

## Soccer Coaches & Boosters-

By now, you have likely heard that TCSRO has called for a work stoppage by referees starting September 28, 2023 if we do not have a deal in place with the Metro AD Committee. This morning, an e-mail was sent to all athletic directors in the twin cities urging them to contact Keith Cornell at STMA with whom we have been negotiating. We want you, the coaches, parents, and fans, to understand why this is happening.

### **Why the Work Stoppage?**

First, this work stoppage is about the student-athletes and what they deserve as much as it is about referees. High school soccer players have suffered as the number and quality of experienced referees has shrunk. TCSRO, and referees generally, want schools to stop shortchanging the student athletes by failing to help retain referees. Without that, the games will be understaffed. We have been losing referees for years and quality has been impacted by the poor pay.

We are losing experienced referees to college or other events that simply pay better. A college referee is getting paid more than double a high school game. There are very few of us left who do both college and high school.

We like officiating. We want to officiate. We want student athletes to have qualified, competent, and caring referee crews to make the game safe, fair, and fun! Referees have continued to work despite the pay and conditions for years. We have stepped up. It's time for the schools to do the same.

The TCSRO leadership team has been dedicated to this cause. We know many of you personally between the four of us. Two of us are currently USSF Referee Coaches. Two of us are former national referees. Two of us are former state referees. We have all worked in the state tournament including the 2022 girls 3A final, the 2022 boys 3A final, and the 2021 boys 2A final in addition to NCAA play-offs. We officiate high school and started TCSRO because we care about the experience of the players and the coaches.

We have also been the *only* group to provide any training or education to high school referees. Please check out our TCSRO Education Page.

### **Referees have already been waiting a year**

Second, referees have waited long enough. TCSRO attempted last year to notify ADs that referees are very unhappy last year and even offered to help assign. We proposed minimal fee increases (eliminating the DH penalty) that some ADs felt that this just could not be met. We had only a handful of metro ADs that responded. After Merry Hilger notified us, we were initially told by Keith Cornell last fall that because we were not assignors, we would not be at the table. After our membership stepped up and called and e-mailed him, we got a seat at the table.

However, we now find ourselves in the same position we were in a year ago, and we do not believe a deal is coming if we do not get one done before the end of this season.

In July 2023 and September 2023, the Metro AD committee was notified that the referees may stop working games. It is unfortunate it has come to this because TCSRO believes we are, in fact, very close to actually getting a deal done if the Metro ADs will re-engage.

### **Referees have been poorly paid for years**

Third, we have found many coaches and others are very surprised to learn how low referee pay is for high school. The metro fee schedule was set by unknown persons and without a representative of the referees. Unlike other sports, schools have directly hired assignors. It is not clear who set the current fee schedule, but at least two of the metro area assignors told us they were never asked anything about the fee schedule.

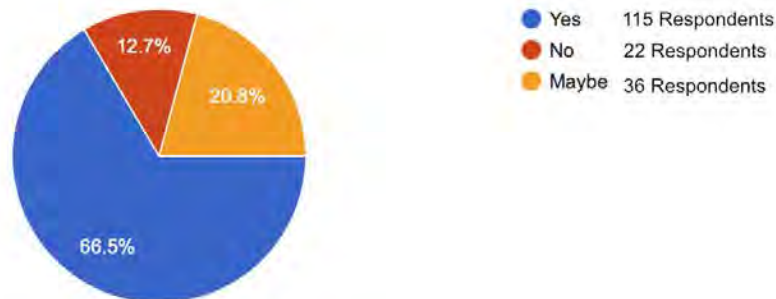
Referees saw a \$4 increase between 2019 and 2023: from \$75 to \$79—and one of those dollars went to increase assignor fees pay 20%. In 2023, referees are scheduled to be paid \$79 per game. However, referees are charged \$6 by the school to pay the assignor reducing the rate. Furthermore, schools impose a double header penalty and further reduce the rate by \$15. For doubleheader, referees do not receive the full \$158. Instead, they receive \$131—about 17% less than the scheduled single game fee. Furthermore, in constant dollars (adjusted for inflation), referees are earning less today than they were in 2012.

In August, nearly two-thirds of referees indicated a willingness to stop working as a result of the pay.

If high schools are not willing to raise the high school fees to \$96 per game, would you be willing to stop officiating games until fees are increased?

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173 responses



## **A reasonable fee proposal**

Fourth, TCSRO’s proposal is reasonable and will help referees simply catch-up to where we should already be and recruit back some of the experienced officials we have lost. We are asking the Metro AD Committee to approve the following:

### ***Fee Structure for Referees***

<u>Fee Per Official Per Game</u>	<u>2024-25</u>	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>	<u>2027-28</u>	<u>2028-29</u>
Varsity (3 officials)	\$90	\$100	\$105	\$110	\$115
Varsity (2 officials)	\$100	\$110	\$115	\$120	\$125
JV/9/8 (2 officials)	\$72	\$82	\$87	\$92	\$97
JV/9/8 (1 official)	\$82	\$92	\$97	\$102	\$107

### ***Assignor Fees***

Referees will not be responsible for paying the assignor. As long as schools select the assignor, then schools will bear 100% of the cost for assigning fees. All fees above will be paid *to the referee*. No discounts will be taken for assigning fees. (While this seems to be quite likely and even desired, the Metro AD committee has not confirmed it.)

### ***Elimination of the Double Header Penalty***

The Double Header Penalty will be eliminated. Referees will not be penalized for working two games. They will be properly compensated for working each game. (While this seems to be quite likely, the Metro AD committee has not confirmed it.)

## **Without a deal, referee numbers and quality will get worse**

Sixth, if there is no deal reached, TCSRO worries that we will continue to see referees disappear, and we will end up with assignors scheduling only two referees. If this happened on the biggest match-up in the state so far this year, what is going to happen to other games? On September 9, 2023, the *Star Tribune* article “No. 2 Wayzata pulls away from No. 1 Minneapolis Washburn in boys soccer” that “The two-referee crew dealt often with questioned calls and extracurricular physicality.” Is this what schools and ADs want? Is this what the student-athletes deserve?

## **Conclusion**

You can read more information about the history of the negotiations and fee advocacy at <https://tcsro.org/referee-fee-advocacy>. As they saying goes, without the referees, it’s just recess. *Good* referees are an integral part of safety, fun, and fairness. If we—collectively—are going to help solve the shortage we face, now is the time.

We believe we are close to and should already have a deal in place. Please e-mail Keith Cornell at St. Michael Albertville at: [keithc@mystma.org](mailto:keithc@mystma.org) and tell him the Metro ADs need to approve the deal. We would ask that you also notify your own ADs and request they contact Keith.