

## REFEREE ACADEMY UPDATE

In 2008, the Florida State Referee program, in a joint venture with FYSA and FSSA, gave new focus to its Referee Academy, to take to a new level those earlier successes of providing special mentoring to a small group of referees, with the vision of providing developmental opportunities to a much larger number of young Florida referees.

The goal is to be inclusive; that is, to provide training and skill development for any FSR referee who wants it and, at the same time, to help the younger refs by mentoring them during their early development, and helping them to perform at a level that will lead to other opportunities, for those who wish to achieve that.

More than ever before, such opportunities are available to young referees, especially in Florida, the Sunshine State, where “the game” is played year around, with the added “spice” of multiple soccer cultures that add skill, traditions and passion to the sport as it is played here. Add to that, the attraction of top-quality venues and tournaments that draw participants throughout the year from all parts of the US and beyond, as well as the developmental programs at various levels, it all means that the demand for more and better referees is getting much greater.

The opportunity really begins at the local club level, where there are almost never enough referees when you need them, especially the good ones (just ask the assignors!). Florida, like all the other states, each year loses about one-third of its new referees who certify for the first time. Some of this turnover is inevitable, but much of this loss could be prevented by giving better support and mentoring to the new refs; and, encouraging them with practical “know-how,” resources, and a path to meeting their challenges successfully.

With the beginning of each year, Florida youth referees have the chance to work the recreational soccer programs which lead to the President’s Cup in late March/early April. Here is their opportunity to show what they can do and, for those who do well, the assignors are anxious for them to participate in the competitive State Cup “knockout” rounds which start in late March and continue through much of April. Then come the big FYSA tournaments.

### **The Tournaments**

Not only do referees want to be busy and successful at home, but they also wish for the opportunity to show their “stuff,” so to speak, and enjoy the fun of making new friendships and working with others. Last April, at the FYSA President’s Cup in Fort Lauderdale, sixty-two referees were invited to work those games, and a similar number were invited to work the FYSA State Finals (Final Four), which was held in Pensacola. *That tournament was officiated by sixty (60) referees, two-thirds (40) of whom were twenty-five years of age or less.*

From this select group of referees at the State Cup, a handful (twelve, to be exact) were selected to represent Florida at the Region III tournament in North Carolina.

Representing all four areas (A,B,C,D) of FYSA, those referees were:

**Emmanuel Darriba; Christina Ibanez; Andres Lavin; Daniel Lewis; Xiao Li; Kyle Longville; Stefan McHardy; Matt Miscannon; Mike Miscannon; Kristen Schiereck; Lance Vanhantsma; and Jonathan Weiner.**

Of this group, **Stefan McHardy** and **Jonathan Weiner** were selected to go to the Youth National Finals, where they joined **Ted Unkel** and **Carlos Sandoval**, who had been to the National Finals the previous year and, as outstanding referees in 2007, had been invited to return in 2008.

#### **ACADEMY EVENTS:**

In early August, a large re-certification clinic for referees, assessors and instructors was held at Stetson University, where Academy State Director, John David McGee, presented some of the program strategies being developed. Any FSR referee may participate in the Academy, both as a “referee in training;” as a “mentor in training.” The hope and expectation is that all referees should improve their refereeing skills; should give back to the program by being mentors to other less-experienced referees; and, should be given help and opportunities to upgrade and perform at the highest level they can achieve.

The Disney (Labor Day) Showcase Qualifier tournament, was one such opportunity, where sixteen referees and five mentors were the participants in that Academy event. During the (late December) Disney Showcase tournament, about eighteen Florida Academy referees participated with a larger group of selected (regional) referees, who were mentored by National Federation staff (Brian Hall; Herb Silva; Don Wilbur and others), along with some senior MLS referees.

Just recently, at Disney’s World Classic (adult tournament), sixteen Florida Academy refs and five mentors spent four days working those games, which were also attended by Federation staff, Herb Silva and Brian Hall, who spent time with the Academy group during the last two days.

#### **WHAT’S AHEAD:**

Now the cycle begins again. For the referees who were invited to the Pro Clinic (February), which is required for any referee wishing to work a professional match, it is the opportunity this year to engage in **ADVANCED** training. For referees working at the **INTERMEDIATE** level, there are the major FYSA tournaments this year, along with other Academy events and select tournaments. For the **ENTRY** level referees, their local club tournaments are places to be seen, including major **LOCAL TOURNAMENTS**, which may wish to have Academy participation. To discuss that possibility, tournament administrators need to contact the Academy Director in their Area.

For the local club referee, Grade 8 or 7, participating in the local tournaments and “knockout” rounds, it is the chance to be seen by his or her ACADEMY AREA DIRECTOR, or other FSR referees, assessors and administrators. Those Grade 8 referees who do well, are at least seventeen (17) years of age, and are ready to upgrade, need to see that their names are known by their Academy Area Director, whose names are listed below. Those who show themselves to be ready, should be eligible to be recommended to be invited to the President’s Cup and State Finals in 2010.

This is a good place and it’s a good time to be a referee in the world’s “beautiful game.”

Area A, Academy Director: Greg Watson ([WatsonGregory@hotmail.com](mailto:WatsonGregory@hotmail.com))

Area B, Academy Director: Chris Kenney ([chriswk@fdn.com](mailto:chriswk@fdn.com))

Area C, Academy Director: Merritt Guthrie ([Guthfam@aol.com](mailto:Guthfam@aol.com))

Area D, Academy Director: Tim Fouts ([timothyfouts@mac.com](mailto:timothyfouts@mac.com))

State Director Referee Academy: John David McGee ([jdmoga1@aol.com](mailto:jdmoga1@aol.com))

JDMcGee

State Director of Referee Academy