

Dale Watts

Inducted January 28, 2011

The first soccer match Dale Watts ever saw was in 1977. It was a pre-season match in Tulsa's Skelly Stadium, and he took his son Jason to watch, not knowing that the game would change his life forever. After that game, he began watching Soccer Made in Germany, collecting books on soccer and then volunteering to coach and referee. When Jason turned 8, Dale began taking coaching courses. In those days if you didn't volunteer to coach or referee, your team would be without a referee, so he also agreed to take a referee course.

By 1980 he was coaching Jason and refereeing matches for Central Tulsa Soccer Club. Dale approached coaching as an extension of his teaching career with Tulsa Public Schools. When an instructor class in refereeing became available, he signed up for that. In 1983 he was assigned to Central High School and named boys' and girls' soccer coach. At that time, high school games were non-varsity and played in the winter, but with the help of Nancy McDonald of Tulsa Public Schools and Carl Moore, owner of the Tulsa Roughnecks, uniforms were provided for all TPS high schools and the move to varsity soccer was underway. By 1985, varsity soccer had arrived and Dale transferred to Booker T Washington as the girls' soccer coach. During his years as a high school coach, Dale worked to create the Oklahoma Soccer Coaches Association which hosts the All-State soccer game.

During this time, his daughter Monica had begun playing and was an assistant coach of her team. At times, the Watt's family dinner table required elaborate schedule planning to juggle soccer games, high school games, referee matches, Boy Scouts, gymnastics, band gigs (Dale was also playing in a rock and roll band), and his wife Mary's schedule at St. Francis Hospital. Adding another layer to the logistics was the birth of Melody in 1981 and Matthew in 1985. Melody quickly determined soccer was not for her. Matthew played competitive soccer until he was 17.

In 1987, Dale was asked to accept the position of State Director of Referee Instruction by State Referee Administrator Jerry Kannard. With the help of State Referee Instructor and assessor Gary Poulson, Dale created a standardized instruction course for referees authorized by SRA Gus Colesides. Since 1988, referees across the state have received consistent instruction in the laws of the Game based on that single syllabus. Another contribution to referee development was to unify the state's referee corps by holding a single site fitness exam recertification and upgrade class for all upper-level referees, thus eliminating any division of referees by geographic location.

In 1997 Dale retired from teaching and became the Director of Publication for Oklahoma Soccer Association. The job allowed him to combine his love of writing, photography, and teaching. As editor of OSA's official newsletter, the Smoke Signals, he used his journalism background to update the format and content. When OSA added a webpage to his duties, Dale oversaw the publication as well. With the advent of social media (Facebook and Twitter) OSA is continuing to rely on him for communication with its membership.

Grandchildren Ella Kate and Jack Whiteley and Evie Watts provide him with entertainment and activities now. Someday he may watch them play the sport he discovered years ago.