time to attend an educational clinic and passing a test. The most common is what is called a Grade 8 license, which is a combination of passing 17 online modules and an eight hour class. These are clinics that are given by referee chapters throughout the state, and the license is recognized nationally. These classes are usually planned right before the spring or fall seasons, so the new referees can get on the field soon after the class, but they could be planned at any time throughout the year. If a referee decides to, they can upgrade to higher grades if they decide to ref higher level games, all the way to college and professional matches. The cost of the license is about \$60, the clinic may have a cost, and then another \$50-\$60 to get the uniform and equipment needed to get out on the field.

Continuing Education - In addition to the initial class to get certified, each referee must go to at least one two hour hybrid clinic and review online modules and pass the test questions every year to become certified for the following year. Along the way, they are mentored by referee assignors and other more senior referees, and they get evaluated by fellow referees for every game they ref. This is all intended to give the referee as much education and wise guidance as possible as they sharpen their skills with every game they do.

Assigning Process

So after the referee has his shiny new badge and uniform, how does he get assigned to a game? This has changed quite drastically over the last 10 years. It used to be that the local assignor would keep a list of licensed referees and use email or phone calls to try to fill all the games for the upcoming weekend's games, tracking them with a spreadsheet. But now, there are online sites where referees can register and then self-assign to those games that fit their schedule. The club or association assignor then attempts to fill the open games with whatever refs are still available. The WSSC

uses Trias as their referee assigning site. All referees must be RMA cleared, which is required for anyone (including coaches and other WSSC volunteers) that works around kids. The state uses the Affinity system to track all RMA status', including coaches and other volunteers. You cannot assign yourself to a game until you complete your RMA. You can access the site here - <http://wys-refereerma.affinitysoccer.com/reg/index.asp?sessionguid=>.

Some referees assign themselves to games week by week, some plan for the entire season. The assignors give each referee a rank, depending on experience. Every game also has a rank. So as long as each referee's rank is the same or higher than the game's rank and they fulfill the other business rules like age and distance between game locations, they can self-assign themselves to games every weekend without any assistance from the assignor.

Games pay anywhere from \$14 for a U8 game all the way up to \$52 for a U18 game. There are also different pay ranges for center referees vs. AR's (assistant referees). Many youth referees start out at the younger games, but move up to being an AR on a U11 or U12 game because it is seen as less stressful and earns them a bit more money. This is one of the reasons why the younger games lack coverage.

Reporting Process

After a game has been played, the referee then must submit a match report in the assigning system (Trias). This site is where the referee puts in scores, red/yellow cards and any comments about the game. They also rate the coach, player and sideline behavior for each side. This detail is used if there is any dispute with the game. If a team has a lot of complaints from multiple referees, the coach may be contacted by the club.

This match report can also be used to report if they were not able to make it, or if one or both teams did not arrive. Filing this match report is necessary for the referee to get paid for that match.

Closing Thoughts

WSSC wants to embrace our new referees, and make sure they make it to from the clinic to the field. There is a bit of time and money investment, and we want to make sure that is recovered as soon as possible and that the referee has a good experience and wants to continue reffing. Our goal is 100% game coverage, but we can't do that without licensed referees.

Please help us make our game day experience the best for everyone out on the field – players, coaches, spectators and referees.

Tim McMonigle
WSSC Ref Assignor