



Job popular with soccer youth

## **Titans Soccer Club recruits referees, both young and old**

With an opportunity to learn more about the game as well as a chance to make a few bucks as a part-time job, a number of local youngsters believe they may have found the perfect job - serving as referees for the game they play and love.

"It's the perfect teen-ager job because you don't have to work weeknights if you don't want to," says Marshall McCloud, son of Titans SC Director of Coaching, Mark McCloud, and who also plays on the Titans U19 Classic team. The younger McCloud has been playing soccer since he was 4-years-old and currently plays for the Titans U19 Classic Team. Now, almost 18, he has been around the game as a player, coach, and referee. He first became certified referee in 2000. He says one of the highlights was getting to work his dad as an assistant referee for an exhibition game with the men's semi-professional team, the Atlanta Silverbacks.

"I just like being in a sports environment. I'm usually always at the soccer field anyway so this gives me a chance to make a little bit of money," says the younger McCloud, who will be heading off to college in 2008.

The older McCloud says "it (refing) keeps the kids in the game. They can do something they really like and they can make more money in a Saturday or Sunday than they can in a whole week at McDonald's." Since coming to Troup in 2004, McCloud has always encouraged his players to take referee classes. Players best know the game as opposed to adults who get involved in soccer later in life when their children begin playing. I didn't take the class until I was in my mid 30s and I didn't grow up with soccer as a kid. I mainly took the class to help me better coach, which it has - offers up a completely different perspective," he says wryly.

McCloud has taken several referee crews outside of Troup County to work in GYSA state tournaments. "It's been a tremendous experience for them to be able to work outside the area to see how things are done state-wide." He said the Titans' Soccer Club recruited close to 40 new officials in the past year, many for an entry-level class offered in Troup in July.

Depending on the age-level, referees can earn anywhere from \$10-45 per game, which runs about 60-90 minutes long, again based upon the age-level of the team. Most referees start out doing recreation games at

the lower age-levels, usually as assistant referees, and then are given higher-level assignments as they gain experience and confidence. Referees have to take a five-hour recertification every year.

In soccer, typically two or three official crews are used, though occasional just one referee is used for lower age-level youth recreation games at U8 and U10, which varies from league to league. High Schools typically use the two-man system, while almost all other programs use the USSF recommended three-man system, which employs a center referee, and two assistant referees, sometimes referred to as ARs.

There are several avenues to become a referee. The Georgia Youth Soccer Association (GYSA) changed its entry-level program several years ago so that new referees must first work a season as a grade (R9) or "blue badge" official. Referees with this certification can only work the "lines" on select games up to age U14 and cannot be the center official. They can be the head referee for recreation games. For more information, visit [www.gareferees.com](http://www.gareferees.com) for a list of upcoming courses.

There are two assignors used in Troup County. Mike Blom, president of the Troup Referees Association, assigns recreation games while McCloud assigns the Titans' games. For more information on officiating in either of the programs contact Blom([troupsoccer@bellsouth.net](mailto:troupsoccer@bellsouth.net)) or Mark McCloud at [mamcloud@mindspring.com](mailto:mamcloud@mindspring.com)

According to GYSA State Referee Assignor, Mike Wright, "there are approximately 3,800 referees in Georgia. Approximately five percent do amateur games while the majority serves the youth soccer community. We lose about 36% of the referees each year, approximately half of which is natural wastage (kids grown, moving away, going to college, started but didn't like it, getting too old, etc.). The other half, some 20%, largely the young, fit, older teenagers who are also players (and who should be the future higher-level referees!), get driven away through the negative attitude of coaches and spectators. We manage to replace the losses through the entry-level instructional program each year, although that still means a diluting effect regarding experience levels, at a time when the quality and speed of the game is increasing at a fast pace," says Wright.

He adds: "one problem is that, although the referees are taught through the USSF instructional program, report into the State referee committee, and are independent contractors, the week to week relationship is through the local soccer associations that assign them games, and many of these associations do not have a referee development program. Therefore recruitment, development and retention of referees is not receiving the attention the developing game demands. Many associations continue to treat referees as something that someone else worries about, and as a 'necessary evil', rather than embracing the fact that the experience on the field each weekend, for the players, should be a true partnership between the coaching staff and the officials, to ensure safety, fairness and enjoyment of the players."

"The State Referee Committee has a number of development programs to assist with the problems and help the referees develop, which in turn improves the retention rates. However, only a relatively small percentage of the associations around the state are making use of these programs. Some of these programs are totally free of cost and others the cost is very small (a fraction of the money spent each year on player development, and the two developmental programs should proceed hand-in-glove with each other). It is great to see that Troup County is working to develop an effective referee program, and is embracing the State programs in order to accelerate the development," says Wright.

### **What they are saying**

#### **Kelly Burt, mother, coach, and referee**

"Well as a parent, refereeing has been great for my son. He is working to earn his own money and developing his character as well. As a referee, it has been a wonderful experience to learn the game from another angle."

Additional quotes forthcoming. If you are a youth referee and would like to share your insights to being an official, please email your thoughts to [mamccloud@mindspring.com](mailto:mamccloud@mindspring.com)