



Mantua Township Soccer Association

Club Number 9142, Travel SJGSL, SJSL, & EDP

REFEREE ABUSE POLICY

Parents,

In case you are not aware, we have a severe shortage of referees. This is due, in large part, to the abuse they are subjected to by coaches, players, and sidelines. The behavior towards referees must change.

For the past several years these Travel Leagues have had a Referee Abuse Policy in place, but despite that, we are still seeing a sharp increase in abuse incidents as well as drop off in the number of referees.

It seems that despite our best efforts it hasn't been enough to curb the growing number of games where referees are being subjected to verbal, and sometimes physical, abuse. Effective immediately

MTSA will enforce a **ZERO TOLERANCE** policy regarding any inappropriate behavior towards referees.

Any coach, parent, or spectator at the field who berates a referee will be subject to a suspension.

Specifically, in each case the VP of Travel will assess the issue and determine the extent (number of games) of the suspension and bring it to the Board for approval.

All coaches are responsible for coaching the players, their behavior, and the behavior of the parents and spectators on the sideline.



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Parents and spectators are encouraged to cheer for their team's players and their teammates. At no time does their role cross over to being a referee mentor or educator, regardless of their knowledge or understanding of the game. That role belongs to the State Referee Committee. As just a few examples, DO NOT tell the referee "to call the game", "to keep the kids safe", "to call it both ways", "that they are a terrible referee", or "that you are going to file a complaint." There is no reason to yell these things or any other derogatory or personal, public, or provocative remarks directed at a referee as it is viewed as a threat. **THERE ARE NO EXCUSES.** If you are making any remark towards a referee, you put your team at risk of game stoppage, your Coach getting a Yellow Card/Fine, a possible forfeit, and other potentially unfavorable and unwelcome outcomes as adjudicated by the league/event and MTSA.



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Policy FAQ's

A referee has all the power!!!

Referees have always had the ability to make a judgement call to clear a sideline or end a match in situations they deem unsafe.

Can I say anything during my child's match?

MTSA is not encouraging, expecting, or mandating that sidelines be silent. Exclamations in the moment are part of human nature...we are all guilty of doing this at one time or another. Saying "handball" or "offside" as an immediate response to a situation is more than acceptable **so long as that exclamation ends there**. It is NOT acceptable to address the official with anything further. Complaints are just part of sports – referees know that when they sign up. Complaints are part of the sports atmosphere. Our youth referees, like our youth players, are still learning and developing their skills. Again, exclamations are okay, but anything after an exclamation is not welcome and will not be tolerated.



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Can I talk to a referee at all?

Coaches – We would encourage you to introduce yourself and start a mutually respectful relationship prior to the start of the match. Throughout the match, anything specifically addressed to a referee should be done with respect.

Players – Most referees welcome communication with players – especially if it is done respectfully. Take ownership of your game and ask for clarification on a call or decision with respect.

Parents – there is no reason to speak with a referee during the game. After the game you may do so but only to say “thank you” or engage in a positive way and certainly not to complain or argue a decision that was made!!!

What about protecting our players? Referees need to keep our players safe.

Soccer is a physical game – referees use their best judgement and experience to protect players and keep them safe.



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My child has been playing for years and we've never seen this issue. Is this even a problem?

Every year the referee pool sees about 1/3 of its referees choose to not return. Each season there are reports of not only berating referees or verbal threats made to individuals, but actual physical violence against referees. We have heard of many examples of parents or coaches stepping into a referee's "safe zone" during or after a match. Some referees are literally scared to face youth soccer parents, others are just simply fed up with getting berated.

Just get referees that know what they're doing. The referees you have are too young.

It can take anywhere from 3 to 5 years to become a confident/seasoned referee. The bottom line is that it takes experience. What MTSA has found is that new referees, young or old, are not being allowed an opportunity to get that learning experience without intense and loud criticism or even threats made against them. They are leaving the role before they have time to master the craft. It has become a vicious circle that we need to break. Referee Assignors also hope to give new referees lower-level matches, but the lack of referees does not always allow for this.



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MTSA just sides with the referee.

This is a common complaint from coaches, and on the flip side – from referees feeling MTSA sides with coaches. Officials see the same coach with bad behavior season after season without a change in behavior. At the rate the referee pool is decreasing, officials need to be protected. Period.

It costs too much to be a referee and the pay isn't good enough.

We agree, this season the leagues announced a large increase in pay for the referees in hopes that they would see a larger pool of officials.

Lastly, we understand that the term “Zero Tolerance” elicits concern and strikes a nerve as too extreme of a solution; we hope that you'll see from our responses and clarifications above that the situation we find ourselves in requires a serious culture change that can only be ignited by a shock to the system.

In closing, I ask you to consider one question: What if that was your child reffing the game?

Sincerely,

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President MTSA

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