



## GAME DAY RESPECT CAMPAIGN



*Mission – To establish a uniform code of conduct for Coaches, Players, Parents and Referees that places sportsmanship first over winning.*

These guidelines or protocols are meant to specifically address proper behavior on game day -- sportsmanship! Most of these ideas are already adopted by our League and other local youth soccer leagues, but not necessarily as policy where there can be a focused effort on public expectations of behavior, uniform education and enforcement.

These policies have been adopted by the MRYSL Board, and apply to all MRYSL teams, from competitive to rec. These policies should also be presented to visiting teams as shared reasonable expectations of behavior.

-Paul Swenson, MRYSL Director of Coaching, Rec Program

*Sections of this document co-authored by Phil Rouse, MRYSL Board Member and Youth Referee trainer*

*Blue type denotes responsibilities of the league/field administrator.*

*Mad River Youth Soccer League, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, teaching soccer to youth aged 4 to 19 in northern Humboldt County, California. More information about MRYSL can be found at [www.mrysl.org](http://www.mrysl.org) or contact us at [mrysloffice@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mrysloffice@sbcglobal.net)*



## PART 1 – COACHES

Coaches are the ethical and moral leaders of a team, both Players and Parents follow their lead. They have the most influence on the behavior of all involved.

On game day a coach's goal should be to provide a safe and fun environment. To adhere to the Laws of the Game and promote fair play, high standards of behavior and place the well being, safety and enjoyment of each player over winning.

### Coaches On Game Day –

#### DO:

- Arrive early to the game site and check the safety of field conditions. Draw any concerns to the attention of the facility administrator and/or game officials
- Make contact with the other coach and game official, introduce oneself and wish good game to all.
- Have only properly cleared personnel/assistant coaches in the technical area and bench side of the field. *It is suggested the league provide simple ID cards to properly vetted and cleared coaches, assistant coaches and team managers/parents, even for D4.*
- During game keep all instruction and commentary to team positive.
- AS per FIFA rules behave in a responsible manner, with only one coach giving instructions from the team's technical area at a time. It is recommended a coach stay seated in Team technical/bench area unless giving instructions. *It is each league organizations responsibility to demark a clearly designated technical area, (and provide each team with a bench if possible.) Technical area as per CYSA guidelines - **PLAYER/COACHES AREA** - Twenty (20) yards long. Beginning at the halfway line go ten (10) yards down the touch line into each half of the field.*
- During game, demonstrate praise for good play on both teams.
- Be prepared to assist the referee with unsporting behavior from parents, bench personnel, and/or players. *(See notes regarding this at the end of section 5, Field Administrators).*

- In the event of a lopsided game, the coach of the leading team should consider making adjustments such as rotating defensive and attacking players, and/or playing a player short if the number of subs is manageable.

- Post game, shake hands of opposing team, coach and officials.

- Fill out Referee evaluations card supplied by the league and give or mail in to league official.

#### DON'T

- Use abusive language or behavior towards any player, coach, parent or official.
- Allow unauthorized adults to reside in team technical area.
- Publicly criticize the match official, ESPECIALLY in front of players or parents - this includes post game, in front of players or parents and not limited to blaming the match official for an undesired outcome.
- Criticize players for perceived mistakes. *Players know when they have made a mistake, they should not be publicly called on it. They need encouragement, not criticism, to continue exploring the game without fear.*
- Over-directing players while they are on field of play (a constant stream of commentary or instruction.) *Let the players own the game. If needed, give guidance when required and then, as per FIFA rules, sit back down on the team bench.*
- Enter the field during the game without the official's permission.



## GAME DAY PART 2 – PLAYERS

### DO

- Arrive early to game site as per coaches instructions, well rested, fed and properly equipped.
- Listen to and obey the coach
- Listen to and obey the match official
- Pre game - Shake hands with the other team and the match officials. *This would be facilitated by the match official at the touchline near the midfield stripe. This protocol would be a Key element of the Respect Campaign. It has been adopted by most top professional leagues and is shown to improve sportsmanship and respect for the other team.*
- Compete to the best of one's ability in a clean & fair manner. Treat other players like you would like to be treated. Show respect to get respect. Look out for the safety of other players on the field by keeping control of your body and actions.
- Acknowledge good play and effort on both teams & cheer in a positive and constructive manner.
- Stay seated on the team bench when not in the game unless warming up, or readying to substitute for a teammate.
- Execute a post game cheer for the other team and officials, shake hands of all.

