



# **VERMONT SOCCER OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION**

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**AN ANECDOTAL HISTORY**

**SERVING VERMONT  
HIGH-SCHOOL SOCCER  
FOR 50 YEARS**

By Eric Evans

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

*Many officials, coaches, and supporters of Vermont soccer contributed to this history of the VSOA. Special thanks to Stew Schmidt who helped my initial research and to Bill Duval who answered my many questions as the project took shape.*

**Cover Photo:**

VSOA Ludlow Legends: Life Member John Witalec and Founding Member Stew Schmidt, Fall 2012. *Photo by Len Emery.*

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### **SERVING VERMONT HIGH-SCHOOL SOCCER FOR 50 YEARS**

September 2012 marked the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Vermont Soccer Officials Association (VSOA). During that month I had the good fortune of refereeing a girls' game in Chester with one of the eight Founding Members of the Association, Stew Schmidt. Prior to the coin toss I asked Stew to reflect on the most significant rule change he had seen in those 50 years.

“I will give you two. When a ball went off one team ‘into touch’ or out-of-bounds along the sideline, a free kick was awarded in those days to the other team. Now it is a throw-in. The second is the prohibition on the goalie from picking up the ball after a deliberate kick to him from a teammate.”

Driving home from the game I realized there must be many other changes in the game of soccer in Vermont since the era when the VSOA emerged. Perhaps more interestingly, soccer officiating would have seen its share of characters with fascinating backgrounds and stories about the game itself and their inevitable successes and mistakes on and off the field. This booklet, then, attempts to document and illuminate these people and this history.

*Eric Evans*



## EARLY DAYS PRE-VSOA

In November of 2012, 16 Vermont high-school soccer teams, eight boys' and eight girls' teams, representing the best that a two-week elimination tournament could cull from thousands of players state wide, played for eight state titles under the auspices of the Vermont Principals' Association (VPA). The situation was far different in the mid 1950s. Few teams played soccer and those that did were all boys. Peacham Academy, with **Burns Page** on the team in 1951, was one of four teams in the state along with Hardwick (Hazen), Hinesburg, and Newbury. Page would coach at North Troy (now North Country) from 1959–1968 before officiating for ten years with the VSOA 1969–1979. Peoples Academy by 1954 had a team under coach Roland Lyford (more on Honorary Member “Lefty” Lyford later).

Officials for those games were even harder to find as teams scrambled to find their own for both home and away games. Even the best refs had little training other than, at best, a working knowledge of the sport. As is often the case with new sports, those promoting the sport had to be a jack-of-all-trades: coaching one day with bus driving the next after stringing the nets followed by a stint officiating with a whistle and a make-shift uniform.

While there may have been little soccer activity in Vermont at either the college or high-school level until the later 1950s, soccer was popular in adjoining areas. In 1952, 112 high schools competed in Pennsylvania while 42 high schools in New York State played soccer. New Hampshire colleges with men's soccer programs included Dartmouth, Keene State, and New England College.

This nascent period produced another early VSOA connection. **Andy Hritz** earned first team All-American honors at Penn in 1942 and 1943. He began soccer as an 11-year-old in the Trenton, NJ City 14-League, then started for three years at Trenton High School 1937–'38–'39. As a freshman at Temple he scored six goals against Ursinus. He transferred to Penn because it had a Navy program. In 1946 he played for the national club powerhouse Chicago Vikings and then in 1951 he scored three goals including the game winner in OT as the Brooklyn German-Hungarians won

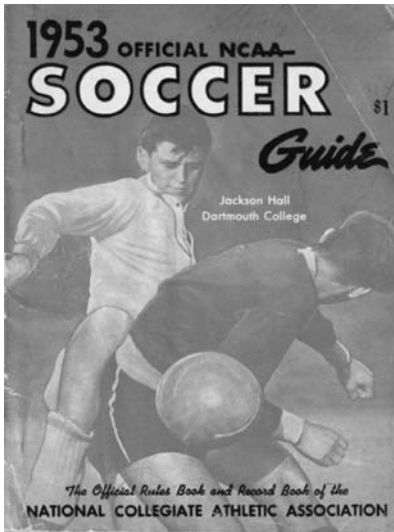


There May be Snow on the Roof, But There's Still a Fire in the Hearth:  
Randy Dewey and Andy Hritz (r.)

the National Amateur Soccer Cup. In the 1950s he played “amateur” ball in the New York City area (money paid “under the table” to the tune of \$1000 pre season and \$50/game, all in 1950 dollars). Forty years later in retirement, Andy would spend half the year in Dover, VT and refereed for VSOA until 2011. He is not only the most accomplished player to ever referee with the VSOA he is also perhaps the oldest person to ever officiate for the association.

Nationally, the US Soccer Federation has been in existence since 1913 under three names: US Football Association 1913–1944, US Soccer Football Association 1945–1973, and US Soccer Federation 1974–current. The National Soccer Hall of Fame was created in 1950. In 1979 it became a physical entity in Oneonta, NY.

On the college level, Middlebury started men’s soccer in 1954 followed soon by Johnson State, Norwich (1958 under coach Bob Axtell), Castleton (1958 under coach Dick Terry), St. Michaels in 1960, and UVM varsity in 1964. In 1959 the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Men’s Soccer Championships debuted in Storrs, CT. That same year The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) held its first soccer championships for small colleges.



Vermont's Early Rulebook

Colleges, prep schools, and high schools in the USA used the annual Official NCAA Soccer Guide for its rules. In the back of the 1953 edition the NCAA distinguishes between Level 1 referees who could work varsity college games and Level 2 referees who were eligible for college sub varsity, prep, and high-school games. There was only one Vermonter listed: F. Miller of Brattleboro at Level 2.

In response to a request from the college soccer coaches in 1963, Jim Walders, Jim Reed, Bill

Rosenthal, Joe Morrone, Al Loeffler, Larry Briggs, and John Kalloch formed the National Intercollegiate Soccer Officials Association (NISOA). The organization started with 184 members in 1964. The first adopted referee's uniform included white knickers, black-and-white striped shirt with long sleeves, black stockings with white tops, black shoes, and a solid white baseball cap. The referee two-man system (Dual System of Control) was adopted until that changed to the Diagonal System of Control (DSC) with one referee and two linesmen in the late 1970s.

**Gerry Gingras**, living in Claremont, NH, and Artie Williams drove to New York City in his 1964 Volkswagen and became charter members of NISOA. Two years earlier, the Williams-Gingras road show went to Worcester, MA for the New England Intercollegiate Soccer Officials Association (NEISOA) meeting. Gingras: "Eleven potential referees took the test and three of us passed." Ironically, there was a regional association for college soccer officials before there was a national association. Gerry became certified in New Hampshire then moved to Vermont in 1965 and joined VSOA. In 1967 he worked his first State Final with Harry Loyzelle. He

refereed at the college level as a member of NEISOA and NISOA (charter member 1964) for 17 years. A VSOA President in 1975, Gerry was VT Special Olympics' facilitator for 10 years. Throughout this time he officiated lacrosse as well.

In 1957 the Vermont Headmasters' Association (VHA) conducted the first state soccer tournament with just one boys' division. That year also brought New Hampshire's first high-school championship game; Massachusetts wouldn't begin a state-wide soccer tournament until 1964.

Vermont basketball championships started in 1922, track in 1926, baseball in 1960, and football in 1970.

In the VHA title game, Stowe defeated Essex 4-3 in OT at Middlebury College. Coach John Spasyk is in the UVM Hall of Fame; ironically not for soccer but for his exploits in baseball, football, and track. **Don Culver** was the captain of the winning side. Don's teammate in that game was a future Honorary Member of the VSOA, **Rod Titus**. Rod played soccer in college before coaching Waitsfield High School in 1962 and 1963. "I did some smaller-college officiating (Lyndon, Norwich freshmen, Johnson, etc.) before they required certified refs." Titus joined the VSOA in 1966 and retired in 2000. Titus: "I am quite sure the refs were from New York State for that 1957 game, but I have no idea who they were. I do recall an incident that happened in the game involving the refs. We were awarded a penalty kick, took the kick and made it. However, there was an infraction against the defensive team. We were required to rekick! I remember a discussion between our coach and the refs, but we still had to take the kick over. To this day I don't know if the rule was different at that time or if there was some other reasoning. By the way, we made the second kick so that call had no bearing on the outcome of the game."

Culver: "There a lot of hand balls called such as the ball hitting the hands from behind while running downfield! We were awarded a penalty kick when an Essex player swore and drew an unsportsmanlike penalty. I believe the correct call should have been an indirect kick (no cards in those days). The tying goal in regulation



happened when our keeper was standing on the end line, not in the goal, and falling out of bounds and flipped the ball onto the field to keep it live. It went right to an Essex player who put it in the top corner: overtime! Rod and I played together from the 7th grade all the way through four years at Johnson.

“The fields were often small in those days, carved out of baseball outfields. There were no nets on the goals, but I don’t recall any controversial goals as a result. Out of bounds on the sidelines resulted not in a throw in for the other team but an indirect kick from the spot. Teams in those days played their faster, smaller players up front, had three dependable halfbacks and put the bigger, often slower guys as fullbacks and goalies. At Johnson, I played on the soccer team and refereed high-school games on the side: I even reffed the state semis in 1960 and 1961 but don’t recall who did the Finals.” Don, splitting his time these days between Essex, VT



1957 Stowe team. Capt. Don Culver with trophy next to Coach John Spasyk. Rod Titus 4th from right in back row.

and Mesa, AZ, is still officiating for the VSOA. He was VSOA President in 1983.

**Bill Duval** played on Essex's winning side in 1959. "I can remember being told that the referees for our 1959 championship had come over from New York. As a sophomore in 1959 I started along with another sophomore, Dave Taft, who later went on to play at Harvard. He scored two goals against Dartmouth our senior year, an indignity I have never been able to put to rest. The rest of the starters were seniors. I scored a goal in that final game of 1959, which was played in snow flurries at Johnson State College." Duval's Essex squad defeated Northfield 5-2. Three future VSOA Life Members participated that snowy day: Essex coach Howie O'Neill, Northfield coach Lefty Lyford, and goal scorer Bill Duval. "When I began refing in 1969 the coaches would get their own referees for playoffs, so I suspect that was the way it was for those first playoffs. In those days, referees wore white knickers, stripe shirt, black knee socks with white socks over, just like the football officials of the day. All games were the two-man system." Bill would continue his career as a player at Dartmouth where he captained the 1965 team as well



Stew Schmidt in uniform of the day

as in the semi-professional ranks—Quebec National Soccer League—in the early 1970s. He joined the VSOA in 1969 and would work 18 State Finals over the years. He served as Commissioner and Assignor for the Vermont Women's Soccer League and as a coach for 28 years at the A.D. Lawton Intermediate School. A past President and Sec./Tres. of the VSOA, his awards include the VSOA Dick Stewart Outstanding Official Award and VSOA Life Membership. Bill resides in the Vermont Principals' Association Hall of Fame as an official.

# 1960s

## BIRTH OF THE VSOA

On September 22, 1962, at a coaches' clinic conducted by Middlebury College coach Joe Morrone, eight men with soccer backgrounds launched the VSOA and affiliated itself with the established New England Intercollegiate Soccer Officials Association. Three officers were elected. **Fred Streeter**, the only member of NEISOA before the clinic, became President. **Don Soderberg** was elected Vice-President. **Stew Schmidt** became Secretary.

Five others passed written and field exams (Middlebury scrimmaged Castleton that day) earning charter member status along with the three officers: **Charles Jasman** of Montpelier, **Howard O'Neil** of Essex Junction, **Dean Rippon** of Rutland, **Harold Boyden** of Waterbury, and **Harold Greig** of Essex Junction. They didn't waste much time before meeting again: Oct. 4 back at Middlebury College to ratify the new VSOA Constitution written by Schmidt and Rippon.

Fred Streeter (1923–2007) graduated Wilmington High School in 1941 before attending Ithaca College where he was a four-year goalie earning all-conference honors his senior year in 1946/7. He then taught and coached at Wilmington, W. Lebanon, Bethel, and Randolph, and his coaching record included 422 wins and 170 losses in soccer, field hockey, boys' and girls' hoops, baseball, and softball. After he served as VSOA President, he became the group's Secretary/Treasurer until Bill Duval succeeded him.

Fred was instrumental in mandating the written and field exams for the VSOA along with the annual meeting. A little known fact is that he was the leader in moving from knickers to shorts. At the VSOA fall meeting one year (they used to meet after the season was over the same weekend as that of the Tunbridge Fair) he brought up the idea that knickers were tough to run in when wet. With the VSOA's blessing he wrote to NESOA requesting a change and they replied: "No way!" Fred wrote them back and said Vermont officials would have the option of knickers or shorts and they could

take it or leave it. A year later everyone went to shorts in New England.



Fred Streeter

The original VSOA Founders were called the Brothers Knicker-Kickers. On one trip to a college meeting in the mid 1960s the driver Howie O'Neil either wouldn't or couldn't turn up the heat in his station wagon so his fellow Brothers, led by Fred Streeter, lit a fire in the cargo space in the rear of the car. They kept asking Howie if he could smell smoke and since the draft was going the other direction, Howie kept saying no. Fred kept telling Howie they'd all be warm soon. When Howie

finally spotted the smoke in his rear view mirror he was the only one not amused.

Don Soderberg played on Maryland's soccer team 1948–1951 and in the Baltimore soccer leagues until 1957. He came to Vermont in 1960 and taught French and PE at Essex Jct. High School and coached the soccer team from 1961–1969 as well as the baseball team from 1960–1964 and the basketball team from 1960–1962. For four years he was UVM's coach (1970–1974). He stayed active in the VSOA from 1961–1970 and was President in 1963. Bill Duval: "Don came to Vermont from Maryland my junior year at Essex. He assisted Howie O'Neil as coach of the soccer team and then took over the next year, winning the states in his first year as head coach. Don brought skill soccer to Vermont and set the example for coaches like Dave Bremner at CVU and Joe Fiarkowski at Swanton/Missisquoi. Prior to his arrival it was kick and run, and the bigger, stronger team won. Don went on to coach for a few years at UVM, but by then it was the late '60s or early '70s and Don was anything but compromising when it came to training and appearances." After coaching he became a home builder in the Burlington area for five years before returning to Essex to become

Superintendent of Maintenance for all the Essex schools until he retired in 1997 to Hale's Location, NH.

