

IYSA COACH'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO GAME OFFICIALS

Coaches as a practical matter and legally are the agents / representatives of their team and club.

Referees (Game Officials) are independent contractors employed by teams, clubs, or leagues on their behalf to officiate individual games or games in tournaments, friendlies, scrimmages, etc. The referee is employed to perform specific duties as defined in FIFA Law 5 – The Referee. A copy of that entire law (rule) is attached. Read it carefully. There is no exception that the referee will or should perform any other duties.

The referee is within his rights to expect that the players, coaches and other team officials know the rules of the game and their responsibilities. And that the home team will provide a game ball or balls of acceptable quality properly inflated, etc. The referee has no responsibility to explain the rules of the game or to answer questions regarding his rulings, fouls, or punishment. In fact, as there is no provision for questions, and because of experience, the referee is likely to consider a question to be a challenge to his authority and a prelude to further questions and confrontation. Considering that if the coach knew the rules, hand, and arm signals, he would have no questions, leaving the referee to assume the coach is dissenting his call. Dissension of a referee's ruling is not allowed, and the referee is likely to deal with it harshly because, otherwise, it only leads to more dissension spreading to the spectators and players.

There is to be no coaching from the sidelines. Practice belongs to the coach, and that is where he does his teaching. The game belongs to the players, and coaches' shouting only confuses things. The FIFA Laws of The Game define the technical area and explains that "only one person at a time is authorized to convey tactical instructions, and he must return to his position immediately after giving these instructions." It also explains that "the technical area extends one (1) yard on either side of the designated seated area and extends forward up to a distance of one (1) yard from the touch line." Tactical instructions are defined as "Johnny, switch positions with Jack" and such. It is anticipated the coach's position will be sitting on the bench quietly observing the game, taking care of injuries or talking with substitutes and assistant coaches.

The coach is responsible not only for his own actions but those of parents and spectators associated in any way with his team. A page from the USSF rule book is attached clearly stating the responsibilities of the coach and defining referee assault and abuse and its penalties. If, in the opinion of the referee, the coach, player, or others are disrupting the game or dissenting his calls, he shall deal with the coach to have the source silenced. If the coach does not correct the disturbance, the referee is empowered to "send off" the coach. If there is a properly designated assistant coach, the game may resume under his control. If there is no such person and/or that such person fails to control the situation and is "sent off" the referee must suspend the game and report the incident to the League or other authority where appropriate action will be taken.

The quote “an ounce of prevention is worth an pound of cure” might have been coined especially for soccer coaches. After an incident at a game where coaches, parents, and other spectators disrupt the game, assault, or abuse the referee or otherwise cause the game to be suspended, the damage is already done. The players have had their game cut short for no fault of theirs. They have seen their role models (their parents, coaches, other adult team officials and spectators) setting terrible examples. Years of sportsmanship training is wiped out in a flash. Unless the referee deals swift and severe punishment out, those involved think their actions were O.K. and they now have a license to repeat that and try for even worse. The prescribed medicine, one or more game suspension and fines, will probably not affect a cure. Those involved will blame the unfair and unreasonable referee, pay the fine and be prepared for the next encounter.

The only cure is prevention. As soon as the team is formed for the season, the coach must have a mandatory meeting of the parents/guardians. It must be understood that unless one or more parents are present at the meeting, their child will not be allowed to play in games. Have it understood there will not be free makeup meetings. Any makeup meeting will cost the parent \$50 or whatever other amount the coach is comfortable with. Remember that every makeup meeting will take time making the coach’s job more onerous and that a lack of cooperation is a forecaster of trouble. Inform the parents of their role at games and practices is to encourage the players by cheering and by compliments after they are off the field. No coaching by spectators or criticism of our players, the opponents or the referee will be tolerated. Inform them there will be game or games suspension and money fines for first time violations. For second time violations they will be suspended from attending games for the balance of the season or forever. Inform them that failure to comply with the suspensions and or pay fines before the next game will result in their child not playing until the fine is paid and the suspension is served. It may seem harsh to punish the child for the actions of his parent but if suspensions and fines have failed to correct the problem, there is probably no other way. Consider the alternative to correction. The problem continues and grows. Because the coach is responsible for the actions of the spectators, he coach is suspended by the League or State Association leaving the team without a coach and therefore unable to play future games. Since the parent of one player is destroying soccer for the entire team not to mention the opponents whose game is also cut short and considering the situation will not improve, cutting playing time for the one player is justified. Experience has proven that a parent faced with his child’s suspension will either pay the fine or serve the suspension and mend his ways or stay away altogether. Either way, the problem is solved. There is an old and true saying; “you cannot save a person from himself or his parents.”

