

THREE REFEREES ON the FIELD, TROF

Joe Bonchonsky of Torrance, California introduced three referees on the field, each with a whistle, during the WATTS SUMMER GAMES (games between urban and suburban high school aged players), and not one yellow or red card was required. The TROF reffing system, during a professional game, was reviewed by Ken Aston of FIFA and he acknowledged that the improved fluidity of the game was excellent. Joe Bonchonsky's words indicate the need for such a system.

“The advances on the state-of-the-art in tactics and techniques by the highly skilled, finely tuned player and the technically-educated coach have placed soccer into the modern-day world of science. The inner game of soccer has advanced tremendously and today ‘total soccer’ is coming into being at all levels. While players and coaches have advanced because of their own unbridled ingenuity, the referee remains in the archaic times of soccer reffing systems and the big question is, ‘How long will the sport of soccer be able to live with the old system of refereeing?’ The attacking fullback and the quickening pace of the cameras have too often found the referee allowing the injustices on the field prevailing over the efforts and artistry of better skilled players and coaches. The success of soccer in the future may be fully dependent upon the mechanics of the referees. With TROF, the player artists on the field will actually experience less whistling, knowing that the guilty will be punished and that the skills can be exhibited. When every intentional foul that should be called, is called, less fouls will be called.”

The TROF system has been used in a variety of settings. It has been used for pre-season games by local NASL teams, in the largest and best known high school tournament in California, and by AYSO in the training of a new referee with two experienced refs on the field of play to avoid “botching” a game by a single learning referee.

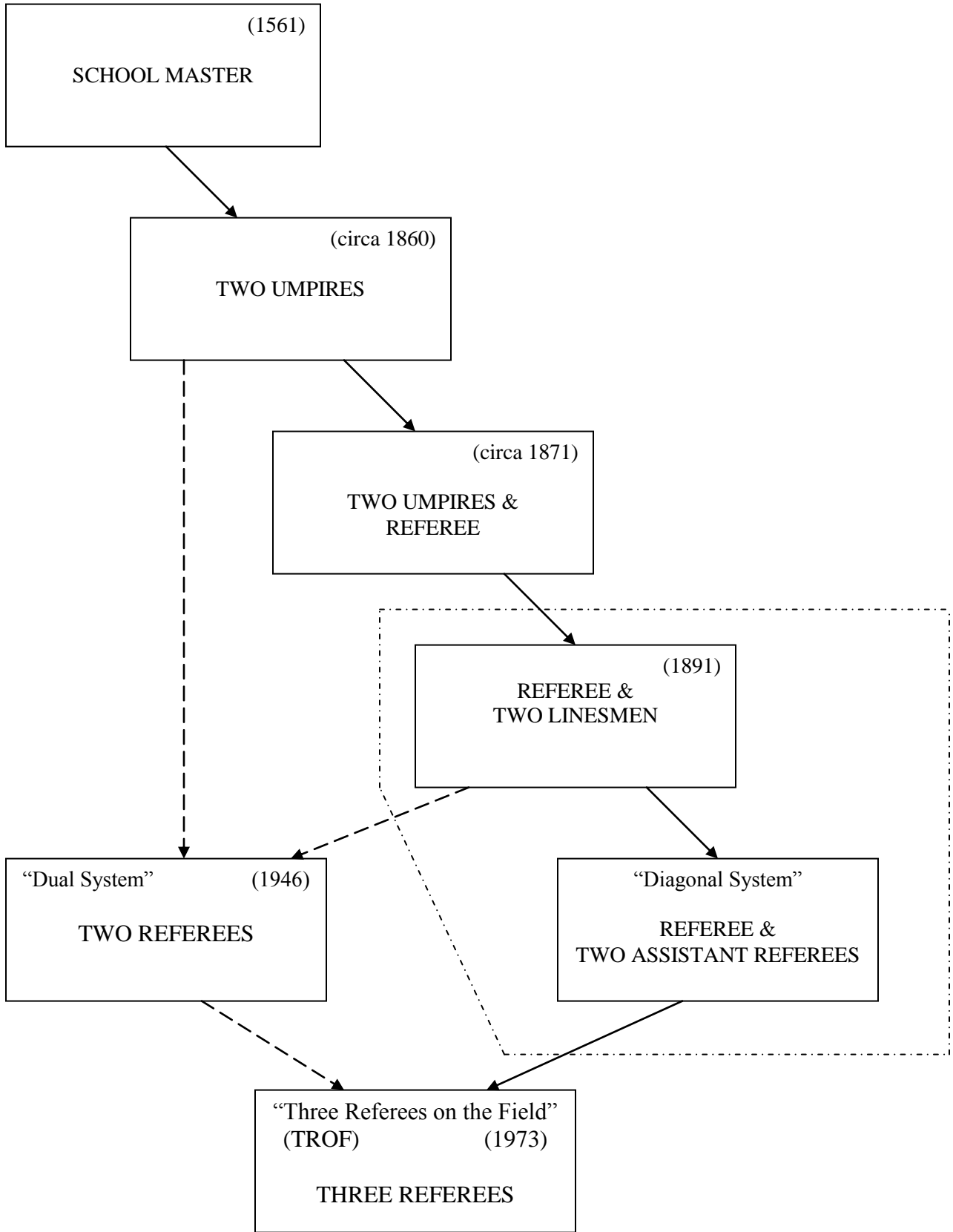
More than ever, the TROF system emphasizes the “team” effort in refereeing. The three referees, all with whistles, will cooperate to benefit from the advantages of the system. The middle referee, shares full responsibility with the wing referees. Wing referees are fully aware of their usual duties involving goal-line decisions, off-side, and out-of-bounds. Wing referees closer to the goal are best positioned to determine a ball crossing the line.

