



Tip of the Week – Dealing with Touchline Behavior

As referees we are assigned to manage the game and provide an equal and safe playing field for the teams. Unfortunately, we are forced to deal with inappropriate, rude, and sometimes abusive behavior from the fans. We have received more reports and concerns recently indicating that parents and spectators are more “out of control” than ever. So let’s take charge and deal with it!

I am sure you have heard the comment “referees need to have thick skin”, or perhaps you have heard a fellow referee say “I have thick skin, the parents don’t bother me.” This is not the approach to take. When we ignore unacceptable behavior by parents and spectators, it progressively gets worse. This week’s tip is provided to give you some hints on how you as referees can deal with these situations.

Keep in mind that referees will have different ways of handling situations. Age, personality, experience and more will be a factor in how you decide to manage issues; however the idea is that we ALL must deal the inappropriate behavior, it should not be tolerated.

The 2009 US Soccer Referees Directives includes *Managing the Technical Area*. This Directive outlines the procedure “Ask, Tell, Remove.” This information can be applied when handling spectators as well.

Pre-game Reminder:

- Spectators are to be on the opposite side of the field from the team benches
- There should be no spectators behind the goal lines

SIMPLE SOLUTION FOR REFEREES:

If the parents/spectators are rude, obnoxious, and verbally abusive dismiss them from the game. There is nothing in the Laws of the Game that requires spectators at games.

If you choose to give them the chance to stay follow these guidelines

- Ask the person to stop, this is a “warning” and they now have a second chance
- A 2nd incident – you must TELL them to stop the behavior, no more chances
- If a 3rd incident occurs they must be removed. Dismiss them from the game

Remember that you do not display the yellow or red card to spectators. They are simply dismissed and the information is documented in your report.

CYS 2010/2011

Section 8 Misconduct (page 25)

8.1. All participants and spectators in CYS activities shall be subject to all misconduct rules contained herein, regardless of whether they have passes and regardless of whether the referee displayed a yellow or red card. The proper authority may investigate misconduct that is not noted in a referee’s game report but is reported in writing to the CYS state office by any individual.

8.4. The referee may suspend play when necessary due to spectator or participant interference until the individual(s) creating the disturbance leaves the playing area to a minimum of 100 yards from the field. Said individual(s) shall remain silent for the duration of the game and take no further part in the game. Failure of (an) individual(s) to comply with the referee’s request within 2 minutes may result in the referee’s terminating the game. Such incident may result in forfeiture of the game as well as further disciplinary action.

8.6. Any participant or spectator who refuses to give his or her correct name to the referee while being cautioned, sent off or otherwise disciplined, shall be subject to additional disciplinary action.

Referees have different levels of tolerance. If our ability to concentrate on our job and do the best for the game is affected by poor, harassing behavior it must be dealt with. You as the referee may not be directly impacted by such sideline behavior but consider your assistant referees and support them. If you are seasoned referee that has the "thick skin," please keep in mind that your AR's may be bothered by the behavior, and if tolerated this week, may cause the next referee to work that team's game to quit.

When you put your foot down to stop this poor behavior you may be surprised, the other parents and spectators may thank you! Many times the other team parents and spectators are embarrassed by the behavior demonstrated at games.

Referees – we are human, we will make mistakes, confidence comes with working games, and we learn from every weekend at the field. Spectators are not assessors of your performance the majority of spectators are not educated about the Laws of the Game, and their personal assessment of the game and the referees is a matter of personal opinion. Don't tolerate the berating and harassing from these people.

Youth Referees – don't be afraid to deal with these situations. If parents/spectators are bothering you and affecting the way you do your job please be confident and ask them to stop, or dismiss them; you are supported in your decisions. If you are uncomfortable addressing an adult stop the game, ask the adult referee on your crew, a referee site coordinator or mentor to help you.

Adult Referees - it is important that we protect and support the youth referees. If we don't protect our youth referees and keep them in the program who will referee these games in the future.

If you have a game where parents/spectators are out of line please report this to your assignor. Assignors follow up with the clubs, and the clubs do not want this behavior on their fields. The key is to document and report the issues. If we do not know about the situation it cannot be dealt with. Take time to submit the report, make the fields a better place to be next weekend.

Parents and spectators are fans of the game! They are to cheer for their team. If they abuse their privilege dismiss them for the good of the game! Perhaps if all referees will crack down on this we can slowly make it known that the behavior is not acceptable.

Have a great weekend at the fields!

PTW/SoccerColorado