



FUSION'S ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICY ON NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR

PURPOSE

To further Fusion's efforts to promote a positive environment for all players, coaches, referees, and spectators, to clarify our position on the subject of inappropriate behavior, to set forth guidelines for handling violations of the policy, and to specify the related complaint handling procedures. Unfortunately, unacceptable incidents of verbal and/or physical abuse occur with regularity around our country. In light of these events, Fusion has adopted this "Zero Tolerance" policy regarding referee, coach, player, and/or spectator abuse.

POLICY

Fusion will not tolerate negative behavior of any type at our practices, games, and events. Verbal abuse of referees has escalated to the point that referees, particularly youth referees, are refusing to stay involved in soccer. The referees have complete authority over the conduct of the players, coaches, and spectators from the moment they arrive until the moment they leave the field. The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play are final. Just as a player or coach may be disciplined by the referee for unsportsmanlike conduct or dissent, a spectator may be asked to leave the area surrounding the field if they are harassing or heckling the referees, players, or coaches, or in any way interfering with the progress of the game. The referee is not required to issue a warning. If the offending individual refuses to leave the area, the referee may stop the game, resulting in a forfeit for the offending individual's team. Coaches may be penalized for the inappropriate behavior of parents, players, or spectators. It is an essential requirement that all coaches, officials, players, and spectators support and promote an environment free from all forms of negative behavior and inappropriate conduct covered by this policy.

Any person who has engaged in behavior covered by this policy will be disciplined and/or their involvement in the club may be terminated. Any coach, spectator, or player who is asked to leave the field will not be permitted to attend any games, practices, or events until he or she has met with the Fusion Sportsmanship Committee to discuss the incident and review the expectations concerning sportsmanship and appropriate behavior at youth events. A second offense by a coach, spectator, or player will at minimum, result in a suspension for the remainder of the season, and a second appearance with the Committee, where further disciplinary action may be taken.

DEFINITIONS

- ***Dissent may include, but is not limited to:***

- ✓ Making a negative comment or gesture directed toward the referee or asst. referee;
 - ✓ Making comments about the referee or directing the referee (ex. "Are you blind?", "Hand ball ref! Get in the game!", "Off-sides! Call it both ways!") ; or
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- ✓ Refusing to follow the instructions of the referee.
- ***Unacceptable behavior can occur in verbal, physical or visual form. This behavior includes, but is not limited to:***
 - ✓ ***Verbal:*** Using profanity, making threats, making derogatory comments about players, officials, coaches or other spectators, arguing, sideline coaching;
 - ✓ ***Physical:*** Offensive physical contact including unwelcome touching, or brushing against someone, interference with an individual's normal movement, assault;
 - ✓ ***Visual:*** Derogatory pictures, leering or obscene gestures.

PROCEDURES

WHAT TO DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR

If you believe you have seen or experienced any form of negative behavior, or other conduct covered by this policy, whether directed to you or another person, please report it to Fusion as soon as possible. Do not allow an inappropriate situation to continue by not reporting it, regardless of who is creating that situation.

You should report conduct prohibited by this policy **immediately** to one of the Fusion representatives listed below:

- The DOC or a Technical Director: DOC@fusionsc.org or tdfitchett@fusionsc.org
- The Club Administrator: officestaff@fusionsc.org
- A Board Administrator: admin@fusionsc.org
- The Club President: president@fusionsc.org

WHAT FUSION WILL DO WITH YOUR REPORT

Fusion will promptly conduct a complete investigation of your report. We will:

- ✓ Contact you to get the details of your report;
- ✓ Keep you informed of the status of the investigation as it proceeds; and
- ✓ Advise you of the outcome of the investigation and any resulting discipline.

Fusion will not tolerate any acts of retaliation against you for making a report. If you feel that someone is retaliating against you for making a report, please tell one of the club representatives listed above so that Fusion can investigate your concerns and take appropriate corrective action.

Fusion has zero tolerance for negative behavior. Fusion will not stand for it and you shouldn't either. Please help Fusion make our club free from inappropriate behavior by treating everyone with the respect they deserve, and by reporting any incidents to Fusion. Let's remember, the game is for the kids.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Like all of us, referees will make mistakes. You are entitled to be disappointed when you think a referee is not doing a good job, but these feelings should not interfere with the game. We need to accept the fact that everyone makes mistakes, and move on. It is the coach's responsibility to contact Fusion or the Referee Association if he or she feels the referee's skills are in need of improvement.

Making negative comments about the referees, or even the skill level of players or decisions of coaches for that matter, is never welcome. Regardless of how slight you feel your comment may be, you need to keep in mind that your child's self-esteem and game performance is at stake. To perform at the best of his or her abilities, a player needs to focus on the controllables of the game, such as their own decision-making, skill, positioning, and fitness. If he or she becomes distracted by side-coaching, too many people giving direction, or negative comments directed at him or her, or the referees, it diverts his or her attention away from the task at hand.

