

IO3: GUIDE MENTORING PROGRAM FOR WANNABEE REFEREES

To be successful with young referees mentoring is very important!

For example a survey of referees in the Netherlands in 2019 showed interesting results about the motivation of referees and reasons to stop refereeing. And it pointed out that 41% of the referees <21 years has no mentor!

Survey Dutch referees/judges 2019 (Buro7, 7.420 respondents)

	<21 y. (297)	> 21 y. (7.124)
Motivation to be a referee/ judge?		
- Fun in sport	70 %	70 %
- Ambition to grow to a higher level	48 %	19 %
- To be useful for my club/sport	42 %	49 %
- Personal development	27 %	10 %
Possible reason for you to stop?		
- No fun anymore	68 %	69 %
- No time anymore	38 %	23 %
- Health reasons	34 %	49 %
- Lack of esteem/respect	30 %	19 %
- Incidents	26 %	23 %
- No perspective to grow	19 %	7 %
Ever thought to stop because of aggression?		
- Never	79 %	82 %
- One or more times	21 %	18 %
Do you have a referee coach or mentor?		
- Yes	59 %	31 %
- No	41 %	69 %

Conclusion of the Dutch federations

- Fun in your sport, possibility to grow, personal development and to be useful are the most important arguments mentioned by young referees.
- Lack of esteem/respect and aggression are very large dissatisfiers. Esteem ('thank you!') and developing skills to prevent aggression and learning how to deal with this are very important.
- Do not deny that officiating is complex. A lot of young referees do not have a coach or mentor. This could be the reason for early drop-out. We have to encourage both the young referee as the club and federation to find a coach or mentor.

Other recommendations gathered from existing case studies

During the Sport4Rules more partners gave input to the discussion to prevent early drop-out of young referees.

Summary of the elements received, please find below the main reasons why young people stop or do not join:

- Management focuses on the higher level and not on the entry into the job.
- The cost of additional equipment (whistle, shoes, jersey, etc.) is always a hindrance if it is not paid for even in the smallest category.
- The responsibility is too heavy for the youngest.
- The lack of a mentor or tutor for everything related to the act of refereeing (feeling alone when arriving at the gym, not knowing who to ask, etc.)
- Not knowing how to become a referee, the way is not clear and not known.
- Fear of doing badly, of not succeeding, pressure from players, coaches and spectators.
- Difficulty in learning the rules because it is an additional learning burden at an age when there is a lot to do at school.
- Remarks, criticism and insults that destroy self-confidence at a time when one's personality is being built.
- Premises that are not adapted to accommodate referees (changing rooms, office, etc.)

The analysis of these inputs resulted in a lot of recommendations for clubs and federations to be successful to young referees.

Recommendations to federations and clubs

1. Create a good learning environment

- Create an inspiring and **safe sport environment** in clubs (or your club)
 - Clubs must recognize, value, and communicate on the service provided by its referees
 - Launch a campaign to promote volunteerism and engagement in referee roles. Increase and communicate the positive responses found in enjoyment of refereeing. It will improve the retention of young referees.
 - Clubs should communicate on the need for referees and respect for them
- There is not always enough conviviality to welcome the referees in the gyms (**no welcoming**, no discussion, drinks offered at the end of the match, ...)
- Ask clubs to better welcome referees
- Help referees to better communicate and exchange around matches with players, coaches, and managers
- Organize events
- If there are **excesses** of unrepressed incivility in clubs. The referee often feels alone and unsupported face to too many and not enough repressed aggressions and incivilities.
 - Promote the presence of a Fair Play manager in the gym,
 - Set up a system for reporting incivility and helping victims of repeated assault or harassment.
 - Set up an assistance service for referees who have been assaulted or in difficult

- Set up a real system of sanction against people responsible of aggression and incivility.