Harold M. Boyden (1931–2006), VSOA President in 1964, was a well-known school superintendent. Life Member and Past President (1965) Charles Jasman (1926–1993) served as President of NEISOA in 1972 and 1976. He was born in Waupaca, WI and graduated Manawa High in 1946.

He served in the US Army for three years before moving to Montpelier where he was Superintendent of Mail in Montpelier for 32 years. After retiring in 1985 he went into electrical contracting with his son. Bill Duval: "Charlie was a professional. When I started, he was The Man. He would come back from the New England meeting and tell us how it was to be. In those days there was no distinction between high school and college and so we as high-school referees would just take the interpretations that Charlie brought and apply them to high school. When I became a college referee, Charlie and I did a UVM-UCONN game. The game was going very well, but Joe Marrone was trying to work us to get an edge. As a young official, I was intimidated by Joe's reputation. Charlie was not. He was the nearside official and at one point stopped the game, at Centennial, lots of fans, walked over to Joe and delivered a yellow because he 'had heard enough.' The rest of the game was a piece of cake, and Joe was a pussycat. I think Joe knew that his next move would have been into the locker room."

Howie O'Neil (1921–2009) graduated Burlington High School, class of 1939, and Vermont Junior College then received a B.S. in physical education from Springfield College, 1948, and a M.S. in education from UVM. He served in the Army during World War II. He was an accomplished baseball player at Burlington High and Vermont Junior College where he captained the team which won the New England J.C. championship. Howie taught and coached



Howard O'Neil

at Essex Junction High School in a career that spanned 40 years. During his tenure as coach he helped shape a variety of Essex team sports: track and field, baseball, basketball, and soccer. He started the soccer program at Essex Junction High School and was the coach of the 1959 state championship team, the first state championship won by Essex Junction in any sport. Howie was a longtime chairman of the history department at Essex. He had a long and groundbreaking career as an official and was President of the VSOA in 1967.



Harold "Hal" Greig

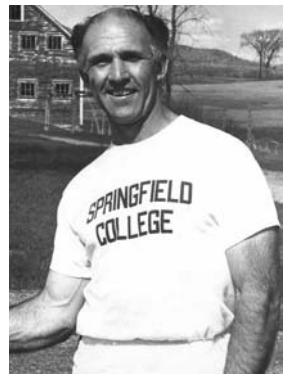
At age 23, "Hal" Greig (1929–2009) enrolled at Springfield College as a Physical Education major /History minor where he graduated Summa Cum Laude. At college he played soccer, hockey, and tennis. His first teaching job was at Hartwick College in Oneonta, NY where he started the varsity soccer program in 1956. A faculty position opened in the Physical Education Majors Program at UVM. He started their soccer program in 1964 with help from students Bill Willey and Ted Manning. An avid sailor, Hal sailed across the Atlantic in 1985. His son, Geoff, played for UVM in the '70s and professionally a few years thereafter. Both Hal and Geoff are in the UVM Hall of Fame.

Stew Schmidt played soccer at Springfield College and began officiating soccer in 1958 while working at Bristol High School, now Mt. Abraham. "There was no officials' organization at the time. Each school provided its own officials for the games. Since that was the case, our primary goal in establishing the VSOA was to provide coaches and schools a pool or list of qualified officials. Considerations such as liability or insurance or assigning developed later." Schmidt remained a NEISOA (college) official for over 50 years and an IAABO basketball referee for 35. "I always liked going to Castleton because Harry Loyzelle refereed many sports there. So when you

went there to do a game no matter who you were they always called you ‘HARRY’ to tell you about missing a good game.”

Stew has had trotters and pacers since 1962. “My father and I went to a sale at Rockingham Park in Salem, NH and came home with five standard-bred race horses—wives were a little upset so I named our stable Mad Wives Stable—still use that name on checks today—had fifteen at one time. I drove in races all over New England and New York. A coach once yelled at me, ‘You can’t ref any better than you can drive a race horse.’ No yellow from me; he must have bet on one of my nags.”

“Colorful” would be an understatement in describing Dean Rippon (1922–2008). Dean lived an extremely active life. While attending Springfield College, he was a member of the school’s Gymnastics Exhibition Team along with his lifelong friend and clowning cohort, Tom Ranney. Drafted out of college, Dean served from 1944–46 as a lieutenant with the second group of Navy Seals in the history of the United States. On April 2, 1945 his ship was bombed by a Japanese kamikaze off the Japanese coast. He worked with Ross Allen’s “Scouts and Raiders” in the Everglades with alligators. He was the Tarzan-type alligator wrestler at Animal Land in Lake George, NY for many summers. He taught biology for a short while but physical education was his passion, especially working with children, always trying new ways to engage kids to stay healthy. He began teaching at Bristol High School where he amused the students by walking down the stairs on his hands. The administration was less enthused. He then taught at Rutland High School for many years until he retired.



The multi-talented  
Dean Rippon

Many people remember him for the summer playground program he ran in the Randolph area. In the early '60s, Dean worked with Dan Allen to install Vermont’s first in-ground swimming pool at Tamarack Notch Girl Scout camp outside of

Rutland. For several years, he and Tom Ranney ran a swimming program at the camp. He was multi-talented, and especially enjoyed entertaining children as a professional clown, “Birdo,” who could juggle anything, including fire and swords, even while riding a unicycle or jumping on the trampoline. He taught gymnastics to children for many years. He could play any tune by ear on the harmonica, but it was his bird whistling that got him in trouble more than once in area supermarkets and he did not need a whistle to officiate. He could bring traffic to a stop just from a police whistle through his teeth and fingers. He built his own house with a sign out front that said “Caution Man at Play!” and his wife swam the length of Lake George and the English Channel.

Life Member **Wade Mitchell** worked a game at Woodstock with Rippon with one goal above the Ottaquechee River. Mitchell: “The ball went over the goal and into the river and headed downstream. Anyone else would have asked for another ball to restart the game. Not Dean. He disappeared over the bank, waded into the river, and went downstream out of sight chasing the ball. Nice crawl stroke he must have learned from his wife...on his way to Quechee Gorge. The girls looked at me. I looked at the girls. I told the girls to just do the goalkick and I did the game alone for five minutes until a soaking wet Deano re-emerged with the ball and a few bird calls as he climbed back up the bank and shook himself like a drenched beagle.”

Mitchell refereed for 30 years in the VSOA as well as college basketball.

Bob Abrahamson: “I thought the world of Deano. He was one of the kindest men I’ve ever known. He would do anything for you. A lot of people did not really know the real Dean. I used to have a great time working with him during summer soccer. We had always kidded that I would assign him a game when he was 100 and I think I would have been 90. He was a very intelligent person that his antics seemed to overshadow. He loved life and had fun living.”

Strong D1 teams in the ’60s continued to include schools of all sizes: Hinesburg, CVU, Essex, Chester, Otter Valley, and a school



from Newport, Sacred Heart, that no longer exists. Sacred Heart was Newport's Catholic school and a big rival of North Country. **Dave Rouselle** (Rosie), former VSOA and NEISOA official, was the coach. Rosie is now AD at Missisquoi. Sacred Heart closed 15–20 years ago.

The D2 Boys didn't start championship play until 1974, but the D3 Boys' first title game came in 1965 with Proctor 3-Danville 1. Proctor would go on to win three more titles in the 1960s. The D4 Boys would not have a tournament until 1981. Vermont Academy boys' soccer began in 1967 while further south The Putney School played private school teams in northern Massachusetts in the early 1950s.

In 1963 **Bob Abrahamson** joined the VSOA after playing the sport at UMASS 1953–1955. In 1966 Abe took over the southern assigning duties from **Bob Sharrow** (1931–2000) and kept the role until 2011. He is an Honorary Life Member of the New England Intercollegiate Soccer Officials Association. Abe's son, **Kirk Abrahamson**, now the Rutland boys' coach, played at Plymouth State, and Abe has a granddaughter currently playing at



Stew Schmidt (l) and Abe

Southern Maine.



2012 VSOA President  
Kirk Abrahamson Played  
at Plymouth State

Abe arrived in Proctor working for Mobil Oil, then applied in Proctor to teach high-school math. He also wanted to coach soccer but had the "misfortune" of arriving in town at the same time as **Tom Lawson** (VSOA Honorary Member who became a very successful coach there and at Middlebury College). Proctor boys' soccer coach Kevin Ratti: "Bob is the face of Proctor High School and especially Proctor sports."

Coaching's loss, however, would be officiating's gain. "I say to myself, 'What's

the biggest game you've ever done?' And the answer is 'The next one.'" And once, long ago, a remark from the sideline went unanswered by Abe, a rarity. "Rochester was leading 5-0 and I was loafing out there. One of the coaches hollered out to me, 'You haven't earned your money yet!' That was the spur I needed, and I can still hear that voice in every game I do." Lawson: "Given Abe's kind, quiet, and soft-spoken manner of officiating, he became a valuable role model for the evolution of Vermont soccer officiating during the past 50 years." Abe must have had laryngitis those days working in front of Tom!

In the spring of 1963 Abe student taught under **Harry Loyzelle** (1926–2008) at Rutland Jr. High and that fall they started refereeing together. Abe: "One of my first memories of working with him: I called a PK in front of him from midfield. He never said a word. He just looked at me—his look spoke volumes." Harry, who would referee just about every sport offered in Vermont, came to soccer from football officiating. He called a PK early in his career and the Pittsford coach went crazy. He wouldn't stop so Harry picked up the ball from the 12 and marched off six yards and placed the ball for the PK. He told the coach that if he did not shut up he would pace off half the distance again. Back in the '50s and early '60s, when playoffs came, each team brought one official and for one game at Bristol Harry rode on the Proctor bus. In those days there were no nets. Late in the game, Proctor losing, and a long shot by Proctor did/didn't go inside the goal. Harry said no goal. Proctor fans and players were not happy, and Harry had to ride back home on their bus after the loss. Proctor player **Jon Ratti**, later an accomplished VSOA official, stood up on the bus on the way home and said the ball never went in. Ratti went on to be a four-year starter at St. Michael's and was a 1966 WCAX All-State College All-Star selection. He was a VSOA member for 25 years, served as President in 1988 and officiated a number of State Finals.

Loyzelle was a 1944 graduate of Maine's Fryeburg Academy and then UVM and received his master's degree from Keene State College. Harry was a mathematics teacher for more than 40 years,

teaching primarily at Rutland Jr. High, and served as athletic director of Rutland High School for 10 years. He was elected to the Vermont Principals' Association Hall of Fame in its initial year of 2003. He was a Navy veteran, serving on a destroyer in the Pacific.

Even in his '70s he was keeping up with the other refs on the field, but would admit if pressed: "I have 50-yard legs, but 100-yard eyes" and "It's getting harder to do 18 holes in the morning and then a game in the afternoon." To baseball catchers he would say: "Everything after 6:30 is going to be a strike."

One soccer game at Norwich had the nearby train going by as the game went up and down the pitch. On and on the train passed as at least one goal was scored. As the last car pulled away, Abe yelled over to Harry: "Did you see those engines at the end of that train?"

Harry replied: "You think that was something? That train had 126 cars!"

Abe and Harry each have tournaments named after them. The Bob Abrahamson Tip-Off Tournament is a basketball event hosted by Proctor while the Harry Loyzelle Memorial Soccer Tournament is hosted by Rutland.

Nationally, in 1967 the North American Soccer League was established and would last until 1985.



1964 Norwich "Rook" team. Coach and sometime Ref Fred Powell (l)

Following an incident in the England vs. Argentina match in the 1966 World Cup, it came to Head Referee Ken Aston's attention that Jack Charlton had been booked by the German referee, Rudolf Kreitlein. Charlton called the press office where Aston watched the games to confirm that Kreitlein had booked him. Aston, driving from Wembley Stadium that evening, had Charlton's confusion in mind during the journey. On the trip, as he stopped at a traffic light, Aston realized that a color coding scheme based on the same yellow (caution) — red (stop) principle used on traffic lights would traverse language barriers and clarify to players and spectators that a player had been cautioned or sent off. Thus was devised the system first used in the 1970 World Cup whereby referees show a yellow card for a caution and a red card for an expulsion.



Dave Barra in Full Caution Mode

Gerry Gingras: “We didn’t have many such events but before yellow and red cards here in Vermont it was straight, ‘You’re out of here.’ That’s what the gig was.”

After a playing career at Hardwick Academy 1959–63 and Johnson State College 1963–1967 (first player at JSC to be selected to the VT All-Star Collegiate Team in 1966), **Jim McWilliam** joined the VSOA in 1967. In 1973 he became the first Assignor for northern Vermont. From 1971–1992 he officiated NCAA soccer. “I also coached varsity hoops at Mt. Abe and Winooski during the 1970s and was told ‘I did a lot officiating from the bench.’” Jim was VSOA Secretary in the ’70s and early ’80s.

Time to stop this chronological march and look at assigning. Today, there is an assignor for the northern part of the state, Frank Martel, who has held the position since 1987. More on Frank later. In the southern part of the state **Terry Harlow**, a veteran soccer, basketball, and lacrosse official and assignor from Woodstock, assumed assigning duties in 2012, taking over for Abe who did the

job from 1966–2011, after replacing Bob Sharrow. Assignors work for the leagues (Marble Valley League (MVL) in south and Northern Vermont Athletic Conference (NVAC) in the north) and unaffiliated or independent schools in their area and are paid a small fee from the schools each season and/or a small per-game fee from each official. They take the availability sheets (either on line or through the mail) and assign active VSOA soccer officials to games factoring mileage, a ref's experience and ability, compatibility with a fellow ref, any conflicts with a school (such as a child playing for the team), a ref's number of games with any one school, and total games in the season. It is important to remember they work for the schools first and really only indirectly for the VSOA. They are jury and judge in one: they determine the regular-season games and playoff games a referee receives.

In the case of the State Finals, eight of them in 2012, held at neutral sites pre-determined by the VPA, the southern and northern assignors confer and select officials from their region based on where the game is being held and who the "home" team is that game. During the season they stay close to their cell phones as schools change game days and times at the last minute and officials turn back games due to work, health, or personal crises. Castleton President David Wolk visited Abe a few years ago in the hospital after Abe had knee replacement surgery. He said the nurses were awed by Abe who was on the phone making soccer assignments a few moments after coming from anesthesia.

