

Behavior Expectation Policy



To help prevent verbal abuse and physical assault in the leagues and clubs within the Maryland State Youth Soccer Association (MSYSA, or Association); the Association has adopted a ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY for our ZERO ABUSE initiative. This Behavior Expectation Policy builds upon the Zero Tolerance Policy and applies to all coaches, players, managers, club team officials, parents, volunteers, spectators and other supporters and referees.

Abusive and obscene language, violent conduct, fighting and other behavior (including, but not limited to sarcasm, taunting, etc.) deemed detrimental to the game between the above-mentioned groups will not be tolerated.

The ultimate responsibility for the actions of coaches, players, and spectators resides with the member clubs.

MSYSA is and will always be, a place where all races, genders, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and other protected categories can come together and feel welcome to enjoy the game of soccer, compete, and grow together. Our organization maintains the highest standards and all our players, parents, and coaches are expected to demonstrate the utmost level of respect and sportsmanship.

The use of racial epithets and offensive language has no place in MSYSA. Use of racial epithets and other offensive language is especially harmful for members of underrepresented groups. Permitting such language is incongruous to the culture of respect, dignity, and belonging we strive to create for all athletes, staff, and volunteers who support our youth.

It is the responsibility of the coaches to provide referee support and spectator control, and it is the responsibility of the member clubs to provide instructions to their coaches on how they are expected to carry this out. This policy applies before, during, and after the game at the soccer field and its immediate surrounding areas.

Parents & Spectators

No parent or spectator shall persistently address the referee or assistant referees at any time. This includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Parents and spectators shall not dispute calls during or after the game.
- b. Parents and spectators shall not make remarks to the referee(s) or advise the referee(s) to watch certain players or attend to rough play.
- c. Parents and spectators shall never yell at the referee(s), including criticism, sarcasm, harassment, intimidation, or feedback of any kind before, during or after the game.

Allowable exceptions to the above include, but may not be limited to:

- a. Parents and spectators may respond to a referee who has initiated a conversation, until such time as the referee terminates the conversation.
- b. Parents and spectators may point out an emergency or safety issue, such as a player apparently injured on the field or observed fighting.

Additionally, parents and spectators shall not make derogatory comments to the players nor to the team officials of either team.

Penalties (Parents & Spectators)

In the opinion of the referee, depending on the severity of the offense, the referee may take any of the following actions:

- a. The referee may issue a verbal warning to the head coach of the offending party's team.
- b. The referee may caution (yellow card) the head coach of the offending party's team.
- c. The referee may send off (red card) the head coach of the offending party's team.
- d. The referee may stop the game and instruct the head coaches to direct the parent/spectator to leave the field.
- e. The referee may abandon the game if the parent/spectator does not leave the field.

The sanction for irresponsible behavior by a spectator will be administered by the referee to the head coach in accordance with Law 12, Disciplinary Action, Team Officials. Examples:

Warning:

- 1) Ignoring a request from an AR to move away from the touchline.
- 2) Non-exaggerated disagreement about referee or AR decisions

Caution (Yellow Card):

- 1) Clear or continual disagreement or complaining about referee or AR decisions
- 2) Gesturing or verbal demand for yellow or red card
- 3) Acting in a provocative or inflammatory manner

Send-Off (Red Card):

- 1) Confronting the other team's spectators
- 2) Throwing or kicking an object onto the field
- 3) Offensive, Insulting or Abusive language or actions
- 4) Violent Conduct
- 5) Entering the field of play for any reason without being invited by the referee
- 6) Physical or aggressive behavior including spitting

IF A SEND-OFF (RED CARD) OFFENSE BY A SPECTATOR OCCURS AFTER THE GAME ENDS, THE HEAD COACH MAY STILL BE SANCTIONED BY THE REFEREE.

Players

The conduct of the players is governed by the Laws of the Game as stated by FIBA and USSF. The Laws themselves describe penalties associated with violating the Laws of the Game. Additional penalties for players who engage in misconduct may be established by the club and/or league but may in no case be less severe than penalties established by FIBA, USSF, or MSYSA.

Coaches, Assistant Coaches & Bench Personnel

It is the responsibility of all coaches to maintain the highest standards of conduct for themselves, their players, and supporters in all matches. Failure to do so undermines the referee's authority and the integrity of the game resulting in an unfavorable sporting environment for players, the referee(s), coaches, assistant coaches, bench personnel, and spectators. As role models for all the participants and spectators, coaches participating in a Maryland State Youth Soccer Association sanctioned event are expected to be supportive of, and to acknowledge the effort, good play, and sportsmanship on the part of ALL players from either team in a contest. By example, coaches, assistant coaches, and

bench personnel are expected to show that although they are competing in a game, they have respect for their opponent, referees, and spectators at all times. The Maryland State Youth Soccer Association will not tolerate negative behavior exhibited either by demonstrative actions and gestures, or by ill-intentioned remarks, including those addressed toward the referees or members of an opposing team.

