

Sidebar to Referee Article: When is it Time?

By Andy Weiss, SRA

Sometimes we do see a referee on the field who may have reached the end of the line. What should we do about this? Do we have an obligation to the game or to the referee?

Most referees will monitor their own abilities and hopefully slow down before it becomes a problem. But sometimes, it may be necessary to step in to prevent someone from hurting themselves.

If you find yourself faced with that level of concern, first try to make sure that you are correct in your evaluation. Get another opinion and find out if this is a chronic problem or maybe just a temporary one.

Consider who may be in the best position to talk openly and honestly with this referee. Does he or she have a colleague or friend that may be able to reach out to him?

If you have decided to intervene, talk to the referee as a friend. Sit down privately so as not to embarrass him, and discuss your observations. Try not to make any judgments, but rather to allow the referee to come to his own conclusion that something needs to change.

Try to come to some agreement that involves a definite action on his part. Be prepared to suggest some alternatives that will be agreeable to him. It may not be necessary to stop referring altogether; perhaps a change of assignment level is all that is needed.

If it is in his best interest to stop altogether, point out that there are plenty of ways for him to continue to contribute to the game we love. Perhaps he has the experience and temperament to be a mentor to others, or maybe he wants to become involved with the instructional or assessment programs. Maybe he can serve as a volunteer or administrator within his league or area. There are literally dozens of helpful and meaningful contributions that experienced referees can make to the program, even after their refereeing days are over.

Above all else, be a friend to this person. Understand that hanging up the whistle is going to be difficult. He or she has already demonstrated a tremendous love for the game of soccer, merely by being a referee. This is a person that deserves our highest respect.