

Player and Spectator Behaviour

Unfortunately in recent weeks we have seen an increase in poor player and spectator behaviour at our matches, and have had 2 AA matches abandoned due to spectators entering the field. Other instances have occurred at minis and junior matches where parents have been involved in verbal altercations with each other, and abuse of referees.

Here are some examples of reports made by referees:

From an U14 match:

I received extensive abuse from the parents during and after this game, at one point, during a break in play I went over and spoke the coach about his parents behaviour and what they were saying, I had this team last week and they were more than happy with my refereeing, it was very upsetting, I was thinking about not doing any other games today. There were 2 penalties against them, both were fair as their arms well away from their bodies or above their heads at the time. The abuse was worse after the game, by 2 of the parents in particular. No wonder referees are dropping out, this was quite upsetting, the abuse after the game continued even as I tried to walk away from them, as they followed me to side line. The coach was very apologetic. I left the ground as quickly as I could.

From an U13 match:

The ref's on field decisions that did not go the way of the team were constantly questioned in an aggressive and condescending tone, at first by their coach and, as the match progressed, by a large portion of the supporters. He was mocked, abused and ridiculed by the supporters and the coach. At the end of the game the coach made a beeline for the ref and demanded to know why he had given one of his players a yellow card. The coach continued to question the ref while another parent approached him as well. A short time later as he was leaving the ground a parent walked up to him with their mobile phone pointing at him and had been filming him.

The referee was 15 years old.

There are many other examples that cannot be included here due to extreme language used by players and spectators against referees and other players.

All players, officials and spectators should be aware that the NWSF Tribunal (GPT) takes a strict stance on referee abuse - penalties handed out this year include a 10 match and 12 match suspension. Spectators also come under the jurisdiction of the GPT and they and their club can receive significant penalties.

Abuse of referees is one of the major reasons for the turnover of referees each year and a reason why its difficult to recruit new referees and achieve 100% coverage of matches. Your behaviour does make a difference.

[The NWSF Code of Conduct for players, officials and spectators can be found here](#) and the [Football Australia Spectator Code of Conduct is here](#). All participants are expected to observe these to ensure a safe and enjoyable environment for all.

And for parents and coaches of minis and junior teams especially, take heed of the messages from the recent "Shoosh for Kids" campaign:

- Shoosh for Kids isn't about staying completely silent - In fact, positive spectator behaviour is encouraged. Cheering on both sides of the competition is encouraged.
- Shoosh for Kids isn't about keeping quiet at a game – it's a reminder that, when it comes to junior sport, if you haven't got anything nice to say, don't say anything at all. Let's keep our comments positive and keep kids coming back to sport.