

JOE KNOWS AYSO

Spring 2002

Joe Eldridge, National Referee Administrator

For some reason, I have recently had more than a few questions surrounding AYSO referee certification, the meaning of badge titles and assessor standards. In addition to my responses to the following questions, John Enroth, AYSO National Coordinator of Referee Assessment, has also submitted his thoughts on assessment in this issue of In Play.

Question –

Joe, what is the significance of the titles on the AYSO referee badges?

Answer –

The referee badge titles indicate the successful completion of the AYSO training and certification requirements for officiating at a specific age level; Referee for under 8, Regional for under 10, Area for under 12, Section for under 14, National 2 for under 16 and National 1 for under 19.

Over the years these title designations have evolved, including changing the colors of the badges and adding new levels. The intent of the National Referee Commission has been to provide incremental training for referees appropriate for the age level officiated. **The badge titles do not represent the progression of training in any obvious way. A Section referee for example has no special training to officiate at the Section level.**

Question –

Joe, what standards are used to assess the referees' on-field performance for promotion to the next level?

Answer –

On-field observation (mentoring) or assessment occurs at the Area level and above. The minimum acceptable standard for promotion to the next level requires the referee to demonstrate the ability to successfully manage (control) a **TYPICAL REGULAR SEASON AYSO MATCH** in the age group in which the candidate is seeking to upgrade. This obviously requires considerable interpretation on the part of the person performing the assessment and assessor opinions do vary.

The challenge for assessors, as it is for referees, is consistency or uniformity of interpretation. What does this imaginary "typical regular season match" look like for the age group in question? This is not an easy task for assessors who must balance an appropriate level of performance by the referee with a typical AYSO match in this age group. The tendency to expect more than the minimum standard can be hard to resist because of the desire to maintain a high standard.

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Question –

Joe, are AYSO referees required to complete age specific referee training before officiating at a particular age level?

Answer –

Referees are required to attend the Referee Safe Haven certification course and one additional referee training course. Additionally, each year volunteers must resubmit their volunteer application form. There is no national requirement in AYSO for referees to complete additional age appropriate referee training in order to officiate older age groups. Regions may require additional training. A Regional referee who is trained to officiate under 10 age groups may, for example, officiate an under 19 match however, this is probably not the best way to retain that Regional referee as a volunteer.

The reality of life in AYSO is that we have lots of referees doing matches above the level indicated by their badge and managing quite well, thank you very much! Personally, I believe a lot more of these referees should be wearing a higher level badge. We should not wait until a referee can demonstrate the ability to handle the most difficult match in an age group before awarding that level badge. Demonstrating the ability to manage the most difficult match in an age group indicates that the referee is probably ready **for the next higher age** group. Consider the following AYSO statistics taken from January 2002 data:

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>% Players/Age Group</u>	<u>% Certified Referees</u>
U6	14%	-
U8	26%	12.0% U8 Referees
U10	24%	80.1% U10 Regional Referees
U12	19%	4.9% U12 Area Referees
U14	11%	2.0% U14 Section Referees
U16	4%	0.7% U16 National 2 Referees
U19	2%	0.3% U19 National 1 Referees

Ideally, the percentage of referees certified to officiate a particular age group would be more closely aligned with the percentage of players in that age group. The data for AYSO does not support this. Our data indicates that only 7.9% of our referees have completed the training to officiate matches with players older than 9. This can indicate a lack of interest in upgrading by referees, or perhaps upgrading is more difficult than it should be, or a combination of reasons may apply.

Question –

Joe, how would you compare the level of competition between a “Typical AYSO Regular Season” under 19 match with a typical high school soccer match?

Answer –

Although this varies widely across the country, in general I would say the level of competition would not be as high in a typical AYSO under 19 match as it would be in a typical high school match. I have witnessed AYSO matches that are as competitive or more competitive than some high school matches, but on average, I believe these are the exception rather than the rule.