

# Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre Districts Referees' Association

## Cancelling or abandoning games due to bad weather

This is advice for referees regarding adverse weather conditions particularly those involving junior games.

As with many match day problems, experience will quickly come and referees will find the decisions required become easier to make. **Remember always err on the side of the safety of the players and yourself.**

When officiating in Junior football, the following points should be taken into consideration when adverse weather conditions become prevalent and especially bearing in mind that the ages of the children concerned could be as young as seven years of ages.

1. Take great care in deciding whether play is even possible if in your estimation the temperature is on or around freezing. Don't be put off by the fact that it isn't raining or snowing. Cold temperatures can affect a young child very rapidly with the possibility of exposure or even hypothermia.
2. It is a good tip to be aware of what the weather forecast is for the day of the game. But always try to watch out for any sudden changes in the local conditions. Never play when there is thunder or lightning possible.
3. If you do decide to start when it is cold watch out for the 'tell tale' signs from the players, e.g. standing still, not interested in the game, crying, numbness in the limbs and extremities of the body. Remember if a child is crying on a football pitch, he is usually trying to tell you something.

4. If a request is made to you for the teams to wear tracksuit tops or bottoms, perhaps you can agree, as this will obviously help in retaining body heat. Colour clashes won't occur if you have them wear their kit or part of it over the tracksuit. In these conditions players shouldn't be discouraged if they also want to wear gloves.
5. Take your time examining the Field of Play and make sure it is safe for the game. Look to see if the surface is damaged or rutted in any way, or that there is water or ice, which could be dangerous. Remember you are dealing with young children, whose limbs are not as strong as older youths. An accidental slip or fall could easily cause a break.
6. Most club officials you will come across, will not try to influence you decision one way or another but perhaps if both sets of officials are in agreement that the pitch is not fit and you are dealing with games of Under 9's, 10's 11's 12's etc, you should think very carefully before you make a decision to allow the game to start.
7. Remember, many of the pitches locally are owned by the local councils, who can order games not to be played. Also bear in mind that many pitches are used by several teams – if you take a chance with a pitch that is only barely playable, you may put it out of action for many weeks thereafter.
8. But do be careful of team officials who appear 'gung ho' and try to put you under pressure to get the game played. As adults they can perhaps deal with the weather conditions better than young children.
9. **Always make up your own mind by yourself – you and only you make the decision to start or not, or to abandon halfway through.**
10. Do not be swayed by managers, parents, or players. Examine the Field of Play properly by yourself to see if it is safe.
11. Do not allow managers or players to be with you when you are examining the pitch. This will apply to every pitch you are due to play on, even as you progress up the ladder. You must ensure that there is nothing at all that is dangerous and which could cause players to be injured. More and more instances are occurring

where players are seeking redress through the courts, blaming officials.

12. This is a duty, which you must undertake before EVERY game you are to referee. It doesn't matter that you may have had the same pitch last week – thoroughly check it again
13. It follows therefore, that you must be at the appointed ground long enough before kick off complete all you pre-match duties, especially pitch inspections. League Handbooks often state the minimum time you should be there before the kick off.
14. If you find that the pitch allocated to your game is unfit, there may be another nearby which is free. Get the home manager to make enquiries to see if your game can be played on that one.
15. Don't be frightened to abandon a game, no matter how short or how long it has been played, or even whether you should kick off in the first place, especially in conditions such as driving rain, extreme cold or with large amount of snow, ice or standing water.
16. If you have to cancel a game before the kick off, or abandon it halfway through, you should always immediately inform the League Secretary by letter. Give him the reasons for your decision and if relevant inform him of the amount of the game which had been played. Once again do not be influenced by club officials or parents if you decided to abandon a game.

**REMEMBER THE SAFETY AND THE WELFARE**  
**OF THE PLAYERS MUST ALWAYS BE**  
**PARAMOUNT**