

Lancashire Referees' Association

Assaults on Referees

Thankfully these are very rare events. In Lancashire there are thousands of games played every season and last season only a tiny number of referees were assaulted by a player and that covers anything from merely being pushed. For at least the last two years, no referee has been assaulted and seriously injured by a player.

It goes without saying that the football authorities take these incidents very seriously and the offenders are often punished very severely.

However following a recent incident, the system of dealing with these sorts of incidents has been looked at and revised to give referees greater support and to enable all relevant facts to be presented in a better way.

The Lancashire Football Association is particularly concerned about assaults on referees and indeed any abuse by players, club officials or spectators directed towards a referee's family or friends.

When it happens

- If a referee is unfortunate enough to be assaulted, he/she should try to obtain the details of any person who might have witnessed the incident. Of course it is understandable if this is not possible because at the very least he or she may well be in a state of shock and may have received an injury which requires treatment.
- The referee should always inform his society or some senior colleague as soon as possible to get support and assistance in completing any Misconduct Form.

What happens at the LFA

- As from now when Misconduct Form involving any sort of assault or abuse on an official's family is received at the Lancashire Football Association, the report will immediately be sent to The Referees' Officer, Mr Eddie Wolstenholme. Mr Wolstenholme will undertake to contact the official as soon as possible.

The referee should also ring the LFA Offices as soon as possible to tell them such a report is on its way.

What the report should contain

- Any report should of course be as concise and factual as possible, leaving out any personal opinions etc. However the full circumstances leading up to the incident should be included and as full a picture of what happened should be described.

The type of assault should be fully explained e.g. a slap across the face, a punch in the nose, a two handed push in the chest which caused the referee to fall over etc.

- Try to report the force used by the player in delivering the blow e.g. it was a short push or a full swing of the arm with clenched fist etc.
- Any injury sustained should be described e.g. No injury caused, a black eye, a injured nose causing blood to flow etc

- Any treatment needed should also be added e.g. no treatment needed, three stitches in cut at hospital, visit to hospital for a check up etc.

If the police have been informed and are undertaking enquiries into the incident this SHOULD NOT be included on the Misconduct Form. However as a point of information Mr Wolstenholme should be told - by telephone if necessary.

The Hearing

- In the past it has been the practice for referees attending Disciplinary Hearings to not try to embellish the report they have submitted and to refer the Hearing to the report.
- This is correct if the report has included all the relevant facts but occasionally the Hearing might want to clarify something and may therefore be in the best interest of the case for the referee to be prepared to answer any questions. Any questions to the referee are put by the Panel Chairman and not by the player or his representative
- The Chairman of the Panel will ensure that the player or his representative does not subject a referee to any deliberately hostile questioning or unfair tactics.

If the referee is young or relatively inexperienced, his or her Referees' Society should consider having someone senior to accompany him/her to the Hearing to provide moral support. Although that person will not be able to participate in the Hearing itself

The LRA's Advice

The strongest advice the Lancashire Referees' Association can give to any referee who unfortunately finds himself in this position is to immediately contact his own Referees' Society or another senior colleague to get advice and support in completing any Misconduct Report.

Ensure that all the relevant facts are given and a full description of the incident is submitted. Often only a third party reading the report will see where points can be clarified.