

## **JOE KNOWS AYSO** **Summer 2004**

Joe Eldridge, National Referee Administrator

AYSO frequently receives questions regarding rules, regulations, policies, interpretation of FIFA Law and AYSO modifications. In my position as National Referee Administrator, I am often asked to respond. The following are some of the interesting questions I recently received. If you have questions, please contact me, Joe Eldridge, at (888) 686-2976 or by e-mail at [joeeldridge@ayso.org](mailto:joeeldridge@ayso.org)

### **Dual vs Diagonal vs Reality**

#### **Questions:**

Joe, does AYSO advocate or encourage the use of 2 referees on the field at once (Dual System), as opposed to one referee in the middle, one qualified assistant referee on one sideline and a club linesman (parent) on the other side? Which is preferred? In a recent game, the two referees were not able to make a tripping call and had to delay the game to confer. Tom

Joe, I need some advice. The shortage of referees makes it necessary sometimes for each team to provide a referee for the game. What do you think about using two referees on the field? Recently I did a game using two referees and the other referee disqualified a goal for offside but I didn't agree. The disqualified goal cost that team the game. If you were me, what would you have done? Randy

Joe, we still have a very difficult time getting three referees for the upper division games. There seems to be resistance to using the Dual Referee System in our region and yet I see it in other regions. What is your thinking and is there a specific rule against its use? Don

#### **Answers:**

To Tom, Randy and Don,

The AYSO National Referee Program strongly recommends against using the dual referee system (two referees with whistles on the field at the same time) because it promotes poor officiating habits. There is no AYSO approved instruction or supporting materials regarding the dual system.

The Dual Referee System encourages the development of poor officiating habits and is the source of frustrations as the officials attempt the impossible task of remaining close to play and, at the same time, being correctly positioned to watch for offside infractions. The Dual Referee System generally looks like two assistant referees near the touch line just calling the ball in and out and no one covering play in the middle of the field. This system also fosters hesitancy on the part of the officials and/or unnecessary interruptions in play as the two officials attempt to consult with one another for a consensus. This hesitancy in decision making or, worse, making a simultaneous decision and both signaling in opposite directions, generates confusion and controversy that can erode the officials' ability to control the match. The end result is that calls are not made that should be.

The reality of life in AYSO is that we often do not have enough qualified officials to have a referee with two qualified assistant referees "on the line" for all the games (The Diagonal System). When only one official is available, they must work the game alone or enlist the help of volunteer club linesmen to help call the ball in and out. When only two qualified officials are available for a match, the best system is for one to be the referee and the other to be a qualified assistant referee. The duties of the missing assistant referee are assumed by the referee when play is in the missing assistant referee's half of the field. The referee may seek the help of a club linesman, if a suitable volunteer is available. This enables the referee, the qualified assistant referee and the club linesman to get experience doing it correctly instead of reinforcing poor habits by getting experience doing it incorrectly. As the late Ken Aston often said, "The responsibility for the flow and control of the game cannot be shared". One whistle, one interpretation, one opinion, one decision.

FIFA, USSF and AYSO do not advocate, encourage or recognize the Dual Refereeing System. The FIFA Laws of the Game, under which we operate, specify in Law 5 that, "*Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match to which he has been appointed*". FIFA Law (Law 5) clearly designates one referee to "*controls the match in co-operation with the assistant referees...*" and Law 6 further specifies that, "*Two assistant referees are appointed...*". One referee with a whistle and two assistant referees with flags is the way it should be done.

In addition to being the universally recommended method of officiating outdoor matches, the diagonal system can be a most effective method of increasing and retaining the number of officials. Recruiting new volunteers as assistant referees has proven to be an effective method of introducing new officials into AYSO. After proper training and exposure to the game while serving as assistant referees, many otherwise uninterested volunteers become enthusiastic for more training so that they can try their hand as the official in the middle. The AYSO National Referee Program is designed to support and encourage the use of the diagonal system of control. The Referee Assessment Program incorporates the diagonal system as an essential component of referee testing, observation, and evaluation for advancement to higher-grade levels.

To answer Tom, Randy and Don:

For Tom, who asked which system is preferred; the Diagonal System is preferred and when there are not three qualified referees available, no more than one official should be the ref with the whistle. For Randy, who asked what I would have done; I would not have agreed to use the Dual System. For Don, who asked if there was a specific rule against using the Dual System; the Laws of the game specify a referee and two assistant referees are appointed to do the match. There is no specific rule prohibiting the dual system but that doesn't make it a good idea. Remember Ken's advice: One opinion, one whistle!