



HIGHLANDS FOOTBALL REFEREES ASSOCIATION

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DEALING WITH OFFENSIVE / INSULTING / ABUSIVE LANGUAGE AND GESTURES

Dealing with offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures in a fair and consistent manner has always been a difficult area for referees and football administrators alike. Although the Laws of the Game state that use of such language is a sending off offence, the interpretation of the exact definition of 'offensive, insulting or abusive language', and the circumstances involved has led to inconsistent decisions being made.

The LOTG outline states that dissent by word or action is a misconduct and punishable by a caution. However, as with most decisions made by a referee during the heat of a game, a balance must be struck between the letter of the law and the spirit of the game.

In order to achieve this balance, referees are reminded of the "3 P" principle. If an outburst is personal, public and provocative, the referee shall apply the fullest extent of the letter of the law. If the outburst, however, could be interpreted as involving two or perhaps only one of the components, then the referee would be expected to apply professional judgement when considering the appropriate sanction.

Mandatory Instruction:

To assist in referees handling incidents of OIAL in a game, the following mandatory instructions have been established. This is the first version of a language policy by way of a set of mandatory instructions on OIAL/G, which is to be applied by all HFRA registered officials, immediately, in all levels of competition.

Language Policy:

The following are the MINIMUM sanctions that must be administered by officials.

1. Using 'offensive' language in a verbal, public outburst directed towards oneself), which can be clearly heard by others. (e.g. – after missing a shot).

First offence – A clear verbal warning to the player

Second offence – A caution for 'unsporting behaviour'

Third offence – A second caution for 'unsporting behaviour' and a subsequent dismissal for the second caution

2. Using 'offensive' language in a verbal exchange with an opponent (non-insulting or abusive), or a teammate or own team official (personal and or public, however, not necessarily provocative).

First offence – A caution for 'unsporting behaviour'

Second offence – A second caution for 'unsporting behaviour' and a subsequent dismissal for the second caution.

3. Using 'offensive' language in a verbal exchange with an official (non-insulting or abusive) (personal and or public, however, not necessarily provocative).

First offence – A caution for 'unsporting behaviour' or 'dissent'

Second offence – A second caution for 'unsporting behaviour' or 'dissent' and a subsequent dismissal for the second Caution.

4. Using 'insulting or abusive' language in a verbal outburst directed at an official, an opponent, a teammate, team official, spectator or any others present at the game, that is personal, public and provocative.

First offence – A dismissal for using 'offensive, insulting or abusive 'language' that is personal, public and provocative.

5. If the verbal outburst is a "racist" or "derogatory" remark based on colour, race or creed' to any person present at the game.

First offence – A dismissal for using 'offensive, insulting or abusive 'language' that is personal, public and provocative.

Notes:

In all cases (other than verbal warning), the sanction must be reported to the proper authorities, using the appropriate reporting method.

All of the above sanctions apply to anyone named on the game sheet (player, substitute or team official).

In ALL cases, these sanctions are the MINIMUM to be applied, and may be increased by the game official to the next level, if he or she feels that it is warranted.