

Refereeing at the Grass Roots

GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING DISSENT



Dissent: An audible or visible disagreement with the referee's decision which reflects negatively on the official's fairness or competency.

Dissent is disruptive to the players and the game and destructive to game control, if not in the short term, then in its long-range effect on the Game.

All referees need to be aware of their responsibility to, not only the game in which they are involved, but to the Game itself. All referees need to consider not only the effect on themselves when dissent occurs, but also the effect on their assistants and the officials who will referee these players in the future.

Lack of consistency in handling dissent is unfair to the players, as well as to your fellow officials. "The referee, who allows dissent, encourages dissent."

These guidelines are intended to aid you in your individual games and to aid referees, as a group, to become more consistent in dealing with dissent.

1. Dissent should not be confused with mere disagreement, which does not reflect negatively on the official. A player can express a difference of opinion in a gentlemanly fashion not involving dissent. Treating this as any other question or statement by a player would be appropriate, unless it continues to the point of becoming dissent.
2. Dissent, which is an emotional outburst (non-premeditated), short in duration, and not destructive to game control *can be acknowledged*, verbally or by gesture, by the referee. But, if it continues, or is repeated within a short time period, the player *must be warned*. Multiple occurrences by more than one player in a short time period should also result in warnings.
3. Dissent, which is an emotional outburst (non-premeditated), but continues beyond the initial outburst, or is potentially destructive to game control, **must result in a warning** at least, depending on other factors. *Caution* on the second occurrence. **Send off** on the third.
4. Dissent which is premeditated (not the result of an emotional outburst) or is destructive to game control **must be cautioned. Send off** on the second occurrence.
5. When dissent involves use of offensive, insulting, or abusive language, punish the more serious of the offences (language), by sending off the player.

Remember: Abusive dissent does not have to involve offensive or insulting language, and when it is directed toward your Assistant Referees, demands quick, firm action.



COACH AND SPECTATOR DISSENT

The control of coach and spectator dissent is a key element in assuring that players, spectators, and referees alike can enjoy the sport of soccer.

It is expected that coaches, parents, and spectators will have a sportsman-like attitude toward the game and will show respect for the Referee. No matter how great the supposed inaccuracy of a Referee's decision, there is NO reason to berate the efforts of that referee. Verbal abuse from the sidelines by coaches, parents, or spectators, whether directed at the Referee or players, is NOT to be tolerated.

A way of determining verbal abuse/dissent from the sidelines is if you, as a referee, are bothered by the statements being made, and if statements could degrade the respect for you as the referee on the field, then action toward the coach of the offending team is warranted.

As a younger referee, you may find it effective to utilize the captains to notify the coach that the dissent/abuse from the sideline is unacceptable. The young referee then avoids a direct confrontation with the older coach.

Use the following steps:

1. Stop play, or at a natural stoppage, blow your whistle and indicate that play should not be restarted until your signal.
2. Call the team captain(s) to you.
3. Inform the team captain(s) that you have time stopped, and are giving them two minutes to explain to their coach(s) that it is the coach(s) responsibility to control the sidelines.
4. Do not talk to the coach (s). That is the job of the captain(s) at this point.
5. When the captain(s) return to the field, restart play.



Older or more experienced referees may choose to deal directly with the coach.

If a warning to the coach does not result in the desired effect, the next step is to “caution” the coach. *(Please note: The Laws of the Game do not permit referees to caution or send off anyone other than players, substitutes, or substituted players. In this discussion, we are talking about the mechanism for informing a coach that his misconduct is being reported to the league, in keeping with the Laws.)*

There are three basic steps when giving a “caution” to a coach:

1. The play of the game must be clearly stopped.
2. The coach must be told that he is being reported for misconduct. **DO NOT SHOW THE CARD.**
3. Play must be quickly restarted.

These three steps can be accomplished in many ways depending on particular referee and the situation. The CSA suggests the follow procedure:

1. Blow the whistle to stop play and quickly pick up the ball.
2. Walk to the sideline and meet with the coach out on the field away from spectators.
3. Tell the coach that he has committed misconduct and is being reported for dissent. **DO NOT SHOW THE CARD.** Always remain polite and respectful.
4. Do NOT answer any of his questions concerning your judgment calls. Tell him you will not discuss these.
5. Return to the field, get the players’ attention, and restart play.

Having been properly “cautioned”, most coaches will make every attempt to control the verbal abuse from the sidelines. If the abuse/dissent should continue, however, the coach must be “sent off”. Follow the above procedure for the issuance of a “caution”, but inform the coach that play will not be restarted until he has left the area.

If a coach is “cautioned or sent off” fill out the misconduct report and turn it in. Keep it simple. These reports help us keep track of problems. Weeks later, if questioned, you may have forgotten the incident.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback about this document, or anything involving the Referee Centre, please send an email to: josebranco@bcsoccer.net

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