



Zero Tolerance Policy on Referee Abuse

Purpose of this Policy:

The purpose of this policy is to make clear that verbal abuse or negative criticism of referees, is as unacceptable as abuse aimed at players, parents, or coaches. HPFC strives to hold itself to the highest standards both professionally and ethically. This policy adopts basic standard sanctions for improper conduct.

This policy is not intended to imply that referees are always “right” and the spectator or coach is always “wrong”. Just as players make mistakes during play, referees will make mistakes in officiating, particularly in the younger divisions where they are learning how to referee. Due to a shortage of referees, a referee may be officiating at a higher level game than they are comfortable with. They must receive positive support from coaches and spectators to continue to grow as an official.

It is never acceptable to abuse or criticize referees, verbally or otherwise, in any situation. HPFC will not tolerate any verbal or other abuse, or criticism of a referee by any coach or spectator. There are appropriate avenues for coaches and spectators to share concerns about the quality of officiating. The HPFC Directors welcome constructive comments about the referees.

Policy on Referee Abuse:

Youth Referees: Although abuse towards any referee will not be tolerated, any abuse towards a youth referee will result in more severe disciplinary actions by HPFC. A coach or spectator may only communicate in a positive way with a youth referee. If you have nothing positive to say, please keep comments to yourself. The coach is responsible for ensuring all spectators associated with his/her team follow these guidelines relating to communication with a youth referee. A coach/spectator may not express any disagreement or dissatisfaction with the officiating to the referee. A coach/spectator may not, before, during, or after a game, discuss with a referee their critique of the referee’s performance, other than to thank and compliment the referee. Only an HPFC coach may, at the end of the game, ask for clarification of a decision purely and only to understand why the decision was made.

Any HPFC Board Member or Director present at the game shall, if necessary, intervene if any coach, spectator, or other adult is criticizing or abusing a youth referee, verbally or otherwise and may take immediate and appropriate action. Coach may also address the spectator. This may include directing the offender to leave the site, and/or suspending or terminating the game.

Any concerns about the quality of officiating of a youth referee must be addressed to the Referee Assignor Adrian Lee. Email: hpfc.fields@gmail.com

Anyone observing behavior not following these guidelines should immediately report the incident to the Director of Soccer Operations so that the situation can be handled appropriately. Email: clubdirector@highlinepremier.com

At the discretion of the center referee or a HPFC Director/Board member, a warning may be given, but is not required, for a first time violation of this policy. The center referee or HPFC Director/Board member/Coach who witnesses any abuse of a referee may remove the offending party from the premises. The Police should be called for anyone who refuses to leave the premises.

Disciplinary Sanctions for Referee Abuse:

HPFC Director/Board member, upon receipt of any reported abuse of a referee shall report the incident to the Club Director of Soccer Operations, who shall implement appropriate discipline before the next game if possible. Any incident the Director of Soccer Operations deems serious, where additional action needs to be implemented, the file will be submitted to the HPFC Disciplinary Director.

The following sanctions will be applied unless modified upon review of the incident.

Type of Abuse & Recommended Sanction

-Criticism, heckling, or verbal abuse of a referee (not including offensive, insulting, or foul language) First Offense = **1 game suspension**

-Serious verbal abuse of a referee (i.e. using offensive, insulting, or foul language), or repeated offense of less serious abuse = **Minimum 2 game suspension**. HPFC Disciplinary Committee hearing to consider additional sanctions and/or actions.

-Coming onto the field to confront an adult referee = **Minimum 2 game suspension**. HPFC Disciplinary Committee hearing to consider additional sanctions and/or remedial actions.

-Coming onto the field to confront a youth referee = **Minimum 4 game suspension**. A letter of apology to the youth referee. Any specified form of appropriate apology to the players, coaches, and parents of the teams affected by the conduct.

-Threatening any referee (by word or action) = HPFC Disciplinary Committee Hearing. **Will be removed from the HPFC Organization.**

-Egregious offenses (i.e. repeated or multiple abusive situations, physical contact with a referee, or exceptionally inappropriate behavior directed toward a referee) shall result in immediate and continuing suspension of the offending person pending a thorough review. The HPFC Disciplinary Committee will determine if further or more serious discipline is warranted. An egregious offense violates the fundamental mission of HPFC and requires firm action. Discipline may include, but is not limited to, suspension for the season, suspension for multiple seasons, or lifetime bans. These sanctions apply only to the discipline of spectators and coaches. A plea of ignorance to this policy is not sufficient, and violators may expect appropriate action by the HPFC Disciplinary Committee. These sanctions do not limit, prevent, or replace any voluntary or required report or referral of improper conduct, by an adult toward any child, to any law enforcement or child protection agency.