

CANADA'S PREMIER SOCCER MAGAZINE | WWW.INSIDESOCCERMAGAZINE.CA

INSIDE

SOCCER

INFORMING AND ENTERTAINING THE CANADIAN
SOCCER COMMUNITY SINCE 1992

IN THIS ISSUE:

CANADIAN MEN'S NATIONAL TEAM
PROGRESSING ...FINALLY!

THE 2014 SOCCER
HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

CANADIAN FUTSAL **FORWARD**

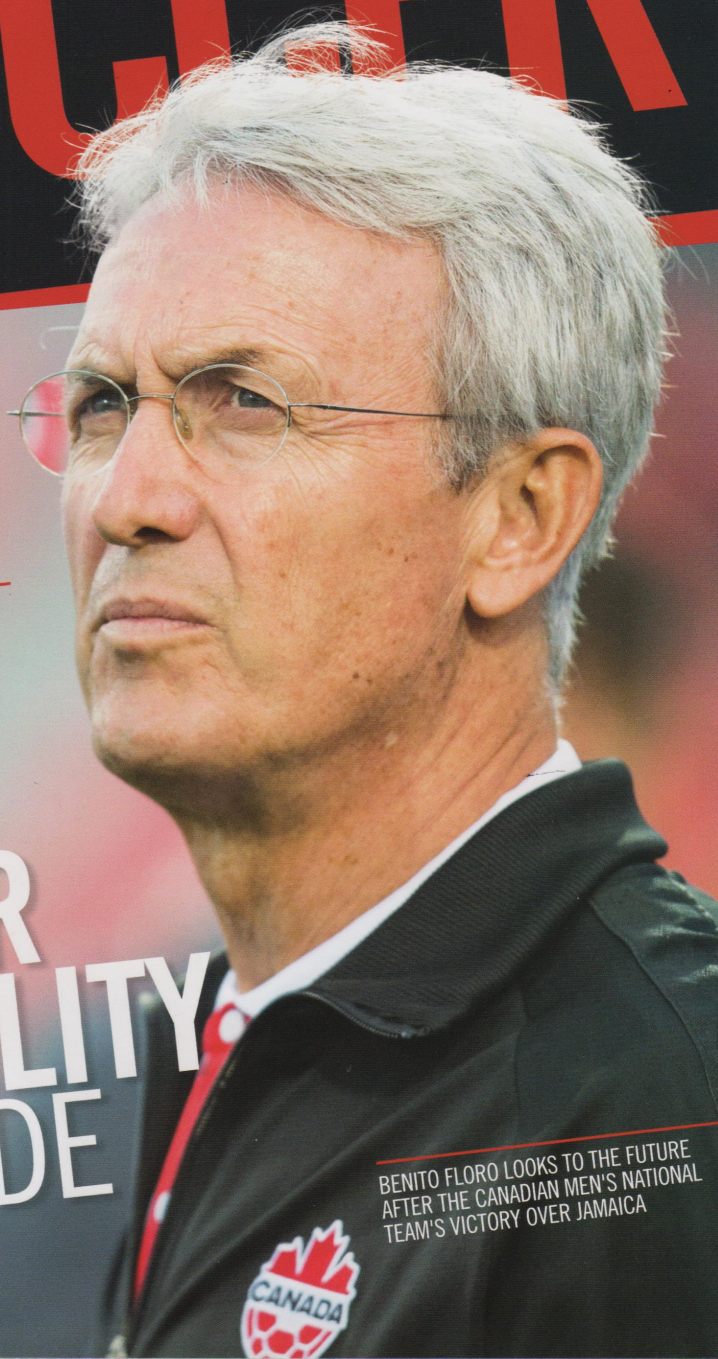
PLUS

THE **2014**
INDOOR
FACILITY
GUIDE

#109 | FALL 2014 | \$5.95



BENITO FLORO LOOKS TO THE FUTURE
AFTER THE CANADIAN MEN'S NATIONAL
TEAM'S VICTORY OVER JAMAICA





TIME TO GIVE THE REFEREES A BREAK

BY RICHARD BUCCIARELLI

Referees at the World Cup – and in soccer in general – have a very challenging job. Physically, they are being placed under enormous stress, and are still expected to perform almost flawlessly if they are to avoid criticism.