Coaches exhibiting hostile, negative, sarcastic, or otherwise ill-intended behavior toward referees, opposing players or coaches will be subject to sanction by the referee. Additional sanctions may be imposed by the club that the coach or assistant coach represents, the league that the match is being played under, or as allowed by the Maryland State Youth Soccer Association policies after a review of the match report.

Coaches should be aware that according to the laws of the game any person in the technical area can be shown cards by the referee.

- Coaches shall not interact directly or indirectly with the coaches or players of the opposing team during the game in any manner that may be construed as negative, hostile, or sarcastic either by way of demonstrative actions and gestures or by ill-intentioned remarks.
- Coaches shall not offer dissent to any call made by the referee(s) at any time.
- Coaches are not to address the Referee(s) during the game except to:
 - a. Respond to a referee who has initiated a conversation.
 - b. Point out emergency or safety issues.
 - c. Make substitutions.
 - d. Ask the referee, "What is the proper restart (i.e., direction and Indirect Free Kick or Direct Free Kick)?"
 - e. Ask for the time remaining in the half.
- Coaches are allowed to ask a referee after a game or during the halftime interval (not on the field), in a polite and constructive way, to explain a law or foul, but not judgment calls made in the game.
 - a. Polite and friendly concern can be exchanged with the referee. If the polite tone of the conversation changes, the referee may abandon the exchange at any time.
 - b. Absolutely no sarcasm, harassment, or intimidation is allowed.

NOTE: It is recommended that coaches or other team members do not engage in any conversation with the referee(s) once the match has concluded.

Penalties (Coaches, Assistant Coaches & Bench Personnel)

In the opinion of the referee, depending on the severity of the offense, the referee may take any of the following actions:

- a. The referee may issue a verbal warning to the offending coach, assistant coach, or bench personnel.
- b. The referee may caution (yellow card) the head coach of the offending party's team.
- c. The referee may send off (red card) the offending coach, assistant coach, or bench personnel. Once sent off, the individual will be required to leave the field immediately.

If the offender cannot be positively identified, then, in accordance with the Laws of the Game, the head coach will receive the Penalty.

The referee should abandon the game if the coach, assistant coach, or bench personnel do

not leave the field or any immediate adjoining area after having been instructed to do so.

Additional penalties associated with the ejection of a coach, assistant coach or bench personnel may be assessed by the local club or league which sanctioned the match in accordance with their documented policy. These penalties may be no less stringent than sanctions as may be imposed by the MSYSA Adjudication Committee following their review, if conducted, of the incident.

Referees

Referees are expected to maintain a professional and respectful demeanor. Team officials are encouraged to report any disrespectful or unprofessional behavior to the applicable competition authorities. Competition authorities are to then share the report with the applicable referee assignor(s) and the MSYSA State Youth Referee Administrator.

Referee Abuse

All cases of alleged abuse or assault of a referee shall be reported by the Referee to that game's respective Assignor within 48 hours of said behavior. The Assignor will manage and forward to SYRA, Club, and League/Event Organizer for review and disciplinary action in accordance with U.S. Soccer Policy 701. The MSYSA Adjudication Committee will handle any applicable appeals. Although MSYSA is continually bound by USSF Policy and its various revisions, definition of referee abuse and referee assault found in USSF Policy 531-9 as of the creation date of this Policy is offered by way of information as follows:

- a. Referee abuse is a verbal statement or physical act not resulting in bodily contact which implies or threatens physical harm to a referee or the referee's property or equipment.
- b. Abuse includes but is not limited to the following acts committed upon a referee: using foul or abusive language toward a referee that implies or threatens physical harm; spewing any beverage on a referee's physical property; or spitting at (but not on) the referee.
- c. The minimum suspension is 3 games.

Referee Assault

- a. Referee Assault is an intentional act of physical violence at or upon a referee.
 - i. For purposes of this Policy, "intentional act" shall mean an act intended to bring about a result which will invade the interests of another in a way that is socially unacceptable. Unintended consequences of the act are irrelevant.
- b. Assault includes, but is not limited to the following acts committed upon a referee: hitting, kicking, punching, choking, spitting on, grabbing or bodily running into a referee; head butting; the act of kicking or throwing any object at a referee that could inflict injury; damaging the referee's uniform or personal property, i.e., car, equipment, etc.
- c. The minimum suspension is 6 months.