



**Respect**



## **Soccer and Respect**

**Your Guide to the USRC Respect Program**





**Respect**

**REF!  
ARE YOU  
BLIND  
OR CRAZY?**

"It is not smart to yell criticism at a referee. You will likely receive a yellow or red card and face possible suspension"

**Are you losing it ?**



Respect

## Why soccer needs Respect

The USRC is responding to concern from across the game to tackle unacceptable behavior in soccer. The USRC is taking action mainly through the **Respect** Program. This is not a temporary campaign but an ongoing commitment to improve behavior in soccer. It won't be completed in the short term as we all have a lot of work to do over the seasons ahead.

One of the main goals of **Respect** is to help recruit and retain enough referees for the requirements of our game at all levels.

We all know that a game without a trained and impartial referee cannot be played properly.

**Respect** aims to improve the environment of the game and in doing so, improve the experience of everyone involved, including referees.

**Respect** needs your club or organization and its members to play their parts.. Together, we can make a difference.



**Respect**



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# What is Respect?

**Respect** is the collective responsibility of everyone in soccer to create a fair, safe and enjoyable environment in which the game can take place.

It is the behavioral code for soccer.

**Respect** is a continuous USRC program, not a temporary initiative.

## What do we want to achieve with Respect?

1. There will be a base of registered referees in the US sufficient for the demands of the game at every level.
2. There will be zero tolerance for assaults on referees.
3. There will be an improvement in on-field player discipline, particularly in the area of dissent toward referees and in competitions with an established record of poor behavior
4. There will be a change in youth soccer regarding what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior from parents, spectators and coaches.
5. There will be a joint effort with coaches to provide an enjoyable learning environment for children's soccer.

The most important message of the **Respect** program is that real and lasting change will come about not through the intervention of the "Soccer Authorities" but from everyone in soccer taking collective responsibility to promote what is good in the game and to deal with that which diminishes it.





Respect



# How do we achieve Respect?

**Respect** is a on going USRC program, adapted from the FA model, not a temporary initiative.

For clubs and soccer playing organizations, the **Respect** program includes four practical steps to improve behavior both on the field and on the sidelines:

**Step 1:** Adopting Codes of Conduct

**Step 2:** Managing the match day environment

**Step 3:** The captain taking responsibility

**Step 4:** The referee managing the game

## **Step 1:** Codes of Conduct

Codes of Conduct aren't new and are already in use. Some Codes are successful while some are forgotten or simply not acted upon.

**Respect** helps make them work.

How? By supporting and strengthening the Codes of Conduct with real consequences. There is little point in having a set of rules if no action is taken if and when they're broken. There are **Respect** Codes of Conduct for:

- Young Players
- Adult Players
- Spectators and Parents/Guardians
- Coaches, Team Managers and Club Officials
- Match Officials

Each Code explains that actions can be taken if the Code is violated. Although your league or organization has to deal with cases of reported misconduct, clubs and leagues can be more effective in dealing with poor behavior from players, team officials or spectators. This can range from education, mentoring, official warnings, suspension or even exclusion from the club.

All the Respect Codes of Conduct can be downloaded from:

[www.usrefereeconnection.com/RespectProgram](http://www.usrefereeconnection.com/RespectProgram)

**Respect** works on placing responsibility on individuals for their actions:

*violate your Code, and face the consequences.*





## Respect

### **Your club or organization's responsibilities:**

Each **Respect** Code of Conduct explains that action can and will be taken if the Code is violated.

Your club or organization has three main responsibilities with respect to the Codes:

1. To ensure everyone within the club/organization (members) whatever their role, has agreed and signed up to their relevant Code and understands the actions which could be taken if Codes are violated. The inclusion of Codes into the registration process for club members ensures that all playing members can be made aware of their responsibilities at the time they join the club.
2. To maintain the Codes so that they can be referred back to if an individual's behavior becomes unacceptable.
3. To deal fairly and consistently with anyone who violates their specific Code.  
If your club/organization hasn't used Codes of Conduct before or has Codes without consequences, this needs discussion. This is so there is understanding of how the Codes work and the responsibilities involved. USRC will provide some further guidance in this area. If you already have your own club or organization Codes of Conduct it is recommended that you adopt the **Respect** Codes or revise your existing codes to include any components not included.

