

Guidelines for Handling Dissent

Player Dissent

Dissent: An audible or visible disagreement with the referee's decision which reflects negatively on the official's fairness or competency.

Dissent is disruptive to the players and the game and destructive to game control, if not in the short term, then in its long-range effect on the game.

All referees need to be aware of their responsibility to, not only the game in which they are involved, but to the Game itself. All referees need to consider not only the effect on themselves when dissent occurs, but also the effect on their assistant referees and others who will referee these players in the future.

Lack of consistency in handling dissent is unfair to the players, as well as to your fellow officials. "The referee who allows dissent, encourages dissent."

These guidelines are intended to aid you in your individual games and to aid referees, as a group, to become more consistent in dealing with dissent.

1. Dissent should not be confused with mere disagreement which does not reflect negatively on the official. A player can express a difference of opinion in a polite fashion not involving dissent. Treating this as any other than question or statement by a player would be appropriate, unless it continues to the point of becoming dissent.
2. Dissent which is an emotional outburst (non-premeditated), is short in duration, and not destructive to game control *can be acknowledged*, verbally or by gesture, by the referee. But, if it continues, or is repeated within a short time period, the player *must be warned*. Multiple occurrences by more than one player in a short time period should also result in warnings.
3. Dissent which is an emotional outburst (non-premeditated), but is ongoing and continues beyond the initial outburst, or is potentially destructive to game control, *must result in a warning*, at least, depending on other factors. *Caution* on the second occurrence. *Send off* on the third.
4. Dissent which is premeditated (not the result of an emotional outburst) or is destructive to game control *must be cautioned*. *Send off* on the second occurrence.
5. When dissent involves use of offensive, insulting, or abusive language, punish the more serious of the offences (offensive, insulting **or** abusive language = send off).

Remember: Abusive dissent does not have to involve offensive or insulting language, and when it is directed toward your Assistant Referees, demands quick, firm action.

Coach Dissent

The control of coach dissent is a key element in ensuring that players, spectators, and referees alike can enjoy the sport of soccer.

It is expected that coaches, will have a sporting attitude toward the game and will show respect for the referee. No matter how great the supposed inaccuracy of a referee's decision, there is NO reason to berate the efforts of that referee. Verbal abuse from the sidelines by coaches, whether directed at the referee or players, is NOT to be tolerated.

A way of determining verbal abuse/dissent from the sidelines is if you, as a referee, are bothered by the statements being made, and if these statements could degrade the respect for you as the referee on the field, then action toward the coach of the offending team is warranted.

These steps can be accomplished in many ways depending on the particular referee and the situation.

1. At the next stoppage, blow the whistle to stop the restart of play.
2. Walk to the sideline and meet with the coach away from spectators.
3. **Ask** the coach to modify his (or her) behaviour. Don't engage in a long discussion. Restart play.
4. If there is further dissent, again stop play and walk to the sideline. **Tell** the coach that his continued position in the technical (or on the sideline) is dependent on him speaking and behaving appropriately. Further inappropriate behaviour will result in his removal from the technical/playing area.
5. If there is a third occasion, stop play. Inform him that he has committed misconduct and is being reported. **Remove** the Coach from the technical/playing area by requesting that he go behind the fence, or to the dressing rooms etc. **DO NOT SHOW THE RED CARD.**
6. Inform the coach that play will not be restarted until he has left the area. If the coach does not leave as per your instruction, encourage him/her once again. If they do not go then terminate the game and send in the appropriate paperwork.
7. Do NOT answer any of his questions concerning your judgement calls. Tell him you will not discuss these.
8. Return to the field, get the players attention, and restart play.

If the language is abusive, insulting or offensive, you must skip steps 3 and 4.

If a coach is removed from the technical/playing area, fill out the appropriate misconduct report and submit in accordance with your local instructions. Keep it simple. These reports help us keep track of problems. Weeks later, if questioned, you may have forgotten the incident.