

REFEREE ABUSE AND ASSAULT PROCEDURES (from EPSARC Referee Manual)

No referee likes to hear cases of assault or abuse. Unfortunately, there are times when something does occur. In most areas, cases of assault on referees are very infrequent. Cases of referee abuse are more pervasive than referee assaults, but fortunately these too are events that do not occur on a large scale. However, if and when a referee is assaulted or is subjected to verbal abuse it is extremely important that he responds immediately and appropriately. Both assault against referees and verbal abuse directed toward referees are addressed in the USSF Official Administrative Rules under Rule 3041, "Misconduct Toward Game Officials." Policy 531-9 defines referee assault as "an intentional act of physical violence upon a referee." Policy 531-9 goes on to state:

Assault includes, but is not limited to the following acts committed towards a referee: hitting, kicking, punching, choking, spitting at or on, grabbing or bodily running into a referee; 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.)

Rule 3041 defines referee abuse as "a verbal statement or physical act which implies or threatens physical harm to a referee or to the referee's property or equipment. According to Policy 531-9

Abuse includes, but is not limited to the following acts committed towards a referee: Using foul or abusive language, spewing any beverage on a referee's personal property, or verbally threatening a referee. Verbal threats are remarks that carry the implied threat of physical harm. Such remarks such as "I'll get you after the game" or "You won't get out of here in one piece" shall be deemed as referee abuse.

Under Policy 531-9 the foregoing offenses when committed by any player, coach, manager or other participant carries very severe sanctions! For assault on a referee by a participant, the minimum sanction permitted is the suspension of the offender from all soccer activities for a period of one year.

When the player, coach, manager or other official is an adult and the referee is a minor(17 or younger), then the minimum suspension period is three(3) years

In addition, this period of suspension begins as soon as the report of an assault is verified. Verification is generally considered to be when the referee's written and signed game report is received, indicating a report of assault on a referee.

The minimum sanction allowed for referee abuse is a suspension from the next three scheduled matches within the rules of that competition. This sanction, also takes effect as soon as the referee's report is received.

Because of the severity of these sanctions referees shall be very careful not to make unfounded allegations against any participant. However if a referee honestly believes that he has been assaulted or abused under the definitions of USSF Policy 531-9, he should immediately report the incident by written documentation to the appropriate authority of jurisdiction under which the game was played.

For Assault or Abuse occurring in a game played under the jurisdiction of the EPSA, the referee's game report including details of the incident shall be immediately sent to the State Office with attention to Referee Game Report. In addition, copies of the report should sent to the State Referee Administrator. (For these names and addresses, please see the Referee Informer) Finally, it is strongly suggested that the referee involved telephones the SRA and personally relate details of the incident.

For incidents occurring at tournaments or cups, the Tournament Director must be notified immediately. This allows the tournament to hold a hearing on the matter if it wishes. However, even if the tournament wishes to hold a hearing, the referee must still send the appropriate report to the sanctioning authority of jurisdiction, and to EPSA.

Additionally in cases of Referee Assault involving hostile physical contact, **it is the policy of the EPSA Referee Committee to strongly encourage any referee so assaulted to swear out a criminal assault charge against the offender with the local police or law enforcement.**

In order to allow EPSA to deal effectively with referee assaults or abuse, the referees involved in any such incidents must document properly the incident. This means a complete and coherent game report must be submitted. The report must state the names, addresses and phone numbers of the referee, assistant referees, the fourth (reserve) official [if appropriate] and game assessor [if appropriate] and the abuse or assault incident facts (who, what, when, where, & how). The report shall clearly identify the game date & time, field site, home team, visiting team, and score (half & final). Furthermore, all cautions, and send offs shall be listed with the name team, jersey number, participant ID number, time and reason for the misconduct issued to those players must be provided. For serious injuries (i.e. one which prevents the participant from returning to the game) the name, team, jersey number, participant ID number, time and description of the injury must be provided. after listing all of this information on any serious injuries, cautions, and send offs the referee shall provide a detailed narrative of the events leading up to the incident and the occurrence of the incident, itself. Identify the participants involved as clearly as possible. It should be remembered that this report is providing people who knew nothing about the incident with a clear understanding to allow them to make a fair and competent decision regarding any alleged inappropriate behavior in relation to the reported incident. Game reports, particularly in situations where a discipline problem is being reported, need to be written in a complete, informative and concise manner.

Although referees never like hearing about cases of assault or abuse on a referee, they do happen occasionally. Therefore, every referee needs to be prepared by knowing what to do when the situation does occur. The steps described herein are the administrative actions necessary to be taken upon the occurrence of a abuse or assault on a referee. As far as directions for what to actually do in such a situation, they are simple. **Remove yourself from the area as quickly as possible by retreating, running if necessary.** (Do not try to be heroic or *macho* in the situation). In cases of actual assault: retreat, protecting yourself as best possible **without retaliating**. Usually, other players or participants will come to your aid in such a situation. **Only as a last resort, when you cannot retreat safely and where you genuinely feel that you may be hurt further if you do not strike, should you physically respond to an assailant.**