



Summer Jobs for Players

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Remember your first summer job? I repaired furniture and scooped ice cream. I would have jumped at the opportunity to be a junior official.

If your organization doesn't already utilize junior officials (officials under 18 years old), take a look at your summer training and working opportunities as a good time to start a program. Since most interested kids will likely play, summer is a great time to train them and observe them work. Come next season, they can help officiate the youth schedule when their own game schedule allows.

Today's junior officials are the college officials of tomorrow. If these kids have a positive experience they will be poised to come back to stripes after their playing days end, and that will help the officiating ranks for years to come.

US Lacrosse recommends that junior officials only work games where they are two grade levels removed from the participants. A ninth grader would work seventh-grade games or below, for example. When starting a junior officials program I encourage organizations to do a few simple things:

1. Make junior officials part of your local association, but don't expect them to act as adult. They need to know what the job responsibilities are, and how to handle themselves (tracking payments, confirming with partners, some game management), but they don't need to know the ins and outs of the entire organization or stay for long meetings.
2. In line with above, consider modifying the uniform for them: a striped shirt, and appropriate black bottoms and black shoes. They will be outgrowing their uniform on a yearly basis so try to keep it simple.
3. When the program is just starting out, make sure the kids are paired with a more experienced and welcoming official. The point is to teach them how to call the game, the adult should be willing to handle the game management pieces. Once the program has some years of momentum, the older, more advanced junior officials can start to mentor the younger officials.
4. Leagues that hire junior officials will benefit by having better game coverage, and will likely be able to pay the junior officials slightly less than they would an adult official. IN return, the leagues need to take responsibility for assuring a positive experience for these young workers, including game administrators to patrol sidelines. It's also important to educate parents about the importance of having young officials involved in the game.



Raise Your Game

You may have noticed this slogan all over our magazine and website, and it's not just for players and coaches. It applies to officials as well. IN order to be a great official you need to constantly be in a cycle of work, reflect, study, improve. Whether you aspire to work an NCAA final or you solely work youth leagues, being the best you can be is an appropriate goal for all officials. It's what makes this a profession.

Hopefully you wrote down some goals for yourself at the beginning of the season. It's time you evaluate if you have accomplished those, need new ones, or need to continue working on your current ones. Either way, summer presents many opportunities to "Raise Your Game." It can be anything from having a more experienced official come out to one of your games and give you feedback, to attending your local organization's trainings, to attending a USL Officials Training Clinic.

There truly is something for everyone to do.