

Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre Districts Referees' Association

Dealing with Abuse

Sadly abuse seems to have become part of the game, so that everyone can bawl and shout at the officials and it is part of the fun. At Old Trafford, the noise is so great that the referee can't hear anything that is said. But on the local parks, you can hear abuse and criticism and it can undermine a young referee. In fact the abuse from players and spectators is one of the main reasons why referees quit.

The good news is that all the junior Leagues in Lancashire have agreed to fence off the pitches and that keeps the spectators at least two meters from the touchlines. This has led to a dramatic reduction in the amount of abuse that referees suffer. This is a great step forward.

So what else can be done about it? First principle is to use common sense, that does not mean that you tolerate anything and everything that is said to you, but it means that often a quiet word is all that is necessary and that players who get hurt or miss an open goal do say things that perhaps they shouldn't

Players.

Football is a passionate game and players often show their feelings and frustrations. Not all of it is directed against the referee, but that does not mean that they can be allowed to say and do what they wish. The quiet word or public warning often make them realise they are close to stepping over the line and most respond to that and cause no further trouble.

Some players will question decisions and provided it is not done abusively but politely then it might pay to explain to them what you have done.

However if the dissent is loud, prolonged or sarcastic and is an attempt to undermine you, then there is the option of cautioning him. Do not shirk from this or give too many warnings, because that might make you appear weak or indecisive. If a player uses foul, abusive or insulting language towards you then he should be sent off. If a player uses such language towards his opponents or the spectators, then his fate is in your hands.

If an **Individual player** is causing you a problem, perhaps having a word with the captain to ask him to calm the player, may help. If it is the captain, then perhaps a word with the manager will help.

If the player continues and you have to caution or send him off, you will find that the other players will blame the offender rather than you.

Understand the Law and the sanctions you can use.

Managers/dugouts and substitutes.

Managers are responsible for the conduct of all their own players and spectators and if you request that they do something they must comply.

However managers often get over excited. Naturally they are biased in favour of their team and often take even minor fouls awarded against them as a personal insult, Assistants decisions especially seem to aggravate. Remember they are setting the standards for their team and they must show respect and be controlled. If you find a manager starts to lose control, then during a stoppage in the game go to him and explain politely why you are speaking to him and ask him to calm down. More often than not this does the trick. However should they fail to take your advice you can ask him to leave the field. It is difficult on the local parks, but the manager should move away from the immediate vicinity of the pitch. If you have to 'send the manager off' this should be reported to the League.

Other member of the team's management can be treated in the same way. The substitutes of course come directly under your control and the Laws give you the power to caution or send them off even when they are on the sidelines.

Club Assistants

These are dealt with elsewhere, but sometimes they also get over excited and start to shout abuse. Always try to politely calm them down. If that fails go to the manager and ask him to replace the assistant. In extreme cases don't worry if you have to do without an assistant, it might be better than a one causing you trouble.

Spectators

Never enter into a discussion with any spectator. You will quickly find that most of them know nothing about the Laws and what they are shouting is rubbish. Try to ignore anything they say.

But if you find that it is really abusive or is undermining you with the players, go to the club manager and ask him politely to get the spectators to be quiet.

Pitch invasions.

Very, very occasionally, parents or spectators will enter the field. **DO NOT TRY TO INTERVENE.** Stand back and watch – remember as much detail as possible for your report after the game. The clubs have to deal with pitch invasions. If it is over quickly, you may want to continue with the game. But if you have any fears about repeat invasions or fear for the safety of the players and yourself – abandon the game.

Always try and ignore any comments, but if this is impossible politely ask the club managers to deal with them. In almost every case, your wishes will be complied with.

Abandoning the Game

But if things are getting out of hand and your job is becoming impossible, you have the ultimate sanction – YOU CAN ABANDON THE GAME. You may wish to give the club managers a final warning that you may abandon the game – but in very serious situations you can walk off without warning. A report to the League MUST follow.