In the case of a double whistle, pre-game signals are determined and the ref decision nearest the infraction is acknowledged as decisive.

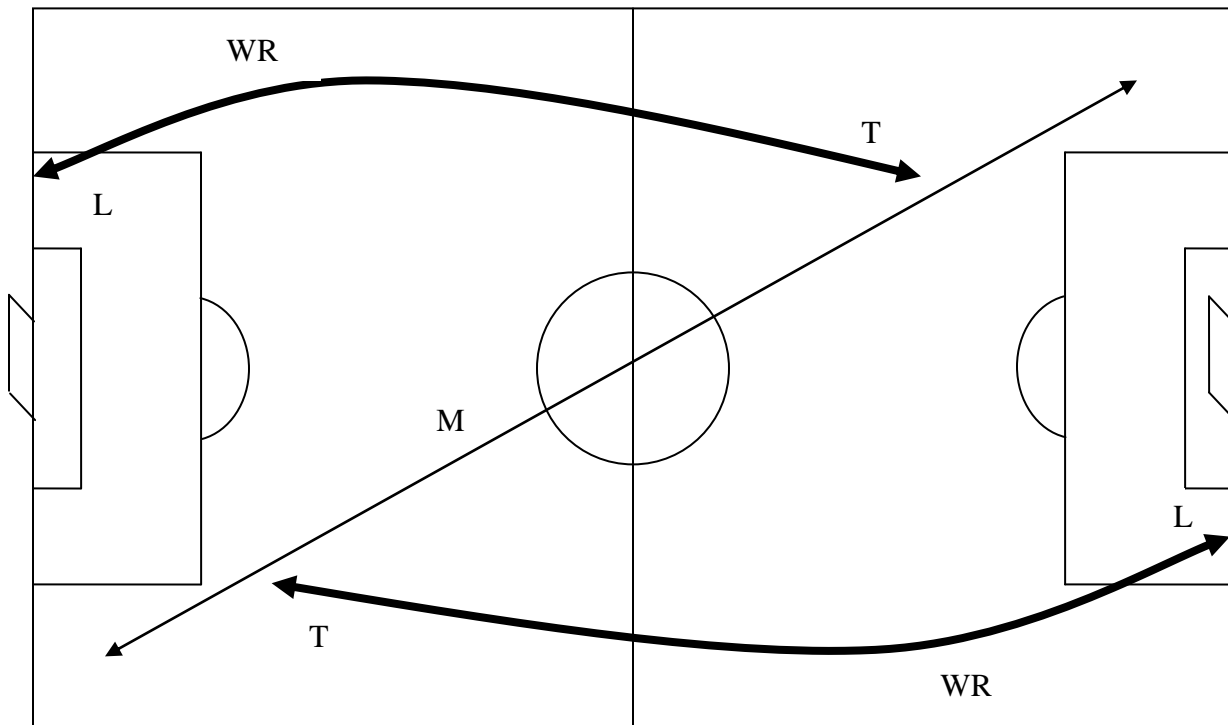
The whistle in the hand of the wing referee means that the game is stopped when it should be; when an intentional infraction occurs. Also, the middle referee will be able to concentrate on the important aspects of play without the worry of fouls unseen.

The vast majority of referees who have used TROF have experienced a lessening of fouls, fewer offside problems, less dissent, more goals scored, and acceptance by players, coaches and spectators. Most important, older referees extend their careers.

The soccer reffing mechanics in TROF solves a major problem at all levels simply because the player knows that he can not be unseen.



BASIC COVERAGE



M = *Middle* Referee. Runs on the diagonal.

The Wing Referees (WR). One is designated *Lead* Referee (L) and the other as *Trail* Referee (T). These roles change instantaneously depending upon the direction of play.