Just for reference, Terry Harlow's southern assigning went as follows in 2012: MVL (297), Prep Schools & Independents (139), VPA Play-offs (46) for a total of 482 soccer matches assigned for 29 schools. Frank Martel's numbers for the north are much higher.

One sure to wake up a dozing partner on the drive to a game during your monologue on the trade deficit with China or the nuances of the Federal Reserve is to raise the subject of referee ratings; i.e. whereby coaches rate referees at season's end or referees rate their peers. In the north, Jim McWilliam had a formal and informal way of assessing his officials: "Ratings came from coaches

only. As is the case with Frank I, too, was an official during my time as the assignor. I had the opportunity to see and work with officials three to four times a week. This provided first-hand information based upon actual field time. Sometimes a conversation would involve who felt comfortable working with whom. Not suggesting I was holier than thou, but these two options proved to be most accurate. Couple this with the coaches' comments and we had a fairly strong rating system." Today Frank employs a rating system of 1–10 for referees from their peers and from the coaches, but receives far less feedback from the coaches. Abe started a ratings system about 20 years ago in the south, 1–4, that both coaches and referees submit. Terry Harlow used the same procedure in his first year, 2012.

What many referees fail to recognize is that ratings have always been just one assessment tool or piece of information that an assignor uses in allocating games. Under their current configuration they are not really designed to be a teaching tool. Refs should take heart from an experience of Gerry Gingras.' "Russ Andrews and I did a game at Middlebury where coach Joe Marrone rated Russ '1' (10 being best) and then he wrote in a '0' for me and then an arrow below it down the page to where he marked an 'X.' Hey, we didn't have a great game but not even a zero!" Referee lore has it that in looking far down the page for his rating that Gingras suffered the only known case of the bends recorded in landlocked Barre.

Assigning in the pre-VSOA or early VSOA days was, shall we say, a bit more free form. As stated previously, there were no assignors in the late '50s and early '60s: schools scraped together their own referees. **Dick Lumbra** and **Dick Brown** (d. 2012) assigned before McWilliam and even before Abe. Gingras: "Sometimes a coach would call you to do a game. Other times a coach would call a local guy to officiate who wasn't certified but who knew the game and the rules. Other times Burns Page or Charlie Jasman would call to cover a lower level college game, freshman or jayvee. Then Lumbra or Brown would call with some high-school games. Bit by bit your calendar would fill up. Not like

today where a ref gets his college schedule and then his high-school schedule before the season starts.”

Richard Lumbra, VSOA President 1971, class of 1961 at JSC, is a member of their Athletic Hall of Fame. While at JSC, Dick was on the baseball team all four years, soccer for three years, and basketball for one year. He is now retired after 33 years of teaching or being principal. In the past several years, he has been a substitute teacher. He coached high-school soccer and girl’s basketball, and also served as a baseball umpire and referee for soccer and basketball. “Prior to the mid 1960s there was no assignor. Coaches and ADs got refs on their own through word of mouth. There weren’t too many schools playing soccer then. Then as the ’60s went on more and more schools started up and a need for an assignor developed as was done with the colleges. In 1965 I became an assignor for the Champlain area and the Northern Tri-City League. A few years later I added the Central Vermont League.” Richard finished refereeing in the mid 1980s.

Richard A. Brown, formally of Fairfax and St. Albans, passed away November 18, 2012. Dick was a former Marine serving from 1954 to 1957. His education included Whitcomb High School in Bethel where he was an outstanding athlete and graduated as Valedictorian in 1954. He graduated from Rhode Island in 1962 where he played football, baseball, and basketball. He received his Masters in Education from St. Michaels College in 1971. A career educator and coach, he served as principal for numerous schools in northern Vermont. He worked games for the VSOA from 1966–1981, presided as President in 1972, and became a Life Member. Brown coordinated the Vermont Special Olympics Association and its tournament officials from 1992 to 2003.



Past Presidents Dick Brown (l) and Gerry Gingras

Honorary Member **Stephen Russell** from Hinesburg was an active VSOA official from 1968–1990 and during that time he refereed basketball as well. His daughter later played for CVU.

Ludlow's **John Witalec** played soccer at Castleton before starting the varsity program at Wallingford High School in 1964. Wallingford High became Mill River High. From 1966–1969 he was the coach at Black River. He then departed from The Dark Side of Coaching and joined the refereeing ranks in 1969 with VSOA and the collegiate ranks two years later. John is a past President of both the VSOA (1976) and the Vermont Baseball Umpires' Alliance the same year. He has officiated numerous soccer, baseball, and softball State Finals in addition to five Twin State Games. He was the Vermont Soccer Official of the Year in 1986 before there was a Dick Stewart Award and then received the latter award in 2011. John was elected to Life Membership in VSOA in 2012. All three children played four years of soccer at Black River and daughter Geri (VSOA Scholarship recipient in 1992) is the current girls' coach at Bellows Free Academy. There is one game Witalec will never forget. "I did my first regular-season game on the day our son was born, and my wife never lets me forget it."

Honorary Member **Roland "Lefty" Lyford** (1917–1979) Hardwick HS '35 and Springfield College '39 (where he played on the 1938 National Championship soccer team) coached soccer at Peoples and Northfield high school in the 1950s and helped start soccer at the high-school level in the state. His Northfield squads were runners-up in the '58 and '59 state title game. He joined the staff at Norwich University in 1962 where he coached soccer, basketball, and track. His Norwich '68 team was particularly strong and featured Norwich record setter son Mickey. Roland and Mickey went together into the Norwich Athletics HOF. In 1986 The National Soccer Hall of Fame in Oneonta, NY established the "Grey Fox Award" to honor Roland. He was President of the New England Intercollegiate Soccer League 1969–70.



## 1970s

### POWERHOUSE AT PROCTOR

In 2012 the Proctor boys' team won their 17th state title (counting both D3 and D4) to be nationally ranked in that category across all 50 states. Their most prolific period was the late 1960s through the 1970s and into the early 1980s in D3. In fact, from 1965–1989 Proctor would reach at least the semis in 20 of 24 years. It was a period of high-school soccer dominance unmatched by any Vermont boys' team in any era and only by the Northfield girls' team. In the 1970s alone they won ('70, '71 tie, '72, '75, '76, '78) six titles.

Proctor's last title in D3 in 1983, the seventh of nine under **Paul "Kixy Austin**, had current Leland and Gray coach Chris Barton coming off the bench where he had been sitting with a cramp from the 30-degree weather in Winooski. In the 4th OT, 8-on-8 in those days, Barton scored with two minutes left. Barton: "Proctor excelled in this period because there were many immigrant families who had a soccer background who came to work for the Vermont Marble Company. We had good coaches as well with Tom Lawson, Lee Orvis, and Paul Austin. The town struggled financially and in terms of population when the Marble Company left town in the mid 1980s." Austin played at UVM before coaching Proctor. He would turn to refereeing soon thereafter and become one the state's finest officials at both the college and high-school level.

The boys' D1 featured title winners from a range of schools. Mt. Mansfield, MAU, CVU, So. Burlington, Mississquoi, and North Country rotated at the top.

After ten years coaching soccer in New Jersey, MAU's Birger



Ex UVM Player and Proctor Coach Paul Austin

Vigsnes launched the school soccer team in 1968. "I had 14 boys, 10 of them freshmen...and they stuck it out for four straight years and won the state title their senior year. One of those freshmen was a math whiz. I called out to him during a game: 'Run diagonally!!' The kid dropped his head and came over and quietly whispered to me, 'What angle coach?' He may have ended up at MIT.

"In the early '70s a ref during our game called a trip on the opposing team in the area. The ref blew the whistle and signaled for a direct kick. My player who was tripped said, 'That's a penalty kick, sir.' The ref looked puzzled and said he would confer with me. He came over to me and asked, 'What's a penalty kick?' I explained the whys and wherefores and where everyone should be. The guy said, 'Ah Birger, if I had known it would so much trouble I wouldn't have called that trip!' I don't think their training was quite up to speed yet."

In 1972 after MAU won the D1 title, they had to play first the Intermediate School champion and then the Small School champion (Proctor at the time) in order to qualify for the New Englands held that year in a snowstorm at Bowdoin. The New Englands were discontinued soon thereafter. Vigsnes: "In those days, the smaller schools were actually better than the big schools. They didn't have football draining away the best athletes. I remember our fans yelling 'Just boot it!' and I wanted the team to keep the ball on the ground."

Another time a multi-sport ref made a call and Vigsnes questioned him...saying that it wasn't a rule. "The ref said, 'Oh yes, it's right in my rulebook in my back pocket'...whereupon he pulled it out and started going through the pages to show me. I said, 'Sir, that's a basketball rulebook you opened up!'"

In a mid '70s game at Otter Valley, MAU went up 3-0 by half time. In the second half the ref called a PK on MAU: 3-1. Later, he called another PK: 3-2. Then a third PK. When Vigsnes questioned him and noted that he wasn't in position, the ref said, "He was inside the box by this much (holding up his index finger and thumb)": 3-3. Near the end of the game he called the 4th PK and held up the

index finger and the thumb for the final time. “Four PKs against us and we lost 4-3. I have never seen a game with four PKs, much less four PKs on one team.”

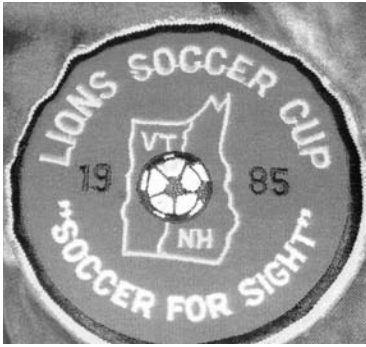
In the 1983 title game all-time Vermont scorer Erik Vigsnes, Birger’s son (104 goals in four years), led MAU. Birger: “The opposing coach yelled, ‘Force him left...he’s a righty!’ So Erik scored with his left foot. Then the coach yelled, ‘Force him right, he’s a lefty’” and Erik scored with his right. ‘Okay...just play him straight on.’ Erik answered with a header into the net. He ended the game with five goals in a 5-0 win.”

The D2 Boys’ first title game was 1974: Milton 7-Northfield 0. Milton would win three more titles that decade. Oxbow and Harwood also were strong. Why did D3 in 1965 conduct a state championship before D2 did in 1974? Bill Duval: “Compounding the situation is that schools were designated as L (Large), M (Medium), I (Intermediate), and S (Small), not D1, 2, 3, or 4. Originally there were no designations. Essex Junction did not have football until the late ’60s, soccer was the only fall sport. Conversely, schools like Burlington and Rice did not play soccer until the early ’70s, just football.”

It was not until 1981 that D4 Boys had a championship.

With the decline of the New England Championships in the early 1970s, a new event replaced it. The Twin State Soccer Game with New Hampshire began in 1975, an All-Star game between graduating seniors from each state. VSOA Honorary Member **Dwight Fiske** had a significant role in starting the game, as he did the Vermont Soccer Coaches’ Association (VSCA) in 1973, in his role as VSCA President from 1973-1976. In 1958 Fiske played for Waterbury in the VHA’s second state tournament. Later he coached at Bradford (started the team), Randolph, Vermont Technical College, and Harwood. His son, Tor, was an All-American player in 1988 at Harwood and earned a soccer scholarship to play at UCONN. Fiske officiated for the VSOA from 1974-1981.

On August 2, 1975 at Middlebury College the first Twin State boys’ game got underway with Russ Simpson (VT) and Carl Hill



Twin State Soccer Game Referee Patch

(NH) as coaches. Dick Stewart represented the VSOA as one of the officials. The other official was Art Jackson from Concord, NH. The game was several years in the making. Fiske: “The idea started in the 60s when soccer received little publicity and it was hard to get even scores into the newspapers. Don Thibault of the NH soccer coaches, Ted Peters, and I and several others met many times in 1974 to organize the first game. Then we ran into complications from the NCAA who said the game violated their recruitment rules. They had no precedent as a game like this had never been held anywhere. It took a year of many calls and trips to get the NCAA to change their rules. Finally, our dream that soccer players should have the same opportunity to show their game as footballers did in the Shrine Game came to fruition.” The establishment of this annual game helped move soccer from being “Kommunist Kickball” in the state to something more akin to “The Beautiful Game.”

Hinesburg’s **Art Thompson** has officiated seven of these games over the years. He joined the VSOA in 1966 and was its President in 1993. He was head of VSOA’s Grievance Committee for many years and inducted into the VPA Hall of Fame for both officiating and teaching.

Securing referees for the Twin State game was done initially by the Vermont Soccer Coaches Association (ditto for the NH ref on the game) and was often an 11th-hour scramble; an afterthought if you will. Later the state assignors took over this task depending on the location of the game. For example, when the game was played at Castleton, Abe would assign the refs.

Nationally, the New York Cosmos of the NASL signed Brazil’s Pele in 1975. Closer to home, current Black River girls’ coach Pat Pullinen earned All New England accolades for Castleton during

1973-74 while farther north Steve Sass, Hartford boys' coach, climbed to fourth on Middlebury College's career assist list in the years '74-'77.

In 1970 the NFHS, short for National Federation of State High School Associations, published its first Federation rulebook for soccer and the Vermont Headmasters' Association (which in 1993 changed its name to the Vermont Principals' Association) adopted these rules for high-school play in the state as opposed to the NCAA rules that had been in use for years. The NFHS is the national governing body for high-school sports, under which the VPA operates. These acronyms demand sorting out because it relates directly to what VSOA officials do on the pitch.

The NFHS, from its offices in Indianapolis, IN, serves its 50 member state high-school athletic/activity associations, plus the District of Columbia. The NFHS publishes playing rules in 16 sports for boys' and girls' competition and administers fine arts programs in speech, theater, debate, and music. It provides a variety of program initiatives that reach the 18,500 high schools and over 11 million students involved in athletic and activity programs. In 2012, 4,484,987 boys and 3,207,533 girls participated in NFHS-sponsored sports. Each year NFHS publishes a soccer rulebook. While the NCAA publishes its rulebook for free online, the NFHS charges for its available-in-print-only rulebooks in all sports; a significant portion of the NFHS budget is covered by those sales.

