## IYSA COACH'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO GAME OFFICIALS

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## 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 or clubs or by Leagues on their behalf to officiate games, tournaments, friendlies, scrimmages, etc. The referee is employed to perform specific duties as defined in Law 5 – The Referee or the FIFA Laws of The Game. There is no exception that the referee will or should perform any other duties. Please click on the following links to review the FIFA Offside rule:

http://www.fifa.com/lotg/football/en/flash/start.html and/or to take the Laws of the Game test: http://www.ussoccer.com/coaches/licenses/national-e/laws-of-the-game.aspx.

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 and hand and arm signals he would have no questions leaving the referee to assume the coach is dissenting his call. No dissension of a referee's ruling is 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 should be very limited coaching from the sidelines. Practice belongs to the coach. That is where he does his teaching. The game belongs to the players and coaches' shouting only confuses things. FIFA Laws of The Game defines 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." FIFA states 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 it penalties. If, in the opinion of the referee, the coach, player or others are disrupting the game or dissenting the calls, the referee 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 a 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. 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. 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 with a substantial judgment in civil court 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 it's representatives—in this case, the coaches.

In a less spectacular case the dissension of the head coach and assistant coach allegedly incited a parent to attack and injure a soccer referee causing a young girl to be injured in the scuffle. The parent was suspended from all youth soccer activities for five years and the coaches were suspended for rest of the season. The parent faced 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.