

# US Youth Soccer National Presidents Cup 2018: An Experience to Remember

By Sarah Most | Special to Soccer Times

*This past summer, Sarah participated in both Region II Championships and Region II Presidents Cup. At Regional Presidents Cup, she was assigned a total of six games, including center referee for the B15U Championship game and center referee for a B19U game in preliminary play. At Regionals, she was assigned a total of seven games, including Assistant Referee for the G16U semifinal and Center on G18U and G16U preliminary games. At National Presidents Cup, she was assigned eight games, including Assistant Referee on the G15U Championship game.*

**F**or five days this summer, I had the privilege of representing Minnesota and the Midwest Region at the US Youth Soccer National Presidents Cup in Westfield, Ind. Working alongside the 47 other referees from across the country, as well as about 10 National Referee Coaches, former professional referees and a FIFA referee, was the most rewarding part as we all sought to work hard, improve, and have fun while we were at it.

I've been to Westfield before, as our Midwest Regional tournament was held there this year. But, arriving in the referee area and stepping out onto the fields on the first day of the tournament had a different feeling to it. Teams had a little more spring to their step in their warm-up; it felt like parents brought a few more cowbells to this one. I knew I needed to bring up my intensity, too — listening to coaches' comments with an empathy to the stakes of a national tournament, finding that extra gear to be in the right places on the field to make the call, and working with my fellow referees to talk through a more comprehensive pre-game discussion.

The referees at the event were all incredibly dedicated, and I loved getting to know them and working with them. The environment we were in was very open in terms of discussion and questions that we had during evening instruction, and I am grateful for all of the learning opportunities we presented each other with at this event. I still talk with several of the referees I met and hope to see many of them at future events when our paths cross again.

The learning that took place for me during National Presidents Cup was amazing, given the knowledge and experience we were surrounded with. I learned just as much, if not more, from watching my fellow crews in their respective positions. As a fourth official, I became a better Assistant Referee (AR) by picking up faster side-stepping techniques from my fellow AR. As an AR, I heard some more effective ways of talking to coaches in different situations from our more experienced fourth official that I have since used.

After the day's games, all of the referees from each field would gather into a circle back at our hotel with our assigned Referee Coach, and we'd talk about big-picture items from the day. The referee coaches focused on asking us



questions about our thought process on different plays to modify how we were breaking things down, instead of simply pointing out things we did wrong. I'm looking forward to using this approach when I mentor referees, because it has been really effective for me. In the evenings, we would gather as a large group and discuss points of emphasis as well as one topic of discussion, such as kicks from the mark, or how to be a better fourth official.

Since attending the National Presidents Cup, I've been inspired to develop a more referee-specific physical training plan for the upcoming year and read the Laws of the Game more regularly. Being around a group of referees so passionate about the game has further ignited the flame of excitement I feel when I referee. I sincerely thank everyone involved with the tournament, our Minnesota State Referee Committee, MYSA and Salvo Soccer Club mentors for helping me get to this level, and my family and friends for believing in me and being so understanding when I leave to referee. The referee community is an incredibly supportive family and I can't wait for what 2019 will bring for all of us — referees, players, parents and coaches together.