With offices in Montpelier, the VPA is a membership-driven organization (of Vermont principals) that was created by Vermont schools to oversee co-curricular activities. One of these activities is athletics.

In 1915 a group of 49 high-school principals decided that some controls on school activities, specifically athletics, were needed. The Headmasters' Club of Vermont was formed, and athletic rules on age requirements, academic eligibility, and game conditions were adopted. Between the group's formation in 1915 and World War II, school athletic programs expanded and the state's headmasters adopted a classification system based on the size of the schools

involved. That system, a version of which is still in effect today, provided equitable competition. In 1949, the Headmasters' Club of Vermont became the Vermont Headmasters' Association and since that time growth has been rapid and nearly constant. Today, the VPA has 515 members and the regulation of athletics is but one of its services.

The VPA promotes sportsmanship, establishes rules, posts pairings, settles disputes, arranges tournaments, and announces awards. The VPA has a Soccer Committee and a part of its job entails taking the NFHS rulebook and adding any Vermont-specific changes to any of the rules. Examples might be those involving overtime or uniform requirements. Thus, when a VSOA official steps on the pitch his first allegiance is to the few VPA adjustments to the NFHS rulebook, then to the rulebook itself. In 2003, the VPA created its own Hall of Fame to recognize athletes, coaches, officials, and others who have made significant contributions to the various activities that the VPA oversees. Inductees include VSOA officials Harry Loyzelle, **Bill Flory**, Bob Abrahamson, Art Thompson, **Walt Lattrell**, Bill Duval, and Gerry Gingras.

One of the best three-sport officials in the VSOA's history was Walt Lattrell who adjudicated at a high level in high-school and college soccer, basketball, and lacrosse. His VSOA career began in 1985 and ended just a few years ago. If a young driver now gets in a wreck at Malfunction Junction in Essex Jct.—don't blame Walt. He retired as Essex's Driver Ed Instructor, and there's no phone service on the banks of the appropriately named Salmon River in western NY where he now wets a line.

In one of the great ironies of school-based sports in this country, the NFHS and the NCAA reside in the very same building in Indianapolis. For years soccer officials who work both scholastic and collegiate games have rued the differences they must remember between the two rulebooks. But each group works on their respective rules at different times of the year somewhat in a vacuum with little coordination that might make it easier for officials to officiate.

Soccer purists who have a worldwide view of the sport of soccer with its FIFA rules protest that it is the FIFA rules that should be followed, not some collegiate or scholastic “Americanization” of the game. NFHS and NCAA rules allow far more liberal subbing of players than do strict FIFA or USSF rules. Proponents say this gives more playing opportunities to more players during a game. Critics claim it promotes an attacking style emphasizing exertion and hard running at the expense of skill and finesse.

England, which has a long history of playing youth soccer on large fields, in 2012 scrapped their kick-and-run model in favor of small-sided five-on-five games that take place on smaller pitches using smaller goals and focusing mostly on developing skills. This trend has been pervasive in many countries for many years. Today, everyone from FC Barcelona’s La Masia school, which produced Lionel Messi, to the US Youth Soccer Organization promotes the small-sided philosophy.



Richard “Dick” Stewart

Inevitably, any book of rules will not provide an answer to every question that arises in a game, or a rule or situation will not cover every contingency or may be interpreted in different ways due to ambiguous language. Enter the Rules Interpreter. This person, often at short notice, provides the answers to the inevitable questions. Three VSOA members have served as Rules Interpreter over its 50 years: **Dick Stewart** 1964–1978, **Dave Zehnacker** 1978–1988, and **Joe O’Brien** from 1988 to the present.

No question that Past VSOA President (2001) Dave Zehnacker was better at explaining the rules than he was the financial benefits of refereeing to his wife. Zehnacker: “Many years ago four referees would head to Lyndon State College for a season opening four-team tournament. This tournament involved two games on Saturday and two matches on Sunday. On Saturday night the referees and all

of the coaches came together at the LSC coach's camp for a 'feed and roast' of any play, referee's call, coach's reaction or behavior, lack of guts on a call made or not, and food beyond belief. Not to mention various thirst quenchers to replace precious bodily fluids lost during the games. This would be UNHEARD OF in today's collegiate scene but led to some great friendships after the smoke cleared. So I convinced my wife that \$105 (\$52.50 per match) for two games and a weekend away from the family (wife and three young kids) was worth it. Like we all do I told her it was yet another referee sacrifice of all work and no play. I might even have told her Bob Stevens and I were having cold pizza on the sideline for dinner in order to save money.

"I drove that weekend with Bob Stevens and partway to this camp for the festivities the hatchback window of my Pontiac station wagon popped up. I stopped and asked Bob to shut it. As he did, he grabbed the corner of the window and slammed it down. Yup, it shattered, sending glass over the inside of the entire car and dashboard. I just sat there shocked. Bob gingerly opened the door, peered in like 'oh shit' and we just laughed uncontrollably like two juveniles. So, I obviously spent the rest of the weekend trying to figure out how to get this one past my better half. I arrived home figuring the best thing to do was back into the garage to clean up the frame that remained in the window to give me a little extra time to figure out how I was going to explain this to my wife who had been taking care of the kids all weekend. So, I unloaded my gear first leaving the front passenger door open. I then proceeded to back into the garage and peeled the passenger door flush up to the fender. Talk about pissed. Over the next few days I headed down for estimates to repair the window and the door, which was sprung so badly I couldn't close it. The total was \$750-\$300 for the window and \$450 for the door. My game fee for two days away, gas, food, liquids was \$105. That weekend cost me almost \$650 and THAT is dedication (or stupidity) to the game and not a lot of 'we missed you' at home.

"In the '70s I was assigned a tough high-school boy's game in Newport between two rival schools — Sacred Heart (a parochial



high school) and the newly formed North Country Union High School. This situation set up the natural rivalry because if you attended one school, you were the enemy of the other, even if you had no choice in where you went to high school. This was a Friday night game, 'at the park' (Gardiner Park), and the only game in the Northeast Kingdom that night. This was for soccer bragging rights and everybody turned out for this game. I was nervous as a cat, but my partner was Jim McWilliam, who was one of our top rated officials. Jim had been around the educational and athletic scene in Vermont and it seemed like he knew everybody. He had a reputation for not taking any guff on the field and never lost control of any game. As we would occasionally go to games together, he was always talking to people, kidding and joking, to the point I figured everyone knew him and truly respected his refereeing abilities. So, I felt relieved to say the least being in a game like this two hours from home. We discussed the game all the way to Newport and although fiercely played and loaded with physical play, the game went very well. As we were leaving the game and headed for the parking lot, Jim begins to banter with this Sacred Heart fan. I continue walking along with Jim kind of laughing at the two of them yelling comments to each other, thinking that Jim knows this fan. I'm thinking 'this is pretty cool', do a tough game, walk off, know a bunch of people, give and take with them, yuk, yuk, yuk, everybody appreciates the job you did and everybody's happy. This banter continues for a few more minutes as we approach the car. I begin to notice Jim's and this fan's tone of voice and decibels changing with each comment. This fan makes some comment about Jim's calls and his abilities to ref soccer which now I realize is not so cool. Before I can react, Jim yells to the fan, 'What's that SH stand for on your hat? SHITHEAD?' Now I, as the rook grab Jim's arm, yank him to the car without losing a step and we sped away, luckily, without a police escort. I did many games with Jim during his very successful soccer refereeing career and it was true—he didn't take much if any guff from fans or players. I can attest to that!!!!"

**Joe O'Brien** started in 1973 with Dick Lumbra who was a VSOA assignor. "We were principals in the same district, and he talked me into going to the test and taking high-school assignments." A member of USSF, VSOA, NESOA, and NISOA, Joe officiated youth for 25 years, high school for 39, and college for 25. Joe sat on the VPA's Soccer Committee for over 35 years and chaired it for 10 years. "I was a founding board member of the present Nordic Soccer Club when it first started as a girls' team in 1991. I am presently a member of the Vermont Lacrosse Officials Association and have been reffing boys' lacrosse since its start with the VPA. I retired from the National Intercollegiate Hockey Officials Association six years ago where I officiated youth, high-school, and college hockey for 20 years. I was also a member of the Northern Vermont Baseball Umpires Association from 1972 until 1980." With this resume, Joe probably refereed all student athletes in the Burlington area at least once in some sport during their four years!

**Frank Martel** became a VSOA member in August, 1971 at Randolph HS and 40 years later he became a Life Member. "We had to pass a field test *before* taking a written test! Athletic Director, soccer, basketball, and baseball coach **Joe Fiarkoski** brought me down and encouraged me to become an official. He has fields named after him at MVU in Swanton and is a legend in that town." VSOA Life Member Fiarkoski graduated Northfield High in 1957 and Johnson State in 1962. Following Johnson, Fiarkoski introduced soccer to Swanton High and won numerous championships there until he retired in 1982. He is in the VPA and JSC HOFs. His daughter, Sonja Duncan, refereed a state championship game in 2011, but more on her later.

Martel: "My first final was at Johnson State College with **Norm Messier**." Frank was VSOA President in 1985 and has been the northern assignor for VSOA since 1987, when he took over for Jim McWilliam. Frank officiated the Vermont Voltage in the 1980s before they were the Voltage and has worked numerous NCAA tournament games.

In the southern part of the state, **Bernie Shaw** joined the VSOA in 1974 after four years working for the Berkshire County Soccer Officials Association. Bernie would officiate more than 30 more years for VSOA. An Honorary Member, Bernie was an excellent referee with four state title games on his resume, yet he was even more appreciated as one of VSOA best mentors to new and younger officials.

**Jim Kiehle**, of Brattleboro, started working high-school games in 1964 in western NY. “A goal was worth two points, and a PK was worth one point. There were no throw-ins from the sideline—just an indirect kick.” In 1971 Kiehl joined VSOA and was the President in 1990.

Morrisville’s **Scott West**, current VSOA Vice President, joined the Association in 1972. He is a certified USSF coach and Level 7 Referee and has been a Board Member of the Morrisville Soccer Club for over 20 years. He helped with the northern part of the VSOA Directory for a number of years and has acted as a mentor for six new officials.

West: “I was traveling home from the annual fitness test held in Lyndon several years ago with Michael ‘Reverend’ Caldwell...a fellow official. I was stopped in the S curves in Walden by a State Trooper. The officer approached my car and then leaned toward my open window and I caught a glance at his name badge and he then asked where I was going and where I had been. I told him that the Reverend and I were returning from our annual soccer officials’ fitness test and we were heading home. The Trooper saw my T-shirt that said VSOA Official on it and he said, ‘So you ref soccer. Did you ever ref any Milton games?’

“I answered with authority, ‘Oh yes...many. How is Mr. Stewart (as in Dick Stewart the VSOA legend)?’

“He said, ‘You know Mr. Stewart?’

“I said, ‘Very well.’ I then went on and said to the Trooper, ‘You’re...you’re...’ and I said the name I saw on his badge. ‘Yes, I remember you. You played...’ and I hesitated a moment.

“And he said, ‘I played left back.’

“I remember you, you’re left footed (I deduced that when I saw him writing with his left hand). I continued on and said, ‘You had such great vision of the field...your touch on the ball was so soft but when needed to you could rocket a shot like no one else.’

“The trooper said, ‘Holy cow...you remember that?’

“I responded, ‘Who wouldn’t?’

“He then said, ‘I’m going to back to the cruiser...I’ll be right back.’ He returned and said, ‘Mr. West, I am not going to give you a ticket...it was so good talking with you and thanks for remembering me from when I played in Milton.’

“And with that the Reverend and I drove off. As we drove off he asked me, ‘Who was that?’

“I said, ‘I have no clue, but it shows how soccer can bring us all together.’”

Honorary Member and VSOA Referee of the Year **Dan Gandin** officiated in the VSOA from 1976-1991. He was inducted into the New England Basketball HOF in 2009 and continues to coach hoops at U-32. “Gerry Gingras called a verbal obstruction on one occasion; find that in the rule book! Another time I had to defuse a female goalie from Castleton by grabbing her arm and doing swing dancing with her from the goal to mid field. After several remarks about an opponent that had elbowed her in a vulnerable area I gave her a yellow card, and she proceeded to play very well the rest of the game and made the winning save in a shoot out to win the game. Good game management!

Rod Titus: “Dan and I had a game in Bradford. It was a real long game. Didn’t get home until 2:00 a.m. This was back quite a few years ago when I was young and foolish. It was a Friday afternoon and a warm, muggy day. After the game we needed a cold beverage. One led to another and we decided we were hungry. So we took a detour over to the little town of Washington where there is a little store that had good chicken wings. As we got back in Barre we decided we would stop and see a mutual friend. There we were offered an after-dinner libation. Not wanting to offend our host, we obliged. By now we were not thinking too clearly and instead

of going home we visited a couple of bars in Barre. Dan, being younger and liking to have a good time, developed the reputation of ‘extending the soccer game.’ The wives of the local officials in the area would cringe when we were scheduled to do a game with Dan. Not to put all the blame on Dan. He didn’t need to do a whole lot of arm twisting.”

Vernon’s **Connie Waite**, VSOA President in 1984 now residing in Shoreham, officiated from 1972 to 2002. “I didn’t get off to a great start: 15 minutes late to my first varsity game with my assignor, Abe. Years ago on an archeological canoe trip to Florida’s Mound Key, I and my group were introduced to our young archeologist/leader. ‘Hey, I know you, you ref soccer. You threw me out of a game in Londonderry!’”

**Phil Baker** played for Waterbury High 1959–62 and then for Stetson University for four years. Two daughters played soccer: one was an all-state selection and played for Mercyhurst College in the 1993 NCAA D2 semi-finals.

In the fall of 2002 **Miles Etter** of Concord participated in his own Fantasy Soccer Camp. Here’s the story. Miles was captain of his Cherry Hills West, NJ soccer team and earned a scholarship to Drexel.