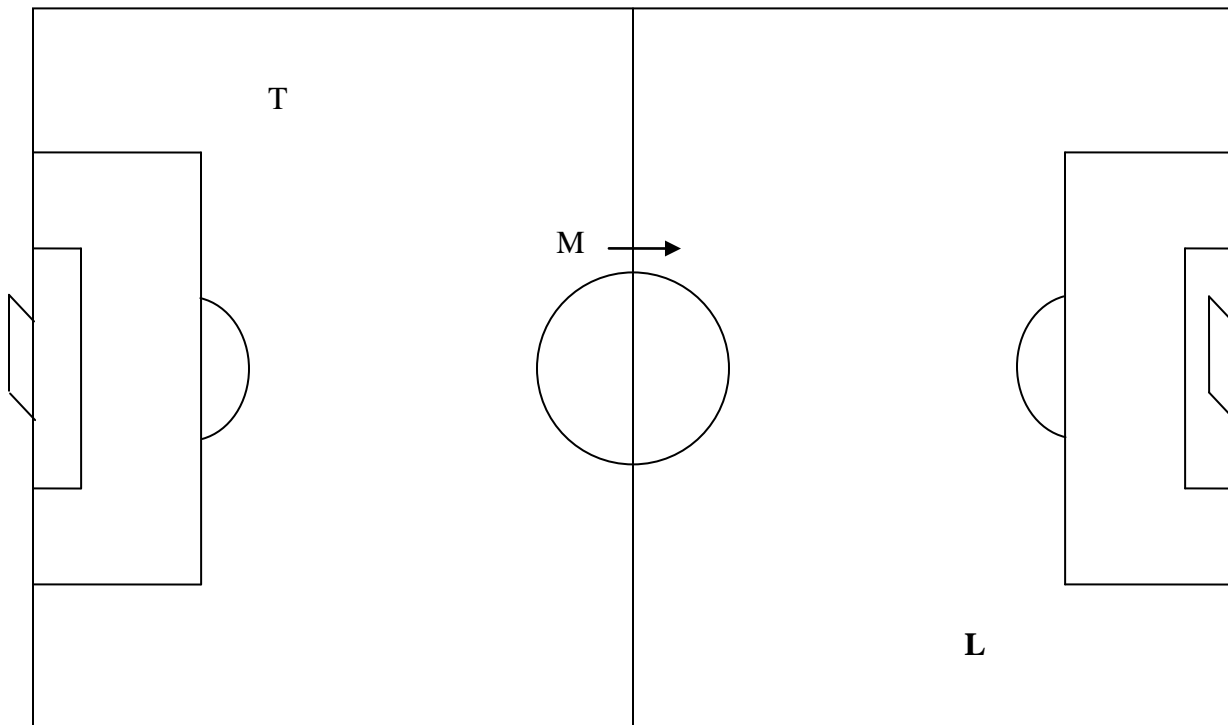
TROF ADVANTAGES IN GENERAL.

The location of each referee with respect to the action around the ball allows for every intentional foul to be seen. While there are many automatic mechanical advantages, even the coverage in the coffin corner (ends of the diagonal) is solved.

Historically, a solution is long overdue for the best of refereeing in soccer at all levels. The TROF system has been tested strongly and the elimination of the unseen foul by the fact that the location of each referee provides optimum coverage and the player is fully aware diminishes the foul player's intent. Each referee has prime responsibility for the exact instant of the intentional foul that has minimized the offensive tactics and skills of the players.

It is intended herein to present the mechanics (location of refs to the ball) of refereeing in the TROF system and the advantages that are inherent at all levels of the sport of soccer. It is the equality of each of the three referees that provides fluidity in the game and therein the advantages to a more attack-minded eleven. The recent past of primarily defensive soccer has been advantaged by the gains in committing the intentional defensive foul and the subsequent defensive re-set. With an L referee nearby, the defensive player will fully recognize the disadvantage of a direct kick near the penalty area where many fouls go un-called.

KICK-OFF



M whistles for the kickoff. He stands at the halfway line closest to his diagonal. His position allows him to determine:

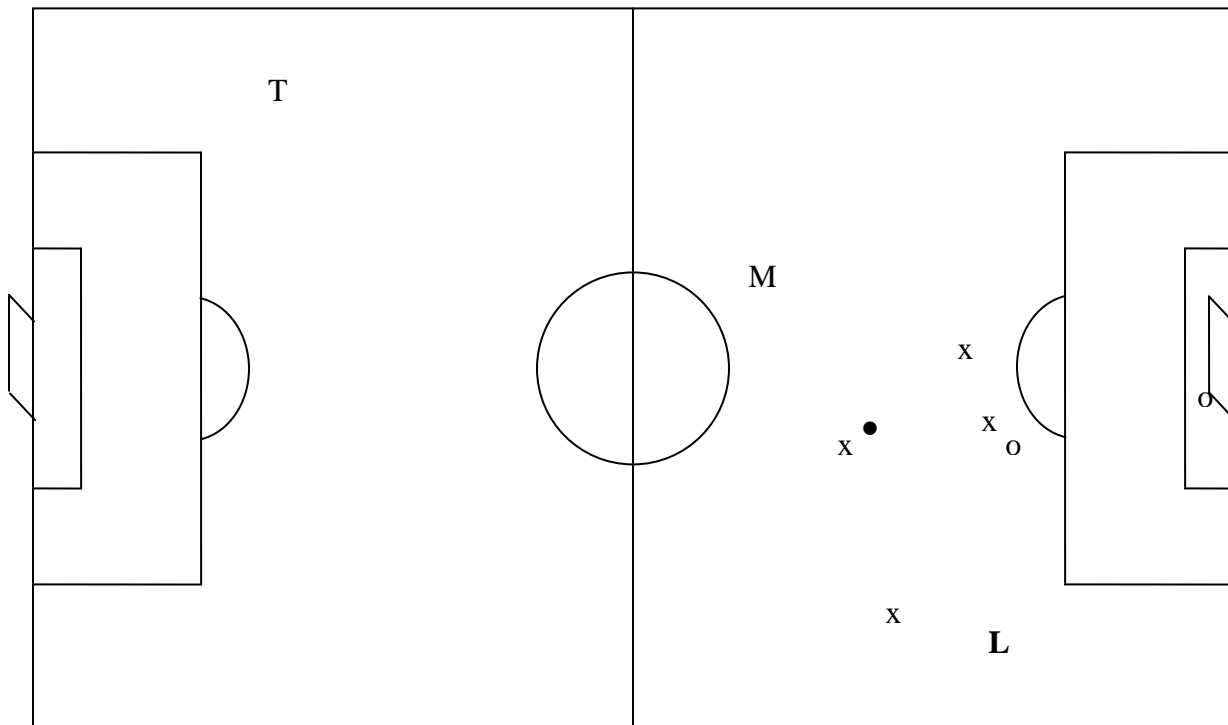
- Ball being kicked forward.
- Ball traveling its circumference
- Offense/Defense play.
- Defensive encroachment into the center circle.

L is approximately 5 to 10 yards from the touchline. He is in position to monitor play as well as conveniently pick up the offside.

T is 5 to 10 yards in from the touchline and about 25 yards out from the goal line. He is tracking closely enough to effectively monitor play, yet has a sufficient margin of safety to keep up with offensive players should a counter-attack develop.

The teams of three referees have developed a working system to confirm with each other the results of a call, including direction, direct or in-direct penalty, ten yard wall location, positioning of refs prior to free kick, etc. which become automatic and instantaneous to improve the flow after an infraction. For example, the time required for one ref to establish a wall will be reduced noticeable by two refs.

MONITORING OFF-SIDES



M stays up with play along his diagonal and concentrates upon fouls.

L actively monitors offside usually by staying in-line with either the most-advanced offensive player or second-to-last defender.

The Wing Referee should not have a player between himself and the touch-line.

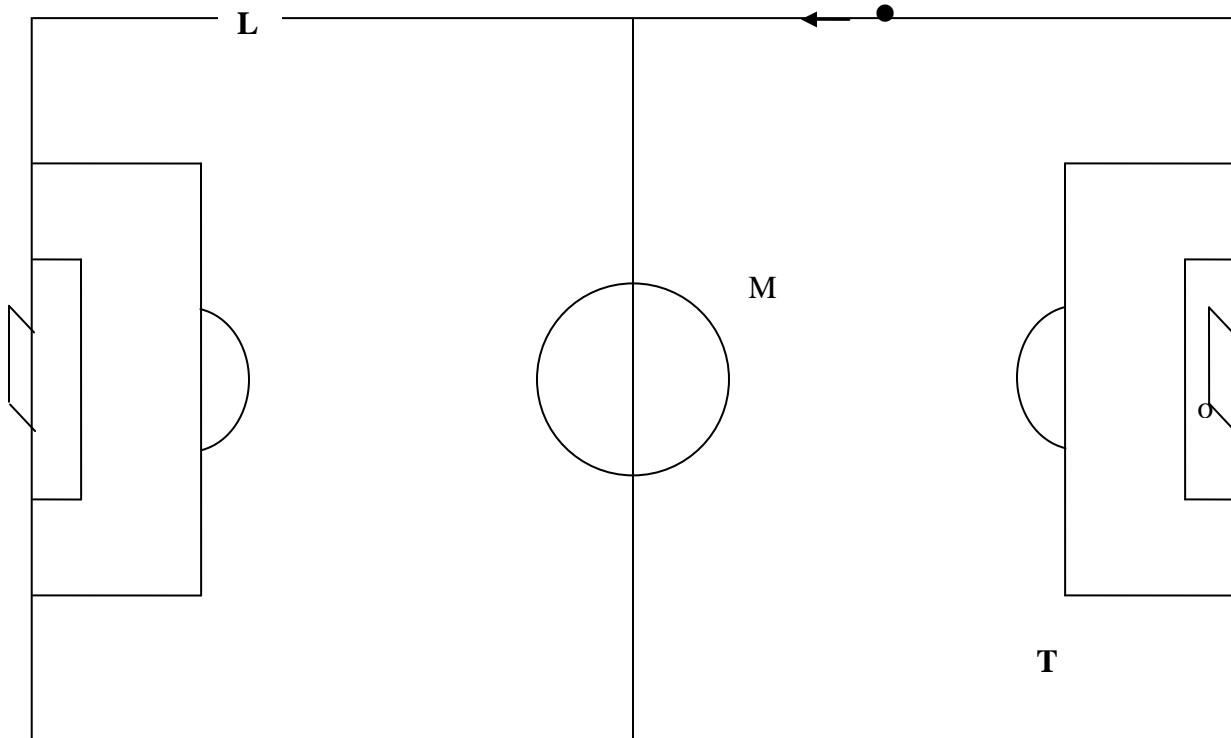
In monitoring the offsides the L referee maintains the best position for an on-side or offside call and most importantly is best positioned to more fully observe action in the penalty area than the one referee who normally would be required to locate toward the center circle.

