

REFEREE ABUSE-DEALING WITH SPECTATORS

The Laws of the Game give the referee the authority to caution (yellow card) or dismiss (red card) players, substitutes, and coaches. The Laws of the Game do not give the referee authority over spectators. The referee should never directly address a spectator.

Referees MUST address any verbal abuse from spectators directed at the referee or referee crew to the coaches or field administrators.

Referee abuse has proven to be a negative issue in recruiting, training and more importantly retaining referees. The referee community loses 60% of all first-year referees. Referee abuse during the match negatively affects players, coaches and the ability of the coaches to coach their teams during the match.

The criteria for referee abuse directed at any member of the referee crew is determined by the Public, Personal or Provocative nature of the abuse. The process used to address the issue is to: Ask, Tell, then Dismiss the person or persons involved. The referee has the authority to immediately Dismiss if the abuse rises to that level.

The progression to follow in managing referee abuse:

ASK: The referee Communicates the spectator's behavior to the coach or both coaches if neither recognizes the spectator. Communicate to the coach the statements being made and a description of the spectator. If needed, suspend the match until the coach or both coaches Communicate to the spectator/s the consequences of their behavior.

TELL: At the next stoppage of play. The referee suspends the match, beckons both coaches to the halfway line. The referee strongly Communicates to the coach or both coaches, the match will not continue until the identified spectator or spectators are removed from the surrounds of the playing area.

Allow the coach time (2 minutes) to ask the spectator or spectators to leave or the match will be terminated and a report filed with the governing body of the match.

If the spectator or spectators are removed from the match and its surrounds, restart play with the proper restart and add time for the suspension of play.

DISMISS: If the spectator is not removed, or the coach continues irresponsible behavior. Blow your whistle 3 times and communicate to the coaches "the match is terminated."

Without further discussion gather your referee crew and belongings and leave the area.

Immediately contact your referee assigner or Area Referee Administrator. With the assistance of your referee crew make note of the words and/or irresponsible behavior and the time the match was terminated.

* If the abuse continues or you feel threatened as you leave the area, set your phone camera to Video, record anyone who threatens you and move quickly out of the area. If needed call 911 and request a police officer be sent to your location. A safe area may be an adjoining field with a senior referee.