As a freshman in 1972 he scored the winning OT goal against Temple that sent Drexel into the NCAA tournament. He only finished one year at Drexel. Travel, marriage, work, and a move to Vermont in 1980 ensued. Fall 2002 found Miles enrolled at Lyndon State where he coached the women’s soccer team and assisted the men’s coach. However, at 48, he was also a player for the men’s squad. All legal under NAIA rules. One afternoon up at Maine-Farmington, he coached the women’s team and then at 7pm laced up his boots for the men’s team to play on the same pitch as his son, Kevin, a freshman at Maine Farmington. In the stands were Miles’s mother, Jane, and his brother, Glenn, a former University of



Waterbury’s Phil Baker

Pennsylvania soccer captain and All-Ivy player. As the final minutes ticked away, Coach Pound put Miles, normally a defensive player, up front so he could go head to head with Kevin. “I got to one ball in front of him and he got another on a 50-50 play,” said Miles. “I guess if his old man beat him, Kevin's teammates would never have let him forget it. It was truly an experience I'll always cherish. I thought about it all the way home.”

Beginning in 1977 the VSOA uniform became black shirt with white cuffs and collar, black shorts, and black socks with white tops. *Referee Magazine* started publication in 1976, went monthly in 1978, and has continuously had soccer-specific articles, information, and quizzes relating to all three rule bodies (FIFA, NCAA, and NFHS).

#### **VSOA Roster 1973 59 Active Members**

Abrahamson, Bob • Auld, John • Baker, Mike • Barrows, Gene • Bean, David • Brown, Dick • Brooks, Gerry • Dunn, Walton • Calevro, Mike • Cartee, Roger • Churchill, Doug • Corey, Dave • Culver, Don • Denault, Ray • Downs, Don • Duval, Bill • Fitzgerald, Bill • Flory, Bill • Gallas, Mike • Gingras, Gerry • Hakey, Dick • Hazard, Ernest • Houle, Bob • Hurd, Carlton • Jaquith, Fran • Jasman, Charles • Kiehl, Jim • Kinity, Malcolm • Loyzelle, Harry • Lumbra, Dick • Male, Bob • Maloney, Jim • Marchant, Charlie • Martel, Frank • McWilliam, Jim • Messier, Norm • Muir, Ron • Mitchell, Wade • O'Neil, Howard • Page, Burns • Parro, Bob • Ritschl, Ermanno • Robb, John • Rodd, Ken • Russell, Steve • Saddlemire, Dave • Scanlon, Pat • Schmidt, Stew • Sicely, Roger • Simpson, Russell • Stewart, Dick • Stokes, Carroll • Stokes, Bob • Streeter, Fred • Thompson, Art • Titus, Rodney • Webster, Duane • Witalec, John • Wright, Perley

## 1980s

### GIRLS' GAME STARTS IN VERMONT

Until now this narrative has been restricted to one gender. That changed in the early part of this decade with the first state tournaments for D1 and D2 Girls in 1981 and with VSOA's first female members that same year. New Hampshire had declared its first girls' champion a year earlier.

As was true with boys' soccer, girls' soccer followed the lead of the Vermont college teams. In 1966 the Castleton women became the first college varsity team in the country. The program took a five-year hiatus and then restarted permanently in 1971. UVM started in 1976. Middlebury's women's team began in 1979 as did St. Michael's in 1982. That same spring the first NCAA Women's Soccer Championships was held after years under the umbrella of the AIAW, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women. The AIAW functioned in the equivalent role for college women's programs that the NCAA had been doing for men's programs. Owing to its own success, the AIAW was in a vulnerable position that precipitated conflicts with the NCAA in the early 1980s. Following a one-year overlap in which both organizations staged women's championships, the AIAW discontinued operation, and most member schools continued their women's athletics programs under the governance of the NCAA. Later in the decade Johnson State ('86) and Vermont Academy ('87) fielded girls' teams.

VSOA's first female members were active in 1981: **Hilary Engisch** and **Gail Lebaron** of Burlington, and **Lynne Halpin** of Essex Jct. Halpin was not only one of the first female refs for VSOA but was probably the youngest having turned 18 two weeks before joining the association. VSOA has an age limit of 18. Halpin: "Being in the first group of female officials in the state is something I am proud of. I played sweeperback and was the first co-captain/mvp of the Essex High varsity girls' soccer team in 1980."

Bill O'Neil, current Essex girls' coach, reflects: "In 1976 there were no girls' soccer teams but there was interest. Bob Scott was

coaching boys at BFA in St. Albans, and I was coaching JV boys at Essex. Girls from both schools approached us wanting a girls' program. Bob and I arranged for three games between the schools. We played and both teams had records of 1-1-1. In 1977 Rich Woods started a girls' soccer club at Essex. In 1980 Rich stepped down, and I was the new coach."

Halpin: "With Richard Woods as our advisor we played a few games that he organized with other schools. In 1979 we played as a JV team against other teams that were recognized as varsity. Hardly any of the people who started the sport at Essex were able to letter in soccer. The gals who started up the club gave up lettering in field hockey or cross country. Our AD was the field hockey coach. It was rumored that she was not happy to lose players to soccer.

"The first teams the Essex girls played competitively were South Burlington, CVU, Missisquoi, and Colchester. Milton and Burlington were not as competitive. Mount Mansfield may have had a team, too.

"The girls did not have a state title game my senior season (1980), so South Burlington hosted a one-day tournament. Each team had to play two full games on the same day. Essex came in second to South Burlington. Our team was crushed and in tears at the end of that game. It was the only validation available to the girls about which team was tops in the state. It was wonderful, but we knew it was unfair.

"In Vermont, when I first became a ref, the coaches hadn't seen a woman ref before, so they thought I was a goalie for the other team. After graduating UVM in 1985 I moved to Connecticut and continued refereeing. There, when I was pregnant, a coach told me I was a horrible example for his female players. I was caught off guard and baffled. My co-official explained to me that because I didn't have my wedding ring on, the coach thought I was unmarried. These days, I would card him. Although I don't remember if I was assigned to boys' games in Vermont, women officials were treated much more equally in Vermont than in Connecticut. I left the latter group for a number of years (returned



in 2003) when I was told by the other female referee that she was about to sue the group for sexual discrimination. I was young and did not want to get blacklisted. Female referees would only get assigned to the girls' games. Girls' games paid less. She won us the right to get paid the same for boys' and girls' games. She did get blacklisted and left the association."

Hilary Englisch, class of 1980 at UVM, is in the school's Hall of Fame for both soccer and her ski career that included four World Moguls Championships. She is still UVM's career leader in points and goals, despite only playing three years (1977–1979) and playing fewer games in a season than the team does today.

Gail LeBaron was captain of UVM's first women's team in 1976. She would later coach at Johnson State in the mid 1990s. Halpin: "When I was in school, I knew of them because I played summer soccer and they would show up to kick the ball around when we played/practiced at UVM. Very nice women. Hilary had huge muscles. So impressive. She rode her bike everywhere too. Gail was very athletic, but being friends with Hilary, she may have gotten the impression that she was just an average gal. There is nothing average about the two of them. I was lucky and proud to be in the same group with them as one of the three first women referees in Vermont. I would have loved to play at UVM. Not sure I would have made the team, but with a tough schedule from my engineering course work and the need for money, refereeing was the best way to stay on the field while I was a UVM student."

Bill Duval: "Title IX came in 1972, with controversy. Many schools hesitated to start girls' soccer because it was a 'contact' sport and people argued that it was too dangerous for girls. Also, financial considerations were always in play, so schools tried to make the claim that field hockey satisfied the need for equal opportunity.



World Mogul Champion Hilary Englisch. Also One of VSOA First Female Referees

Throughout the 1970s the VSOA fees remained stagnant. I have always maintained that referees were an unintended casualty of Title IX, because many high schools had to expend considerable amounts in order to bring their athletic budgets up to code and, thus, referee fees in part subsidized that action. Do not misinterpret; I have been a huge supporter of Title IX, but many never realized the price paid by the referees.”

**Charlie Marchant** joined the VSOA in 1967 when he started teaching at Leland and Gray after a playing career at Springfield College. “We had a girl, Robin Miramontes, who played on the L&G’s boys’ team at the time because there was no girls’ team. There was a meeting of the ADs in Rutland which I attended because Burr and Burton refused to play with Robin on the field. It was there I found out that some refs were refusing to work games involving mixed teams. Ultimately the game was played and ultimately girls’ teams came into existence. But it wasn’t always a smooth process.”

In the D1 Girls’ first title game in 1981 it was CVU 1-Missisquoi 0. Other strong teams of the decade included Essex, Colchester, and MAU with two titles (’87, ’89).

In D2 Girls’ in 1981, the first state title game, Northfield defeated Milton 1-0. While Burke Mtn. would win two (’82, ’86), Milton would get on a roll that would include nine titles from the mid ’80s to the mid ’90s.

Northfield moved to D3 in 1984 and tied Black River 1-1 in D3’s first championship that year. Black River would take the title in ’85 but then began a period of soccer dominance unmatched by any other team, boys’ or girls’. Not the CVU boys’ teams (2000s) or their girls’ teams (1990s–2000s) or the Milton girls’ teams of ’80s–’90s or the aforementioned Proctor boys match the record posted by the Northfield girls over a 20-year period from 1984–2004.

Dan Shepardson of Fairfax attended Norwich 1972–76 where he played soccer. In 1976–77 he was an assistant with the boys under Denny Miles when he pursued a Masters at Norwich, then came back to coach full time in 1984 at Northfield. “There were

several reasons why Northfield had good soccer teams at the high school. One, it was the only fall sport and hockey was a big winter sport, and the hockey players wanted to get in shape for their winter season...so they played soccer. Second, Mike Gonneville, the girls' coach, established a local K-8 youth program. And we had separate boys' and girls' teams. This encouraged girls to play whereas co-ed teams did not. We had high-school players coach and ref these youth games. Then we had the youth players be ball handlers for the high-school games so there was a continuity. The teams nearby that we played were usually larger schools, a higher division, so we took our lumps in the regular season heading into the D3 playoffs. Finally, I encouraged players to play in the local summer league and, later, the ODP teams as well. When I coached at Northfield, I received seven cards. I was a cheerleader. Then I realized that I had nothing to say at halftime because of all that cheerleading. Today, I sit in a chair. Some refs will chuckle because I do get competitive at times. Even if a ref calls a PK on us in the last minute 'costing' us the game, I tell my team: 'We had 79 minutes to take care of business and we didn't do it.'

"I remember one instance when Northfield was playing Harwood, a 1-goal game. Their goalie was hurt; we may or may not have fouled him. I don't recall. Their coach was beckoned onto the field. **Spencer Noble** (both of our fathers ran general stores) allowed him to stay rather than depart until the next sub, etc. I questioned him on it because I wanted the chance to score on their backup. But Spencer said, 'No, I would do the same thing for your team as well in such a circumstance.'" Later, I realized and appreciated that Spencer did the fair thing if not the legal thing."

No official on Frank Martel's list is as requested by his peers as Spencer Noble of Essex Jct. Noble has refined the fine art of post-game cuisine (cold shrimp, crackers, adult beverages) combined with a knack of finding yet another new route home over back roads. Spencer joined the VSOA in 1977 and was its President in 1999. A member of the VPA HOF as an official, Spencer helped start Colchester's youth soccer program. For years, Spencer would



L-R: Dennis Filion, Bill Duval, Spencer Noble, and Art Thompson celebrating their Best Call of the Day: A Ride Home in the “Shrimpmobile.”

host the northern officials at his camp in Fletcher during the state quarter-finals weekend.

Back in the late '80s, **Jon Zehnacker** (brother of Dave who provided this story) happened to be a newer official. He was in his early 20s and like all young and aspiring officials in any sport, he was pretty excited to be working with a “vet” like Spencer who was one of the best officials in both soccer and basketball, refereeing many State Finals in each sport. So Jon was all business. BUT, he wasn't quite sure when Spencer was kidding or serious and the first half ended without incident. At halftime, Jon approached midfield to meet Spencer and discuss the first half, hoping to get some pointers and criticism from a well respected official. They discussed the calls, and Jon was nothing but “all ears.” All of a sudden in mid-conversation, as the halftime interval drew to a close, Spencer knelt down on both knees and laid his head sideways to the ground and listened silently but intently. Jon watched him thinking to himself “Is he having a stroke or heart attack?” Spencer then looked up from the ground and asked Jon, “Can you hear them?” Jon quizzingly looked at Spencer, not wanting to appear stupid or out of it and



(L-R) Charlie Marchant, Bob Parro, and Harry Lozelle at L@G 1974 discuss who is fixing the net.

said “No.” Spencer asked again, “You can’t hear that?” Jon said to him, “Hear what?” Spencer said, “Clump, ta-clump — ta-clump — ta-clump.” Jon said, “No, but what’s that?” Spencer responded, “It’s the Clydsdales, they’re 40 minutes away, so we’d better get the 2nd half started!” Jon just dropped to his knees in laughter, and they finished the game on time to meet up with the Clydesdales and their carriage product later that afternoon. Talk about a unique way for a “vet” to make a “rook” feel accepted.

In the D4 Girls’ 1989 first state championship it was Arlington 1-Green Mtn.Valley 0.

Bill O’Neil: “The first Girls’ Twin State Game was in 1982. Mickey Lyford and Jim Hubbard from MVU and I were the coaches. We lost to NH 2-1 in a game in Keene, NH.” When he left Norwich after playing for his father “Lefty” Lyford, Mickey held eight school soccer records. A successful coach at Missisquoi, Mickey’s team won several state titles and he earned a Coach Of The Year award in 1982.

**Steve Skilton** joined VSOA in 1983 after a seven-year warmup officiating lower levels. Two years later he joined NISOA and

refereed college soccer for 25 seasons in addition to working eight VPA finals. For nine years he was President of the Mad River Valley Soccer Club, a feeder for Harwood Union, and saw it grow to 300 players, 40 coaches, and 22 teams. A VSOA President in 1995, 10 years later Steve would earn the Dick Stewart Award.

Jacksonville's **Scott Allen** also joined in 1983 and is still going strong with a 2012 State Final assignment. He started soccer play in the sixth grade and continued through high school and two years at Lyndon. He coached the Deerfield youth teams for a number of years and was Whitingham's head coach for five. Scott's daughter and son both played for Wilmington/Twin Valley.

D1 Boys' MAU would win three titles ('82, '83, and '89). In 1984 MAU's Erik Vigsnes would climb into the top eight on the list of National High School soccer career goals with 104. BFA, CVU, So. Burlington, and Essex captured titles as well.