2. Organize mentoring

- Wannabee referees are **not armed enough** to endure and deal with incivility
 - Organize mentoring for young referees in the club(s). They should be mentored at each level they advance to.
 - Provide guides, tools, videos and training on these overlooked aspects in referee training
- After their training and once launched into the big bath, young referees are **often alone when they return home, left to their own devices in the face of their difficulties.**
 - Propose a "tutor" or a resource person to each young person, so that he can contact her when he is in difficulty or he does not have the morale,
 - Allow to start the activity with the same partner for a certain period for a certain time before being "let go"
 - Offer a service (hot Line) to help in case of difficulty
 - Organize convivial events at least every year with fellow referees (barbecue, outing, games, ...)
 - Ensure convivial moments in all referee training
 - Ensure that the referee is well integrated into the club and that he is invited to participate in the life of the club
- **Level downgrades** are accompanied by disappointments, often followed by dropouts
 - Know how to accompany demoted referees, advise them, and help them bounce back
 - Know how to offer them goals to progress to the lower level and explain how to regain confidence
 - Knowing also when a referee is not made for that and that he puts himself in danger and the match if he cannot make enough good decisions

3. Offer good facilities and compensation of costs

- Referees are **not paid enough** for the frequency and duration of their time investment in their refereeing activity (match and transport) and in their training (courses, video, personal work)
 - Increase match allowances so that it is attractive and rewards the time invested in the service of players/spectators
- **Fuel and toll prices** are rising much faster than mileage refunds.
 - Upgrading travel allowance
 - Young people (15-18 years old) are **not autonomus enough to travel by car.**
 - They depend a lot on the goodwill and availability every weekend of their parents to accompany / transport them
 - They cannot move alone and far enough by bike, moped, ...
 - Public transport is sometimes complicated or impossible to reach some gyms in different cities
- Medical **obligation**, cost of medical test and cost of training clinics are **too expensive or take too much time or travel**, or provoke difficult deals to be charge to the club instead to the referee

- Referee Education should be free of charge and dealt between federation and clubs
- Reduce or facilitate medical control,
- Charge to the clubs or federation the medical fees

4. Stimulate women in refereeing

- **Provide uniforms that are adapted to women**
- **Female referees often blame the macho environment** in the gyms and even from their trainers and colleagues, and the isolation of girls among a predominantly male population
 - Promote groups of female referees in addition to other courses
- **Post-pregnancy recoveries of women** are quite rare
 - Consider and prepare returns before maternity leave.
 - Remember to reconnect after birth.
 - Accept a resumption of activity at the same level after one or more seasons of shutdown with accompaniment
- It is **less socially tolerated for a woman** (rather than a man) to leave the home and her family on weekends to go to referee.
 - Make companions and clips to promote this commitment, and ensure its social promotion

5. Systemize and register: follow the referee!

- **The arrival in university studies** generates a change of city and an additional work not always compatible with the continuation of arbitration after 18 years
 - Accompany the relocation of the referee so that he is taken care of by the committee / association that manages the referees near his future home.
 - Promote the continuation of arbitration in other countries in the event of an internship or year of study in "Erasmus" abroad: Exchange to be systematized between federations.
- **Studies often become a priority.** The activity of arbitrator is rarely recognized/validated in university study cycles
 - Offer university credits (Credit Units - UC) for referees trained and officiating a minimum of meetings

6. Be flexible

- Young people increasingly **want to be free** to organize their leisure activities. COVID has raised awareness that you can spend your leisure time in a different way and has made it possible to enjoy new activities at home or around your home replacing refereeing. Commitment to arbitration is often synonymous with total commitment, i.e., a commitment to arbitrate every weekend; sometimes 2 or more times per weekend; and even sometimes during school holidays. Young people are less willing to be "prisoners" of their commitment than in the past. They are willing to give up arbitration to retain some of their freedom.
- **Accept that a referee is on "leave"** or that he officiates according to his availability schedule provided he makes enough matches in the year to maintain his level
- There are **not enough facilities to allow you to continue playing**, or coaching a team, while refereeing. We sometimes ask to stop playing, which leads to the choice to stop the arbitration.
- Accept and better **consider player schedules** to appoint referees outside of their player matches

