

Alabama Soccer Referee Program

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Fall Newsletter

2014 USYSA Region III Championships, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

June showcased the Referees nominated to represent Alabama at the Youth Regional Championships in Baton Rouge! Fifteen referees, three assessors and three administrators left on June 19th to spend an exciting and "hot" tournament serving the game we all love! The Referees selected were: Sam Bierster, Sarah Brannon, Philip Cagle, Ryan Campbell, Oz Cermik, Jose Cornelio, Thomas Holt, Jason Kuehl, Daniel Miranda, Jonathan Sauers, Michael Smith, Cedric Thomas, and Marisa Younianian. Our Male Youth Referee of the Year, Austin Holt, and our Female Youth Referee of the Year, Rachel Barron, also accompanied the group.

Many of the referees at the President's Cup also attended the Region III Youth Regional Championships in Baton Rouge the week following the President's Cup. Several were selected as the top referees and assistant referees at the Baton Rouge event. This included Alabama's Michael Smith who was selected to referee at the National President's Cup in Greenville, South Carolina. Also recognized for their work as Assistant Referees in Baton Rouge were Alabama's Jose Cornelio, Thomas Holt, Cedric Thomas, Ryan Campbell, Oz Cermik and Phillip Cagle.

This group represented Alabama and Region III very well! A good time was had by all!

Referee Assault and Abuse

"Soccer referee dies after assault by player in suburban Detroit," Reuters, July 1, 2014; "A whistle, a punch, and a Soccer Referee is dead," Sam Borden, May 7, 2013.

These two incidents are the second and third deaths of soccer officials in the United States (according to the National Association of Sports Officials). The Association claims that referee assault and abuse has increased drastically since 1980. However, deaths are a shocking occurrence in our refereeing community. We always assume we will never be in this situation but every referee needs to be ready! Bob Johnson, AL Referee Emeritus, has written some important reminders for every Alabama referee to consider.

Ways to avoid Referee Assault by Bob Johnson

First thing you need to know is what age you are doing; are you doing U8, U18, or adult? Each of these ages will bring a different type of atmosphere:

- 1) U8 through U10 abuse will probably be from the parents.
- 2) U12-U18 may come from players, parents or coaches.
- 3) Adult league may be from players or from close friends.

You're probably wondering right now saying.... U8/U10...really; but yes, everyone may see this behavior. If this isn't recognized and dealt with by all in our community, referees will disappear! If you get verbally abused or physically assaulted, you need to let your assignor and the SRC know immediately. How can you prevent this from happening? If someone does come after you after a game, you need to leave and don't talk to them. You need to report this every time it happens.

To help you avoid any type of abuse or assault, you need to have a plan before the game. Discuss where you need to go once the game is over. If you don't talk about it in pregame, you will not be prepared.

When leaving the field, if the parents, players or coaches are coming toward you yelling, please do not stop to respond. Leave the area immediately and do not hang around for opportunities to be confronted. This may only fuel the fire and matters could get worse. Make that quick exit according to your plan! Adult leagues are often played on a single field with no additional people to help so make sure your plan is in place. Always remember to report any incident of abuse or assault. Be ready to write a complete report with all the details. Please be aware and be safe!

*****Note:** State League game rosters must be signed by the coaches after the game. If the situation does not allow you to remain at the field, then mail the rosters within 24 hours to the Alabama Soccer Association along with your USSF Referee Report.



Regional Experiences by Sarah Brannon



As a grade 8 referee, I was more than honored to be selected as one of the people to attend Regionals from our state. From the first day in Baton Rouge there were so many things I learned. The experience gave me a taste of what can be attained by a young referee who wants to work hard.

The first day we got there, we checked in to the hotel, got our credentials, delegation shirts and then went to the referee meeting. At the meeting there were hundreds of referees from other states. Getting to meet some of them was really neat. During the meeting, Ryan Cigich (the tournament referee coordinator) and Chris Penso (FIFA referee) got us ready for the week by stressing the importance of hydration, starting games on time, and managing players and coaches. After the meeting, I got to meet my mentor, Ted Unkel (a PRO referee). The mentor group I was in had a short meeting and then we got our assignments for the next day. By this time it was late. Our delegation briefly met and shared everyone's assignments, then we went to bed.

The next morning at 7:00 a.m. I arrived at the fields. My first assignment was a 17 boys AR. Once our crew got to the fields and discussed our pre-game, I got to use beeper flags for the first time. The game was much faster than I had expected...also much hotter!

Afterward, during our debrief, the assessor and my mentor discussed the game with us and gave us some pointers to work on. They asked us what we thought we could have done better. This really helped me visualize the game and my performance. It didn't take long for my clipboard to fill up with notes.

Throughout the week, I became more familiar with the pre-game and post-game duties of the referee. Finding your crew before the games, filling out the paperwork after the games, and turning everything in before getting debriefed made me realize that the job of a referee doesn't stop after the final whistle.