I attended a match at this year's World Cup (the quarter final between France and Germany) and after taking an up-close look at the referee at this game, I can attest to just how difficult the job really is. This article will examine some of the difficulties of refereeing soccer at the highest level, and suggest some possible alternatives that could be incorporated in the future.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS OF REFEREEING IN SOCCER

Several studies using time motion analysis on top level referees have determined that referees' amount of running done, as well as running speed, is not very different from that done by outfield players. One study, done by Bangsbo et al. (2001) found that referees from Denmark's first division covered an average distance of 10.07 kilometres per match, of which 1.97 km was of high intensity (fast running or sprinting). Similarly, another study by Da Silva et al. (2008) found that top level Brazilian referees covered an average of 9.5 km

in a match, and that their high intensity running was 1.80 km per match. These numbers are slightly lower than the average amounts of running and high intensity running done by players in top level leagues, but not by much. A number of studies done using time motion analysis of players in various top level leagues including England, Italy, and Spain, have found that players run, on average, a minimum of nine and a maximum of 15 km per game, and the amount of high intensity running can vary from one to four kilometres (depending on playing position and several other in-game factors). Thus an argument can be made that the physical demands of top-level soccer refereeing are similar to those of top level outfield players.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE PHYSICAL DEMANDS OF REFEREEING:

Unfortunately for referees, their advanced age puts them at a significant disadvantage with regards to the ability to perform high intensity running. In the two studies mentioned, the

average age of top-level referees was 42 (Denmark) and 39 (Brazil). This means that on average, referees are 10-20 years older than the players on the pitch. Compounding the problem for referees is that their decision-making ability is expected to be perfect, regardless of how much running they have done. There is a very clear relationship between amount of running done in a match and fatigue, and consequently, a very strong relationship between fatigue and mistakes made in soccer. Thus referees are not only expected to be perfect, they are somehow expected to be perfect while performing under extreme fatigue.

Soccer is the only major sport that puts this much pressure on its officials. In contrast, think for a moment about Canada's most popular professional sport, ice hockey. The playing area is about one-third the size of a soccer field, yet in NHL hockey there are a total of six officials; two on-ice referees and linesmen, and two off-ice goal judges (responsible for determining whether or not the puck has crossed the goal-line). Furthermore, in hockey the action is much more intermittent than in soccer, so that while the two on-ice referees do have to perform a significant amount of skating, they are given frequent breaks from play, during which they can recover. The other popular North American sports (football, basketball, and baseball) also have more on-field officials than soccer,

and these officials do significantly less running and physical work (in the case of baseball, almost no physical work) than do soccer referees.

THE POSSIBLE SOLUTION(S):

In my opinion, the governing bodies in soccer (namely FIFA and UEFA) should try to tackle the refereeing problem from two angles:

1 Add video replay to assist in decision-making by allowing each coach to challenge 1 on-field call per half (4 challenges in total per game). This is already done in American football, and in soccer I believe that giving a tired referee the ability to watch one or two quick replays of a specific incident before possibly changing his or her mind on the call would be simple, easy and most importantly quick to do. It should not take an experienced referee more than about 30-60 seconds of watching a video replay to either stand by, or reverse, their decision.

2 Add a second referee on the field of play, and assign each referee to only one half of the field. This change would significantly decrease the total amount of running done by referees, and therefore also significantly decrease referee fatigue. Since fatigue plays such an important role in ability to perform both physically and mentally, adding a second referee should also significantly decrease the amount of mistakes referees make in each game.

At the end of the day, soccer fans and media will always be critical of referees and their decisions. In some ways, this criticism also adds to the spectacle and overall interest of the sport as a whole. In my opinion, however, the physical burden placed on top level referees makes meeting fans' and the media's expectations impossible to achieve. FIFA has already taken a huge step in the right direction by introducing goal line technology at the World Cup for the first time this year. Hopefully it will also consider making the changes recommended above to help improve the quality of the beautiful game, and give all referees a needed break.



Richard Bucciarelli at the Germany vs. France Quarter Final match at Maracana in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil

Richard Bucciarelli is the President of Soccer Fitness Inc., a soccer-specific strength and conditioning company located in Toronto. He recently spent 2 weeks in Brazil, attending the FIFA World Cup. For more information about Richard and Soccer Fitness, please visit www.soccerfitness.ca

SOCCER FITNESS **gols** what's your gol?



The first mobile app to offer:

- Soccer-specific training
- Customized workouts
- Performance monitoring
- Practical workout schedules
- Social connectivity

AVAILABLE NOW
through Google Play
on Android smartphones

www.SoccerFitnessGols.com

www.Facebook.com/SoccerFitnessGols

@SoccerFitGols

