



Dear Player/Parent/Guardian.

We are as you know from newsletters, website and information from managers taking part in “The RESPECT Campaign brought in by the National FA to improve Junior Football.

The following is a quote from the FA themselves: -

“This was the No.1 priority emerging from the biggest opinion survey to date of grassroots football in England. It was carried out in late 2007 and directly formed The FA's National Game Strategy, published in March 2008.

We hope that Respect will ensure a safe, positive environment for everyone to enjoy football. From the start it will have an impact on the following areas:

Referee recruitment and retention: By tackling abuse towards match officials, we hope to reduce the stream of referees understandably leaving the game.

Participation within youth football: Abuse and pressure from the sidelines needs to stop if we are to ensure young children enjoy, stay and progress in the game.

Coaching and player development: An encouraging and player-centred approach is vital if we are to improve coaching standards - particularly for the key 5-11 age-group. It's simple: better coaches produce better players.

Safeguarding children: Everyone in football has a duty of care towards children - ensuring they are able to play football in a safe, enjoyable environment free of abuse, bullying and discrimination.”

As you can see the word “respect” applies to everyone including referees, players, coaches and officials, opposition and both sets of spectators.

Regretfully over the last month or so we have had a few serious accusations against some of our teams, their players and their supporters which at the moment are being dealt with by the County FA .If found guilty the club will be hit with a serious fine, possible loss of Charter Standard, named players and supporters suffering bans and ultimately risk being voted out of the league at the AGM in June for bad behavior.

We have also suffered a few incidents of bad behavior by other teams and officials which we are also discussing with the FA at the moment

Ultimately should our accused be found guilty by the FA they can be charged with bringing the club into disrepute and risk having their involvement with the club terminated.

REFEREES

I would like to state that we all realise there are some bad referees out there and it is irritating and frustrating when we feel we are being unfairly treat in games by what we consider to be bias. However there is a national shortage of referees and without them our games would be unable to continue, and of course many are just young kids themselves who deserve all the encouragement we can give them. They will make mistakes as we all do. Football is all about opinion's, everyone has a different opinion about games, decisions, players etc.

Verbal abuse of referees has to stop and I urge everyone to think before they make comment. Put themselves in their shoes, could you do any better and if so why not put yourself forward to become a referee. The same has to be said for players in the same situation.

OPPOSITION/SPECTATORS

With regard to opposition behavior it is difficult I know in the face of abusive behavior from opposition spectators and management and indeed some of the known teams who encourage physical behavior from their players. In these circumstances our coaches and their teams are held responsible by the FA for any bad behavior. Retaliation is always treated worse than the original offence. So again if you have a problem like this, please do not respond whilst at the game.

Our response should be in two ways.

1. Our manager will mark the team/referee low on their match cards and if necessary send a letter to the league with reasons for marking low.
2. In more serious cases complaints about a team's behavior should be in writing via your manager to myself for forwarding to the FA for action to be taken.

OUR OWN TEAMS / SPECTATORS.

We will not condone bad mouthing of referees, spectators and of course our own players.

Should a manager see a player either bad mouthing anyone on the pitch or behaving in an aggressive manner then the way forward is to substitute that player and talk to them in the company of their parents to calm them down before allowing them to rejoin the game. Good referees will talk to managers regarding this if a player is behaving badly and would sooner this happen than book or send anyone off.

RESPECTING OUR OWN TEAMS.

The club needs to ensure a safe, positive environment for everyone to enjoy football.

We will do this by encouraging our own coaches, parents and players to behave as we feel is correct. But we will also protect them where we feel they have been wronged via guidance and appeal procedures should they be reported to FA. Please note however that if we strongly believe that the player's actions have been outside the club remit we will not defend them. As a club we will also not be responsible for fines attributable to them.

We will wherever rules allow prohibit badly behaved clubs from attending our premises as has already been the case this season, both for normal games and our summer tournament.

We will, starting this week ensure that all pitches are either roped off correctly or will have the new respect barriers along them. All spectators, substitutes etc will have to stay behind the barrier/rope. We will also instruct referees that NO ONE either home or away will be allowed to stand at any end of the pitch where the goals are. If people do and refuse to move then the game will be abandoned by the referee. Managers and coaches will also be given instructions about encroaching on the pitch and again referees will be instructed to abandon games should they continually ignore these requests.

I am sorry that this letter is long and I know will not affect the vast majority of you but we need to nip this growing problem in the bud. We are fast getting a reputation for bad behavior and this cannot be allowed to continue.

I thank you all for your support and hope that it will continue and that the safe environment we as custodians of this club promise will actually be delivered.

Ian Walker

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