



West Side Soccer League
Chief Referee Manual
October 2016

Welcome

The West Side Soccer League (WSSL) is a member Region of the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) and consists of various divisions grouped by age and sex. Since WSSL serves almost 5,000 players and is run entirely by volunteers, those volunteers who manage the individual divisions, as well as the division's referees and coaches, represent a critical component in the operation of our Region. A successful and vibrant WSSL division cannot exist without the efforts of a dedicated Chief Referee. The Region and most importantly, our players, thank you for your volunteer contribution in this key position!

The purpose of this document is to provide you with key pointers and suggestions to help you do your job effectively and efficiently. It is simply a road map and not a “must do” or “only do” list of position requirements.

Your input in updating or adding to this document for the benefit of future Chief Referees is always welcome.

Key Points

- **Divisional leadership is critical for the proper operation of WSSL**
- **This document is a series of suggestions - not must-do's**
- **We need your input to improve this document**

Key Success Factors for the Division Chief Referee

- Ensure coverage of each week's games with properly qualified referees
- Awareness of, and response to, game events such as cautions, send-offs, and player, volunteer or spectator behavioral issues.
- Provide the referee volunteers in your division with the tools they need to ensure that WSSL games are Safe, Fair and Fun.
- Maintain a steady flow of useful communication between and among referees and coaches.
- Identify non-referee candidates who could become referee volunteers
- Identify existing referees who would benefit from additional training
- Identify referees who would benefit from in-service guidance
- Be the conduit for reminders and changes in the Laws of the Game and its official interpretations
- Ensure referee volunteer attendance at Q&A and other WSSL referee events
- Identify exceptional referee volunteers for recognition

Recommended Preseason Duties

Several weeks before the first game of the season, check in with your Division Head. Review any issues from the previous season, key areas of focus or player development for the upcoming season, referee recruiting from the division parents, and any areas of coordination between the referees and coaches. Note that one U-8 Official with Safe Haven course is taught during the summer, but that all other U-8 classes and all Basic Referee classes take place either a week or so prior to the start of the season or towards the beginning of the season.

Check your Chief Referee authority levels and settings on wssl.org. Proper access will ensure that you can send parent, referee emails to your division (using the Email Manager on wssl.org), access the referee scheduler as a Chief Referee, etc. If you have any questions or issues about this, email WSSL's Regional Referee Administrator, Stan Ince, at stan.ince@gmail.com.

Look at the referee training class schedule and send recruiting emails (using emailer on wssl.org) to division parents in advance of classes. This is especially important in the younger divisions. You will probably need to send these messages more than once. It is essential to get as large a pool of referees as possible in these divisions to build a foundation for future seasons. Referee recruiting should be coordinated with the Division Head, as successful recruiting is the first and most important step in building a great division referee team and is a critical part in the development of a vibrant WSSL division.

Build your division referee contact and email database of existing certified referees in your division. You will piece this together from a variety of resources; keep in mind that this is a critical resource for referee management and game coverage during the season.

To build your updated season referee list, use:

- 1) parent referee database on wssl.org;
- 2) emailed lists of newly certified referees from the Regional Referee Administrator; and,
- 3) past season lists.

Make sure to cross reference each referee with the team their child is playing on. This helps to understand adequate game coverage (if too many teams are without a certified referee you will have gaps in referee game coverage). This also helps you understand which referees are likely to referee a particular game (usually before or after their child's game at U-8 and older divisions).

Understand the ideal size of the pool of certified referees based on your division size, i.e. number of teams.

Aim for a minimum of two certified referees per team. You will want more than this for U-6 to U-8 divisions, which play two teams on adjacent fields.

Scan “Referees not assigned to a division”. Contact any misplaced referees and ask them to update their family profile. If you don’t do this they will not receive your group emails from the Email Manager.

Call all referees that are new to your division, inquire about their availability (some may be injured and cannot referee this season; some may appear available to referee in multiple divisions but really have a preference to work with a younger sibling, etc.). If your division is U-9 or older, stress the importance of the AR position and ask those who cannot commit to CR to participate as AR at their child’s game. Encourage reluctant newly minted referees to find their feet by participating as AR.

Using either the wssl.org Email Manager or your own database as outlined above, send a pre-season welcome email to the pool of division referees, cc:ing your Division Head. In this email you may want to solicit questions, see if there are any needs (uniforms, stopwatches, laws of the game books, referee badges, etc.), point to online resources and references (see below, such as the Referee Survival Guide), remind them to get properly registered on wssl.org (with the correct division), and use the online referee scheduler to sign up for games.

Check in with your division’s Referee Scheduler. This is a key resource for you and the division. If your division doesn’t have at least one Referee Scheduler, work with the Division Head to find one. This person will work during the weeks of the season to fill games from the pool of referees, freeing you up to provide leadership to the division referees in terms of game assessments, weekly Q & As that come up as a result of game day issues or questions regarding Laws of the Game interpretations. Most highly functioning WSSL divisions have a Referee Scheduler. Note that your Referee Scheduler does not need to be a referee.

Attend the divisional pre-season Coaches meeting. If such a meeting has not been scheduled, encourage the Division Head to hold one. It is valuable to meet the coaches and this provides you an opportunity to quickly run through important items and ensure the coaches are on the same page as the referees.

Here are some items you can touch on:

- Cleats vs turf shoes
- Jewelry
- Time management (start and end on time! ‘On time’ means 5 minutes before the next game is scheduled to start)

- Substitutions (when, how many, procedures for entering and leaving)
- Treating the referees with respect
- Anything else that you have come across in your experiences

Familiarize yourself with the rules for your division, especially if they have changed since the previous season. Send out a separate email to all referee volunteers at the beginning of the season setting out the current rules and discussing any changes.

