

For Martinez Play Becomes Work As Referee

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Frank Martinez ('20) hears the loud ringing of his phone, and he slowly drags himself out of bed. It is 6:30 a.m. on a Saturday morning, and he has to referee four soccer games.

Martinez goes downstairs, where his mother is making him breakfast. Blurry-eyed, he sits at the kitchen table to eat his eggs and bacon and drink his coffee. He needs as much caffeine as he can get. After breakfast, he puts on his refereeing jersey, black shorts, a pair of soccer cleats, and grabs his stopwatch and whistle.

As his mother drives him to the soccer fields, Martinez thinks about how much he'll have to run today.

"They usually assign me about four to five games a day," he says. "The length of each game depends on the age group and can last anywhere from 40-90 minutes." He hopes that the head referee only assigns him four games so he can go home sooner and finish his homework before he goes to bed.

When they arrive at the soccer fields, Martinez rushes over to the head referee to tell him that he has arrived. Shortly, the first game of the morning starts, and Martinez jogs onto the field where he finds both teams lined up and waiting for him. "Good morning. My name is Frank and I'll be your referee today," he says.

He points to the team on his left and says, "Please call it in the air." He tosses the coin.

"Tails!" the team's captain calls out. After a few thumps, the coin lands on the ground.

It's tails!" Martinez yells.

The captain opts to take the ball first. Martinez hands them

the soccer ball, and they throw the ball in. The game begins.

Martinez runs up and down the field, blowing his whistle. For Martinez, it's the most fun in the world.

"The love of soccer runs in my family," he says. "The thing that got me interested was my dad. He was a great soccer player in his prime, and he had scholarships to clubs he played with."

The love of soccer rubbed off on Martinez at a young age.

"I have been playing for 15 years and have played on many recreational and travel soccer teams, as well as my middle school team," he said.

After finishing his first game, Martinez congratulates the winning team and slowly walks off the field, sweat dripping down his face. He sits down on a bench, wipes his face, and gulps down two bottles of water. Then he sips some Gatorade.

He eats a couple handfuls of trail mix. His next game starts in five minutes, and he has stay hydrated.

Martinez was born in Mexico, where soccer is the most popular sport.

"What I wanted to do like any other kid in the world is be a professional soccer player," said Martinez.

His family immigrated to the United States and settled in Fort Mill when he was 10-years-old. While growing up in the United States, Martinez played on several teams, but he did not know that a person could become a referee at such a young age.

"When I realized that I could become a ref and watch people play soccer while getting paid, I immediately applied for a refereeing job," he said.

All referees work for the league in which they referee. To become a soccer referee, Martinez registered



Waiting for a game before his to end so he can get on the pitch and officiate the next game, Frank Martinez ('20) prepares to work at Tega Cay Middle School on Oct. 15.

on www.arbitersports.com. The site gives applicants a step-by-step guide on how to become a referee.

One of the requirements is that all applicants must attend an in-class clinic and pass a test to make sure they have an excellent knowledge of soccer and the rules.

Soccer referees like Martinez can make anywhere from \$22-\$70 per game, depending on the age group for which they are refereeing.

Referees have a lot of pressure on them because some of the calls they make can cost a team a crucial win. It isn't unusual for parents of young players to yell at referees during the game.

"There was one time when I was refereeing a U13 game when I had to take a goal away from a team because they had violated the offsides rule, and they lost the game because of this. A lot of the

parents were very mad and a couple yelled at me," Martinez said.

After a tough day of refereeing four games, Martinez goes home and works on his homework. It's a challenge to balance work and school, he said.

"I organize myself so that I don't work on weekdays, because I save those days for school only," he said. "This allows me to do less work on the weekends so that I can work. This job takes up about half of my weekend."

He devotes a lot of time and hard work to his job and to school, but even with these demanding activities, he always makes time to be with his family.

The love of soccer and family and his determination are what keeps him going everyday.

"I truly love what I do," says Martinez, "and I hope that I can continue doing this job for a long time."