

GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING DISSENT

“Dissent doesn't get better”

Dissent: An audible or visible disagreement with the referee's decision that reflects negatively on the official's fairness or competency.

Dissent is disruptive to the players and the game and destructive to game control, if not in the short term, then in its long-range effect on the Game.

All referees need to be aware of their responsibility to, not only the game in which they are involved, but to the Game itself. All referees need to consider not only the effect on themselves when dissent occurs, but also the effect on their assistant referees and the officials who will referee these players in the future.

Lack of consistency in handling dissent is unfair to the players, as well as to your fellow officials. “the referee who allows dissent, encourages dissent.”

These guidelines are intended to aid you in your individual games and to aid referees, as a group, to become more consistent in dealing with dissent.

1. Dissent should not be confused with mere disagreement that does not reflect negatively on the official. A player can express a difference of opinion in a gentlemanly fashion not involving dissent. Treating this as any other question or statement by a player would be appropriate, unless it continues to the point of becoming dissent.
2. Dissent that is an emotional outburst (non-premeditated), short in duration, and not destructive to game control can be acknowledged, verbally or by gesture, by the referee. But, if it continues, or is repeated within a short time period, the player must be warned. Multiple occurrences by more than one player in a short time period should also result in warnings.
3. Dissent that is an emotional outburst (non-premeditated), but continues beyond the initial outburst, or is potentially destructive to game control, must result in a warning, at least, depending on other factors. Caution on the second occurrence. Send off on the third.
4. Dissent that is premeditated (not the result of an emotional outburst) or is destructive to game control must be cautioned. Send off on the second occurrence.
5. When dissent involves use of offensive, insulting, or abusive language, punish the more serious of the offenses (language).

Remember: Abusive dissent does not have to involve offensive or insulting language, and when it is directed toward your assistant referees, demands quick, firm action.