In D2 Boys Fair Haven and Harwood won three titles each. Burr and Burton, Vergennes, and Milton were also champions in this division.

Proctor would be on top early in the decade with four titles in D3 Boys. Arlington followed by Northfield would win thrice each. Under coach Dan Shepardson, Northfield would win or tie for the title five straight years from 1987–1991 and during that period go 70 games without a loss, still in the top ten in the country in that category. Proctor would go D4 in 1990.

The D4 Boys' first state tournament came in 1981. South Royalton and Sacred Heart in the last game played to a nil-nil tie. Future referee **Marty Adams** played in this game and for four years at South Royalton. He coached as a volunteer assistant at South Royalton in '93 and '94. He also coached varsity baseball there from 2004–2012, winning a State Championship in '05. "I'm proud to have played, coached, and officiated in a State Final." Marty became a VSOA member in 1994 and a year later also joined the soccer board for New Hampshire. He was a Dick Stewart Official of the Year recipient in 2008. He has refereed five State Finals. "My first playoff game was with Abe in Thetford. The opposing coach knew

Abe from his college days. I overheard him telling his team ‘I know the referee from my playing days and he is excellent...’ I thought to myself, I hope someday I have earned that level of respect when I walk on the field. I was proud to be working my first playoff game with such an experienced and respected partner. During the game Abe had a ball off his end line on my side of the field. He asked (as only Abe could—loudly) what I had. I said, ‘corner kick.’ He thanked me even louder and it seemed to me that everyone involved elevated their respect for me as well because if Abe was asking for my help he must trust me. To this day I do not hesitate to verbally ask my partner for help. I think it shows respect for your partner and that you are working as a team on the field. I had another situation as a young official where I red carded a coach after sending one of his players off with a subsequent caution. The coach swore very loudly and proceeded to come onto the field. After the game as we were leaving we were accosted by a fan (the player’s father I later learned) and my partner that day, **Bill Ladd**, ran interference and in a very professional manner quieted the fan down and let him know we were done discussing the situation. I later was able to return the favor to Bill after a State Final where a similar situation occurred, this time with Bill the target of a fan.”

Sacred Heart would return and finish the job on top in '81, '82, and '84. Burke Mtn. and Wilmington produced strong teams, too, in D4.



2012 Finals Ref Gary Blodgett in Bigger Hair Days as '85 Springfield Coach

**VSOA Roster 1983 91 Active Members**

Abrahamson, Bob • Acebo, Phil • Adams, Dan • Auld, John • Baker, Mike • Baker, Phil • Barrows, Gene • Boucher, Jim • Bourbeau, Lucien • Brooks, Gerry • Brown, Charles • Clark, David • Coffey, Peter • Culver, Don • Dewey, Randy • Duval, Bill • Engisch, Hilary • Evans, John • Fillion, Dennis • Finn, Jim • Finck, Don • Fitzgerald, Jim • Flory, Bill • Fulcher, Mike • Gandin, Dan • Gee, Bruce • Gilbert, Dave • Gingras, Gerry • Graves, Norm • Graves, Randy • Halpin, Lynne • Harrington, Carl • Hayford, Buddy • Hazard, Ernest • Houle, Bob • Hunt, Brian • Hurd, Carlton • Hutchinson, Gary • Hutchinson, Mike • Jaquith, Fran • Kadish, Ken • Kathan, Robert • Kamuda, Joe • Kiehl, Jim • Kiniry, Mal • Lanoue, Phil • Lebaron, Gail • Loomis, Gary • Lovely, Phil • Lozelle, Harry • Marchant, Charlie • Martel, Frank • Martel, Norm • McWilliam, Jim • Memoe, Charles • Messier, Norm • Miles, Dennis • Mitchell, Wade • Morgan, Dave • Noble, Spencer • O'Brien, Joe • Parker, Larry • Parro, Bob • Perry, Bruce • Perry, Neal • Stewart, Dick • Stokes, Carroll • Streeter, Greg • Thompson, Art • Thurber, Bill • Titus, Rod • Waite, Conrad • Wells, George • Werner, John • Wheatley, Pat • Wilkens, Ed • Pullinen, Peter • Ratti, John • Rippon, Dean • Russell, Steve • Saddlemire, Dave • Schmidt, Stew • Shaw, Bernie • Sheldon, Bill • Simpson, Russ • Stetzel, John • Stevens, Bob • Witalec, John • Wright, Perley • Wyman, Jim • Zehnacker, Dave



## 1990s

### DICK STEWART RETIRES

The VSOA has had many tremendous referees over the years, mentors who have helped other officials develop, and supporters of the game who have given back to the sport in many ways. But it would be hard to find a VSOA member who has combined all three attributes to the degree that Dick Stewart did for nearly 30 years from 1964 to his final game in 1992, the Twin State Cup that summer with 1987 VSOA President and Life Member **Bob Stevens**.



Richard Stewart

Stewart's first teaching job was at Cabot High School where he started the boys' soccer team. His principal was John Spasyk who had coached the victorious Stowe title team in 1957. Spasyk encouraged Stewart to start officiating and mentored him after he joined the VSOA in 1964. Stewart was selected to work 26 straight State Finals games in his career and four Twin State games. He officiated the first New England high-school tournament that was held in Bristol, R.I.

Stewart: "There were a number of officials that got their start while attending Johnson State College. That included Don Culver, Rod Titus, Jim McWilliams, Bob Stevens, Carroll Stokes, Joe Fiarkoski, and myself. We were enrolled in a course in 'Coaching and Officiating' taught by **Dr. Walter Minaert** (VSOA Honorary Member, d. 2004). From my perspective this course was very valuable to me and gave me a head start when I became an official."



Former Johnson AD  
Dr. Walter Minaert

There is no truth to the rumor that future coaches in Minaert's class all snoozed through the lectures on rules and mechanics.

Hired by JSC in 1947, Minaert was the college's first teacher of health and physical education, and was a driving force behind the expansion of the college's athletic

facilities and the athletic program in general. He served as the college's athletic director from 1948 until 1976.

Stewart officiated college soccer from 1967 through 1992 including games involving Connecticut, UCLA, and Indiana. In 1979 he received the New England Outstanding Collegiate Officials award presented by the New England Collegiate Coaches Association. After moving south to be the principal at Arlington, he was chair of the VPA Soccer Committee for several years and was a past President and Rules Interpreter for VSOA.

Bill Duval: "Dick had presence! When he walked on the field he commanded it. He was big physically, he had a deep voice, and he came on strong with confidence. He was always in shape...didn't drink...didn't smoke. And, in the heat of battle, he would talk to players, call them by their first names which none of us could ever get over. How did he know all of these kids? And, once a player knew that Dick knew them, they were pussycats. Plus, he had great judgment. One thing Dick always said was that you might be right or you might be wrong, but if you hustle and are on the play, who can argue with you? He would have been great as a center in the diagonal system."

All four of Dick's sons played soccer in high school. One, **Tim Stewart**, played in the 1983 Twin State game and was named the Vermont MVP. Tim was an outstanding official in his own right and worked his last game in 1998 with Bill Duval at the D1 Boys' Final where Kyle Desotel's North Country squad defeated Brattleboro 4-3 in Brattleboro's only trip to the Finals.

Dick Stewart: "In the fall of 1991 I was selected to officiate my final State Final. Abe had it set up that Tim and I would be able to work the D3 game between South Royalton and Northfield. However, when we got to UVM, I had to go from Gutterson Field over to Centennial Field and work the D1 game involving South Burlington. This was necessary because Spencer Noble who taught at SBHS was scheduled to do the D1 game. It would have been a great way to end my career. That was the game when SR scored in overtime to win with a goal that was a little controversial. Tim was

trail official and helped Spencer make the call that the goal was good. A video from Channel 3 later verified the goal went in to stop Northfield's long win streak. I had gotten back from my game and was on the end line. Very proud of how they handled the situation."

Following Dick's retirement the VSOA named the Outstanding Officials Award in his honor. Bill Duval: "Dick's retirement does mark a turning point in Vermont soccer and in soccer officiating. Some of us have discussed how Dick would not have the command of today's game that he had in his day. The game and officiating have changed, and the dominating referee would not be accepted by either today's players or their coaches."

Bob Stevens, who was also Executive Secretary of the VPA, played for Honorary Member **Joseph Yando** (d.) at Peoples in the 1960s. Stevens: "He was from Windsor and attended Springfield College. He coached at Lamoille Central Academy (LCA) before going to Peoples Academy in the early '60s where I played for him. He later went to Mt. Mansfield and was coaching basketball at Johnson State College when he died in an auto accident. He coached three sports at PA and we had some excellent soccer and basketball teams under his guidance. He also ran summer recreation programs at Mt. Norris (Boy Scout camp in Eden) and Morrisville. He was a tough disciplinarian with a gruff voice but demanded excellence and produced some great teams.

"I did play on two Peoples Academy high-school playoff games at JSC in the early '60s where both teams had to walk one behind the other around the field, shuffling their feet, so we could reveal the touch and end lines plus the penalty area. The reason was too much snow. The games were played and both ended with the winning team decided by corner kicks. There was a time when that was how a game was decided: the team with the most corner kicks won if the score was tied. I was a goalie and the goal area ended up a mud puddle, and my heavy sweats turned into frozen linen and I had to change at half time."

The soccer landscape in this decade would be one recognizable today. All four high-school divisions in girls and boys would be up

and running. While referees wore the black shirt with the white cuffs and collar, the assignors were Frank Martel in the north and Bob Abrahamson in the south. The signal for “Advantage” or “Play-on” was now the underhand motion with palms up and no longer the clenched fist overhead. “Even” with the second-to-last-defender was no longer an offsides position. The decade started with the first Women’s World Cup won by the USA in 1991 and ended with the USA victorious again in 1999 at the Rose Bowl. These events bracketed the first men’s World Cup hosted by the USA in 1994. Major League Soccer started in 1996 with 10 teams. In 2012 there were 19 teams, many playing in soccer-only stadiums, with an average attendance for the year of 18,800.

In the D1 Girls Mt. Mansfield would start with two titles and then CVU started a run that would extend well into the next decade. Milton’s D2 streak would end after 1994, and Burr and Burton would capture three titles towards the end. Northfield’s D3 juggernaut would be interrupted briefly by Leland and Gray in 1990–91. Arlington followed by Wilmington and then Proctor would all win two state titles each in D4.

The field was wide open in D1 Boys with CVU (two), So. Burlington, BFA, Burlington, Essex, and Mt. Mansfield on top. Burr and Burton won three titles in D2 (four if one counts 2000) with Rice, Montpelier, Burke, Enosburg, and Green Mountain Valley also in the mix. Parity was also seen in D3 with Northfield, Arlington, Thetford, Oxbow, BFA, and Fairfax having strong squads. Black River would win twice at the end of the decade. In D4 Boys Wilmington would win three crowns in the middle part of the decade. Canaan, Craftsbury, and GMVS were also at or near the top.

Rutland’s **Gunther Sihler** joined the VSOA in 1994 after playing, coaching, refereeing, and assigning in Wisconsin. In 2000 he would serve as VSOA President and win the Dick Stewart Award in 2010. On the national level, Gunther is a USSF certified official and since 1990 has been a NISOA (college) National Referee. In 2007 and 2008 he worked the Final Four Men’s D3 NCAA Championship and was the Referee for the 2010 D3 NCAA Championship. To

date, he is the only Vermont soccer referee to ever work an NCAA Final Four. One of the referees who mentored Gunther was **Dan Adams** (Otter Valley '69 and Castleton '73) who is the only VSOA official to work a NAIA Final.

**Jim Bellinghri** of South Hero joined the VSOA in 1997 and won the Dick Stewart Outstanding Official Award in 2010. He will be coaching his two sons in the fall of 2013.

## SUMMER CLUB SOCCER

Summer soccer in the state divides broadly into three categories. The Vermont Soccer Association (VSA) is affiliated with the US Youth Soccer Association, US Soccer Association, and FIFA. This is the structure and governing body for soccer that is played outside of the VPA schools in Vermont. The VSA provides training and accreditation for coaches, players, and referees for games involving the quite young all the way up to the MLS and the US National Team/World Cup. Many well-known VSOA officials are USSF and VSA accredited. The VSA Referee Administrator is **David Barra**, the Director of Instruction is **Andy Gingras**, the Director of Assessment is **Craig Iverson**, and the Youth Referee Administrator is **Frank Halden**. Many VSOA members are USSF certified and officiate these matches.

Dave Barra played soccer at South Hadley, MA High School 1971–74 where he was captain in 1974, and then at Williams College 1975–78. He coached youth soccer in Montgomery County, MD in 1981 and then coached Essex Jct. rec league teams in the late 1980s. He helped found the Essex United Soccer Club in the early 1990s; coached there to 1995 and assisted Joe Gonillo coaching JV boys at Essex HS in 1993. “For USSF I was first certified in 1994 as a referee. I have served as State Referee Administrator and member of the executive board 2005–present, State Director of Instruction 2003–05; Chair of the State Referee Committee 2005–present; Instructor 2003–present; Assessor 2007–present; and Assignor 2008–present. I became a VSOA referee in 1997 and a college referee in 2000 and have worked on various committees for both organizations. We have about 300 USSF-certified referees in Vermont. We are the

second smallest association in the country (behind Wyoming). Every year we lose about a third of the referees to attrition. Most are young people who discover they don't like the experience or who move away for school or other reasons. We train about one hundred new referees each year and recertify about 200.

“USSF leagues run throughout the state from the end of April until mid-August. USSF referees obtain entry level certification to start which allows them to referee youth matches. In order to referee higher level matches upgraded certification requirements must be met. As State Referee Administrator I am in charge of overseeing the training and certification of all referees, instructors, assignors, and assessors.

At the higher end of summer soccer, the Vermont Voltage play in the Premier Development League (PDL) of the United Soccer Leagues (USL). The USL is a nationwide soccer organization containing over 100 men's, women's and youth teams split into four leagues. The PDL is considered by the United States Soccer Federation as a third division, below Major League Soccer, the A-League, and the USL Pro League. The PDL allows high-school and college players to compete in a “pro”-like environment without



Special Olympics Crew (L-R): Frank Halden, Spencer Noble, Dennis Filion, and Gerry Gingras



VSOA president 2011 Andy Gingras Signals for the Stretcher

losing their college eligibility. Prior to being known as the Voltage, they were known in their first season in 1997 as the Wanderers.

