

**The History of the  
SOCCER SOUTH BAY REFEREES ASSOCIATION  
SSBRA**

The history of soccer in the South Bay has deep roots. In the early 1900's, soccer was played in small pockets of ethnic groups in separate communities. San Pedro, being a busy seaport, accounted for most of the area's soccer teams. Most of the area's young men had played soccer—"futball" in the homelands, either in schools or neighborhood clubs. Soccer games were played from Daniels Field in San Pedro, to the Los Angeles Coliseum, out into the San Fernando Valley, and eventually reaching down into Orange County regions. Daniels Field, one of the birthplaces of LA Soccer, was considered a "hellhole" to referee at in its early days, but its history superseded its condition. The Greater Los Angeles Leagues and the Pacific Soccer League Majors grew from these community clubs into a great number of teams stretching out over the Southland.

Most of the soccer officials that did these games were associated with the USSF and the Mexican League of Referees. Many of our "founding referees" grew up through these organizations. The Greater Los Angeles League was organized and run under the "indestructible" Tony Morejon and his ever-present "sidekick", Chuck Bowerman. Of the SSBRA original roster, there are only four referees still "active" within our Association. They are Frank Troeger, Bob Hildreth, Dick Lujan and Walt Hoovler. Between them, they are "older" than the US of A, but younger than the Plymouth Rock.

From the foundation built in the 1900's, came the evolution of a new organization — The American Youth Soccer Organization, AYSO. Hans Sterle and a few friends who coached these teams started the AYSO concept in our own "backyard" of Torrance in 1964. It was organized in Palos Verdes in 1969. And our own Frank Troeger was one of their initial "referee"-volunteers who could "blow a whistle" as Frank put it. In 1970, Frank was "elevated" to the Chief Referee of the Margate area. In 1971, the girl's AYSO League was started up in North Torrance. Currently, AYSO has grown to numbers reaching over 50,000 teams and nearly 700,000 players, 40% of which are girls.

With the kids now playing soccer all around the South Bay area, the adults soon decided they needed to play also. In the mid and late 1960's, men's teams were formed. Employees from companies such as Northrup, Hughes, Garrett Airesearch, TRW, and Air Force, to name a few, formed teams of their own to compete against each other. With a field of their own, TRW created their Recreation League and some co-ed teams, and played their games off of El Segundo Boulevard. The organizer of those TRW games was Bill Mason, one of our referees, an AYSO Instructor and National leader. These teams were the frameworks for many of the Men's Leagues that formed in the South Bay areas. The earliest teams remembered were: Fram, Pv Soccer Club, Riviera, Montemalaga, PV Rovers, Antarctica, Northrup, German American Eagles, Yugoslavs and others that have been long forgotten. As recalled, Miller Collins was the coordinator for the team managers. He and Frank Troeger, our referee assignor covered 4-6 games on a weekend. The 1<sup>st</sup> Registrar of the Peninsula League was Mrs. Marcelite Troeger.

Among the earlier referees were Frank Troeger, Dick McElwee, George Faragallah, Bob Hill, Bob Hildreth, Duane Johnson, Pablo Diaz, Dick Lujan, Walt Hoovler, Joe Mardesic, Pete Snodgrass, Bill Houghton, Rich Molony, Fritz Schmid, Len Marabella, John Holmes, Inca Nash, Waldo Rodman, Jack Demcak, Brian Urwin, Dan Matulich, Lonnie Lasman, Fred Nierath and Bill Cottle. Many of these referees worked with the USSF affiliated Leagues on weekends and weren't always available. Coverage was usually a 2-man system or 1 referee many times because of availability. Inca Nash, in later years did a high-level game in South America, Panama, as the center referee, a lady referee in those days was extremely rare. Inca was very good and received praise for a job well done! I would be remiss if I didn't mention a man who contributed much to the safety of soccer and was an avid referee. Joe Bonchonsky saw that the soccer goal posts were dangerous in the early days of the AYSO and made heavy metal posts for nearly all the fields in the South Bay area. These goal posts

were/are used by the AYSO, high schools, Men's/Ladies' and Club teams. Some are still standing today. Joe has two sons, Joe Jr. and Andy, which also refereed for us at the youth levels and did a good job.