The sound of the “pass forward” is often not loud enough for a linesman to be fully accurate in establishing an on-side position and with the L referee closer to the “pass forward” a more accurate decision is made possible.

Many on-side decisions result in a shot on goal and the L referee is better positioned to determine if the ball fully crossed the goal line.

The offensive forward quite often tests the off side mentality of the former assistant referee but with the L referee the distance gap minimizes that status and more forwards will tend to control his on-side status resulting in more improved shots on goal. The disapproving offside player will no longer be disagreeing with an impotent assistant referee but instead with an L referee who has a whistle at hand. Respect by the players for the referees will be enhanced by the TROF system. A status long overdue.

THROW-IN



M is positioned opposite the point where the ball went out of bounds. He makes sure the thrower does not crab along the touch-line. He is in an ideal position to observe the ball coming directly over the head and being delivered equally with both hands.

Throw-In

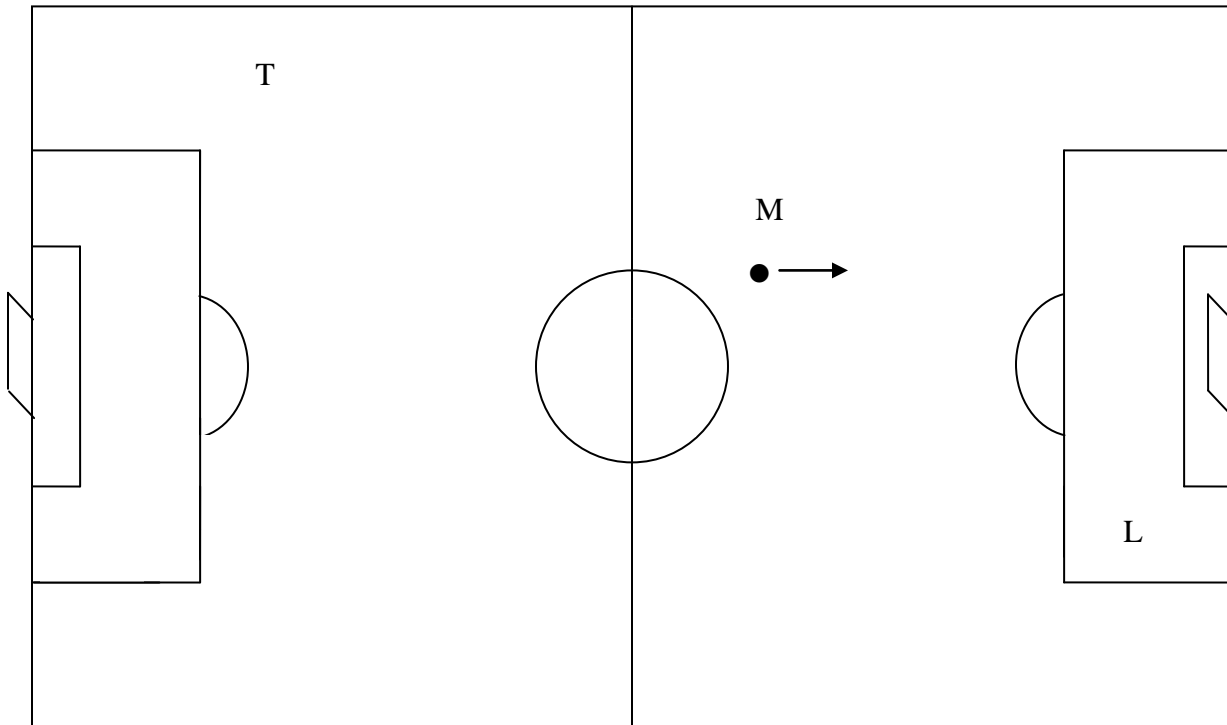
L – On the touchline.

T - Concentrate on play on the field.

All of the thrower should be watched. Special attention is directed toward feet position, and the onset/culmination of the delivery.

Offensive throw-ins in the coffin corners have produced many shots on goal. The TROF M referee now has the advantage of not worrying about his positioning during a quick counter attack because his T referee is properly positioned.