It is suggested that it would be helpful to display the **Respect** Codes of Conduct in locker rooms, offices, club houses and ideally , displaying the Spectator Code publicly including distributing copies on the sidelines during games.

It is important to ensure your club/organization members understand and appreciate what can happen if Codes are violated.. That way, there should be no misunderstandings or debate over knowing what the consequences can be.

## Applying Sanctions

The Codes identify a range of sanctions which can be applied in the event of misconduct or poor behavior.

While your League or organization will deal with reported misconduct, clubs also have a role to play in educating their membership as to what is – and what isn't – acceptable behavior and taking action when the Codes are violated.

Potential measures that a club can take include:

- Requiring an apology to team-mates, the other team, referee or team manager
- Receive a warning from the coach
- Receive a written warning from a club committee
- Be required to attend a USRC education course
- Be dropped or substituted
- Be suspended from training
- Not be selected for the team
- Be required to serve a suspension
- Be required to leave the club

It's important for clubs/organizations to be clear about what they expect from members and to educate people when guidance is required. Should this guidance be disregarded then the management of a club or organization has the right to implement sanctions against offenders. Such action must:

- Be fair and consistent – treating people in the same way regardless of their position in the club or organization.
- Follow a process which allows people to know when they have violated a Code of Conduct and provide them with the opportunity to amend their behavior and conduct.
- Be proportionate to the offense.
- Be progressively more serious for repeat offenders.



## Respect

### Step 2:

#### Managing the match day environment

Sometimes the behavior of spectators and team officials can have a negative impact on the game itself. **Respect** aims to create a playing environment which is fair, safe and enjoyable.

This can be achieved by:

- Clearly identifying to players, spectators and team officials the behavior that is appropriate. This is why the codes of conduct are important.
- If you are the home club there is a value in displaying the club's code of conduct - visible to both home and visiting participants. This could be in the locker room, on spectator stands or on a sign staked by the sideline, or even on a laminated card that can be passed down a line of spectators.
- Signage – if the facility allows the display of a **Respect** banner or sign this can establish to all participants a club's commitment to the **Respect** program.
- The creation of designated areas for spectators is an important element of **Respect**. If your games attract large numbers of fans on the sidelines then the following details on the introduction of designated spectator areas will be of interest. If however your games are watched by few people other than the teams themselves it may be better to focus attention on the other **Respect** measures.

**Designated Spectators' Areas** can be marked by an additional line, the use of cones, a roped-off area or use of a temporary spectators' barrier.

The areas literally draw the line which spectators should not cross. Research has shown it to have a beneficial impact on the behavior of spectators and their effect on players and match officials.

The Designated Spectators' Area should start two yards from the sideline on both sides of the field. Each area should run the full length of the field. This means no-one should be watching from behind the goals. It is recognized however that the alignment of some public fields does not allow for this set up in which case other appropriate arrangements should be made.







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You may prefer an alternative form of marking a Designated Spectators' Area, but you must ensure this is safe for both the spectators and the players. USRC strongly recommends you obtain formal agreement from the facility/field provider about which method of marking is most suitable for the field location before beginning any work or buying any new equipment.

The safety of the players, officials and spectators is paramount.

To help implement the creation of Designated Spectator Areas USRC has endorsed a **Respect** Barrier Kit which is available from:  
[www.ScoreSports.com](http://www.ScoreSports.com)

### **Dealing with difficult spectators**

Clubs should consider the use of a sideline manager - someone known to club members designated to help maintain a supportive playing environment. Ideally the individual should have authority and presence, and the ability to remain calm. The role of the sideline manager is to attempt to prevent any behavioral issues developing, to be a point of contact during the game for the referee and to remind spectators of their responsibilities. It's important that they act quickly and with discretion. Some clubs have equipped sideline managers with a **Respect** bib which has increased their visibility and assisted them when required to intervene. The sideline manager is to assist with the smooth running and enjoyment of the game for everyone – not just the home team. They are there to deal with small scale incidents and to reduce and diffuse problems. It is not the role of the sideline manager to replace the referee or the normal applicable league sanctions. They should never place themselves or others in danger by their actions and should be prepared to notify appropriate security or law enforcement should a situation warrant it.