As participation of women increased in the sport of soccer, a new organization was formed to accommodate the increasing demand. In 1974, the United States of America Ladies Soccer Organization was formed with 4 ladies divisions. This was the first organized Ladies League in the USA. The order of the organizers were: Bill Hughes, Waldo Rodman, Lou Kaufmann, and Bob Fraser. Bob Fraser affiliated the ALSO with the USSF in 1990. Again Frank Troeger was "drafted" by the Ladies League to provide referees on the weekends. For the most part the 2-man system was used. Meanwhile, the youths were organizing into Club teams and becoming affiliated with the USSF.

In these early years of 1970, Frank Troeger was assigning the referees he could contact to do games for numerous men's team, ladies teams and a few youth teams. Frank's "group" was a rag tail outfit doing games by phone and who called first got the referees. The PV Soccer Club, dissatisfied with the arrangement, called a meeting with George Faragallah. George came up with an idea, called Frank Troeger, and laid down the framework for an association devoted to serve the needs of Youth Club Soccer and the Men's/Ladies' Leagues of the South Bay areas. In early 1976, after a few meetings at George Faragallah's home, Frank Troeger, George Faragallah and a few others, with the legal aid of one J. B. McGuire, developed a set of by-laws along with the name for our Association — Soccer South Bay Referee Association.

The 1<sup>st</sup> SSBRA Board was:

- *Chairman of the Board* – George Faragallah
- *President* – Frank Troeger
- *Vice President* – Bill Cottle
- *Secretary* – Elise Eggertson
- *Treasurer* – Lennie Faragallah
- *Chief Instructor* – Bill Mason
- *Assignment Secretary* – Hal Eggertson
- *Referee's Agent* –
- *Delegate* –
- *Past President* –

This New Board called an open meeting for all interested referees. About twenty referees showed up at South High School and we were in business. Since then, through training and recruitment we've grown to a large association that handles hundreds of games on Holiday weekends and thousands of games since our "birth". The incorporation of the SSBRA was arranged and paid for by George Faragallah. The original group also decided not to affiliate with the USSF, although members were encouraged to do so and did. The SSBRA badge was designed, and has been redone numerous times since inception, is now only worn in non-affiliated games. Our basic agreement was to cover the area south of the 405 and west of the 110. In the first year, the membership grew to over fifty referees. We have since grown to a body of 122 referees.

Over the years, by-laws have changed and dropped the Chairman of the Board position to an honorary position; the Referee's Agent and Delegate were deleted, as well as the Honorary Chairman later on. We had a Chief Referee for a few years, Frank Troeger, but that was dropped also as our Association congealed into a more compact group. George Faragallah, under the direction of Frank Troeger, filed for Incorporation as a Tax-Exempt Organization in 1980. It took Frank four long years to finally get over all the hurdles of paperwork, but it had finally been accomplished. George Faragallah later went on to the State Referee Administrator and other high levels before his retirement. Until the age of computers, all assignments were done by pencil and paper and long hours by Frank Troeger, Bob Hildreth, Karston Gronwald and "Dr." Billy Cooke. "Dr." Cooke became the first paid SSBRA assignor, with fees being charged the Leagues. Bill Cook is now the paid "computer guru assignor".

The past presidents of our Association have been:

- *Frank Troeger – 1976/1980*
- *Dick McElwee – 1980/1982*
- *Dick Lujan – 1982/1984*
- *Pablo Diaz – 1984/1985*
- *Bob Hildreth – 1985/1987*
- *Joe Robelotto – 1987/1989*
- *Bill Cook – 1989/1990*
- *Joe Robelotto – 1990/1994*
- *Ed Lambert – 1994/1996*
- *Vladimir Wergeles – 1996/1999*
- *Larry Stern – 1999/2004*
- *Keith Gendler – 2004/*

Over the past 30 years, our Association and members have covered games in the following:

- *South Bay Peninsula Soccer League*
- *United States of America Ladies Soccer Organization*
- *PSL Jr's.*
- *South High School Christmas Tournaments*
- *Tri-Valley Women's Soccer League*
- *El Camino Real Soccer League*
- *Coast Soccer League*
- *Pomona Women's Soccer League*
- *Diamond Bar Women's Soccer League*

Our members have officiated in other affiliated games such as:

- *FIFA games, International games*
- *Professional and semi-professional games*
- *Pacific Soccer League Majors*
- *NCAA/STATE and local and Jr. College games*
- *High School games*
- *AYSO games*

SSBRA members have officiated in thousands of tournament games over our lifetime.

