We Want YOU to become a Ref!

By Tom Gullen

This article is for you, the 15-year-old boy or girl, who wants a few dollars in your pocket.

This article is for you, the 42-year-old Hockey Dad who does not like the referees in his kid's games: the critical type who thinks this is a college game even though they are 10.

And this letter is for me, the 59-year-old man who sees that the demand for referees far exceeds the supply. Get off the couch.

We need referees. We need you.

There is a critical shortage of referees in all youth sports, including hockey. Abuse is one of the primary reasons; to many it's just not worth the abuse. Our club is not innocent in this regard. I have seen it, and I am seeing it more frequently. Just because you paid your child's fee does not entitle you to yell at a referee. I said earlier this year that every game we have two referees at is a victory. Our Mite travel league had 15 games without referees and NO referees for our playoffs.

We need referees. We need you.

Yes, I know I am repeating myself.

To you High School aged players. What other job can you find that will pay you $25-$30 per hour? What other job can you pick your own hours, pick the location, time, and level that you want to work?

And I might add, what other job can you have that will teach you so much about the real world?

I spent eight years of my life being a caddy. You see, as a kid I wanted to play hockey. My Dad, was either too cheap, or too influenced by the depression to pay for it. Something about earning your own way was his lesson. So, at age 12 my Dad dropped me off at Thorngate Country Club and told me to get a job because it would be my job to pay for half of the fee (and it was expensive back then also).

I often felt that most everything you need to know you can learn by carrying a golf bag; respect, sportsmanship, eye contact, yes sir, yes ma'am, please, thank you, how to deal with lots of different types of people, the hand shake on the 18th green. All great parts of the game of golf. I also saw the negative; it was my fault when a ball was lost after being hit into the trees, it was my fault when I gave the member a 7 iron and it ended up in the bunker short. It was me that moved in someone's backswing. It was easy to blame the caddy.

There are many similarities between being a ref and being a caddy. You will be blamed for a loss. You will be expected to be perfect. People will forget that you are a High School

kid, trying to make a few bucks. They will forget that you are doing this because you love the game. You want to give something back to the game; to help young kids learn and play this great game. You like to keep skating and being a part of the game.

You will be criticized by coaches, by scorekeepers, by players, by people that really should have no involvement in the game, and parents in the stands. That can be a powerful learning tool if you let it. **You are in charge, not them.** You are there to make sure the game is played the right way. Every once in a while, you will ref a game that will be played hard and fair and you will be a big part of it.

The Winnetka Hockey Club is one of the largest in Illinois. Unfortunately, we produce very few referees. We want to change that by next season. We want more referees of all ages including me, Tom Gullen. We can be part of the problem or be part of the solution.

We want you to become a referee! Clinics for next season start in August.

www.ihoa.com