

Recruiting Officials For Your Child's Youth League

August 2009 – Collins Web Content

The schedules are drawn. The gyms or fields are reserved. You're happy with your child's coach. You're all set. Then your child's youth league gets hit by an ugly reality: you don't have officials. You see, sometimes it's mighty hard to get officials for a youth league.

There's a shortage of officials. It's not surprising that this shortage filters down to the youth level; indeed, in many ways it's felt most acutely at the youth level. Fortunately, youth leagues have some special tools to fight the shortage.

Youth leagues can and should try to develop a core group of dedicated youth officials. This core group can be supplemented by high school level officials who are just starting out. Often these officials need to supplement their high school level games in order to gain the needed hours of experience it takes to see the wide array of game situations that can arise.

Other sources of officials are high school athletes and college students. Of course, youth leagues can skew old, too. Parents are a good group to recruit. Parents shouldn't officiate their own child's game (with the possible exception of games where the children are so young that virtually everybody perceives the game as instructional and not competitive). However, parents sometimes seek further involvement once they begin viewing their children's youth games.

Officials' shortages have led some youth leagues to recruit middle school students to officiate games involving elementary school kids. This procedure has always struck me as odd because a responsible organization should not give such young children discretion over the rules of play and over the tough judgments that an official confronts. If your league has become so desperate that it has resorted to using middle school kids to officiate games, you should adhere to the following rules of thumb: (1) Only let middle school kids officiate games played by children who are younger than them; (2) Try to restrict middle school kids to games where no score is kept or the game is purely instructional; (3) Have an adult around whenever a middle school official officiates a competitive game; (4) Give the adult authority to impose penalties for sportsmanship violations of a middle schooler is officiating; (5) Give the adult dual responsibility over all pre-game and in-game safety matters; (6) Strictly enforce all sportsmanship rules – especially if comments are directed toward the middle school official.

Finally, youth leagues can do one thing that's not frequently done at the high school or college levels. Youth leagues can assign an official to three or more games. In fact, some youth leagues will assign their best adult officials in this manner. These leagues believe that it is better to have their top guys work while tired than to have either a lesser official or no officials at all.

The poor economy will likely lead to more people seeking to officiate at the youth and high school levels. Still, the shortages of officials are real and have hurt many a league. Hopefully, your league has not confronted this problem yet.

I will address the shortage of high school officials in a separate article. Hopefully, your high schools are functioning smoothly – not all high schools are.

Game Theory

Zero Sum Game With Equilibrium Pt. (p.14). Any unilat change by either party creates a negative result for that party.

I've got the media stuff

1. who gets a pass
2. How many do we give to a school
3. where can media be
4. what do we do with elec media? See #1.
5. what do we do with late media that failed to make a request.
6. what are our fees for extra access.
7. what are our rights fees for web cast? And others