- *SBPSL year-end tournament games*
- *USALSO Labor Day and Memorial Day tournament games*
- *Pomona Ladies Memorial Holiday tournament games*
- *World Youth Tournament Games*

Dick Barkhuis organized these South Side Tournaments, in the early 1980's for boys U14 to U19. Dick Barkhuis was a leader of many great teams from the Fram Soccer Club, having their own field at Nansen created many opportunities for our members to do very spirited games.

We were privileged to officiate great teams from Asia, Europe, North and South America for five years. These games took place at South High School with great festivities surrounding them.

Dick Barkhuis went on to coach his Fram Club team of boys U19 to a National Championship.

- *O'Rourke Memorial Weekend Cup games*

- *Semi-Valley tournament games*
- *Mission Viejo tournament games*
- *Diamond Valley tournament games*
- *Thousand Oaks tournament games*
- *ECRSL tournament games*
- *UC Irvine tournament games*
- *Long Beach Policemen's Olympic tournament games*
- *L. A. Coliseum tournament games*
- *Watts Summer Games tournaments*
- *Las Vegas Tournament games*
- *California State Youth Cup games, coordinated over by an ex SSBRA referee Leo Umana*
- *National Youth Cup games*
- *Other tournaments at the Rose Bowl, Home Depot Center, Los Angeles-Orange-San Diego-San Bernadino and Santa Barbara Counties*

Many of these tournaments ran for 2-3 day weekends covering 5-10 fields with total games running near 300 played from 7am to 7pm.

Along with our hundreds of referees that have been members over our 30 years we have been privileged to have US National referees — Billy Cooke, Jim Keating, Heinz Wohlmerath and Toros Kibritzian — a FIFA referee working along with us. Some of us were lucky enough to have run lines for these referees at the L.A. Coliseum and elsewhere. They often did “friendly” International games at local schools and our own State level referees had the honor of running lines for them. This also has been the case during playoffs in the Greater Los Angeles League and the Pacific Soccer League Majors.

Such great speakers as have honored our monthly meetings:

- *John O. Best* – FIFA Referee
- *Toros Kibritzian* – FIFA Referee
- *Kevin Stott* – FIFA Referee
- *George Noujaim* – FIFA AR
- *George Savic* – FIFA AR
- *Steve Davidson* – FIFA AR
- *Heinz Wohlmerath* – National Referee, Instructor, Assessor, FIFA Inspector
- *“Dr.” Billy Cooke* – National Referee
- *Jim Keating* – National Referee
- *Dio Cordero* – National Instructor, Assessor and numerous State and Local positions
- *Sigi Schmid* – UCLA coach-National Championships, Galaxy coach-NASL Championship
- *Paul and Larry Harris* – AYSO officials and book writers

At the time of this historical perspective, our Association has grown to 122 members. We have numerous Emeritus State referees, State level referees, referees and youth trainees. Our ages range from the 70's on down to our youths who are still in their “teens”. Meetings are still held monthly and training is still a major topic.

In the “computer age”, we now have our own website, homepage, and everything you need to know from today's news to next week's refereeing schedules. This “computerization” was done through the coordination of our President Keith Gendler and Lee Jordan, our “Website Master”. The trials and tribulations of our Assignment Secretary Bill Cook are made much easier by the computer and the cooperation of the Soccer Leagues that we serve.