It is important to know that the coach controlling his own actions as well as spectators isn’t just the nice thing to do. Failure to do so can lead to serious legal consequences. The coach, team and club can be held legally responsible for injuries arising from assault on referees and other game officials. In a baseball game, an attack by the coaches of one team upon the coach of the other team resulted their in being found guilty in criminal court and a judgment in civil court of more than \$700,000 against the

attacking coach's club and the club running the tournament. The court held the club is responsible for the actions of those associated with it and the club is charged with controlling the game and security through its representatives—in this case, the coaches.

In a less spectacular case the dissension of the head coach and assistant coach probably incited a parent to attack and injure the soccer referee and a young girl was injured in the scuffle. The parent is suspended from all youth soccer activities for five years and the coaches were suspended for rest of the season. The parent is faced with a criminal trial. A substitute coach had to be found for the team. The coach commented that it was "so unfair for the State Association to suspend the coaches because it meant the players would be without their coach." The coaches can try to avoid their responsibility by blaming others but if they had done their jobs there would not have been an altercation and the players would not have been subjected to such a display. Who do you think was unfair to the players?

Thank you for reading this lengthy dissertation. It was reduced in length but further deletions would leave you without the knowledge and tools to do a vital part of your job. Referee dissent and its by-products could destroy soccer, the most perfect sport for kids.

Good luck

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Illinois State Referee Committee
Charlie Dyson

Law V - The Referee

The Authority of the Referee

Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match to which he has been appointed.

Powers and Duties

The Referee:

- enforces the Laws of the Game
- controls the match in co-operation with the assistant referees and, where applicable, with the fourth official
- ensures that any ball used meets the requirements of Law 2
- ensures that the players' equipment meets the requirements of Law 4
- acts as timekeeper and keeps a record of the match
- stops, suspends or terminates the match, at his discretion, for any infringements of the Laws
- stops, suspends or terminates the match because of outside interference of any kind
- stops the match if, in his opinion, a player is seriously injured and ensures that he is removed from the field of play
- allows play to continue until the ball is out of play if a player is, in his opinion, only slightly injured
- ensures that any player bleeding from a wound leaves the field of play. The player may only return on receiving a signal from the referee, who must be satisfied that the bleeding has stopped
- allows play to continue when the team against which an offence has been committed will benefit from such an advantage and penalises the original offence if the anticipated advantage does not ensue at that time
- punishes the more serious offence when a player commits more than one offence at the same time
- takes disciplinary action against players guilty of cautionable and sending-off offences. He is not obliged to take this action immediately but must do so when the ball next goes out of play
- takes action against team officials who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and may at his discretion, expel them from the field of play and its immediate surrounds
- acts on the advice of assistant referees regarding incidents which he has not seen
- ensures that no unauthorised persons enter the field of play
- restarts the match after it has been stopped
- provides the appropriate authorities with a match report which includes information on any disciplinary action taken against players, and/or team officials and any other incidents which occurred before, during or after the match

Decisions of the Referee

The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play are final. The referee may only change a decision on realising that it is incorrect or, at his discretion, on the advice of an assistant referee, provided that he has not restarted play.

Decisions of the International F.A. Board

1. **A referee (or where applicable, an assistant referee or fourth official) is not held liable for:**
any kind of injury suffered by a player, official or spectator
any damage to property of any kind
any other loss suffered by any individual, club, company, association or other body, which is due or which may be due to any decision which he may take under the terms of the Laws of the Game or in respect of the normal procedures required to hold, play and control a match.
This may include:
 - a decision that the condition of the field of play or its surrounds or that the weather conditions are such as to allow or not to allow a match to take place
 - a decision to abandon a match for whatever reason
 - a decision as to the condition of the fixtures or equipment used during a match including the goalposts, crossbar, flagposts and the ball
 - a decision to stop or not to stop a match due to spectator interference or any problem in the spectator area
 - a decision to stop or not to stop play to allow an injured player to be removed from the field of play for treatment
 - a decision to request or insist that an injured player be removed from the field of play for treatment
 - a decision to allow or not to allow a player to wear certain apparel or equipment
 - a decision (in so far as this may be his responsibility) to allow or not to allow any persons (including team or stadium officials, security officers, photographers or other media representatives) to be present in the vicinity of the field of play
 - any other decision which he may take in accordance with the Laws of the Game or in conformity with his duties under the terms of FIFA, confederation, national association or league rules or regulations under which the match is played
2. In tournaments or competitions where a fourth official is appointed, his role and duties must be in accordance with the guidelines approved by the International F.A. Board.
3. Facts connected with play shall include whether a goal is scored or not and the result of the match.