FREE-KICKS



The Referee whistling the infraction immediately points the direction for the kick to be taken and then to where the foul was committed.

M - Administers the kick.

L - Administers the ten yard rule, then offside and ball flight to goal line. The M referee controls the timing of the whistle and is fully aware of the L referee's duties.

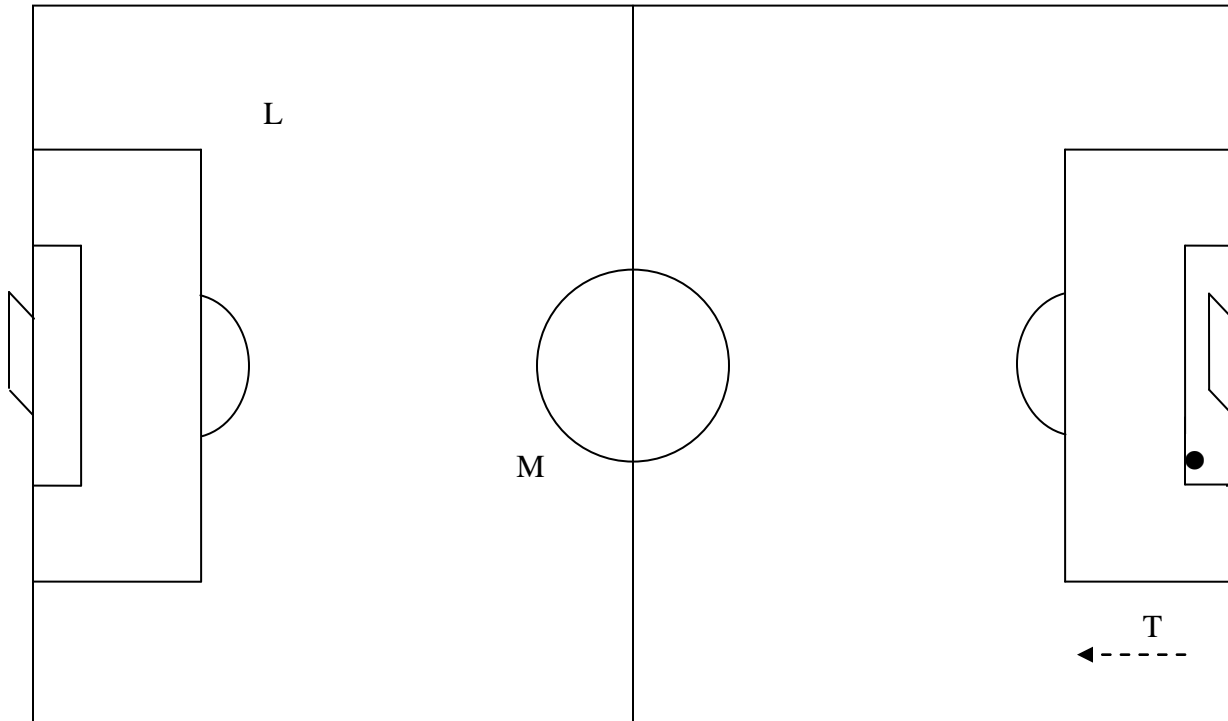
T - Observes the field of play in general and counter attacks.

In all cases during the implementation of the TROF refereeing system, the location of the players will slightly mend the location of the referees. The fact that there are three referees with whistles on the field provides an advantage to those players who are goal-oriented simply because the defensive oriented player knows that his intentional foul will be called and a golden opportunity be afforded to the other team simple because of the percentage of goals scored from free kicks.

Free kicks are advantaged in the timing of execution. With two refs, M and L, administering the free kick, the time of execution now favors the team fouled and that is a step in the right direction for improving the goal scoring and active playing time.

It was during Ken Aston's (FIFA Instructor) review of the TROF reffing system (refs Paul Harris, Larry Harris, and Joe Bonchonsky) at the NASL pre-season game between the LA Aztecs and California Surf that the TROF reffing system received its highest compliments. Ken Aston became a most ardent supporter of the impact of AYSO on American Soccer.

GOAL-KICK



T checks for correct placement in goal area then rapidly moves opposite the front of the penalty area to ensure that the ball leaves the area.