- **Allowing young people more to declare when they are available** to arbitrate – and appoint them on these slots – rather than considering that they must always be available and "used" at will.
- The **more frequent separation of couples** leads in France to more children being timeshared between their 2 **parents** (1 week at one's, 1 week at the other's). Sometimes only 1 of the 2 parents agrees to accompany his child or authorizes him to arbitrate. As a result, the referee is only available to referee one week out of 2 or only when he lives with one of his 2 parents if leaving in distant places.
 - Allow more flexibility to allow these situations to be expressed and considered
 - Do not sanction the referees for his "unavailability" but allow him to build his own availability program.
 - Consider alternate designations on 2 sectors
 - List the conveyed referees who can pick up the referee not conveyed / not accompanied by his parents

7. Structure pathways

- **Young people need opportunities for rapid career development.** If they do not evolve quickly, always staying at the same level, and officiating the same teams, they get tired and try another less routine activity in which they hope better to be able to realize themselves.
 - Allow systematic accession or training to access the higher level after 2 years spent at a same level. (e.g. in basketball, referees accessing the regional level stop 4 times less than those who keep refereeing at the local level)

Mentoring Program Young Referees

How to organize mentoring in your federation or club? We give you an example.

Find a mentor for every young referee

One of the most important causes of early dropout of young referees is not having a mentor to guide them during the first period as referee. Most young referees start as a 'local' referee in the environment of the club where they already are active as player.

Sometimes the referee is starting as an individual, sometimes a group of young people start a course to become referee. For both situations it is important to create a save environment to learn, guided by a local mentor. The mentor could be an experienced ex-referee who coordinates the officiating in the club, an experienced referee in the club or an referee officiating in the region.

To prevent early dropout of young referees the management of the club should organize this save environment and a mentor.

Learning by doing

Most federations are providing special courses to learn the laws of the game and the sport specific aspects. In most existing courses the more generic aspects as communication, promoting good behavior, dealing with comments and self-control are getting less attention during the course and has to be learned in practice. The mentor has an important role to guide the young referee in learning these competencies. Therefore it is not necessary for the mentor to watch every game of the young referee. He can also mentor by questioning about the last game(s) and stimulate the young referee to ask these questions to him- or herself after each game.

Questions like:

- How can I clarify my decisions even more for all individuals involved?
- How do I determine the right moment to blow the whistle?
- How do I stay firmly on the ground in this respect?
- How do I radiate positivity and energy?
- Do I pay enough attention to desirable behavior – and how do I show this?
- What have I already accomplished in this respect?
- How do I find out which athlete needs more attention?
- How do I react when players/ coaches are agitated?
- What is your need to improve yourself?
- How can I stimulate the involvement of the coaches in sharing responsibility?
- How do I start the conversation when the game has ended?
- What is going well already?
- What do I want to change next time?

The video '4 Insights for the modern referee' can be helpful during this process.

Learn young referees to monitor their own performance

By asking the young referee to write down the questions, answers and difficulties after each game, the mentor can help the young referees to monitor their own performance, seek and receive feedback from others and clarify interpretations of the rules/laws and ethics of the sport. This stimulates the young referees to realize that they are in a learning process and see difficulties and incidents as a cause to learn of for the next time and to improve in their hobby.

Example of a learning process guided by a mentor

This process can be done with an individual young referee or with a group.

Introduction period

After, or combined with, the course to learn the laws of the game

- Young referee plus mentor together watch a game of an experienced local referee
 - Mentor + referee talk about his performance
- 2 test games in the club watched and guided by the mentor
 - After each game the mentor asks questions and gives advice
 - Referee points what went well and what was difficult
 - Write down what to do better next time
- 3 games alone, one of them seen by the mentor
 - The referee write down what went well and what was difficult
 - Evaluation with the mentor after each game
 - Write down what to do better next time
- Referee plus mentor visit another game with an experienced referee
 - Give observation tasks to the referee
 - Evaluate the game
- 6 games alone
 - After 3 games evaluation with the mentor
 - 6th game seen by the mentor and evaluate together
 - Make appointments about the next phase of learning and mentoring.
- End of the introduction