

Dealing with Problem Coaches

- Set the ground rules – be proactive
 - Show them where the team and the coaches will be seated. Make sure they understand that they must stay in that area.
 - If there is more than one coach, ask which coach will be giving instruction to the players and who will be asking for subs.
- Don't let the coaches intimidate you.
- Be confident in your knowledge of the Laws of the Game and Rules of Competition.
- Remain calm. If someone is hollering at you, don't yell back at them. Speak respectfully and quietly, so the coach must quiet down to hear you.
- Do not take someone yelling at you personally. It happens to all referees, even the most experienced.
- However, once the coach steps over the boundaries of the game and begins to make his comments personal or abusive, you must deal with it. Slowly and calmly walk over to the coach. In a polite and respectful way, inform the coach that this type of conduct is unsporting and continuing with this type conduct will result in his or her removal from the game. If the behavior continues – respectfully and professionally ask the coach to leave. If the coach refuses to leave, give the coach a warning that if he or she does not leave, you will end the game. If the coach does not leave in a reasonable amount of time (approximately 30 – 60 seconds), end the game. Be sure to file a very detailed report with the league so there is a good understanding of why the game was ended early.

Dealing with Problem Players:

- Make your presence known from the moment you walk on the field - that way players know you are in charge. Stand tall, look people in the eye and smile confidently. Have your pre-game questions down - introduce yourself even if you have worked games with the same coaches before, solicit copies of the rosters, get the game ball from the home team and check it out, check in players. (Do not tell players how you are going to call the game and what you are going to call and not call. This can cause you major problems in the game.) Doing these game management things confidently will carry over into the game.
- Remember to blow the whistle with confidence, even if you are not feeling so confident and use decisive signals with straight arms.
- If you have a difficult player dissenting or doing something else to disrupt the game, at a stoppage of play, issue a caution to them and let the player know that kind of behavior is unacceptable. If the player still insists on being difficult, use a well delivered warning to let them know that you have just about reached the limit of what you are going to take. It is often helpful to let the coach know this particular player is wearing out their welcome and the team may soon be playing short. Give the coach a short period of time (approximately 30 – 60 seconds) to correct the situation. If the bad behavior continues, issue a second caution and then a send off (red card). Remember that the proper procedure for this is to display the second yellow card and then the red.
- Remain calm when talking to players, but be firm in your voice and your decisions. Do not yell at players and never use foul or abusive language no matter what they are saying to you. Speak softly so the players must quiet down to hear you.
- Listen to what players are saying. Allow them to vent for a few seconds before calling it dissent. You might find out about fouls you are missing, or there may be something else going on that can be easily corrected. This tactic also lets the players know you are willing to listen up to a certain point. This type of exchange should not go on often in a game and should not last for more than a few seconds. If it goes on longer, you must deal with it. The more experience you have as a referee, the easier it is to set boundaries and to know when and where to set them.

Dealing with Problem Parents

- Remain calm.
- Do not get into discussions or arguments with the sidelines.
- Report any misbehavior on the part of the spectators in a misconduct report to the league so that this type of behavior can be disciplined and stopped. Most leagues and state associations have methods for dealing with bad behavior, but doing so often requires a written report from the referee.
- Enlist the support of the coach. Ask him to speak with the offending spectators, and let him know that if the behavior continues, the game will not. This will usually be enough to quiet most parents, but not all.
- If you have asked the coach to deal with problem parents and the situation continues, ask the coach to have the spectator leave the area. If the spectator refuses, tell the coach that if you have to remove the spectator the coach will be removed too and the game may be abandoned. Give the coach a reasonable amount of time (approximately 30 – 60 seconds) to deal with the situation. Coaches are responsible for their parents.
- If the parent does not leave, you should feel free to end the game. Be sure you file a complete written report with the league so that there is a clear understanding of why the game was terminated. The league must have a written report in order to take any follow-up disciplinary action.