

Gary Poulsen

Inducted February 2, 2013

Gary Poulsen came to Tulsa, Oklahoma to study music at the University of Tulsa based on the suggestion of his high school guidance counselor. Born in New Brunswick, New Jersey, the young Poulsen had decided to teach music, and the counselor had attended TU. After a few years, Gary determined that teaching music might not be what he wanted and he turned to a business degree which would better support his family of wife Peggy and son Ron and daughter Carol.

When Ron signed up to play soccer, Gary attended the games and at one memorable match was informed that because he disagreed with the referee's calls so vociferously, the East Tulsa Soccer club wanted him to attend a referee course.

That occurred in 1981 and after he attended the class, Gary began his referee career that would span the next 27 years. In those days all referees began as 08 grade and within two years Gary had risen to the grade of 07 and then a State 06 soon after. During this time, he officiated at club matches, adult matches, high school matches, and college matches.

Soon, Gary was drawn aside by future Hall of Famers Peter Aradi and Russell Staurovsky for mentoring and advancement in the administrative ranks of Oklahoma's referee corps. His first assignment was to work as assistant State Youth Referee Administrator with Jim Nays. That collaboration led to Gary assigning matches, a task he would continue until his retirement in 2008. Assigning the Green Country championship tournament, state tournaments, and club matches made Gary well known to nearly every referee in the state. That led to his assigning the 1982 US Youth Regionals in Tulsa with Peter Aradi. In 1985, he helped organize and assign high school referees for the first year of varsity soccer in Oklahoma.

That first year of high school soccer, all referees officiated matches for no charge.

Gary's personal knowledge of those referees also developed from his love of another aspect of refereeing- assessment. With formal assessment training by FIFA Referee and Assessor Ed Bellion, Gary began a long history of assessing referees around the state. Trained by Aradi as an Assessor, he and Peter developed an Assessor training class and taught assessment courses across Oklahoma. That experience led to his State Assessor badge and appointment to State Director of assessments under SRA, Atef Iskander. He also became a Regional NISOA assessor.

Not content with just assigning and assessing, Gary became a referee instructor in 1982 and in 1987 worked with Dale Watts to create Oklahoma's current referee instruction curriculum. Gary also obtained his state instructor badge during this time.

Gary Poulson's legacy to Oklahoma soccer is the family's continued interest in the sport. Son, Ron is now the SRA and his wife, Christel and daughters, Skylar and Sahara, are playing or have played the game while Summer (born 2012) may join when she gets old enough.