The Vermont Voltage Ladies were established in 2005 and are part of the nation's highest division of women's soccer in the United States and Canada. They play in the W-League of USL's Northern Division where they compete against teams like Montreal, Ottawa, Rochester, and Toronto divisionally, or NYC, Chicago, Atlanta, Seattle, and San Diego on the national level for the crown of the W-League. Home for both Voltage teams is the Collins Perley Sports Complex in Saint Albans, VT. Voltage games are assigned out of Boston and USSF-certified officials in Vermont such as Barra, Sihler, and Andy Gingras work these games: \$75 for a line/game and \$135/middle.

But a more informal third category exists as well. This is the adult summer leagues, usually based around a town or school field, where teams play on Sunday afternoons with squads consisting of high-school, college, and post-college players of all ages. UVM's Bill Willey formed a men's team in the early 1960s that traveled

around New England and Canada. Eventually the team became the Green Mountain Soccer Club and played in the Quebec National Soccer League. Bill Duval played on this team, competing against teams from Quebec City to Toronto.

The Burlington International Games between Burlington, VT and Burlington, Ontario began in the '60s and ran for approximately 25 years. Each alternating year athletes from one city would visit the other. They would stay with local families for the weekend, and there would be competition in numerous sports. Bill Willey coached a boys' soccer team, made up of local high-school stars that participated. Once all the other leagues and opportunities came into being, the BIG games became too much of an effort and were discontinued.

VSOA Honorary Member **Dick Terry** played at Cortland State before becoming the first men's coach at Castleton (1958–1972). In the mid 1960s he established and became the first Commissioner of the Vermont Amateur Soccer League (VASL). It began with four teams playing games at Castleton and eventually expanded to 36 teams from Vermont and Eastern New York.

A key member of the VASL was **Gene Barrows** fresh off his 1963 national championship NAIA season at Castleton. In 1964, and for several years thereafter, he played, officiated, assigned officials, and organized a team in the league.

Barrows: "That Castleton era had a group of us who had graduated Brandon High School in approximately 1958 where we played soccer. It was 'kickball' really in that we didn't pass much, just boot it and chase it. **Chuck Memoe**, VSOA president in 1982, Don Orvis, and Lee Orvis were all teammates of mine at Brandon and Castleton. Lee reffed a small bit then went to Proctor to coach."

UVM's Dave and Jeff Taft and Pete Baldwin were part of the Catamounts, one of the first teams. Jeff and Pete played at UVM and are in the UVM Hall of Fame. Robert Squeek Gregory would play and ref in the VASL and later coach soccer and lacrosse at Castleton.

In time the summer adult league divided into north and south. **Robert "Buster" Kathan** recalls: "I became the Commissioner of the non-profit Southern Vermont League (SVL) after Castleton





1962-3 Castleton Team NAIA co-Champs

coach Jim Theiser and served for 13 years. We started with one division that played on summer Sundays and then added a second division for high-school players and veterans and then a women's division. Officiating at first was done by former players, but then we realized we needed refs not affiliated with either team. Bob Abrahamson then assigned the entire SVL, and we finally had credibility. The SVL would hold playoffs and then play the winner from the north for a Vermont Amateur Championship.

“As a league we experimented with overtime rules (one game went 23 overtimes) and then a season with no offsides. Without the commitment of officials willing to give up their weekend time the game of soccer would have stayed a shadow of what it is now. In the beginning it was often said the teams would argue for 30 minutes and play for 10. Without the officials stepping up and loving the game soccer would be decades behind.”

The Inn at Long Trail proprietor Patty McGrath: “I want to say it was about 1984 that the women's division started in the SVL. Karl Roemer from Ludlow was the driving force. He contacted me because he was interested in getting girls from his high-school soccer team gaining more experience off season to help bring up the level of the game (I was MSJ coach at the time). The first years

were limited to four or five teams, and we played each other twice until the number of teams started to grow.”

Adult summer soccer can be, shall we say, *challenging* for officials. The institutional control found in VPA fall play is missing as is, sometimes, simple organization such as field prep, benches, ball handlers, and start times. And often the “A” in adult league does not stand for “Adult.” Suffice it to say there are many referees, official and unofficial, on the pitch at once. Rule 1 for a ref is not found in any rulebook: Get paid prior to the game. Rule 2 isn’t either: Park near the exit. But for VSOA referees over the years these Sunday games have been a good way to earn some extra cash, stay involved with the game, and learn invaluable people skills.

Most VSOA refs start their careers following a common incremental pattern. Start officiating informally with the local grade school. Maybe get certified and then move up to middle-school games and JV high-school games with a mentor showing the way. Not **Nathan Cook**. No sir, in 1997 he jumped right into the Wild West Show of adult summer soccer. No training at lower levels, no certification, no mentoring, and no VSOA membership until a year later. He and father **George Cook** of Rutland, the first Dick Stewart Official of the Year for the south recipient and an excellent basketball and lacrosse official as well, worked every Sunday together, often doing double headers. Since George was well known by the players, one might imagine to whom players’ appeals flew that summer.

George and Nathan Cook are not the only father-son duos seen together on the pitch. Bob and Kirk Abrahamson, Fred and Greg Streeter, Gerry and Andy Gingras, and Stu and Bruce Schmidt (who worked a State Final together a few years ago) demonstrate that officiating runs in the family. Will it be long before the first mother-daughter team? Or father-daughter? Or mother-son? If Noah Schmidt hurries up and gets VSOA certified, he can join grandfather Stew before the latter retires.

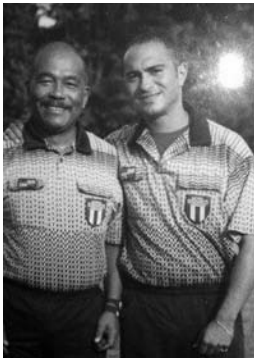
**Greg Streeter** in 1972 joined his father Fred on the VSOA scrolls and was the youngest ref in the state at 18 and at 20 he served as chair of the written and field exams held at Randolph. “My

knowledge of the game of soccer came about when I was able to go to the fall meetings with my Dad. There was no mandatory one at that time; only a fall meeting to take care of VSOA business. I played four years of varsity soccer at Randolph and the only games my Dad missed were because he was off officiating.” Greg was a VSOA member for 32 years.



Greg Streeter

Former college players have provided the basis for the VSOA. Early on Springfield College filled this role. Later, both Johnson State and Castleton have supplied the greatest number of VSOA referees with UVM and Lyndon State chipping in as well.



George Cook and Son  
Nathan Survive Another  
Summer League Game



Former Castleton Player Tom Cook with  
Daughter Ashley

### **VSOA Roster 1995 147 Active Members**

Abbott, Marilyn • Abrahamson, Bob • Abrahamson, Kirk • Acebo, Phil • Adams, Dan • Adams Randal • Allen, Cindy • Allen, Scott • Austin, Paul • Baccei, Bruce • Baker, Mike • Baker, Phil • Barrows, Gene • Billings, Roland • Blicharz, Stan • Blythe, Dave • Boucher, Allen • Boucher, Jim • Brown, Steve • Brownsford, Dave • Bruso, Jeff • Bushey, Bob • Caldwell, Mike • Caron, David • Chandler, Brian • Clark, Mike • Collins, Tim • Commito, Tom • Cook, George • Cook, Tom • Culver, Don • Davis, Frank • Desorda, Rick • Dewey, Randy • Drury, Ben • Duval, Bill • Emery, Tim • Etter, Miles • Evans, Eric • Falco, Jamie



'82 CSC Women's Coach Chuck Stanley Checks Out a High Kick in Ludlow



Stew and Bruce Schmidt

• Farrell, Dick • Filion, Dennis • Filion, John • Finnigan, Charlie • Finnigan, John • Fitzgerald, Jim • Fitzgerald, Mat • Flory, Bill • Ford, Marty • Fressie, Andrea • Gerdel, Greg • Gervais, Bob • Getty, Hal • Gingras, Andy • Gingras, Gerry • Giroux, Mark • Gonillo, Joe • Graves, Norm • Hague, Dave • Henson, Craig • Hickey, Brian • Holton, Skip • Houle, Bob • Hritz, Andy • Hunt, Brian • Hutchinson, Mark • Jaquith, Fran • Kadish, Ken • Kaldy, Jack • Kamuda, Joe • Kathan, Robert • Kiehle, Jim • Kinsler, Mike • Krawczyk, Dave • Ladd, Bill • Lamarche, Dick • Larose, Joe • Lattrell, Walt • Lee, Larry • Link, Ronnie • Loomis, Gary • Lovely, Phil • Loyzelle, Harry • Marchant, Charlie • Marshia, Jim • Martel, Frank • Martin, Steve • Maynard, Stu • McLaughlin, Bob • McLean, Stewart • McVicker, Richard • Memoe, Charles • Menoff, Joe • Meunier, Pat • Miles, Dennis • Mills, Charles • Neet, Doug • Noble, Spencer • O'Brien, Joe • Parker, Dan • Parro, Bob • Peirce, Dave • Phillips, Bill • Potter, Spencer • Pritchard, Marvin • Ratti, John • Reiber, Rob • Richburg, Ginny • Rippon, Dean • Roach, Pete • Roberge, Al • Rouselle, Dave • Ryan, Scott • Schmidt, Stew • Shaw, Bernie • Sheehe, John • Sihler, Gunther • Skilton, Steve • Stanley, Chuck • Stanley, Paul • Stetzel, John • Stevens, Bob • Stewart, Tim • Streeter, Greg • Taginski, Francis • Thompson, Art • Thurber, Bill • Titus, Greg • Titus, Rod • Tower, Bob • Wagner, Tom • Waite, Conrad • Walsh, Tom • Ward, Tom • Watson, Dave • Weber, Paul • Werner, John • West, Scott • Wilkens, Ed • Witalec, John • Wood, Mark • Woodruff, John • Wyman, Jim • Yelton, Everett • Zehnacker, Dave • Zehnacker, Jon • Zolnoski, Nicole

## 2000s

### CHALLENGES EMERGE FOR THE SPORT AND THE VSOA

The moniker “Soccer Central” has sometimes been applied to Champlain Valley Union High School (CVU) and with some justification. In just over 50 state D1 Boys’ title games, CVU has won 13 and been runnerup 12 times. This decade proved fruitful for both the boys’ and girls’ CVU teams. The boys won in 2002, ’03, ’04, ’05, ’06, ’07, and ’09. The girls continued their excellence from the 90s with titles in 2000, ’02, ’04, and ’06.

In the mid 1960s Hinesburg High School along with other local schools morphed into Champlain Valley Union High School. Dave Bremner was their coach in the 1960s and was succeeded by Peter Coffey for 22 years with Bob McLaughlin as his assistant. Bob Parker was the girls’ coach. Northfield’s Dan Shepardson arrived in 1995 and was JV coach for three years. Shepardson: “Yes, we have had our success, but we made history one year when we, as the #1 seed, lost to the #16 and last seed, on PKs. This was the first time that had ever happened in D1.”

The separation between the top teams in the north and those in the south, especially in D1, grew in this decade. Rutland would win its only title in 2000. Brattleboro’s last trip to the finals was in 1998.

D2 Boys saw Burr and Burton win three titles along with wins by U-32, Rice, Mt. Abe, and Harwood. In D3 Boys it was Peoples (two), Northfield (three), and Stowe (three) on top. Wilmington with two early titles in D4 Boys would be followed by Black River later with three.

In D2 Girls Lamoille took two early then Milton ended the decade with three crowns. Peoples would be the strongest team at the end of the decade with four wins in D3 while in D4 Wilmington won four early on then Black River took three as the decade closed.

The year 2000 brought Lyndon’s **Andrea Fressie** to the D1 Girls’ State Final between CVU and Essex, the first female VSOA



Jess Christian (l) and Sonja Duncan  
2011 First All-Female State Final Crew

member to ever work a final. Andrea would also officiate the D3 Girls' final in 2007. **Jessica Christian** and **Sonja Duncan** were the first all-female crew on a final in 2011: D2 Girls between Milton and Hartford. Jess Christian joined the VSOA in 1997. In 2000–2001 she was a USSF ref and attended the national tournament in western NY that year. She officiated in New Jersey from 2002–2006 and then returned to Vermont for the 2007 season. Jess has

been a high-school and college lacrosse official since 1998 and is currently the Vermont assignor for girls' lacrosse.

Sonja Duncan (see Joe Fiarkoski above) attended Missisquoi and played four years of varsity soccer. Her senior year she was chosen to play on the Twin State team. "I decided to be an official because I love the sport and wanted to be around it. I was a single mother and officiating wasn't quite the time commitment that coaching would have been. Being one of the few women was hard for a while but the more I stuck with it and my confidence grew I began to really enjoy it. Don't get me wrong: I thought once or twice about quitting. Doing the final with Jessica was very exciting also and I felt we did a great job."

This decade brought challenges to the sport of soccer and, thus, to the VSOA that remain as the future unfolds.

## CONCUSSIONS

Head injuries, particularly concussions, generated and continue to generate much attention at the national and local level. Media coverage of the big-time sports in North America included NFL retirees suing the league over misdiagnoses and mistreatment of

player concussions, and hockey's star player Sidney Crosby missing significant ice time from blows to the head.

It would be shortsighted to assume that if parents and players turn away from football due to its risks in the next 20 years that soccer would be a beneficiary with increased numbers trying out each fall. Soccer at all levels is not exempt from the scrutiny. According to two studies performed by the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital in 2007 and 2010, of all American high-school athletic activities, soccer ranks second only to football for highest concussion percentages. Moreover, overall concussion rates have risen over that time period from 8.9 percent to 13.2 percent of all high-school athletic injuries. In gender comparable sports where both boys and girls can participate, girls had a higher concussion rate than boys. In fact, girls' soccer only lags behind boys' football for the highest number of concussion-related injuries.

"Female soccer players are second only to football players in the number of concussions they report," according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "About 200,000 girls participate in high-school soccer every year. Most of that risk comes from one play: heading the ball. When two or more players leap to direct the ball with their heads, a number of collisions can occur with heads, shoulders, and elbows. From a neurological standpoint, nearly all are bad."