## The role of a Sideline Manager

- Be aware. Enjoy the game but monitor the sideline.
- Move towards an incident or potential incident.
- Observe and analyze. Is this a significant incident likely to escalate or will a quiet reminder resolve it?
- Isolate. Ask the person to move away to talk.
- Emphasize that the club is committed to creating an environment where people are treated with **Respect** and dignity.
- Acknowledge that they may be frustrated by the decisions a coach or referee has made but explain that the person is doing their best (everyone makes mistakes) and that the referee may see things differently from their perspective.
- Explain that abuse directed at players or team officials on either team is unacceptable.
- Refer to the club's Code of Conduct. The spectator may not realize that they have behaved inappropriately.
- Be calm and firm. Be conscious that both the tone of your voice and your body language is assertive but not aggressive.

- Explain the **Respect** Code and that this behavior cannot be tolerated and that continued abuse will lead to problems for the club and the players and that the incident will be fully reported to the league and/or organization.

### And if this doesn't work.....

- Bring the incident to the attention of the referee
- If the referee deems it necessary the game will be abandoned resulting in a referee's report and possible team and club/organization sanctions.

Remember, if you have done all that you can to calm and resolve a situation this should be taken into account.

## Step 3: The captain takes responsibility

Often problems start at matches when individual players are abusive towards the referee, which escalates into several players confronting the referee at the same time, creating a potential out of control situation.

**Respect** aims to stop this cycle before it starts. Only the captain can question a decision made by the referee and the captain needs to manage his/her team to ensure that this is always observed. However, this does not mean the referee will only speak to the captain. Referees remain free to talk to any player if this helps in managing the game well.





## Respect

### **The advice to captains is:**

To promote **Respect** the referee will work with you, as the team captain, to manage the players and the game effectively.

Even if you are some distance from an incident when the referee feels he/she needs you involved in a discussion with a player, the referee will call you over. This will ensure that, as the team captain, you remain the point of contact for the referee.

In some cases a referee will proceed directly to a caution if an offense is deemed to be serious enough. The referee is not obliged to call a captain forward for every incident – only those who will assist him/her in the management of the game.

The type of behavior which often gives rise to problems in matches, and where captains and referees need to work together, can be described as ‘harassment and challenging behavior’ towards the referee’.

As a captain, you have no special status or privileges under the Laws of the Game, but you do have a degree of responsibility for the behavior of your team.

Referees will also make use of captains to deal with persistent offending from a team-mate where there is a real possibility of further offending resulting in a caution or a send off. Captains will also be called forward where additional support is required to calm a player down who is likely to immediately re-offend.

Here are some examples of each of these types of behavior.

### **Harassment:**

- Running towards the referee in an aggressive manner.
- Players surrounding the referee to protest a decision.
- Repeatedly asking questions about decisions in an attempt to influence the referee or undermine his/her responsibilities.

### **Challenging:**

- Making comments to other players about a referee’s decision-making.
- Repeatedly complaining or moaning at the referee about decisions.
- Gestures that obviously are made in a derogatory manner, such as a shaking one’s head or waving one’s hand(s).

### **Captains have been asked to:**

- Ensure they wear a captain's armband.
- Together with the opposing team captain, make themselves known to the referee before the game. He/she will ask the captains if they are clear about their responsibilities.
- Ensure all players understand what they can/cannot do in relation to the referee and what is meant by 'unwanted behavior'. No one's trying to curb enthusiasm – just instill more discipline. This can only benefit each game and Soccer as a whole.
- Ensure co-captains (who should be designated if there isn't one) are aware of these rules, in case captains are unavailable or have to leave the field.
- Ensure every player in the team has signed the **Respect** Code of Conduct.
- Visit [www.usrefereeconnection/respectprogram](http://www.usrefereeconnection/respectprogram) for further updates and tips.

### **Step 4:**

#### **The referee manages the game**

The instructions given to referees are that: “you” are expected to work with the team captains to manage the players and the game effectively. You must control the game by applying the Laws of the Game and deal firmly with any open show of dissent by players. (e.g. not move away from the incident, but stay and deal with it).

