

Referee Spotlight: Omeed Azadpour



The Cal South Referee Spotlight is a calsouth.com feature, highlighting elite officials through the Cal South system.

At the age of 10, Omeed Azadpour's dad was challenged to become a referee and "dragged" his son along for the ride. For the younger Azadpour, becoming a referee would not only allow him to spend quality time with his dad, but also, it would shape the rest of his life.

Since then, Azadpour has had the opportunity to officiate at many levels, including youth and amateur and professionally, domestically and internationally, passing through the domestic referee ranks of Oklahoma, Cal North, and since 2016, Cal South. Azadpour's career as a referee has continued to flourish in Southern California, recently earning his U.S Soccer National Badge.

"Cal South has helped my career through mentorship and coaching," Azadpour said. "I want to thank my local coaches during my stays not only in Cal South, but in Cal North, and Oklahoma. I also want to thank all my mentors and coaches at all regional/DA/national levels for everything they taught us."

"We are always striving to be the best versions of ourselves. I am thankful to be where we are at now. I wouldn't have changed the 19-year journey any other way," he added.

As a Sergeant actively in the U.S Army from 2008-2014, Azadpour's military service taught him to be as grateful as possible, facing hardships in his deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan where they had nothing. Through sharing of food or water, or even a short story, Azadpour developed a mindset of resilience and gratefulness that he would later be able to apply on the pitch.

During his first tour in Iraq, Azadpour was part of a match that would make a strong impact, as well as memories that he will cherish for a lifetime.

"I was able to referee a match on base on my first tour in Iraq," he recalled. "We had Ugandan allies that would just melt anyone's heart with their sheer genuineness, 'Jambo!' they would yell across the base on any given day. It never ceased to amaze me how happy they were. They never needed a referee, but they welcomed me to ref after discovering I enjoyed doing so. They would greet me everywhere on base, 'Jambo Mr. Referee'. I can't explain how fortunate and blessed I felt that they would let me be a part of their game. It brought happiness in a literal warzone, and I'll never forget how much it meant to me that all of us have a part in the beautiful game."

Because of his resiliency and experience in overcoming hardships, he is able to apply his knowledge and abilities on the pitch, regardless of the teams that are playing. Due to this, Azadpour has excelled on the pitch as a referee wherever he goes.

An avid traveler and learner of the game, Azadpour has had his share of officiating games abroad, like the 2019 China Gothia Cup, as well as an international friendly in the Far East between LA Galaxy of MLS and Japan's Vissel Kobe, and for the past few years, the Paris World Games. In the 2019 version of the latter tournament, Azadpour was recognized as the Best Referee in the tournament, another achievement earned, and still representing his country in the best way possible.

"I was grateful to receive such distinction from the Referee Abroad Tournament staff and members," Azadpour said. "It was a pleasure being a part of 200+ referees with over 400 teams from 35 different countries. The feeling of being recognized while under the Eiffel Tower was indescribable."

"I highly recommend any referee, regardless of grade, to attend at least one international tournament a year," he added. "You're able to work with other referees from other parts of the world and learn not only their culture but their own styles of refereeing on the pitch. There were also assessors from the Premier League, UEFA, and Women's World Cup there the prior week. I believe the international experience is an essential and rewarding goal that everyone should aspire to, to further enrich their development as a referee."

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