

2021 Referee Report

BC Soccer – The entire Referee department was replaced in the past few months. This has caused issues in training and efficiency with them as the new people learn their roles and see what the regional situations are. This means the landscape of refereeing in 2022 is an unknown one at this point.

It was great to get back on the pitch this year although we all experienced the challenges of a year off and a continuing pandemic. In 2019 we had 289 referees. 86 were District or higher, 47 youth and 46 small sided. 2021 we had 115 referees of which 63 District or higher referees, 12 youth referees and 40 small sided. Where in 2019 we had a 99.6% fill rate for divisional soccer, in 2021 we ran with middles only in most games with a team of 3 referees only in U16 usually.

We actually fared better than most other districts in BC based on my conversations with other BC Soccer officials.

If we are to return to the days of full referee teams of 3 for all games we will have to do some serious recruiting and retaining of officials. This will not be easy.

Recruiting – Adult Leagues need to recruit referees. If you want referees you will have to start to take initiative to get some trained instead of relying on children to fill the spots on the lines. Keeping in mind that these kids can get a job in fast food making up to \$17/hr. Their shifts are generally 3 hours or longer so they could make \$45 - \$51 for a shift and not be told they are wrong all the time. Money alone is not the driving factor for the youth, we need them to understand we have their back and will provide a safe environment to work in.

Mentoring - I believe mentoring will be the key to our success. We need to be able to have our mentors on the fields mentoring not refereeing. The newer referees want the training and feel safer on the field when a mentor is around. To do this we need to commit to making mentoring a priority. The trick is to have games spread out and away from the games our mentors would typically would referee.

I think it is going to take 3-5 years to recover to pre-covid levels if we commit to training and mentoring. We will never recover if we don't.