

GRANTHAM OPTIMIST



SOFTBALL LEAGUE

Grantham Optimist Softball
Zero Tolerance Policy

Across the country and throughout youth sports, there have been increasing numbers of incidents involving coaches, parents and game officials. This policy addresses specific incidents of abuse concerning umpires, coaches and parents/spectators.

Umpires.

The Grantham Optimist Softball Program (GOSP) utilizes youth umpires and sees this program as an additional benefit to the youth of our community. This provides a secondary outlet for young people to participate within the GOSP. Our youth umpire program helps young people develop valuable life skills, while also filling a needed role for the league.

Coaches.

The GOSP is a volunteer-based program and our coaches are vital to the league's success. We encourage and appreciate their efforts to promote fair play, good sportsmanship and ability to teach our children how to play the game.

Parents/Spectators.

The GOSP is also a family-oriented program and the parents and extended family and friends that join in the softball experience are also important to our success.

The primary purposes of this policy are to ensure that umpires, coaches, and parents who are participating in or observing GOSP games are **safe from physical harm or verbal abuse** and to **encourage and teach principles of good sportsmanship while having fun**. We feel it is everyone's responsibility to teach the players that there is more to the game than winning or losing and the final score.

Because of this, the GOSP has decided to implement a "zero tolerance" policy toward any cases of abuse concerning players umpires, parents, spectators, coaches or club members. This policy will encompass all interactions during the course of the pre-season, regular season and post-season, which shall include but not be limited to the following: practices, games, opening day ceremonies, tournaments and any other league sponsored event(s).

Under NO circumstances does this policy authorize or encourage parents or coaches to argue, physically restrain, or in other ways assume the role of convenors, Club members or authorities. If friendly, measured requests to stop offending behavior are ignored, we will call on the NRP for assistance. This policy is effective immediately.

Coaches

The only time coaches can interact with an umpire is to do the following:

Review the ground rules before the game

Interpret rules during the game

Point out emergencies

Respond to an umpire if addressed

Thank them after the game

No other coach-initiated interaction with an umpire is acceptable. No disputing calls, during or after the game, no yelling at the umpire, no criticism, sarcasm, harassment, intimidation or feedback of any kind during or after the game. The umpire has the right to immediately expel a coach who violates this policy.

This includes:

- No comments concerning balls and strikes.
- No under-the-breath-remarks.
- No comments concerning any judgment calls.
- No comments concerning any rules interpretations.

Discussions with umpires should take place between innings. If an umpire interprets a rule incorrectly, it is permissible to talk with the umpire between innings with the coaches of both teams present. These conversations should be positive in tone, with the intent on gaining clarification on the call. Coaches can share any concerns with the convenor following the game.

Umpire abuse at its simplest is defined as any deliberate action that makes an umpire feel physically threatened, verbally intimidated or emotionally

humiliated. Disrespectfully objecting to calls, yelling at, publicly calling, constantly disagreeing with an umpire by action or verbally can be deemed umpire abuse. Coaches should always show decorum, respect and observe all game rules whenever questioning an umpire about a call

A coach who violates any of these offences will be removed from the game immediately and receive an automatic one game suspension. A second incident will result in a three-game suspension. A third incident will result in removal from the program

Parents

Parents are not to address umpires, opposing coaches or opposing players either directly or indirectly, before or during the game or after the game. This means no yelling, jeering, questioning, criticizing, or feedback of any kind.

Convenors or umpires will alert coaches to intervene when a spectator or parent from their team becomes disruptive to coaches, players, umpires or other spectators. The offending spectator will receive one warning. If the behavior persists, they will be asked to leave the game. Once asked to leave, play will not resume until the person has removed him/herself completely from the field and surrounding areas. If the person does not vacate the premises within 10 minutes, the game will be forfeited.

Parents or spectators who are removed from the park must sign a 'Reinstatement Form' to re-enter the park. That document states that a 'zero tolerance incident' has occurred and that any further incidents will result in a ban to be determined by the Club and Ball Committee.

Offending Behaviour

Offending behavior from coaches/parents is defined as:

1. Use of obscene or vulgar language to anyone at any time

2. Taunting of players, coaches, umpires, officials or other spectators by means of baiting or ridiculing them, physical violence or threat of physical violence.
3. Throwing or kicking of any object from the stands towards players, coaches, or officials.
4. Examples of verbal harassment include name calling and audible statements that question another person's capabilities or intentions or suggest that their decisions or play may be the result of physical or mental limitations. For example, shouting at a umpire, "Are you crazy?" or "Ump, you need your glasses fixed" would qualify, under the terms of this policy, as verbal harassment, as would "That's a terrible call." Shouting suggestions that players or coaches engage in unsportsmanlike behavior or commit fouls would qualify as verbal harassment. Post-game critical comments directed aggressively at umpires, players, league officials or coaches would also qualify as verbal harassment.

GOSP strongly encourages:

Applauding effort on the field, regardless of the score.

Remembering that the league exists for the players to learn and to have fun. Even though the game is competitive in nature, winning is secondary.

Remembering umpires are often "in training" as well as the players. All umpires will make mistakes occasionally, but coaches and parents are expected to accord the umpires with the respect their position within the game deserves.

Many coaches are also parents who volunteer their time to help our youth. Treat other coaches as you would expect them to treat you.

Youth sports are valuable family time. Celebrate this experience and refrain from unacceptable behaviour.

Model acceptable behavior. Booing, taunting or ridiculing another player is not acceptable behavior.

Softball is a game of interpretations and, as a result, disputes will occur from time to time. Work to resolve any disputes in a reasonable manner.