### DON'T

- Play in an unfair manner, cheat, or intentionally foul or try to hurt another player
- Use offensive, abusive or taunting language or behavior towards any player, coach or official, nor tolerate it amongst your teammates. *Peer pressure is one of the most effective tools against bullying.*
- Publicly Criticize the match official, other team or coach



### GAME DAY PART 3 – PARENTS

Parents play a huge role in ensuring that game day is a safe and fun environment for their kids by modeling a calm and supportive presence.

#### DO

- Make sure your child arrives early, rested and nourished to the field as per the coach's instructions.
- During the game, remain in the spectators area where provided.  
*(Leagues should have a clearly demarked spectator area, set back from the touchline as per CYSA guidelines, between 5 and 10 yards away.)*
- Acknowledge good play from both teams
- Respect the coach's choices. Encourage and support coaching decisions regarding your player as an opportunity for all involved to learn.
- Respect the official's decisions. Officials are interested in player safety and fairness according to the rules for both teams. Support them with positive behaviors. If possible, make an effort to learn the laws of the game and league rules. *The number one reason referees leave the sport (at all ages and levels) is abusive conduct toward them by parents, players, and sometimes coaches.*

#### DON'T

- Coach or attempt to coach the players, or tell them what to do during the game. *Game Day belongs to the kids. Kids will have more fun and develop as players better in a game environment absent from distractions. Parents can help protect the game environment by modeling a quiet, but supportive presence.*
- Criticize players for perceived mistakes. *Players know when they have made a mistake, they should not be publicly called on it. They need encouragement, not criticism, to continue exploring the game without fear.*
- Engage in or tolerate offensive, insulting or abusive language or behavior toward any other parents, players, officials, or coaches. *Emotions are a natural response to any contest, but we must all do our part to ensure the players have a safe environment. That means monitoring our own behaviors and knowing how to respond to others who may be acting inappropriately.*
- Criticize the match official, or in any way foment dissent among the spectators or players. For player safety and fairness the official's full attention must be on the moment to moment action. Don't be a distraction with negative commentary.
- Post game, publicly criticize any player, coach or official or in private to one's child. *All of these above items, if present, will make for an intense and unsafe environment for your player.*



## GAME DAY PART 4 – OFFICIALS (Referees)

Officials can have a significant impact on the tone of a game by simply treating players and coaches with respect, even when calling infringements or making cautions.

### DO

- Arrive early, to inspect the field & check in with coaches and league officials. Warm-up, and prepare to ref the game. Make sure you have the equipment needed such as league game cards, whistles, time piece, yellow and red cards. If doing multiple games, make sure you have food and water.
- Pre-game communicate expectations to coaches and players for a fair and safe game. Tell the coaches you will ask for their help to have them remove any spectator or player for unsporting or poor conduct. Remind them the game will not continue until the person(s) are removed. (See commentary regarding this “Ask, Tell, Remove” policy at the end of this document.)
- At coin toss have captains introduce themselves and shake hands.
- Administer pre-game handshake between the two teams. (see Game Day part 2 – Players).
- During game communicate clearly with players when making calls or stopping play, by providing a loud, clear whistle, a directional signal, and a verbal cue (especially for younger players).
- Treat coaches and players with respect. Model the respectful attitude you want players and coaches to show by setting the example yourself. Be calm and clear when you confront disrespect.
- Be positive and upbeat

- Stay focused on the game at hand. Give the game your full attention. Your body language, your uniform (clean and complete), and your attitude should confirm that you are present and ready to work.
- Report any foul or abusive language or behavior on the part of coaches or parents to the league official. If you do not, the behavior will continue and other refs will have to deal with it later on. Know who to call and to whom to report. [See section 5 – Field Administrator.](#)

### DO NOT

- Tolerate abusive or foul language or behavior on the field. Stop the game, speak to players and coaches. Use the “ask, tell, and remove policy” – **see end of this document-** for coaches and spectators. Use progressive discipline for players unless immediate send-off (red card) is appropriate.
- Engage in arguments about any call with players, parents or coaches. Encourage players and coaches to move forward with the game and put it behind them. If anyone continues to argue, question, or dissent then use appropriate disciplinary action up to and including removal (send-off for players).
- Engage in abusive, insulting or foul language or behavior toward any player, coach or parent. Model and set the example of how you want others to act.