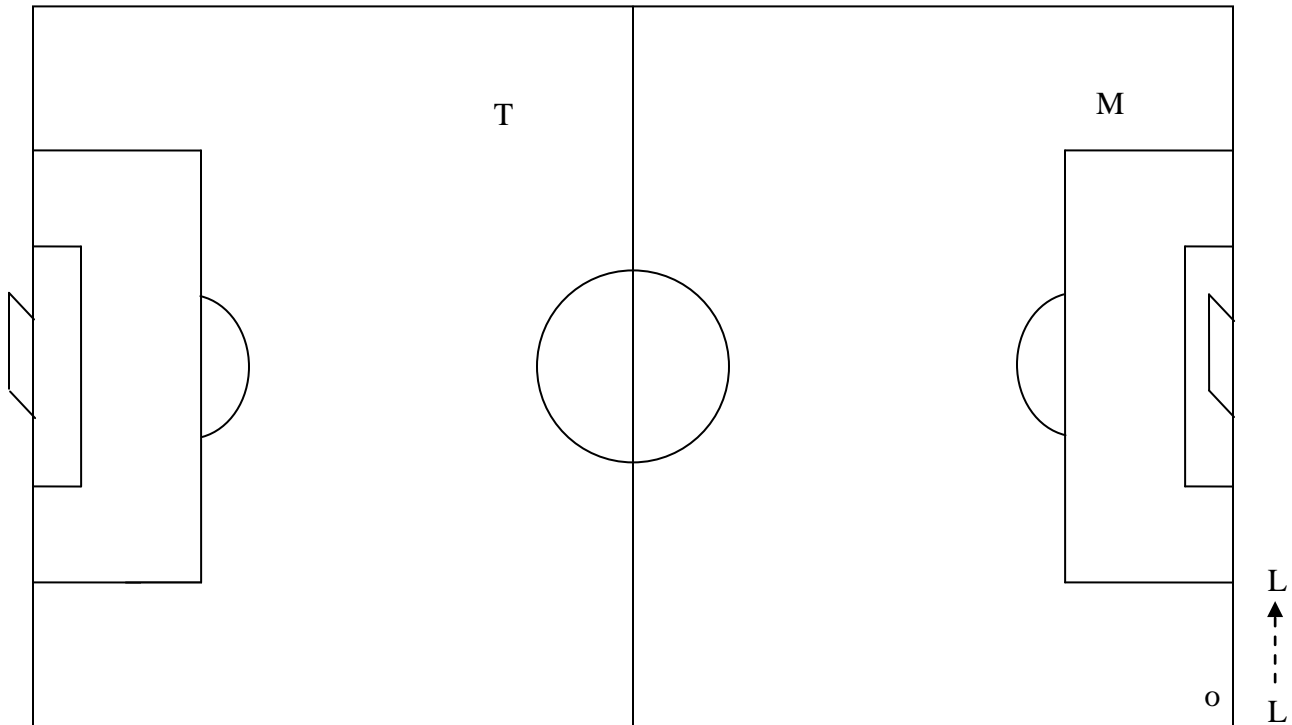
M is in the vicinity of the center circle in preparation for the result of the kick.

L is up field and in from the touchline.

Goal kicks quite often can be delivered to any location on the field. Professional fields' average 70-80 yards by 110-120 yards, an area of 7,700 square yards to 9,600 square yards. An acre measures 4,800 square yards. FIFA requires younger refs (less experienced) to properly cover each square yard of the acreage.

The younger referee is not as competent as the older referee simply due to experience on the field of play. The TROF system requires less strenuous requirements of older, more experienced refs, a direct step in improving the officiating. Most importantly, there should never be a single referee on the field by himself especially during his first learning adventure where two coaches and 22 players practiced for many months to display their skills in playing the best of soccer. Soccer referees deserve the right to earn their status on the field of play and it is not the quality of the referee as much as the refereeing system that presents the problem of poor officiating. Tradition is fine to treasure but not at the price paid.

CORNER-KICK



L - checks the placement of the ball on the quarter-circle, then moves slightly behind the goal line and 10 yards in from the corner-area to monitor encroachment. He concentrates upon the flight of the ball and if the goal is scored.

