

NWSF RESPECT PROGRAM

Background:

Team sports often suffer from perceptions of poor behaviour on and off the field. This is particularly true of football. Many programs exist to try and combat this behaviour and improve the perception of our sport. In 2016, NWSF started a long term initiative to try and fundamentally alter sporting behaviour on and off field. The fundamental aim is to give equal importance to the personal development side of sport as to the physical and technical side. This will not be an overnight process. We need to slowly get coaches, managers, players, referees and, most importantly, parents to alter their behaviours to give equal importance to player behaviour as much as game outcomes.

AIM:

The aim is to create an enjoyable and safe playing environment for ALL participants in football (players, spectators, coaches, volunteers and officials).

WHY FOOTBALL NEEDS RESPECT:

Match officials are crucial to the enjoyment of football. Unfortunately, in the past decade, we have seen increasing rates of dropout of match officials, physical assault on match officials and increasing frequency of disciplinary hearings

We understand that football is a passionate game however the general concepts that people react better to praise and criticism, that everyone in the sport is doing the best they can and that children (players and referees) can be significantly affected by the manner in which commentary from the sidelines is given

What can we do:

The overall aim is to increase participation in the sport at all levels from players to match officials. To achieve this, we need for everyone to contribute to making the playing environment safe and enjoyable.

The main method of achieving this will be through education of everyone involved in the sport. Coaches and parents will have a key role in helping achieve this. Children model the adults they are with. If they see and hear criticisms of the match officials, other teams, your own coach and other team mates, they will learn the lesson that this is OK. On the drive home after the match where you say the referee was terrible, wrong or biased is the first step on the road to your child being sent off for violent conduct and disrespect. Referees do make mistakes – many are young and learning their trade. Sometimes they can't see exactly what happened and have to make the best assessment based on what they did see. Instead of criticising the referee (OR coach OR other players), find something good to comment on eg take pride in their individual effort, acknowledge players keeping their cool after a bad tackle.

Respect pamphlets have been developed for all participants in the sport from parents to players. Please make the effort to read them-they are all only one page. More importantly, BE the person on the sideline who sets that example. Feel free to gently counsel others who do not follow the guidelines.