Both the NFHS and the VPA websites have information on concussions and training resources for coaches, players, and referees. Some states now require the completion of on-line concussion course for officials. Even the State of Vermont has weighed in with statutes about students and concussions. Sports Medicine Committees of the VPA and the NFHS continually study the issue along with the related topic: use of headgear.

In 2012 the NFHS posted a position statement regarding soccer headgear:

"The incidence of concussions in high-school sports, including soccer, has been of interest and concern to the NFHS SMAC for many years. Increased knowledge, awareness, and public attention

have produced major changes in management of concussions, and the NFHS SMAC continues to evaluate opportunities to improve safety and reduce concussion risks in all high-school sports. The definition and methodology for initial assessments for return-to-play decisions have evolved over the last several years. Instruments such as neuropsychological and balance testing have aided researchers and clinicians to better serve our students who have suffered concussions.

“The concept of padding the head to minimize the force delivered by a blow to the head has led to the development of several forms of headgear. Research has also shown that head injuries in soccer predominantly come from head-to-head, head-to-ground, head-to-goal post, and possibly ball-to-head on an inadvertent contact, instead of from the purposeful heading of the ball. Data on biokinetic reduction in force are available and a published study in the field has suggested a decrease in self-reported concussion symptoms with use of such headgear.

“At this time, the use of soccer headgear is permitted, but not required under the NFHS soccer rules. We know of no state that has chosen to require such use on a state-wide basis, though some schools or school districts may be doing so. Member state associations, school districts, schools, parents, and students are free to make their own assessments regarding the advisability of soccer headgear.”

What does all this mean for VSOA referees now and in the future? Explicit language now in the 2012 NFHS Soccer Rulebook emerged in this decade. Rule 3-1-c-3 states what to do, and the Points of Emphasis starting on page 69 explain the rationale. Explicit in all this wording is the need for extra vigilance by referees and implicit is the proverbial elephant in the room: What is the future for heading the ball in soccer, especially for players below the adult level?

## **CLUB SOCCER**

Youth and young adult sports in the United States differ from most of the rest of the world in that sports here are conducted largely through the educational system and not through a town, district, or



national club system. In the past if a kid from Smalltown, USA wanted to play soccer he played on the middle-school team or high-school team and maybe eventually a college team that provided the coaching and resources. That same kid from Smalltown, Belgium would walk over after school to the local sports club sponsored by a town business or provincial lottery and have roughly the same experience, albeit with more practices and touches of the ball than the American counterpart playing more 11v11 games. Once the American youngster's school season was over, that would be pretty much it for that sport until next year. The next season would bring a different sport or an activity or a part-time job or nothing at all.

Club soccer's growth and development are changing this landscape in both good and bad ways. The first area is out-of-season soccer play. Vermont high-school soccer for both genders is a fall sport. What has developed is indoor winter soccer at the club level in towns with indoor facilities and spring/summer club soccer outdoors. The Vermont Soccer Association focuses on the latter with its Vermont Soccer League. Quoting from their website: "The Vermont Soccer League was formed in 2004 by the merger of the Champlain Valley Youth Soccer League and the Green Mountain Soccer League. The VSL includes three Divisions. Division 1 includes premier or select clubs. Divisions 2 and 3 are made up of town-based clubs. Each division provides an opportunity for boys and girls between the ages of 8 and 18 to compete on a team against other teams of equal ability. The goal of the League is to provide opportunities to play soccer in a positive environment that promotes skill development, fair play, and good sportsmanship. All leagues start early in May and end in June." Highly skilled players can also try out for the ODP (Olympic Development Program) teams that play in the spring and summer.

The benefit of all this extra soccer is obvious: more skilled players, players who otherwise may be sitting on the couch in the off season. The drawbacks include overuse injuries from doing one activity month after month after month, possible burnout, and less

time to try or participate in another sport. Soccer's gain may be basketball or softball's loss. The reverse may be true as well in the winter or spring.

Another aspect of the club system not seen yet in Vermont, but unfolding in states like New Jersey, is when the club team competes for players with the high-school team during the same season. The club team's lure is better competition, more competition, and more visibility in the presence of college coaches.

At the very highest levels of play, this has led to a conflict between the NFHS and US Soccer. Earlier this year, US Soccer announced that it was moving to a 10-month season with its US Soccer Development Academy. Thus, the approximately 4,000 boys who compete in the 78-team Development Academy will no longer be able to play soccer on their high-school teams. In basketball, it's the effect of AAU teams. In hockey, prep schools or junior hockey act as feeder systems for D1 college programs. Parents get seduced by the thought of "college scholarships" and encourage the high-school player's move to the club team.

Bill Duval: "I have been a player, official, coach, parent of players, and spectator. It is out of control in many sports and for every kid who makes it to the bigs, there is another who either got turned off, or burned out, or just worn out. There is no question that indoor soccer has improved the skill of players, but at what cost? Hockey seems to be the leader in that characterization here in the north. Basketball is also a good example. College coaches don't bother to scout high-school teams anymore. It is all done in the summer at the AAU tournaments. Whenever there are highlights of local high-school basketball games on television, I pay attention to the stands. Usually there is just a handful of spectators, probably parents. Where is the student body?"

Need this growing club phenomenon be a concern for present VSOA officials looking to the future? Candidly, probably not unless the referee is also a parent of a player or a coach. Indoor games provide extra income during the offseason and a chance to officiate a brand of soccer that involves more touches of the ball and players

in closer proximity due to the limited spaces. Outdoor spring and sometimes summer games offer more off-season financial and improvement opportunities for referees and exposure to slightly different USSF rules and the Diagonal System of Control (three-man game).

## **WANTED: YOUNGER OFFICIALS AND FEMALE OFFICIALS**

Every August the VSOA gathers for four hours at a central location to conduct its annual required meeting. The affair combines instruction and education, the honoring of deserving members, and the social aspect of seeing friends after a year's break. VSOA's Secretary/Treasurer **Pete Roach**, as he has for the past 18 years, organizes and orchestrates the proceedings. After surviving Frank Martel's basketball coaching in 6th grade in Swanton, Pete and **Steve Lunna** played for Joe Fiarkoski at Mississquoi during the mid '70s, winning two D1 (then called class "L") championships. Pete played in the 1978 Twin State Cup game and began officiating in 1987 in high school and 1993 in college.

At some point those members who have been in the VSOA for at least 25 years are asked to step forward and greet newcomers to their ranks. It's a large group that makes its way from the grandstand to the middle of the gym floor. There's a wealth of soccer officiating experience standing there.

But the scene reveals some hard truths. The now-depleted stands facing this group contain very few young officials. The group in front includes no females, and the ones in the stands are few and far between. It's no secret: the VSOA population is graying and male. With the game getting quicker and more competitive all the time, with its leading officials getting older, and with a 50-50 split between boys' and girls' teams (74 teams each) in the state, reason dictates that the VSOA's ranks need to become younger and more gender balanced.

Dave Barra above alludes to this VSOA issue with the 30% attrition rate he sees in the VT USSF referee scrolls each year, most



John Woodruff: 2012 Vermont Coaches' Referee of the Year

of them younger refs (USSF refs can start at a younger age than VSOA's minimum of 18). The lure of picking up spending money blowing a whistle for a sport you love suddenly gets a lot less appealing when parents and coaches weigh in with opinions at best and vulgar behavior at worst.

Trouble with recruiting and retaining female officials is not unique to VSOA with its roster at 7% female. The New England Intercollegiate Soccer Officials Association has 5% female membership while the New Hampshire Soccer Officials Association has 6% female membership among its 307 officials. It is beyond the scope of this booklet to go into much depth exploring the issue but here are some questions that can be discussed on one's next trip with a fellow official. Do females pursuing career and family (i.e. children and child rearing) have less time at 4pm weekday afternoons than males of a similar age? But if this were true wouldn't there be fewer high-school female coaches? Is the nature of refereeing, where black-and-white decisions made are always disputed, often loudly and obstreperously, by at least 50% of the audience better suited to one gender than another? Researchers like Carol Gilligan or Mary Belenky might argue that women's decision making is more nuanced, more empathetic, and recognizes more shades of gray than men's which is more linear and dualistic (good/bad, black/white, right/wrong) and, if so, would this hinder or help women in their refereeing careers? Finally, are there procedures or policies that VSOA can do better to encourage women to apply and then stick around?

## **IMPROVEMENT THROUGH MODERN TECHNOLOGY**

Every one of the hundreds of soccer referees who have worn the VSOA patch over the past 50 years has carried an obligation to improve. Ways to make this improvement happen have varied little over much of this period.

Written tests, field tests, field observations, annual clinics presented by experienced officials, mentoring, and post-game debriefs with partners have all allowed officials with a desire to improve to do so.

The internet in the 2000s added another tool for improvement for referees.

The savvy net cruiser can gain access to instructional articles and videos posted by US Soccer, NFHS, and the National Intercollegiate Soccer Officials Association. Other unofficial sites have “rules forums” where play situations or rules and mechanics are discussed, and sometimes these discussions bring more heat than light. Yes, even the referee foibles found on YouTube have instructional merit upon occasion.

The VSOA is unlike the professional sports leagues where every game is filmed and individual officials and crews are then assessed by neutral paid observers who are most likely retired referees. The resources and qualified personnel (US Soccer went to full-time referees in 2007) just aren’t there, yet, for this to happen with high-school sports in Vermont and with the VSOA. But the day might not be too far off when game tapes or sections thereof are sent to a central site and germane plays or situations are downloaded each week or better yet each night onto a common website or “app.” Perhaps a mentor will be able to film a mentee with his Iphone/camera and send it to him with comments that night (see: need for younger, computer savvy officials above!).

These challenges to soccer and soccer officiating, as well as new ones now unforeseen, will keep the VSOA busy and on its toes for the next 50 years.

**VSOA Roster 2012 174 Active members**

Abrahamson, Bob • Abrahamson, Kirk • Adams, Marty • Adams, Randall • Aldrich, Andy • Allen, Bruce • Allen, Scott • Austin, Paul • Baker, Betty • Barney, Brian • Barra, Dave • Bayer, Bob • Bellinghiri, Jim • Bevier, Rob • Brown, Mike • Billings, Roland • Bittner, Brian • Blicharz, Stan • Blongey, Steve • Blodgett, Gary • Blythe, Dave • Boucher, Jim • Boyd, Peter • Brooks, Marty • Brown, Steve • Browne, George • Buzzell, Bob • Caldwell, Mike • Chadwick, Evan • Christian, Jessica • Clark, Dave • Clark, Mike • Clifford, Brandon • Cobb, Pete • Colby, Phyllis • Collins, Keith • Cook, George • Cook, Nathan • Cook, Tom • Culver, Don • Deegan, Ed • Delaney, Michelle • Denette, Chris • Desorda, Rick • Dewey, Randall • Dillon, Scott • Dingley, Jim • Doenges, Dave • Draper, Greg • Duncan, Sonja • Duval, Bill • Easton, Paul • Edwards, Bill • Etter, Miles • Evans, Eric • Falco, Jamie • Fatnassi, Ezzedine • Fillion, Dennis • Finer, Steve • Finnigan, Charlie • Finnigan, John • Fitzgerald, Matt • Fitzgerald, Parke • Fletcher, Bob • Ford, Jim • Floyd, Jamie • Gallus, Don • Gates, Ryan • Gill, Jason • Gingras, Andy • Gingras, Gerry • Goldsmith, Mick • Gonillo, Joe • Haigis, Kurt • Halden, Frank • Hall, Tom • Hammond, Dan • Harlow, Terry • Hartmann, Greg • Hawley, Aaron • Henson, Craig • Hickey, Brian • Holton, Skip • Houle, Bob • Hurlbert, Brian • Hussey, Corinna • Irwin, Brian • Iverson, Craig • Jandric, Elvir • Johnson, Kerry • Kamuda, Joe • Kathan, Robert • Kelley, Ernie • Kessler, Tom • Kinsler, Mike • Ladd, Bill • Lagasse, Scott • Lance, Bob • Laroche, Roland • Larose, Ron • Laudenslager, Bud • Lawrence, Kevin • Lebaron, Barry • Lewins, Scott • Lockyer, Janet • Lovely, Phil • Lunna, Steve • Mckinnon, Donna • Marshia, Jim • Martel, Frank • Martin, Karina • Maynard, Stu • McCaffrey, Mike • McVicker, Richard • Menoff, Joe • Miles, Dennis • Mitchell, Alan • Murchie, Jeff • Murphy, Kieran • Murphy, Scott • Neet, Doug • Nguyen, Chau • Nixon, Mike • Noble, Spencer • Noel, Roland • O'Brien, Joe • O'Hearn, Scott • Ogilvie, Rich • Oliver, Lorinda • Page, Keith • Peck, Steve • Pedone, John • Peirce, Dave • Pike, John • Pritchard, Marvin • Ranz, Roger • Reed, Jeff • Richardson, Bob • Riley, Shawna • Roach, Pete • Roelants, Rod • Ross, Karl • Royer, Mark • Ryan, Scott • Sanderson, Milt • Schmidt, Bruce • Schmidt, Stew • See, Peter • Sherman, Gary • Sihler, Gunther • Sivret, Bob • Sivret, John • Sjoblom, Glenn • Skilton, Steve • Slocum, Scott • Small, Steve • Smith, Perry • Stanley, Chuck • Starr, Jim • Stuart, Ben • Thompson, Art • Torino, Ken • Upham, John • Vallieres, Jay • Walsh, Tom • Waring, Gary • Watson, Dave • West, Scott • Weston, Carol • Whalen, Pat • Witalec, John • Wood, Mark • Woodruff, John • Zehnacker, Dave

**Life Members (Year of VSOA Entry)**

Abrahamson, Bob (63) • Brown, Dick (66) • Duval, Bill (69) • Fiarkoski, Joe (64) • Jasman, Charles (62) • Loyzelle, Harry (63) • Martel, Frank (71) • McWilliam, Jim (67) • Messier, Norm (64) • Mitchell, Wade (67) • O'Neill, Howard (62) • Page, Burns (69) • Schmidt, Stew (62) • Soderberg, Don (62) • Stevens, Bob (74) • Stewart, Dick (64) • Streeter, Fred (62)