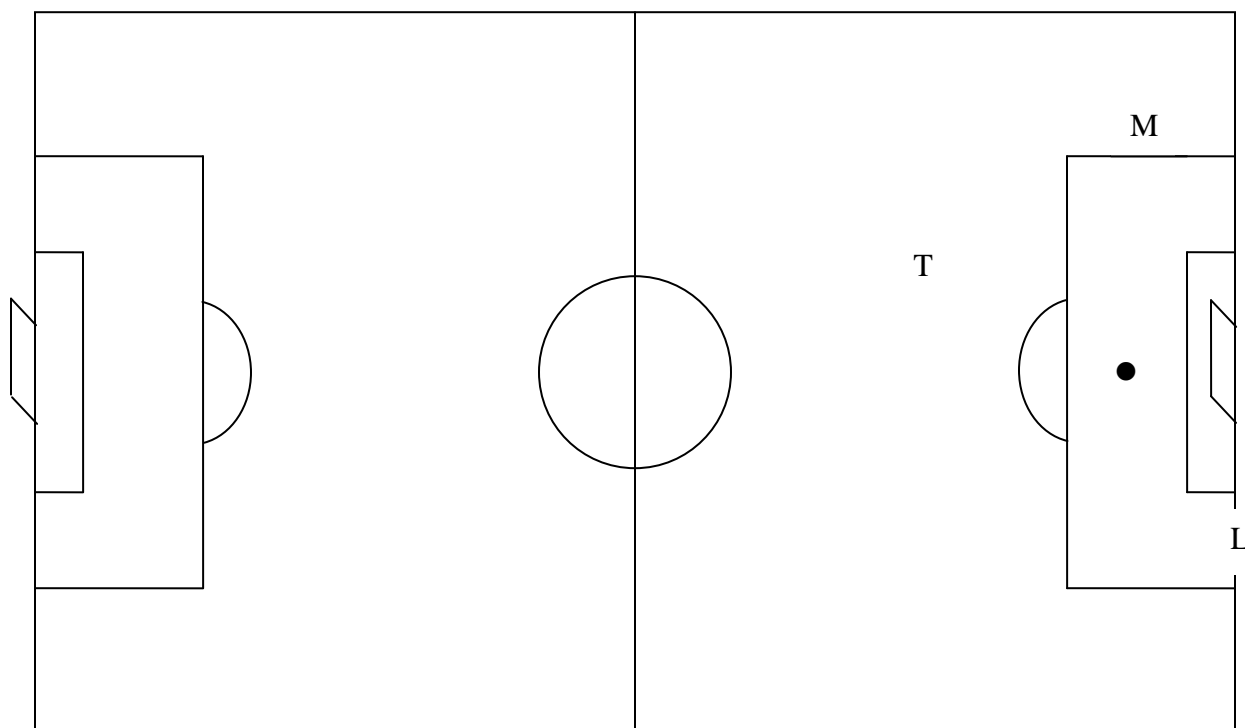
M - is on the far side of the penalty area approximately level with the penalty spot. He is watching for infractions especially within the Goal area.

T – is downfield approximately 10 yards from both the touchline and halfway line.

Corner kicks provide an “award opportunity” for the team that conducts offense minded soccer and the infractions prior to the taking of a corner kick must not go unpunished

The TROF reffing system has been fully tested and the end result is a more fluid game with an increase in scoring. Naturally, any changes to soccer play are to be incremental to retain the success of the worldwide sport. Tradition is very important but a comparison with the success of other sports is noticeable in that soccer deserves better than 0-0 games that occur too often. A simple comparison where other American sports have modified their officiating numbers to implement the scoring advantages is necessary. Soccer has been constrained especially with the archaic reffing system that impedes “fair play.” AYSO has placed the philosophy of fair play at the top and without affiliated constraints AYSO has, over the years, experimented with improvements. AYSO growth has been awesome while developing more strikers.

PENALTY-KICK



M - retains possession of the ball until the penalty area is cleared of all players except the kicker and the goalkeeper. He identifies who will be the kicker and informs the goalkeeper. He retires to his position on the side of the penalty area in line with the penalty spot. He whistles for the kick to be taken and monitors for encroachment.

T - clears out players from within the penalty area (if necessary) and the penalty-kick-arc. He then takes up a position at the rear of the penalty-kick-arc. He has both kicker and goalkeeper within his line of sight.

L - is responsible for seeing that the goalkeeper's feet are positioned correctly on the goal-line. He then goes to his position on the goal-line equidistant between the side of the goal-area and the penalty-area. He judges forward movements of the goalkeeper's feet and whether the ball properly crossed the goal-line. He signals for the goal, but only after first checking with M for encroachment.

Penalty kicks are the result of intentional fouls that unquestionably disadvantage the opponent. Each of the three refs is empowered to call a penalty kick. Occasionally, a penalty kick call is missed (Maradona's hand of God, Henry's deliberate handball assisted goal, knocking N. Ireland out of the WC). It is the "unseen" foul that must be corrected.

Younger, less experienced, refs too often call contact between the hand and ball as a handball foul. There must be deliberate, not accidental, action to contact the ball and therein lies the rub. Any ball that bounces off a "body" or "ground" within a close distance and strikes a player's

accidentally is not a deliberate intentional foul. A normally out stretched arm not moving to strike a ball is not a handball. It is better to see a dozen guilty players go free than to penalize one innocent man. No sane soccer player intentionally strikes a ball with his hand (arm included) especially knowing that he will have his team punished.

The TROF system may not solve this problem but one step closer to the solution is best. When either the M referee or L referee call a hand ball (or major penalty) in the penalty area, a signal from the M or L referee should be viewed to confirm the call.

CONCLUSION:

The TROF referee system is worthy of FIFA experimentation. We Alumni Pioneers of AYSO (AP.AYSO) have fully tested its viability and only the traditionalists amongst us are concerned.

Therein lies the conflict. Those of us who seek major growth in the Americas recognize that there must be steady improvements in “fair play.” Those of us who seek the “old country” dreams prefer to hang onto every little thread that keeps us together.

As one who has reffed at every level of soccer, I remember mostly my days as a coach of under 10 year olds who practiced and played for six months only to have the final game decided by the single referee who traveled from the far deep coffin corner to the mid-field circle and called a penalty kick that appeared to be a mile away. I do not fault the referee but I do fault the system.

AYSO deserves the best.