

Inland Empire Soccer Referee Association Policy to Address Irresponsible Behavior At Soccer Matches

The Inland Empire Soccer Referee Association's (IESRA) policy to help prevent physical and verbal abuse against referees within the soccer community. This policy applies to all coaches, players, parents, spectators and other supporters effective immediately.

The number of referees in the Spokane area has been unable to keep up with the increase of players and games. Most referees quit after their first year. By far, the greatest reason for new referees quitting is verbal abuse from team officials and spectators.

The IESRA Board and Instructors are aware that referees make mistakes. New referees will perform better if we can make their job less stressful by controlling actions on both sides of the touchline.

The referee is an integral part of a soccer match. Coaches, parents, and players must keep in mind that youth referees are kids and are learning to officiate just as the youth players are learning to play. Abuse of youth referees will not be tolerated, under ANY circumstance.

Purpose

This Policy's intent is to eliminate physical and verbal abuse of Referees and to adopt standard sanctions for improper conduct toward referees. It is **NEVER** acceptable to abuse or negatively criticize a referee, verbally or otherwise, in **ANY** situation. IESRA will not tolerate any verbal or other abuse of a referee by any coach, player or spectator. This policy applies before, during and after the game at the soccer field and its immediate surrounding areas (including the parking lot).

Ask-Tell-Dismiss

Bench areas/technical areas and sidelines can be the scene of irresponsible behavior that impacts what is happening on the field.

Irresponsible behavior interferes or undermines the referee's ability to manage the game.

Most of the time, coaches and spectators act appropriately.

When actions become unacceptable there are steps that should be taken.

Referee's steps to deal with **irresponsible behavior** from a team official (Coach, assistant coach, or an adult in the area):

1. **Ask** the person to modify their behavior.

If the unacceptable behavior continues:

2. **Tell** him or her to stop the irresponsible behavior and inform the person that this behavior will no longer be acceptable.

If the unacceptable behavior continues:

3. **Dismiss** the team official if the unacceptable behavior continues from the bench area and the immediate surroundings.

The Assistant Referee on the bench side CAN be a part of the ASK and TELL steps.

Important to note: In cases where behavior is overly disruptive, blatant or unacceptable, the referee is always authorized to bypass any warning and immediately issue a DISMISSAL.

The Ask-Tell-Dismiss process supports the powers and duties outlined in USSF Law 5 that require the referee to take action against team officials who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner.

Examples of irresponsible behavior:

Use of offensive or insulting language or gestures

Persistently questioning of decisions

Kicking or throwing items

Refusing to stay within the confines of the technical area

These irresponsible behaviors go beyond the levels of acceptable conduct.

Soccer Organizations (Groups or Affiliations) and its members

Soccer Organizations are responsible for the actions of its members. IESRA suggests that Soccer Organizations share this policy each season with its members with the expressed intent to create a positive culture of respect.

When inappropriate behavior occurs, Referees will submit misconduct reports via the referee website. These misconduct reports will be automatically forwarded to the league's disciplinary chair.

Sanctions

IESRA may decide to impose any or all, but not limited to the following sanctions;

- NOT assign referees to a particular team's future games if the safety/well-being of the officials is of any concern.
- Require a Soccer Organization Board Member or Officer to attend the next game to monitor and help create a positive environment for Coaches, Players, and Spectators.
- Fine the team's league organization \$250 for each incident of Referee abuse by team officials or spectators. A portion of that fine may be used to pay for an adult referee mentor to attend future matches involving the team with reported disciplinary issues.

Feedback to IESRA Board and Instructors

If coaches or spectators wish to give feedback regarding a referee, they may complete a referee evaluation available on www.spokaneref.org. Referee evaluations are taken very seriously and are reviewed by a referee committee. Issues and behaviors deemed important by the IESRA Board and patterns detected from multiple evaluations will be addressed with the individual referee and future referee training meetings.

Coaches, Assistant Coaches and Bench Personnel Responsibilities:

Shall not make negative Personal, Provocative, or Public comments towards the official.
Shall not make negative demonstrative actions or gestures towards the official.
Shall control the behavior of the players, bench personnel, and parents/spectators.
Shall have basic knowledge of the Laws of the Game.
Shall refrain from persistently questioning the decisions of the Referee.
Shall not approach the referee at half time.

Players and Substitutes:

The conduct of the players is governed by the Laws of the Game.
Additional penalties may be established by the club and/or league.

Parents & Spectators:

[It is strongly suggested that parents and spectators stand on the opposite side of the field from their team bench between the Centerline and the top of the Penalty Area.]

Shall not make negative Personal, Provocative, or Public comments towards the referee.
Shall not address the referee or assistant referees at any time.
Shall not make remarks to the referees or advise the referee to watch certain players.
Shall not make negative demonstrative actions or gestures towards the referees.
Shall not visually display any sign of dissatisfaction with an referee's decision with the intent of inciting the referees, players or spectators.
Shall NEVER yell at the referee (s), including criticism, sarcasm, harassment, intimidation or feedback of any kind before, during or after the game.

Coaches are the designated on-site representative of their organization and thus responsible for ensuring all spectators associated with his/her team act appropriately before, during, and after the game.

Referee's options to deal with **irresponsible behavior** from spectators:

Referee may issue a verbal warning to the coach of the offending team.
Referee may instruct the coach to direct the parent/spectator to leave the field and its immediate surroundings with or without a previous warning.
Referee may abandon the game if the parent/spectator does not leave the area.
Referee may abandon the game at ANY time the referee feels his/her safety is compromised by parents or spectators.

IESRA will continue to monitor the situation/policy and reserves the right to add/amend/replace any or all of the Policy as IESRA sees fit in order to protect its Referees.

A plea of ignorance to this policy will not be considered. It should be obvious to all those involved with youth sports that assault and abuse of any type will not be warranted, encouraged, or tolerated.

Questions regarding this policy can be sent to office@spokaneref.org.

Modified 2/10/2015

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