



Meridian Police Activities League

Policy to Address Official & Referee Abuse

Purpose

The Policy to Address Game Official (Referee) Abuse has been generated to reverse the growing trend of game official abuse within the leagues and tournaments that are sanctioned by the Meridian Police Activities League (PAL), the Idaho Youth Soccer Association (IYSA) and US Soccer. It is our intent that this Policy will be enacted to eliminate the physical and verbal abuse of Game Officials, as well as discourage public dissent. Meridian PAL and IYSA want to make it clear that physical or verbal abuse of game officials (Center Referee, Assistant Referee(s), and Fourth Official) is as unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The purpose of this policy is to adopt basic standard sanctions for improper conduct toward game officials.

This Policy is not written in an effort to insinuate all Game Official actions and behaviors are correct, and that all points from coaches and spectators are incorrect. Rather it is to clearly provide sanctioning actions against the physical abuse, verbal abuse and negative criticism against Game Officials. Clearly, Game Officials or Referees will make mistakes in officiating, particularly in the younger age groups of our organization. All officials must start with their first year of officiating under different levels of youth games and thus will inevitably be assigned as the "Center Official" for a young players match. These same officials may also be officiating at a higher level game than they are comfortable with because of the large turnover of officials causing shortages. Mistakes WILL BE made. When this occurs, there are appropriate procedures for coaches and spectators to report any concerns about the quality of the officiating that they have received. Meridian PAL and IYSA encourage constructive comments about referees, especially as they are applied to the Laws of the Game. Game Officials must receive positive support from coaches and spectators to continue to grow as an official, no different than the players on the field.

It is NEVER acceptable to negatively criticize or abuse a game official, verbally or otherwise, in ANY situation. Meridian PAL and IYSA will not tolerate any verbal or other abuse or criticism of referee by any coach or spectator.

Jurisdiction of Reported Abuse of Game Officials

The Meridian PAL Soccer Committee shall be the governing committee for all reported abuse of game officials. The committee will follow procedure in applying the appropriate sanctions for reported incidents that fall within this policy. These sanctions do not limit, prevent or replace any voluntary or required report or referral of improper conduct, by an adult toward any other adult or by an adult toward any child, to any law enforcement or child protection agency.

Game Official Abuse complaint need not be initiated by the official or the official's governing body. These events can be reported and acted upon by the committee if witnessed at any PAL

sanctioned event by any member of Meridian PAL Board of Directors or Committee Members, Presidents of IYSA approved clubs in good standing, or the IYSA State Youth Referee Administrator (SYRA). Furthermore, sufficient complaints received by witnesses about game official abuse can be investigated by the committee and if sufficient evidence exists, can apply this policy to the sanctioning of offending person(s) on behalf of the Game Official.

Reporting Concerns of Officiating

Any concerns or complaints about the quality of a referee's application of the Laws of the Game shall be directed to Meridian PAL Committee Members. Coaches, parents and spectators should never approach an official to discuss their concerns or frustrations.

Parents and spectators may report their concerns to their Head Coach only. Head Coaches will report their concerns to their respective league director. Please use a 24 hour rule before reporting any concerns to allow for a cooling off period.

Applicability

Each Coach is responsible for his/her actions, the actions of his/her players, and bench personnel (assistant coaches, etc.). Each coach, player and spectator shall at all times support the game officials. Failure to do so will undermine the game official's authority, and has the potential of creating a hostile environment for the players, spectators, coaches, and officials alike. No one is to address the referee in a negative manner (physically, verbally, or non-verbal gestures) during or after the game.

Policy

Coaches and/or bench personnel may NOT address any member of the game official crew during play except for:

- Responding to a referee initiated communication
- Making a request for substitutions
- Pointing out emergencies or safety issues, such as an injured player on the field
- To request clarification of any call provided the request is courteous, non-argumentative and non-threatening

Negative or critical comments directed to any member of the referee crew from spectators will not be tolerated. All IYSA approved clubs or associate members shall be responsible for the appropriate behavior of their spectators. Coaches are responsible for ensuring all spectators associated with his/her team follows these guidelines relating to communications with a game official.

Although abuse towards any game official will not be tolerated, any abuse towards a youth game official (under the age of 18) will result in more severe disciplinary actions by Meridian PAL and/or IYSA. A spectator may not express any dissatisfaction with the officiating to the youth game official. Under no circumstance is it acceptable for a spectator, before, during or

after a game, to express any dissatisfaction or critique the referee's performance, other than to thank and compliment the officiating to the youth game official. A coach 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. If a coach is concerned during a game for the health and safety of a player or players, or feels any player is at risk, the coach may respectfully and in a non-threatening manner request that the center applies immediate attention to the safety situation. A coach after a game may also provide positive feedback, in a respectful and non-threatening manner that will assist in the growth of the referee. However, at any time, if the official asks the coach to cease discussions, the coach must comply or find themselves in violation of this policy. Meridian PAL and Idaho Youth Soccer Association recognize that there is value in the ability to have positive feedback discussions with game officials after the game, but greatly cautions that it does not degrade into anything that can be construed as negative. Any concerns or complaints about the quality of a referee's application of the Laws of the Game shall be directed to Meridian PAL Committee Members.

Handling Dissent is a part of every game official's job. Meridian PAL, IYSA and US Soccer recommend all game officials to apply the "Ask – Tell – Dismiss" for all irresponsible behavior as noted by non-players. It is a practical and flexible approach to deal with irresponsible behavior of coaches and bench personnel. However, if dissent from coaches and bench personnel transitions into verbal abuse, hand gestures, or threatening behavior, or is received from a spectator, it must be handled as game official abuse and not dissent.

Any Meridian PAL Board Member or Committee Member present at any game where game official abuse is occurring and not addressed by the game officials 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 but is not limited to the offender to leave the site, and/or suspending or abandons the match.

Disciplinary Sanctions

At the discretion of the center referee a warning may be given, but is not required, for a first time violation of this policy.

All Incidents will be reported to the Meridian PAL Soccer Committee, who has authority to immediately apply disciplinary sanctions for any individual or group of individuals involved with abuse of a game official, even prior to a hearing. The Soccer Committee will make all efforts to convene any hearing prior to the next scheduled game, however in the event this is not possible the Soccer Committee's immediate action of recommended sanctions shall be applied.

The following sanctions shall be applied by the Soccer Committee as necessary for the reported events. It is noted, however, that this sanction table is not intended to limit Committee's sanctioning actions, rather be applied as a guide. Extemporaneous circumstances may exist that require fewer or additional sanctions to be applied.

Type of Abuse	Recommended Sanction
Criticism, heckling, or verbal abuse of a referee (not including offensive, insulting, or foul-language) FIRST OFFENSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One (1) game suspension • Committee review to consider additional sanctions or remedial actions
Serious verbal abuse of a referee (example: using offensive, insulting, or foul language), or repeated offense of a less serious nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two (2) game suspension MINIMUM • Committee review to consider additional sanctions or remedial actions
Entering the Field to confront an Adult referee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two (2) game suspension MINIMUM • Committee review to consider additional sanctions or remedial actions
Entering the Field to confront an Youth referee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three (3) game suspension MINIMUM • Committee review to consider additional sanctions or remedial actions • Letter of apology to the youth referee, delivered by PAL • Possible form of appropriate apology to players/coaches/parents of the teams affected by the conduct
Threatening any referee (by word or action)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspension from all remaining events until Committee review to determine final sanctions • Possible referral to local law enforcement agency
Physical abuse of any referee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifetime ban from PAL/IYSA sanctioned events • Referral to local law enforcement agency