

MEDIA RELEASE
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VERGARA RETIRES FROM THE FIFA LIST OF OFFICIALS
November 8th, 2011

It is with a bit of sadness that I must announce that as of November 12th, 2011 I am retiring as a FIFA Assistant Referee. This is an expected retirement as FIFA officials must retire at the age of 45, which will become reality in December 2011. November 11th, 2011, kind of an interesting date (11-11-11), will be my last international match as a FIFA official.

I have had a wonderful 19 years on the FIFA list, which has provided me with the opportunity to see the world, experience fantastic sporting events, meet amazing people, make tons of friends, enjoy the “beautiful game” as a referee on the field amongst the world’s best players and teams, as well as be a spectator in awe at what was in front of me. Soccer has allowed me to be involved in 11 FIFA competitions (three of those FIFA World Cups and 14 FIFA World Cup games, Semis and Finals in many of them), Six Gold Cups (three of them in the Finals), Olympic Games and nearly 150 international matches involving Clubs and Nationals Teams playing at the highest competitions in the world.

Of course, like anything in life, I have had some negative experiences and have come across a few individuals, funny enough mainly in Canada, who have tried to prevent my success either for political and personal gain or jealousy. But I am not going to focus on that part, they don’t deserve the attention! May be some day in a book we can expose their conduct.

Instead, I want this to be an opportunity to express my gratitude to those that have supported me along the way. It will be impossible to thank so many people that have positively influenced my participation in this great game. However, I will make a note of some who to some degree stand out for specific reasons.

My Dad and Godfather, may he rest in peace, were always influential figures that kept me humble. Always supportive and providing guidance on being fair, impartial, committed, concentrated and focus on doing “what you know what to do.” They were the ones that got me going at the beginning with their encouragement to be the best that I could be. Obviously, alongside Dad was always Mom, who always wanted to watch the games on the TV and cut out the newspaper clippings for the album.

I have a pretty soccer oriented extended family, that have always been supportive in my career and this is very important. I hope that I have brought some happiness to their lives and not too many nervous moments. My in-laws, although not from a soccer background, always were supportive, even when they were concerned about my travels across the world!

One of the people that has made a huge difference in many ways is Joanne. Ever since we have been together my career seems to have taken a new level and many great things started to happen. Her support has always been present and she has been at times my toughest coach, best friend and number one fan. I am extremely grateful to her. I want to thank my four children, although young, for the patience and understanding when Dad was somewhere around the world chasing his sporting dreams. Joanne and the children are the ones that suffer

the most and I hope that now it will be time to make it up to them and show them the same support they have given me. I owe them big time!!!!

When one trains and competes at a high level there is always the chance that something may go physically wrong and although I have taken pretty good care of my body and have avoided any major injuries, there have been times when I had to see an expert. Dr. Glen Bergeron and Dr. Gerald Olin have been extremely helpful in keeping me void of any major issues. Dr. Olin in particular has gone way out of his way to ensure that if I needed treatments he would be there to take care of it. Thank you so much to both of you!

To the players, parents, coaches, referees, administrators that have taken part in our game during the time that I grew up in Winnipeg and represented the great province of Manitoba, I extend my gratitude for all you have done. There are thousands and thousands of stories and great moments that I will forever cherish. I want you to know that you played a part in my refereeing career – even those of you who criticized are part of what made me a better referee.

There are many referees in Canada that I have had the pleasure of meeting and working in different games with and every one of them brought something to my experience. However, there is one person in particular that I want to express my thanks to for his contributions to making me better. Mauricio Navarro, is the best referee Canada has had for a number of years, and we have officiated many important international matches together. He has always been a great friend, who has provided tremendous support and encouragement throughout his years on the FIFA list.

In CONCACAF and FIFA there have been many referees, instructors, assessors and colleagues from around the world that have been part of my career. I am very happy to have met them and participated in some many matches together. We have shared many happy moments and in some cases very difficult ones that have made us all a better person and official. A particular thank you to Mr. Mathurin, who gave me the one opportunity I needed at a young age to make a first impression with FIFA, one that lasted 19 years. I know that he was always there even when no longer officially active. I hope I have not disappointed you!

What can I say about the Manitoba Soccer Referees Association (MSRA), it was those senior referees, members of the MSRA, that supported me at the very beginning of my career. The referees are like a family and even more so when they are your local referee association. I am grateful for their teachings, encouragement and support.

One is not able to have such a long career without the support of your employers. I am grateful to all of them for being understanding as it relates to what is essentially a “hobby” amateur sporting career. In particular, the last eight or so years have been extremely important in my career, and the Manitoba Soccer Association Board of Directors and fellow staff members have been critical in ensuring that I could continue to participate at the highest level of the game.

And lastly, to you, the members of the Media, please accept a HUGE thank you for your support, for your coverage of my career. I have been blessed to be in this province where the Media has been fair and interested in my career. There are many important moments that you have captured that will be a keepsake for my grandchildren to one day read and watch. That will be awesome, awesome like the experiences I had.

Respectfully and humbly,

Héctor O. Vergara
FIFA Assistant Refereefor the last time!