

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 verbal abuse or negative criticism of players.

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. The Wagoner Soccer Club will not tolerate any verbal or other abuse, or criticism of referee by any coach or spectator. There are appropriate avenues for coaches and spectators to share concerns about the quality of officiating. The WSC welcomes constructive comments about the referees. The WSC Board Members can be found on the WSC Facebook page.

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 the WSC. A coach or spectator may only communicate in a positive way with a youth referee. 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, before, during, or after a game, discuss with a youth referee their critique of the referee’s performance, other than to thank and compliment the referee.

Any WSC Board Member or USSF –certified Adult Referee 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 appropriate action. 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 or board member.

Anyone observing behavior not following these guidelines should immediately report the incident to the WSC Board Member on duty so that situation can be handled appropriately. Please report to the concession stand and the Board Member on Duty will be contacted.

At the discretion of the center referee or WSC Board Member, a warning may be given, **but is not required**, for a first time violation of this policy. The Center Referee or WSC Board Member 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

Any Board Member, upon receipt of any reported abuse of a referee shall report the incident to the WSC Board, who shall implement appropriate discipline before the next game if possible.

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

Types 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 (e.g. using offensive, insulting,
Or foul language), or repeated offense of less serious abuse.

Minimum 2 game suspension
WSC Board hearing to consider
additional sanctions and/or
remedial actions.

Coming onto the field to confront an adult referee.

Minimum 2 game suspension
WSC Board hearing to consider additional
sanctions and/or remedial actions.

Coming onto the field to confront a youth referee.

Minimum 4 game suspension
WSC Board hearing to consider
additional sanctions and/or
remedial actions.
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)

WSC Board Hearing
Reported to local law enforcement and
OSA.

Egregious offenses (e.g. 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 WSC Board will determine if further or more serious discipline is warranted. An egregious offense violates the fundamental mission of the WSC and requires strong action. Discipline may include, but is not limited to, suspension for the season, suspension for multiple seasons, or lifetime coaching bans.

These sanctions apply only to the discipline of spectators and coaches. Sanctions necessary for any player will be dealt with using the Red Card Policy form the FIFA Rules.

A plea of ignorance to this policy is not sufficient, and violators may expect appropriate action by the WSC Board.

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.