



July 14, 2021

Colleagues and Fellow Zebras in the Central District-

As you know, I have had the honor of serving USA Hockey's Central District as the District Referee-in-Chief since 2015. This is a role that I never imagined myself taking when I first started officiating, and I have had to follow in some amazing footsteps (Chet Stewart, Bill Spohn, Dave LaBuda, Bob Cunningham). Life takes unexpected turns and twists, and I was in the right place at the right time to assume this role and lead this district with the passion it deserves. I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the Central District Affiliate Presidents, in selecting me, selected the first female District Referee-in-Chief in USA Hockey history. What an incredible honor! In my tenure we have developed a district plan encompassing communication, recruitment, education, development, evaluation, retention, and fiscal responsibility. We have sent so many officials to National tournaments and camps, where they work championship games repeatedly. We celebrated the success of our IIHF certified officials as they officiated the Olympic Games, World Championships, and many other tournaments. We participated in rewriting curriculum for seminars and "reimagined" the Central District camp structure. Annually we hold a Summer Summit for all Central District Officiating Program Staff, bringing all of our affiliate officiating groups (IHOA, MIHOA, WIHOA, and Midwest) together for a weekend of strategic planning around our six areas of concentration and to network with each other for solutions to issues we face. Each of our affiliates is so unique that these summit opportunities have been welcome as a way to exchange information and to work together to reinforce our standing as a district at the forefront of the officiating community. In short, we have done much "heavy lifting".

As I said earlier, life takes unexpected turns and twists. Recently I made the decision to move to the Austin, TX area so that my daughter could grow up near family (we have a large extended family here), and so that I could assist my mother as she ages. Though I can attribute many of my positive life experiences to hockey, the best one thus far is being "Mommy" to my daughter, Tenley. I LOVE officiating, and thank God each night for what being a zebra has brought to my life. I have a lifelong hockey family, and have had SO many opportunities to skate amazing levels of men's and women's hockey across the country. I will always cherish my hockey life. That being said, it is with a heavy heart that I have decided that due to distance and life's demands, it is time for me to step away from my role as Central District RIC. Sometimes we officials have to make tough calls, and though this call is the toughest I've had to make, it is also the best one.

I will continue to work with the Central District to assist Tim Richter as he transitions into the District Referee-in-Chief role, and I will always be available to help. I thank you for your trust in me over the past six years, and I look forward to seeing you in a rink somewhere, someday. My phone number will remain the same, and my personal email address is: referette@gmail.com. Thank you ALL for your dedication to the Central District and to the officiating program. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve you.

Yours in hockey,

Sjoukje Brown

USA Hockey Central District Referee-in-Chief