

Association's mentorship program a success

By David L. Halek

Picture this. You've decided to become a football official. You've registered with the League. You've attended a rules interpretation meeting. You've purchased your uniform and gear. You've joined an officials association. As a new official, what's the next step?

Get involved in a mentorship program. As part of its continuing commitment to excellence, the Minneapolis Officials Association has established a mentorship program for football and basketball. I will focus on the Football Mentorship Program.

In 2005 the Minneapolis Officials Association conducted a survey of its associate members to determine the needs of individuals as they begin their officiating careers. The feedback indicated strong support for a program that would provide the following:

- Increased connections between new and veteran officials.
- Increased collaborative efforts within the association.
- Increased opportunities for on-field experiences for new officials.
- Increased knowledge base in the areas of rules and mechanics.

The entire membership — board of directors, members, associate members, applicants and assignment secretaries — is involved in the process. The mentorship program begins as the mentee (new official) is paired with a veteran official and his varsity crew.

The mentee will: ● Attend a minimum of two varsity football contests with his mentor and crew; ● Observe the game and, if possible, work with the chain crew during the contests; ● Submit a report to the assignment secretary describing the experience.

The mentor will: ● Include the mentee in the pre-game conference with coach and crew, the halftime

conference and the post-game conference; ● Connect with the mentee during the season to answer rules and mechanics questions; ● Submit a report to the assignment secretary describing the experience.

In addition, the mentee is expected to attend two association meetings during the season. The focus of the meetings is general mechanics, rules, position-specific mechanics, and interpersonal skills.

The feedback received from the mentors and mentees indicate the program has been a positive experience.

Veteran official Tom Barnette stated, "I have nothing but positive things to say about the individual I mentored. He asked great questions, had a great attitude, and showed a willingness to learn."

Roger Lashomb commented that his mentee was focused and prepared. "After working with him this season, I feel he could substitute on a varsity crew. He does a pretty good job."

Jeremy Lois, a new official, said, "Right off the bat, my mentor and his crew were including me in the pre-game, giving me tips, and treating me as if I was a regular part of the crew."

Todd Christianson, also a new official, stated, "I really enjoy working with my mentor and the crew. I am treated with respect and asked for input like everyone else."

These comments and additional suggestions serve as valuable tools as the Minneapolis Officials Association plans for next year, renews its commitment



Above: Mentee Pat Budnick (street clothes) sat in on the pre-game conference with referee Josh Thurow (white hat) and his crew. Below: Budnick also listened when Thurow held a pre-game conference with the coaches.

to excellence, and continues its goal to provide the best in recruitment and training of officials.

David L. Halek is the assignment secretary-football for the Minneapolis Officials Association. He extends special thanks to Kelly Scott, activities director of Coon Rapids High School, for his support and assistance in this endeavor.



Above: Budnick watched as Thurow spoke to the captains before the coin-toss. Left: During the game, Budnick observed from the sidelines.