

THE UMPIRES and how to approach Player Dissent and Verbal Abuse situations

At the end of the 2013-14, there was a general feeling that too many red cards had been issued as a result of either player dissent or verbal abuse. We have put together this document to try to dispel any doubts umpires may have as to what is acceptable and how they should act in certain given situations. For some of you these will be simply reminders, for the others they may suggest new techniques.

Provided you follow the guidelines set out in the Match Check List and the SHUA Code of Conduct, you will always have the backing of the Association. So here are a few reminders and clarifications.

1. PRE-Match/Captains

At the toss you will always exchange the usual pleasantries but this is not a time to get involved in discussions about the rules. However, you should make it clear to captains that this season the umpires

- a) Will be tougher on any dissent
- b) Will be working towards “zero tolerance” for any personal abuse of umpires. Players should not be the least bit surprised by the consequences of unacceptable behaviour.
- c) Will be expecting far more support from captains in these instances.

2. Judging from coaching and assessment reports, it would appear that our umpires (mainly those below Development Group level) are failing to deal with the major issues of dissent and abuse early enough in the game. As a result matters escalate and then with no previous warnings (i.e. cards), a card is produced out of the blue. Players need to know where they stand **before** disciplinary action is actually taken. We hope that it goes without saying that the same applies to poor and unacceptable tackling! You have your control ladder – use it and use it wisely! Avoid the element of surprise.

When dealing with dissent/abuse, you may find it helpful to:

- a) Call over the captain at the same time so that he is aware of potential penalties looming.
- b) To tell the captain to inform his team and give him time to do so.
- c) Consider whether you have ended up giving a card as a direct result of an error made by your good self. This happens frequently and some umpires choose to “dilute” their penalty accordingly. “It is possible that I made a mistake. However.....”.

Finally here, never allow yourself to be surrounded by a crowd of players contesting a decision. This must be regarded as intimidation and is totally unacceptable. The captain may come over or you may wish to call him over. Other than the player concerned, nobody else has any business to be there.

3. Last season a number of MMO’s were awarded in that crucial 5 minute period after the final whistle. There may have been a contentious late goal etc etc. So don’t “walk straight into trouble”. You should :
 - a) Stick close to your colleague – probably in the middle of the pitch
 - b) Be prepared, where appropriate, to turn a deaf ear and thus avoid dialogue
 - c) Give the players a few minutes to collect their belongings before doing the same yourself.
 - d) Should there be any personal abuse, be sure that you would have given a Red Card during the game for this before giving an MMO. In some instances a quick word with captain may do the trick.

4. Post-Match

These days we don’t always have the opportunity to go back to the home team’s clubhouse for tea/beer. More often than not though. I think we do. Just a few pointers here:

- a) Don’t allow yourself to be ignored by the players. Remember that you too have the ability to start up a conversation – it’s a two-way thing.
- b) Those with experience will tell you that with no doubt whatsoever they learnt more about hockey by talking to players after the game. They have needs too and you should show some empathy towards these.
- c) Be prepared to be “a little bit humble”. There is **no way** that you can always be right!

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