

## Football Ref Says Managing Money Prepares Him for Fans Catcalls

By Curtis Eichelberger



Nov. 25 (Bloomberg) -- Financial Advisor Shawn Hochuli finds respite from market turmoil by subjecting himself to the boos of 80,000 football fans. He calls games from Iowa to Texas as a referee in the Big 12, college football's best conference this season with two teams in the top five of the Bowl Championship Standings.

"It's a great way for relieving stress and re-energizing for another week in the market," Hochuli said. "It's my getaway. The markets really create a lot of stress, but I can put that in a box on the weekends."

Hochuli, 30, left a job as a financial adviser at **Morgan Stanley** four years ago to found an investment advisory firm with former Morgan Stanley colleague Michael Hernandez, 37. Hochuli now invests money for about 200 clients, including college and professional football officials, with assets ranging from \$200,000 to \$3 million. As a referee, three of the seven people on his officiating crew work in the financial industry. He said the two jobs are surprisingly similar.

"Whether you are working with a coach in a big game, or an investor getting close to retirement, the stakes are high," Hochuli said. "There's fear; it's an emotional time. My job is to keep calm amid the madness so I can make the right call."

### **In the Business**

In addition to Hochuli, a son of National Football League referee **Ed Hochuli** and the founder of IWM Partners in Corona, California, his crew includes Greg Burks, 53, a mutual fund regional sales director for New York-based RS Funds; and Rick DiBernardo, 44, a former NFL and University of Notre Dame linebacker who is a mutual fund regional vice president for Old Mutual Investment Partners in Denver.

The group will be officiating seventh-ranked Texas Tech's home finale against Baylor in Lubbock, Texas, Nov. 29, when the Red Raiders will attempt to bounce back from a 65-21 loss to Oklahoma. Big 12 referees are part-time and make from \$700- \$1,000 a game.

When the group meets on Fridays before the game, the three go to dinner and swap stories from their day jobs. Burks and DiBernardo said the jokes and banter are getting harder to come by.

"The markets have been doing so poorly, in a sense, this is our therapy," DiBernardo said. "Some people fish, some snow ski, some from what's going on in the markets."

### **Day-Job Helps**

When the game starts, they can draw from their day-job experience when working a football game.

Hochuli recalls calling offensive holding on a wide receiver that negated a touchdown late in the game. The coach was red-faced, waving his arms, screaming; so angry that he wasn't speaking in coherent sentences.

Hochuli said he just walked away for a few plays, then came back to explain. By then, the coach had seen the replay, realized it was a correct call and was appreciative Hochuli hadn't penalized him for the tirade.

"All coaches want to know is why you are making the call," said Hochuli, who wouldn't reveal the identity of the coach. "Clients are the same way with recommendations. They realize you can't control the market, but they are losing money and need you to let them vent a little and then explain why you are making your recommendations."

### **Right Position**

Hochuli said the key to good investing and good officiating is being in the right position before the play begins.

"There is madness all around you; guys are flying around, the coaches are emotional and running onto the field, the commentators are second-guessing you in front of millions of TV viewers and 50 percent of the fans think you're wrong on every call," he said. "It's really not all that different when a client, in the fourth quarter of his life, calls me and is scared to death by what's going on in front of him.

"Sometimes you have to tell them to stop looking at their statements. We have positioned ourselves to make the right call. Relax. Focus. We're going to get through this."

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