



Allow us to introduce ourselves. We are the Bonansinga Brothers: Jay, Tod, and Jeb. We are currently developing a treatment for REFS—an original docu-style reality television series based on the trials and tribulations of the American referee. The attached synopsis we submit to you to consider for further development.

Our hopes are that our excitement and enthusiasm for this project are contagious. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Bonansinga Brothers

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The Bonansinga Brothers – best selling author Jay, and music industry veterans Tod and Jeb – have collaborated for over 20 years on various musical and film projects.



REFS  
A Synopsis  
For a New Reality Series  
Created by  
The Bonansinga Brothers  
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LOG LINE:

*REFS is a documentary-style reality series that follows a rogues gallery of colorful and quirky character who show up at our stadiums and on our TV sets each week dressed in the proverbial black and white stripes. Who are these people? What are their hopes, dreams, fears, and daily grinds to which we can all relate? And what magnificent hot messes do they happily get into during the course of their daily personal and work lives?*

SYNOPSIS:

We open on quiet suburban lawns at the break of day in some gated community somewhere in the Sun Belt. The fizz of lawn sprinklers coming on... the rumble of a Pea Pod truck... the chirr of birds. And over this we hear an alarm clock going off.

WE CUT to an upper middle class bedroom, a sixty-ish man, GEORGE, and his wife, GLORIA, stirring in their bed, waking up for another day of upper middle class work and play. We hear the voice-over of the man of the house.

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GEORGE (V/O)

Hard to believe I've been in this crazy racket for almost four decades.

SPLASH! Coffee poured into a cup. WHAP! Toast popping up. George tying his cleats, getting into his uniform.

GEORGE (V/O)

The bones get brittle, the joints get sore, the hair goes away. But pretty much you're providing the same service you did when you were twenty -

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

GEORGE driving sedan down the off ramp, into the gates of the massive stadium where the pro football team plays.

GEORGE (V/O)

-- you're the thin line between order and chaos.

A TRANSITION: We see a montage of GEORGE officiating to hard-driving music. Think heavy metal, head-banger tunes. People in the stands screaming bloody murder, throwing things. Poor old George - the perennial villain who is blind, deaf, and stupid according to the beer sodden clientele. We end up on an extreme close up of his long suffering face - craggy, steadfast, the face on Mount Rushmore.

GEORGE (V/O)

Still... it seems like only yesterday, I was working the hometown sandlots, calling Little League games... --

DISSOLVE to that iconic suburban middle school baseball diamond from a million childhood summers, mom and dad in the tiny bleachers screaming bloody murder at some poor schmo officiating. CLOSE UPS of our next hero, KEN, a thirty-ish middle class former jock, trying to keep order. Kids are yelling at him, mothers are yelling at him. KEN keeps a stiff upper lip.

KEN (V/O)

Name's Ken Kowalski, been an umpire in the DeKalb Pony League for almost five years now... --

(cont.)

CUT TO: Extreme close ups of kids in uniform, displaying tantrums and acts of rage such as kicking over trash cans, slamming bats into soda machines, and rolling on the ground in horrible, awkward fist fights.

KEN (V/O)

Some kids, they get a little too...passionate. I think it might be hormones... -

CUT TO: Angry parents screaming, one after another, as though the greatest injustice of the world has just been perpetrated on their children by Mr. Kowalski.

KEN (V/O)

--Not sure what the parents' excuses would be.



**NOTE:**

In this fashion, the show will weave a poignant, entertaining, and complex series of connections between all the levels of officiating in our modern society. The three or four main subjects of the series - colorful, real life characters who each officiate at a different level of accomplishment - will drive the narrative of each episode. They will be joyfully prodded and persuaded every step of the way by our quirky sports savy host ala Mike Rowe of (Dirty jobs/Deadliest catch) fame or even a Howard Cosell type. The host needs to be as salty as the panel!

The series will have strong point of view - often reflected through the darkly comic predicaments in which refs become entangled - which will get at a deeper truth about both athletics and the human condition. A facsinating part of their relationship will be the various ways that major league sports echoes down through college, high school and Little League...and vice versa. The tone here is droll and ironic, somewhat akin

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to the works of Gene Shepherd (*A Christmas Story*) and the Coen Brothers (*The Big Lebowski*). But it will be an honest-to-goodness docu-series with inspiration rightly homaged to Steve Sabol's (NFL Films). The personalities will make all the difference. These four refs will be the *Duck Dynasty* of sports. They will be the reason people tune in.