That Tuesday a training session was held at the fields. With the instructors simulating different infringements of the game, the referees each took a turn making the call. Everyone got to practice their quick decision making and communication skills. Personally, this was a highlight of my week. Everyone was very helpful and supportive. The session gave me great practice as a referee.

Looking back on my first regional experience, I am so thankful to have been invited. The quality instruction and competitive games made it a great learning experience. I made friends, got to meet fellow referees from other states, and learned so much about the game of soccer...not to mention experience the scorching Baton Rouge heat! To sum everything up, I hope to go again next year!

USSF Changes to Grade Structure

Recently, the United States Soccer Federation has changed some of the requirements for advanced grades. Upon a request by the adult soccer community, the requirements of Grade 7 were somewhat reduced in hopes of getting more referees available to manage those matches. However, Alabama Soccer rewards referees who have met the more rigorous requirements with incentive pay. To continue to receive incentive pay, Alabama referees will need to meet the previous requirements -- attend an intermediate clinic, receive an assessment on a 90-minute match of adequate level to evaluate performance, and a fitness test (the FIFA interval test will be the standard starting in 2015). Additionally, the process to become a Grade 6 State Referee will also follow this same type of track for incentive pay. You will receive additional information at each Recertification Clinic. As always, if you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact a member of the State Referee Committee. All addresses are shown on the website, www.alasoccerref.com.

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2014 USYSA Region III President's Cup

Jimmy Buffet sings, "The weather is here...I wish you were beautiful!" Well, this year Alabama Soccer Association could say, "The President's Cup is here...and the weather IS beautiful!"

The 2014 Region III President's Cup was held June 12-15 in Decatur, Alabama at the Jack Allen Sports Complex and the Spirit of America Fields at Point Mallard. The Alabama Soccer Association hosted this prestigious event for the fifth time. Region III obviously recognizes the superior playing fields and the fine effort that ASA does in organizing and running tournaments. ASA is to be congratulated for their work in bringing this event to Alabama.

The President's Cup began Thursday evening with the U17 Boys and Girls kicking off in the early evening. 207 games later, Region Champions were crowned on Sunday for both the boys and girls in the U13, U14, U15, U16 and U17 age groups. The Region Champions advanced to the National Championship President's Cup that was held in July in Greenville, SC.

For Regional events of this size, states from throughout Region III are asked to send in referees to support the tournament. This year, 112 referees from 12 states sent referees. We had 29 Alabama referees working alongside 78 referees from 9 other states in Region III plus 4 referees from Kentucky and one from Wisconsin! Having this large contingent of referees required them to work only 2 or 3 games per day which allowed the referees adequate time between games to refresh and recover so their best efforts could be given in each contest.

An added benefit this year was the addition of a guest Instructor/Mentor. Region III Referee Coordinator Ryan Cigich made arrangements for FIFA Referee Chris Penso to attend the President's Cup. Chris gave several mini clinics throughout the tournament, watched games and provided feedback to the referees. It was a pleasure having one of America's best referees with us at this event.

Next year the Regional President's Cup is scheduled for Lafayette, Louisiana. "Laissez les bons temps rouler!" (Let the good times roll!). Plans are for Alabama to support this event

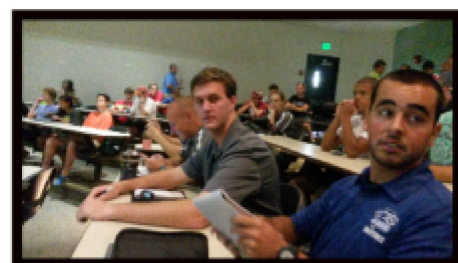
You want to join our Cajun Caravan? The selection process is ongoing. Get involved and let your State Administrators watch you work at our State events during the next year.

Road Show Recertifications Completed for 2014

Saturday, July 26th, 2014, and Sunday, July 27th, 2014, afforded the northern and central Alabama soccer referees the opportunity to complete their annual recertification by attending a clinic taught by George Gansner, FIFA Assistant Referee since 2002 and MLS referee (completing his 200th match on August 3rd in Houston). The three sessions were conducted in Huntsville, Gadsden, and Birmingham with 126 referees in attendance. "Great session...Thanks for the efforts bringing in national/international instructors. It is so good to find higher level officials wanting to give back" from Eric Zimmer, ALARA.

Mr. Gansner covered a variety of topics concerning referee development, management of the game at the proper level, and the similarity of management requirements no matter what level. He was willing to share experiences from his many successful games but also shared some disappointments and how he recovered.

Mr. Gansner decided at the age of 14 that he wanted to be a FIFA referee....making everyone realize that with extensive investment of time and commitment coupled with hard work....anything is possible!



State Referee Committee:

Bill Walker, State Referee Administrator
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Ohannes Younianian, State Assignor Coordinator

Klaus Staefe, State Director of Assessment
Kris Bailey, State Director of Instruction