## GAME DAY PART 5 – LEAGUE/FIELD ADMINISTRATOR

- **Provide Team Technical Area & Team Bench** - It is each league organization's responsibility to demark a clearly designated technical area, (and provide each team with a bench if possible.) Technical area as per CYSA guidelines or the PLAYER/COACHES AREA - Twenty (20) yards long. Beginning at the halfway line go ten (10) yards down the touch line into each half of the field.
- **Provide a clearly demarked spectator area** on the side of the field opposite the side of the field where the team benches are, set back from the touchline as per CYSA guidelines, between 5 and 10 yards away. A painted strip could be used, or stakes 12" to 24" high with ribbon stretched between them.
- **Provide trained field monitors.** Suggested duties to include, but not limited to, monitoring spectator behavior and helping to diffuse potential problems, ensuring only authorized personnel are in the technical area, providing support for the referee if an "Ask, Tell, Remove" situation arises (see section below).
- **Provide Referees with training** regarding dealing with out of line behavior (see Ask, Tell & Remove at the end of this document), including reporting protocol - how to report and to whom.
- **Provide Referee Feedback Cards for Coaches** - The different leagues may want to employ a universal referee feedback card – not meant to be a "complaining" card, but a constructive feedback card that tells referees both what they are doing well and what they need to work on.





**IMPORTANT NOTES ON “Ask,Tell & Remove Policy” for Officials, and why it is important for coaches to be part of the support network for officials.**

*Comments by Phil Rouse, Experienced USSF Ref, Arcata High Boys Coach and MRYSL youth referee educator*

To clarify, the “Ask, Tell, Remove” process was developed and formalized by USSF. While it is used at higher levels for coaches and bench personnel, I feel it is a critical part of youth ref education. I see it as a tool that can be used to control the tone or environment of the game. Courage to use it is definitely a factor, but I think the concept should be introduced and encouraged. These young refs should know that it is within their power to stop the game, not just for an injured player, but for bad behavior and conduct also. I think we can build on the confidence they show in stopping for injured players (which has become a part of our culture) by teaching the importance of stopping the game for conduct which is not good for the game. Stopping the game for injured players went through the same process.

I am thinking of the situation when the referee begins to sense the emotions of the game rise and they begin to feel uncomfortable and perhaps unsafe. I believe a youth referee should NEVER have to tackle this on their own, but my wording is intended to solicit the coaches help up front by telling them to remember the ref may need their help during the game. When the ref stops the game and approaches both coaches, the ref SHOULD be able to say, “I am stopping the game until you talk to/remove/or tell “person X” to stop. This is a necessary layer between the ref and the fans. Stopping the game seems drastic, but at the same time, it signals to ALL players, coaches, and fans what is NOT acceptable, and thus (hopefully) we begin to change the culture.

If you Google “USSF, Ask, Tell, Remove,” you will get the USSF Position Paper which explains it fully. I mention this in my ref training, but youth refs really need the support of the coaches to back them and help remove unwanted behaviors from the game. In short it is a “shared” responsibility.

When the ref feels it is just their own responsibility, the pressure and emotions go up and it takes more courage to make it happen. The coaches must be behind the ref and supporting (AND Sometimes POLICING) the healthy environment we want at games.

I have used this approach at HSU games when spectators are crossing the line. Sometimes I confront the fans directly, or I know who the on-site administrator is and use that person to deal with them. I ALWAYS feel justified in stopping the game if needed. The pressure leaves me (at least in my mind) and gets placed directly on the jerks until they adjust or are removed. Everyone wants the game to continue, so if it is one person or two holding up progress, the mob usually “encourages” these persons to conform.

**Resources and Links:**

- “Why They Stop.” An article about why players quit playing.  
[http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/news/story.asp?story\\_id=3912](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/news/story.asp?story_id=3912)
- “Youth refs should emulate Willy Wonka, not Pierluigi Collina”  
<http://www.socceramerica.com/article/41283/youth-refs-should-emulate-willy-wonka-not-pierlui.html>
- “Conduct Toward Referees.”  
[http://attleborosoccer.com/referee\\_page.htm](http://attleborosoccer.com/referee_page.htm)
- “The New Epidemic...Sideline (Mis)Behavior.”  
<http://www.georgiasoccer.org/coaches/epidemic-of-sideline-misbehavior.aspx>
- “Dealing with sideline abuse.” (Using the “Ask-Tell-Remove” Procedure)  
[http://www.youthsoccerfun.com/2008/12/dealing\\_with\\_sideline\\_abuse.html](http://www.youthsoccerfun.com/2008/12/dealing_with_sideline_abuse.html)
- Fixing Kids' Sports - Rescuing children's games from crazed coaches and parents  
<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/040607/7sports.htm>

