

# Calling 'Em As He Sees 'Em

## An Indiana lawyer strives to be judicious on the soccer pitch

BY ANNE STEIN

Gregory Bowes, an Indianapolis solo practitioner, didn't enjoy kicking his sister out of an amateur soccer game—but he didn't have a choice.

"We don't allow players to play without a pass, which indicates they've paid their membership fees," explains Bowes, who referees collegiate soccer in his spare time.

"Elizabeth didn't have one. I told her two weeks before that when I was going to be a ref for her game, I wouldn't be able to let her play." Bowes, who has been officiating soccer matches for 10 years, says his sister wasn't angry; she knew what to expect.

The Indiana University law school grad first stepped into the black uniform of a soccer referee during his law school days in Indianapolis. His older brother enjoyed being a basketball ref, so Bowes followed suit in soccer, the sport he loved.

Bowes started with high school games; now he primarily works Division II and III college games near home, at schools that include Ball State, Purdue and DePauw. From March to October, he officiates at nearly 100 games, mostly on weekends.

"I like it because of the challenge of trying to be good," says Bowes, 34, who earned a master's degree in international and comparative law from Georgetown University and focuses on criminal defense and trademark rights enforcement.

"There's the physical element of being fit enough to get up and down the field, the mental element of knowing the rules and being quick with decisions, and the psychological element of knowing why people are behaving the way they do and figuring out what it takes to get them to behave the way you want them to."

Armed with warning cards and the authority to toss offenders out of the game, Bowes finds that players usually comply with his rulings, though often with very loud objections. "The biggest challenge," he explains, "is when you award a penalty kick, which is virtually a score. Soccer's a very low-scoring game and a penalty kick can deter-

mine it. So you can routinely expect someone to come up and scream in your face."

Take last autumn's University of Indianapolis vs. Northern Kentucky game. With a penalty kick, "the rules require that if the goalkeeper moves before the ball is kicked, and the kicker misses, we call the kick again. The goalkeeper jumped up before the kick, the guy missed and I followed the rules."

The Indianapolis team was upset. "At the end of the match, an assistant coach came up and said, 'You stink, ref, you're one of the worst refs I've ever seen.'"

But, explains Bowes, almost every call makes someone angry, "and if they didn't yell, you'd wonder if they were awake. Every time I get yelled at, I ask myself if I did something wrong. If I keep that attitude, I'll always get better. But sometimes the answer is, 'Hell, no!'"

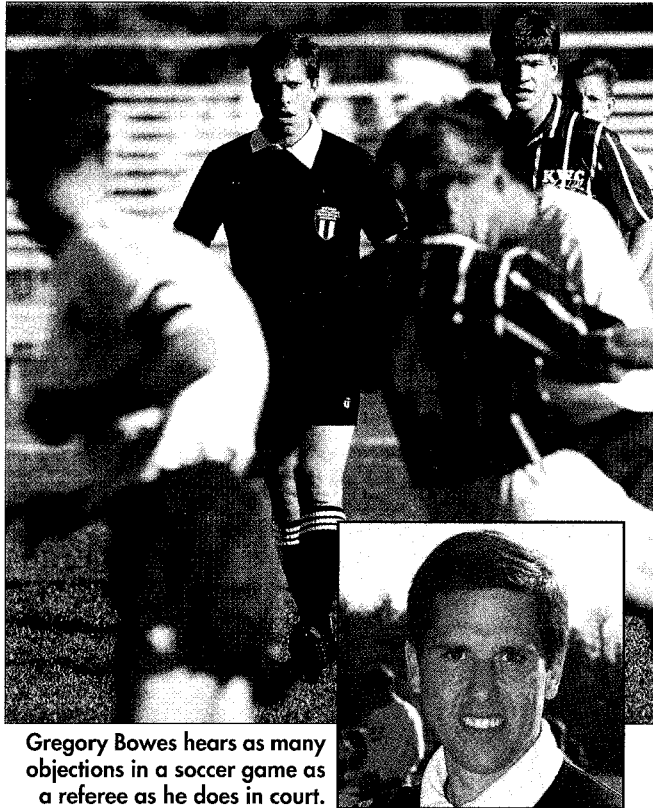
### A Change of Venue

Ten to 15 times each year, Gregory Bowes officiates over a different kind of playing field as a pro tem municipal criminal judge in Indianapolis. "As a judge and as a referee you have to be consistent, firm yet polite, and courageous by making unpopular decisions," he says. Sometimes, it's best to let the lawyers or players hash things out themselves.

In court, Bowes says, "Unless the process of the case is so unfair that a judge must intervene, or is asked to by an attorney, the prudent choice may be not to intervene." With soccer, it's similar. "If a foul becomes so severe and takes away from the fairness of the game, you have to get involved." If it doesn't, a ref might not call the foul and the game will continue. "That's the precision and art of being a referee."

Sometimes, Bowes says, soccer

rules apply well to legal situations though, unfortunately, he can't use warning cards on other attorneys. A recent deposition provides a good example. "I thought it would last four days," he explains. "The opposing counsel had to cut it a day short, but kept making objections I thought were improper and giving speeches, wasting a good half-hour to an hour



Gregory Bowes hears as many objections in a soccer game as a referee as he does in court.

each day. It reminded me of soccer, when a team is winning by just one goal and they do things to delay so the other team can't score.

"You try to hurry them up; if they don't respond, they're warned," Bowes says. "If they commit another offense, a player's taken out and they play one short." That can't happen in a deposition.

Bowes' fascination with officiating and rules—he rereads his soccer rulebook twice a year—has spilled over into his practice. He says he now knows trial rules better than ever, and he's a fanatic about reading the advance sheets.

After all, if you know the rules, on and off the field, a good referee/attorney can smooth out almost any situation—no matter who's doing the objecting. ■

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