

Referee Development

Written by Vice Chair of Coaching and Referee Development - Last Updated Wednesday, 23 September 2009 15:36

This article is intended to be a guide for clubs and fencers who are interested in developing their program and creating opportunities for referee growth. I hope some conversation will be generated by this sometimes controversial topic. I strongly encourage our fencing community members to comment, add what they think is important, and challenge my list.

If you haven't figured it out... I like challenges!

Suggestions for Club and Referee Development:

1. Fence the weapon you want to referee regularly (2-3 times a week, minimum.)
2. Fence in your club with electric equipment and referee your club mates as much as possible. Many clubs do this in different ways. Most often, the winner stays up, the referee fences the winner, and a new person steps up to referee.

Some clubs have a three-bout-only rule if you keep winning – but the point is to be reffed and to practice reffing.

3. As a Coach, designate a few willing people to become “referees.” These people should be of age to travel on their own, vested in fencing, and understand fencing and the application of the rules. Set up a program for them to begin their training to help the club out.

4. Encourage dialogue among fencers when they are refereeing each other. My basic thought is: if you are a fencer, you are also training yourself as a referee or to understand refereeing (you want to win don't you?). You must be a fencer to be a good ref and to maintain a current understanding of modern rules, which generally change every Olympics, if not sooner.

5. Find a mentor who travels to tournaments outside of the ones you participate in. If you are a local tournament referee, seek a National referee for guidance on how to get better.

If you are National referee, seek International referees to understand more intricate timing.

Have them watch and observe you, listen, integrate, question and keep at it.

6. Go to “better” clubs and fence in and referee in.
7. Recognize who can help you and who just has their ego in it when you are refereeing. Some fencers know who earns priority – listen to them, even if they are younger or have fenced lesser years.

I had to swallow a lot of pride to be wrong as an adult, with a 13 year old telling you are wrong “again.” But I wouldn't have learned to understand fencing and refereeing without recognizing my limitations and inexperience.

8. Develop a callus around your fencing heart. It isn't about you when someone yells at you, tells you are not ready to direct a particular bout or fencers sigh heavily when you ask if you can direct them. Its about that's persons wants to expectations not being met for themselves or their club. The "yellers" usually want the best and show their frustration inappropriately at times (guilty as charged).

9. Practice refereeing in club. When you ref at a tournament you have a job and you are a professional. Know your professional limitations. If you don't know where you stand in the ref world, have someone qualified tell you where you fit in, and how you can get to where you want to go.

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Fencers deserve quality refereeing at tournaments.

Refereeing is generally a thankless job, but integral to the fencing experience. I remember a good referee and the freedom they offer me to create my own bout based on my opponent's actions. |

remember the refs I can manipulate and influence who are weak.

I also remember the ones who are ego-based and want to prove a point to me about who is in charge of the bout.

Unfortunately, I have also gotten the ref who wants to screw my coach or my country.

Decide which kind of ref you want to be, find others like you and enjoy the learning process!!