

Veteran U.S. refs put their expertise on paper

For The Good of the Game
Modern Techniques and Practical Wisdom for Today's Soccer Referee.

By Robert Evans and Edward Bellion.
Youth Sports Publishing, (800) 297-6386.

So a player says, "Referee, you really are pathetic!" How should the ref react? "Yes, I know. That's why they won't let me referee *real* players."

That's from the excellent new book by Robert Evans and Edward Bellion, two of the most experienced referees in American history. The former NASL and FIFA officials have compiled an invaluable guide for referees that coaches and players would be wise to pick up.

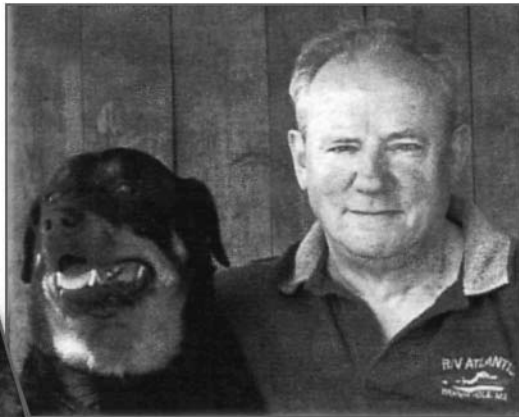
Indeed, fans will enjoy the anecdotes scattered throughout the book.

George Best, Rodney Marsh, Chicago Sting owner Lee Stern — even Glenn Myernick — are among those featured in scenarios that make valuable

self if the goal would still have been scored with the player absent."

Evans and Bellion are research scientists, and the analytic skill that that profession requires is put to good use.

They've got a solid grip on when to be strict and when not to: Crack down on the keeper who charges a couple yards off the line in a Women's World Cup final but don't get pedantic about bad throw-ins during a U-8 game. An irrefutable argument is made in favor of



Bob Evans (right), with his friend Kafka, officiated in the NASL from 1972 to 1984.

refs knowing their subjects: "Gather information about the so-called 'hard men,' the 'destroyers,' 'enforcers' or whatever they are called."

As retired refs, the authors don't have to tread lightly. Colleagues, assessors, instructors, TV commentators and governing bodies aren't spared criticism.

(Evans includes a response from FIFA to his proposal for an article tracing referee movement. FIFA rejected it as "scientific ... and therefore impracticable." Twenty years later, FIFA did embrace a similar method to measure referee mobility.)

Here's a soccer book whose index includes Maradona, Shakespeare, Bobby Moore, Disraeli and Pele — and their appearances are made pertinent.

There's also the story about goalposts in Haiti that were nine inches too short. The solution, to enable a World Cup qualifier to proceed, entailed lowering the ground. And it worked!

— Mike Woitalla



points about officiating. By using real events and soccer's colorful characters — and a sense of humor — the book avoids textbook turgidness.

But it's also thorough. It includes practical checklists for preparedness and detailed training tips. There's good advice on coping with "gang dissent."

It deciphers the awkwardly written portions of the rulebook — for example, FIFA's flawed wording of Rule 12 (Fouls and Misconduct).

The unwieldy judgment calls, such as passive offside, are covered in depth: "Ask your-



backline

TELEVISION

Major League Soccer will have 42 regular-season games on national television in 2001.

ESPN (nine regular-season games), ESPN2 (19) and Telemundo (14) will again serve as MLS's primary broadcast partners in 2001.

Additional playoff telecasts will be determined later.

The only games ABC will air this year are the All-Star Game July 28 in San Jose and MLS Cup 2001 Oct. 21 from Columbus. Last year, ABC aired four regular-season seasons in addition to the midseason game and final.

ABC, ESPN and ESPN2 have been broadcast partners since MLS's launch in 1996. Telemundo replaced Univision as its Spanish-language carrier in 2000.

"Soccer Saturday" returns with 41 broadcasts, including the All-Star Game. At least one game will be on national television every weekend during the regular season.

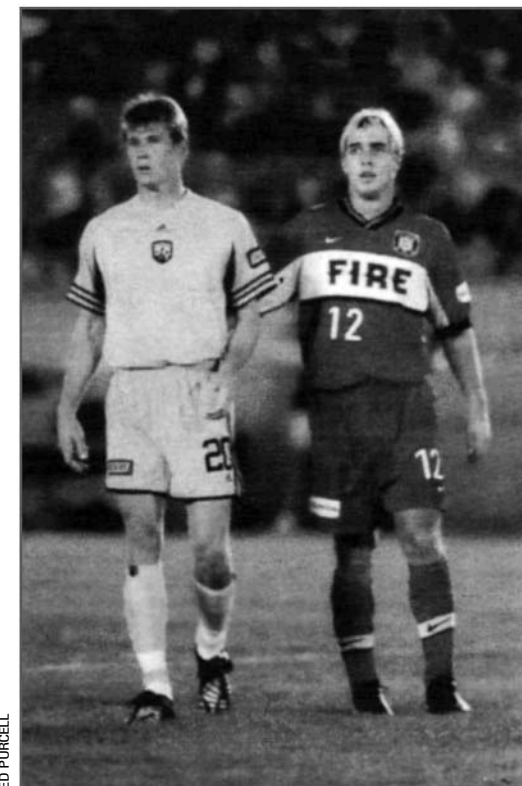
"Soccer Saturday" will be complemented with a bonus game on each Sunday of the season's final two weekends.

ESPN2 kicks off the national-television slate on April 7 when 2000 MLS runner-up Chicago travels to Columbus at 7:30 p.m. ET.

A highlight of the 2001 MLS television schedule is a series of eight consecutive Saturday doubleheaders on ESPN (afternoon) and ESPN2, (evening) June 2-July 21.

Telemundo joins ESPN and ESPN2 to provide triple-header MLS coverage on June 2 and June 9.

Telemundo will televise a 14-game regular season package, with games on every Saturday at 4 p.m. ET April 21-June 9 and Aug. 11-Sept. 15.



ED PURCELL

Carlos Bocanegra and his Chicago Fire teammates travel to Columbus to open the MLS season April 7 against Brian McBride and the Crew on ESPN2.