From your experience in previous seasons with the referees at this level, select one or two points that will become your emphasis for improvement in the current season. This could include proper dress, AR mechanics, pre-game talks, etc.

Key Points

- **Check in with the Division Head**
- **Familiarize yourself with the WSSL website functions**
- **Know who is in your referee pool and communicate with them**
- **Pick an area for improvement each season**

Recommended Weekly Duties During the Season

On each Monday or Tuesday, solicit game reports from the referees while the games from the prior weekend are still fresh on their mind. Ask about any interesting calls or events where interpreting the Laws of the Game proved tricky. Ask about any problems.

Use this feedback to send a brief recap highlighting or explaining one or two issues or tips from the weekend's feedback.

If there were issues in past weeks with specific teams, check with the referees who worked those teams during the immediate prior weekend. Look for recurrences of those issues.

Less experienced referees sometimes project a less than authoritative presence on the field. Authoritative here does not mean dictatorial. Presence is the confidence with which a referee manages the game and makes their calls. When that presence is lacking, it can invite dissent or a lack of respect from the adults present. If you have seen each of your referees in action on the field, you can use your opinion of their authority in determining whether a lack of presence can contribute to repeated incidents. If that is the case, you can consider recommending a mentoring session to help the referee improve their control of the game.

On Wednesday or Thursday, check the scheduler on wssl.org for upcoming game coverage, coordinating this effort with the Referee Scheduler.

By Friday of the week, coordinating with the Referee Scheduler, fill any remaining holes in referee game coverage. Use the website's "Weekend Report" feature to communicate open slots to your referees. This big picture lets referees see exactly which games need coverage in CR and AR positions. It has the added advantage of letting them see who is already filling other slots and this may inspire a referee to step in and help out a friend by volunteering to be their AR for instance. It also allows referees to pick the proper game and avoid games where there may be a personal conflict. This may allow you to pick up some referees who shy away from volunteering because of the "blind" nature of the referee scheduler page.

Every game needs a center referee, and at U-9 and older divisions, every game should have two assistant referees. The AR's primary duty is to monitor the offside position. Stress the point that the players cannot properly learn and implement the correct offside strategy unless there is a full referee team in charge of the game. Inform the parents that they will play an important role in teaching their child this fundamental

skill by participating as an AR. It is key to make sure all games are covered, and for the coverage to appear in the online scheduler!

Make sure that you or the Referee Scheduler “accept” and “confirm” referees on the wssl.org referee scheduler.

Key Points

- **Be aware of on-field issues and get reports from referees**
- **Ensure coverage for the coming weekend**

Recommended Game Day Duties

You can also perform these periodically throughout season.

Make an attempt to personally meet the division referees. This helps build rapport, improves communication, and develops a feeling that referees are part of a team (and not on an island all by themselves). If you want to truly lead by example, be prepared to spend extra time on game day at the field, rather than just officiating games or attending your child's game.

As you become more comfortable with your own skills, observe referees, make notes and observations for weekly email. You may have questions of your own as you observe play on the field and may ask others in the league for clarification.

Work with WSSL Mentors to provide guidance and training to your division's referees. Mark Mravic and Jon Dohlin serve as WSSL's Regional Referee co-Directors of Assessment, and oversee mentoring activities.

Let your division referees know that they can request mentoring at any time. We have a strong group of experienced referees who are willing to provide mentoring. These mentoring sessions are positive experiences which focus on a referee's strengths and how they can broaden those strengths. You should communicate to your referees that not only should they not fear a mentoring session but that they can enjoy it and come away with additional confidence in their abilities.

Work with the WSSL Teen Referee program to fill gaps in referee coverage and provide opportunities to teen refs. John Drayton serves as WSSL's Teen Ref Coordinator. He uses two email addresses, john.drayton@citi.com and drayts@aol.com. Our Teen Referees have proved themselves to be competent and passionate volunteers. Please encourage their participation in your division.

Key Points

- **Get down to the fields and meet your referees**
- **Identify candidates for mentoring**
- **Utilize the Teen Referee program**

Other Duties (in and out of season)

Continue recruiting! Note referee classes that may be offered during the summer and winter and send reminders to the parent pool. Note the following certification levels:

- U-8 Official with Safe Haven certifies a volunteer to referee up to U-8
- Basic Referee follows on the U-8 class to certify referees at U-9 and above
- Intermediate Referee class is optional and generally taken beginning around U-12. This class is usually offered once a winter.
- Advanced and National Referee certification is also optional and highly self-selecting among more experience referees, generally at U-13 and older divisions.

Consider attending Referee Q & A sessions and encourage your referee pool to do so. We generally have two Q&A sessions during the fall season and one during the spring season.

Consider upgrading your own certification to Intermediate Referee and beyond.

Recruit enthusiastic club linesmen and encourage them to become certified referees. Tell them that you only want them to concentrate on the AR position. A little flattery goes a long way in this area.

Ensure that all referee volunteers have updated volunteer forms filed with the Child & Volunteer Protection Advocate, Julie Jung, for the current year.

Key Points

- **Ensure that all referee volunteers have updated volunteer forms**
- **Recruit, recruit, recruit!**

Other Resources

These resources are available to you and your referee pool.

WSSL online at www.wssl.org, under referee resources:
<http://www.wssl.org/referees.htm>

AYSO. http://www.ayso.org/resources/referee_res.aspx

Network with other Chief Referees. Consider holding a meeting during the season.