

Will I be remembered when I leave the field?

By: Pierce Richardson, Region VI

Over the years of a referee's career one may tend to focus on refereeing only and not on other opportunities provided by NISOA. Knowing this, in addition to refereeing several questions should come to mind such as:

- What will be my contribution and involvement with NISOA after I leave the field or even while still refereeing?
- How? Potential opportunities assessing, assigning, clinician, mentoring

I remember back in the early 70's when I first started officiating. Every Saturday morning I would go to the local YMCA and work my 4 or 5 U-6 & U-8 games and EVERY Saturday morning Mr. Bill O'Toole was there. At this time Mr. O'Toole was in his late 60's or early 70's and still had a love for the game that few share. I would be the referee and Mr. O'Toole would be one of the linesmen (as it was called then) for me, then he would be the referee and I would be the linesman. After all of our games were over, Mr. O'Toole would take me to a shady spot and sometimes we would spend an hour or more talking about the games and how I could improve. Mr. O'Toole is no longer with us, but he will always be remembered by me and many others for what he gave back to the game and each of us.

One thing NISOA needs is mentors. The organization is currently developing a formal mentoring program. A seasoned NISOA member could start informally mentoring now. There is no need to wait until being asked or told that help is needed. Mentors differ from assessors or clinicians in that they assist members with less experience with the overall NISOA culture and become a person of reference on a more personal basis.

There are many ways a person can mentor another referee. Some have a great aptitude for fitness, thus can mentor someone in how to better stay in shape and train. Some have refereed at the highest level of collegiate soccer and can mentor someone in achieving this level. Some of you work in a corporate environment or you are school teachers and can mentor someone in responding to difficult situations with assessors, assignors, clinicians, other referees or game management.

Mentoring is not limited to young or new referees. The options are out there. The key is to take the first step in helping someone. When I first started officiating college games I was very fortunate, because I came along at a time when there were many Bill O'Tooles in the local NISOA chapter who would spend hours and hours helping me and other young officials develop our abilities.

Once I heard an individual I respected say, "I don't want to be forgotten when I retire from refereeing, I want to help someone take my place" I didn't quite understand what he meant until several years later when I realized all the time and dedication this person gave to me.

We have all heard Dr. Bernabei say many times Family first, job second and refereeing third, but that should not stop any of us from looking for a few minutes to help someone along the way. The world has changed a lot since Mr. O'Toole and I sat in the shade and talked about our U-6 & U-8 games for that morning. I know most everyone has a hundred things going on in their life and as soon as the game is over we want to get back to those things. There are many ways you can find a few minutes to spend with your crew for the day and talk about the game and how each of you might have done something different. For example: What about stopping along the way and have refreshments? Better yet whenever possible ride to the game together or least part of the way and use this time going and coming to help each other become better NISOA officials.

A few extra hours in bringing someone along will go miles in continuing the tradition of NISOA - producing quality college officials. When your time comes to step away, you can then be proud that you mentored someone who became your replacement and they too will then have a Mr. O'Toole to remember.