

Richmond Youth Soccer Head Referee Report for 2017/2018 Season

The Richmond Referee program took many steps forward this year — both on and off the field. We've seen improvements across the board on referee and assistant referee technique and decision making, as well as increased engagement from our match officials throughout the season with the referee program.

We kicked off the 2017/2018 season by hosting an official BC Soccer Referee Grassroots Education session on the field at Hugh Boyd. The event saw attendance from across the Lower Mainland, including many of our club's referees. Mentors and instructors from BC Soccer ran participants through on field drills on assistant referee movement, assistant referee technique, referee movement and positioning, whistling and communication techniques, and concentration and decision making. During the course of the evening we saw improvements in every area.

Continuing the training and development theme, we implemented a calendar of continuing education sessions for club officials to remain engaged with the program beyond their assignments. Our goal was to create an environment where they could learn and develop and maintain consistency across our club. During the course of the season we held five separate sessions, including pre-season meetings to set the expectations for the year on assignments, professionalism, rules and regulations, and more. Individual education sessions focused on assistant referee technique and movement, offside (Law 11) decision making, deliberate handling offences, and other topics. We saw a highly engaged group of referees at each session asking questions and learning, from our young small sided officials all the way up to officials who've been with Richmond Youth for many years.

To close the regular fall/winter season out, we also hosted the Richmond Referee Awards Night to celebrate the year, socialize, study some interesting match situations, and honour some of our fantastic, dedicated officials. This year we handed out four awards: Prem Gundarah (Richmond Referee of the Year — Male), Mackenzie Seaborn (Richmond Referee of the Year — Female), Razvan Ion (Richmond Youth Referee of the Year), and Alexandra Shury (Richmond Small Sided Referee of the Year). Congratulations are due to all of these dedicate officials on their performances over the past year!

Another area of focus for the Richmond Referee program this year was on-field evaluation and mentorship. We created a mentor program this year to support and provide structured and actionable feedback to our officials at the fields. This consisted of either the Head Referee or a mentor watching an official's performance, providing quick notes at halftime, and a debrief after with feedback tailored to them. The goal is to provide actionable feedback on areas of strength and areas for improvement so that we can both reinforce good habits and behaviours while providing specific items for the official to work on in future matches. Over the course of the season all small sided and youth referees had at least one on-field mentorship and many district referees had at least one mentorship as well. The mentorships were provided primarily by Head Referee Bradley Smith (approximately 100 on-field hours), with additional mentorships from our club mentors Emad Ghashghaee, Prem Gundarah, Michael Hood, Dusko Jovic and Asia Robinson. Common themes from mentorships were whistling technique, confidence, positioning, and assistant referee technique. We hope to continue to expand this program in the coming year to ensure that all new referees get support on their first matches and that we see officials multiple times per year to track their improvement and provide continued support and engagement.

Many of our referees participated in various events and championship tournaments: the Provincial A and B cup, BC SPL Premier cup, Adult Provincial Cup, and the District and Coastal Cup Finals. Some of our were also nominated and took part in other leagues, such as the Metro Women's Soccer League, Richmond Adult Soccer League, and the BC Soccer Premier League.

Overall, it was a solid step in the right direction for our referee program as we formalize our training and development and mentorship programs.

Bradley Smith/ Emad Ghashghaee