Episodes will bring the three or four hero subjects together before live studio audiences for panel discussions and town hall-style Q-&A with the wonderfully entertaining behind the scenes footage of game "drama" consistently played and critiqued. The mic'd or "wired" official will be central to the show. When we can actually hear what the cast of characters is saying, or should we say more often times "yelling", at each other (again, think NFL Films sideline jabberjawing) we feel like real insiders!

#### **SUMMARY:**

On the surface, REFS will be a hilarious and darkly comic reality show that will most certainly go viral due to the almost universal misadventures of calling games in our modern world. But the show will also be the proverbial onion that is rich with deeper meanings, and every layer you peel away will reveal another layer of meaning underneath. It is the story of harnessing the universe, making order out of the chaos, and also, more than anything else, surviving another day at work without getting lynched by an angry mob of soccer moms.

#### **REFS**

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#### **PROSPECTIVE EPISODE CONTENT**

##### **Ref 101 (Referee school and training)**

This episode includes delving into how an official rises through the ranks. The development of a "thick skin" and calm, unbiased decision making skills will be explored. The panel will share their individual stories and trials of their "journey". Referees have to be certified in many sports, more so as they reach the professional level.

##### **Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

This episode content demonstrates how players and coaches can become aggressive and threatening toward officials. They can become "out of control" using profanity and gestures requiring disciplinary action. This episode the refs will talk about the technical fouls, ejections, taunting and unsportsmanlike conduct they've been involved in over the years. We'll explore the almost comical reaction of baseball coaches and managers getting nose-to-nose with officials, acceptable touching and unacceptable "your otta here!". Beating and bench clearing brawls and the dreaded technical foul in basketball ruffles fans feathers.

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### **The Buzzer-Beaters and the Hail Mary**

Last-second shot for the win is one of the most exciting events in basketball. The inevitable question for the ref is, "Did he get it in time?" Any time in a sporting event when time is winding down, the ref's concentration must be laser-focused, and his judgment can cause the thrill of victory or the agony of defeat.

### **Championships**

What can you say? "we are the champions of the world"! Everyone loves a champion! In a championship, only the "cream of the crop" officiating will do. The selection process for championship refs will be explored in this episode. The officiating 'team' in itself must have the pride and swagger of a well-oiled "rat pack" machine. The polarizing effect of real or perceived favoritism, and its impact on championships, will also be discussed.

### **Bloopers and Follies**

As long as sports have been on film, there have been bloopers, and Refs are not immune! The officials have to try to control the 'run-away train,' and sometimes they are tossed aside by the cattle catcher. In this episode, the Refs will talk about their injuries and most humiliating moments. Getting run over by a 300lb lineman can't feel good!

### **Instant Replay**

"This play is under review...there has been a challenge on the call...after further review, the ruling on the field stands!" Challenges and lengthy reviews of plays often infuriate fans and test the Refs' patience. This episode will explore the frustration experienced by coaches, players, fans and refs. The Refs will discuss how frequent changes to the rules can lead to confusion and often chaos. No one really knows what qualifies as a catch these days.

### **The Minor Leagues (Bleacher dads and soccer moms)**

There is a phenomenon in junior sports. It's a poignant and sometimes pathetic drama of the dad whos athletic aspirations never materialized , or perhaps was cut short by injury, and is now living out his failed dreams through the son. The poor referees can be caught in the middle as a potential "foil" to the child's success. It has been in the news more than a few times where refs on the junior level upon making a call against a child have been verbally abused at best, harassed and threatened, and "punched out" in the parking lot or worse! The refs job can become ironically two-fold if he has to step between two parents! OMG!

\*Guest officials from a variety of sports can be invited to bring there "briefcase full of blues"... Tennis: "you can't be serious". Players have "calmed down" a little since the days of Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe but there is still plenty of tirades with the chair umpire. Hockey: "Let them fight it out" Hockey is the only sports where fighting is basically allowed for a few before breaking it up. Boxing: The wayward punch and the ref gets the 10 count!

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**CONCLUDING THOUGHT:** The human condition is by nature competitive. A talented competitive athlete has been told all his life how good he is. The authority figures in his life can be somewhat manipulated. He doesn't always have to listen to his coach. He doesn't always, with the right high paid lawyer, have to listen to the cops. He doesn't always have to listen to his wife. But one thing remains unchanging... if he wants to play, he always has to listen to the REF!!!



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