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## **Summary**

Referee training continues to be a challenge given new U.S. Soccer requirements coupled with venue availability. The entry course curriculum requires a field exercise component, making more traditional venues obsolete. Venue requirements and coupled with changes in the economic business approach is forcing us to pay higher rates than in past years. The State Referee Committee (SRC) continues to find creative ways to get more for less. We did have to raise our state registration rate as these new requirements coupled with the large numbers in referee registrations to meet our budget needs.

New referee registrations for 2023 were 380 and our overall referee registration numbers saw an increase of nearly 100 referees.

Entry courses are now being scheduled with three currently posted and available for registration. Entry courses will be a three-phase approach to accommodate the new entry requirements. Step 1 will be all online CBTs to be completed within the U.S. Soccer Learning Center. Step 2 is a build from this training to be completed with the SRC's referee registration platform. Step 3 will be a 6-hour in-person session with combined classroom and field exercises.

Referee registration numbers for the 2023 registration year ended with just over 1,010 referees. We continue to operate at half-capacity with ideal referee numbers being 1,600 to cover the excessive number of matches. The number of leagues and competitions continue to grow at a far greater pace than referee registrations.

The SRC will continue to look at improving these numbers and we hope that NYSWYSA and local leagues can continue to assist in referee recruitment and retention.

## **Critical Update/Needs**

We continue to be at a critical shortage of referees as detailed above. We reached out to new referee of 2022 and asked what he or she liked and disliked about the first year. Approximately 80% of the respondents stated they will return and loved learning new aspects of this beautiful game. A good number of these respondents also mentioned the mentors they had and the great referees they got to work and learn from each day. The SRC will most assuredly continue to build on this positive news. Sadly, this means that 20% of the new referees will not return in 2023. The obvious reason is that many found the job of being a referee too stressful. Those who elaborated on this reasoning state that parents and coaches are "out of control" and complain all the time. Others who said they would not come back ranged from left New York state, lack of time to commit, or enjoyed playing more than refereeing.

Sadly like 2022, the 2023 season saw another rise in referees being overly criticized. On a few occasions coaches of a U13 or younger clubs were dismissed from their matches for foul and abusive language towards a match official. This is grossly uncalled for and saddens me greatly that such young players hear and witness this inappropriate behavior from their coach. We all need to do better.

Referees will be reminded of the zero-tolerance policy and be provided with additional training on how to deal with matters of unruly spectators, coaches, and players. The SRC hopes that when there is an unruly parent that another adult or coach intervenes on the matter before the referee needs to stop the match. We are asking the leagues and competitions have a greater policy on sanctioning such clubs and team personnel. The SRC implores that NYSWYSA continue its efforts to ensure young referees are not excessively criticized and to provide coaches and team officials with an avenue to place comments of referees in a more professional and encouraging manner.

I will repeat what was written in last year's report. When a young player makes an error on the field you hear, "That's OK, better luck next time!" When a young referee who is equally learning the game is treated far differently. The hope is that we all have a better understanding of our youngest referees who are equally learning the game in an entirely different role. Our new referees are like new players, they will make mistakes. New players often miss the pass or the easy opportunity to score. No one expects that new player to be openly criticized in a manner that referees are being criticized. Let us all take the opportunity to learn from our mistakes.

### **SRC Personnel Changes**

I will be remiss if I do not mention the loss of William Campbell. Bill passed away in early April. He was the State Youth Referee Administrator for nearly 20 years. His presence and commitment to the game overall and especially the referee program will be greatly missed.

Julie Randall was appointed to the position of SYRA in October, and she will do a fantastic job. She has wonderful ideas and is a well-respected referee, assignor, and unofficially mentors our referees. Julie was the Ithaca District representative, so she is familiar with the business of the State Referee Committee. If you know Julie or when you get to meet her, say hello, and congratulate her on her new role.

Dave Wolgast, Jr. will also be taking on a new role with the SRC. Dave will be the State Director of Assessment (SDA) and has already begun the work of building on and improving our referee mentor program. We are excited to see what great things Dave will bring in this new role. Dave was recently the secretary of the SRC and many years ago held the State Director of Instruction. When you see Dave, congratulate, and encourage him on this new role with the SRC.

### **Assessment Program:**

The assessment program will be completely different for the 2024 season. The title of assessor has been abolished. Many will now be known as mentors with a few others as referee coaches. For most of you the assessment program will more than likely look unchanged. Assessment will now be known as evaluations and the focus is not strictly on what a referee did incorrectly, but at helping a referee understand the decision he or she makes, what may have been a better decision, and what other options a referee has during the match. All of these will bring a holistic approach to referee development.

In the same manner as low referee numbers, we also suffer from low numbers of mentors and referee coaches. We conducted a class to recertify assessors as mentors and we have already begun the entry enrollment for new mentors for the 2024 season. We are projected enough mentors to meet our 2024 goals.

Respectfully submitted,  
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