Our present Board of Directors is as follows:

- *President*-----Keith Gendler
- *Vice President*-----Ed McClure
- *Secretary*-----Warren Howell
- *Treasurer*-----Tom Mallen
- *Past President*-----Larry Stern
- *Assignor*-----Bill Cook
- *Web Master*-----Lee Jordan
- *Training*-----Heidi Peters
- *Membership*-----Steve McCall

A synopsis of the year 2005 scheduling by Bill Cook is as follows:

1. In the year 2005 about 1900 soccer games were assigned.
2. A scheduling of 3-person teams was done with an astonishing 99.8% result.
3. The 2005/2006 CSL soccer season covered 975 games using 120 different referees.
  - a. 61 referees got to do the U9/U10 games. These were a 1-person system; many consider these “prime games”.
  - b. 69 referees were assigned to the U16 or above games.
  - c. 45 of the above referees were assigned to the U17 and above games.
4. On a regular weekend of 80-100 CSL club games, along with PSL and J-Leagues, Bill will spend about 6 to 7 hours on his initial assignments with another 4 to 5 hours reassigning and rescheduling.
5. On weekends with a 2-day Tournament(s), Bill will spend another 7 to 8 hours entering the game information into the computer system (he doesn't have to do this with regular CSL games) and assigning the Tournament. He will also usually spend 4 to 5 hours reassigning.
6. On weekends with a 3-day Tournament(s), Bill will spend 8 to 9 hours to initially set up the assignments and 4 to 5 hours rescheduling.

One has to wonder, how many hours were spent by the “old assignors” with pencil/erasers and pages of paper filling in game spots. Tournaments were done on newspaper size sheets and posted in the Referee tent before the 1<sup>st</sup> game. Telephone calls were made to confirm and reschedule and balance assignments and reassignments. The US mail was rarely used because the delays were too long and how many assignments would be lost in the “mailbag”. Many, many times it was a nightmare. But looking back, it was all done with much cooperation.

Here is a brief from Frank Troeger and Bob Hildreth on assignment in the “good old days”.

*One of the major differences was that game schedules were typically late in preparation and subject to many, many last minute changes. Much the same was true of our referees' availability, since many of our member's refereed college and affiliated games, whose assignments also came late. As mentioned before, first caller got referees first. The result was that almost all of our assignments were done starting Thursday night via telephone. The wives grew to recognize our voices, and often they would take the assignments. And remember, this was before telephone answering machines were common. Later, we were able to get the commitment from most of our referees to service our games first; this became a sort of honor system. And then there were the tournaments, particularly the Ladies' Tournament out in Pomona/Diamond Bar. As the result of the tournament director trying to get as many teams as possible into the competition, we frequently didn't have a firm schedule until the week before and changes the morning of the tournaments. And this was for a two/three-day tournament on six or eight fields with games running on an hourly schedule from early morning until nightfall. Bob Hildreth “taxied” referees between fields some days. This was necessary because the Referee “refreshment/food/drink” tent was at the main fields. With temperatures often above 100 degrees, we were fortunate we were young; to the best of our knowledge, only one referee ever had to come off because of the heat. Some of our referees were willing and able to do 8 or 10 (40 minute) games in a day.*

*In these tournaments many referees stayed overnight locally. The rooms were paid for and the evening social gatherings and pool parties were abundant since the teams stayed at the same places.*

*Our local 3-day Ladies Labor Day Tournaments at Columbia Fields were a little easier once the 8-10 hours of initial scheduling was completed. Phone calls, cancellations rescheduling on Friday night was minimal. Being so local, many referees could just pop into the fields and arrange for trades. Pablo Diaz earned his moniker of "hot dog king" this way. Many came for lunch as V.W., Vladimir Wergeles, handled the Referee Tent food and cold drink setup. Bob Fraser and his wife Fran were the best of possible hosts for many tournaments there.*

*As the tournaments became larger, Frank gave up trying to do them himself and solicited help, one year with Dick Lujan, then several years with Bob Hildreth. Bob would bring 3 big steaks and a bottle of wine and as the time inched closer to midnight began, the schedules, steaks and wine would be finished. Frank's wife, Marcelite, thankfully did the cooking. Then Bob Hildreth worked around the same problems. Later Karsten and Cookie managed to schedule everyone, sometimes with the help of Joe Robelotto. Just about all of these assignments were done via the telephone, as e-mail was not yet developed. I don't remember any significant snafus, and to our members' credit, very few no-shows.*

So as it was in the beginning, it remains today that the purpose for which this Association, the SSBRA, was created was and is to promote the game of soccer throughout our community by encouraging a better understanding of the Laws of the Game. We will always maintain a high level of soccer officiating. We will continue our recruiting pursuits, train and evaluate our referees so as to supply dedicated officials to all Soccer Leagues that request our support.

RWH/FT