While recognizing that players may on occasion make an appeal for a decision (e.g. a throw-in, corner or goal-kick), it is important you distinguish these from an act of overt dissent which should be punished with a caution.

The referee should use a stepped approach, where appropriate, to managing players:

1. Free-kick.
2. Free-kick with quiet word.
3. Free-kick with public admonishment (this is the time referees should consider using the team captain to visibly get the message across).
4. Yellow card or straight red card as necessary

The stepped approach does not negate the fact that as the referee, he/she has the authority within the Laws of the Game to issue disciplinary sanctions without recourse to the captain(s), including issuing a yellow or red card where the Laws and situation require it.

Even if the captain is some distance from an incident, but you feel you need him/her involved in a discussion with a player, you should call the captain over. This will ensure the captain remains your point of contact during the game.

These guidelines are an additional preventative/supportive tool for referees to manage games effectively. The key is for referees to use captains in a more visible way.







# Following The FA example

## The first two seasons of Respect

Let's take a look at the results of the **Respect** Program in England.

Throughout the first two seasons of **Respect** its impact was monitored. The following are the headline findings:

- Prior to the launch of the **Respect** program in 2008 the number of affiliated referees had fallen to all time low. In 2010 there were 26,692 registered referees, an increase of 7.4% increase compared to 24,852 for the same period in 2009.
- The number of trainee referees at level 9 is 5598 compared to 4111 in 2009 - an increase of 36.2%.
- The **Respect** program has made a contribution to creating an environment where referees, feel better supported and are more likely to continue their involvement. In a survey of 3,500 referees in November 2009, 35 % of respondents reported that they were more likely to remain a referee and 39% reported that they received less abusive behavior from players as a result of **Respect** program.
- When the **Respect** program was launched referees were encouraged to submit '**Respect**' marks after a fixture. In 2009/10 nearly 10,000 reports were entered. Encouragingly the average **Respect** marks (out of a possible 5) ranged from 4.1 to 4.7
- In 2008/09 The FA received reports of 534 referees having been assaulted (ranging from a referee having a card knocked out of their hand to serious assault). In 2009/10 the figures for assaults on a match officials (all categories) show a 13 % decrease from last season (a reduction to 466 cases from 534 cases in 08/09)
- One of the major themes of the **Respect** program has been its attempt to deal with overtly aggressive coaches and pushy parents in youth football. The **Respect** program has increased awareness of the problem. The use of Codes of Conduct, designated spectator areas and pre-match handshakes is now widespread. More importantly there is greater peer pressure on coaches or parents that do not behave in an acceptable way.
- Over 500 youth leagues have committed themselves to the program. Despite this work a significant problem still exists with the key finding of the 2010 CFA Online Grass Roots Survey of 12,000 respondents, across all regions and all roles in football identified as: '*the abuse of young players by spectators*'.

The USRC believes this program can be used to help with coaches and spectators behavior here in the US.



Lose Respect  
Lose the Game





Respect

# How to introduce Respect at your club/organization

Fundamentally, we need you to accept and understand the four steps to **Respect** outlined on the previous pages – and then impart them to everyone at your club or organization. To get everyone on board, we suggest the following actions.

## **Attend a league information session**

If your organization decides to sign-on to **Respect** your officials will hold an information session on the program and the role your organization will be expected to play. It's important your organization is absolutely clear about what your involvement entails. **Respect** materials and resources will be provided at this session.

## **Organize a club Respect session and inform your members**

We would recommend you organize an information session for your members, along the lines of the one you will be asked to attend.

However it's organized, you need to ensure that all the members of your organization read, understand and sign the relevant Codes of Conduct.

## *Members include:*

- Club/organization officials, coaches and team managers, including volunteers/parents.
- All players

## **Communicate with your spectators**

This may not apply at your organization or club, but if your matches attract spectators, they have a key influence on standards of behavior, their own and others.

It's accepted that spectators are not under a club's direct control, but you and your players have a responsibility to lead by example and set the standards of behavior you expect from spectators – and then maintain these standards.

So, depending on the size of your organization or club, you may want to include parents in your information session(s).

## **Ensure your club officials understand Respect**

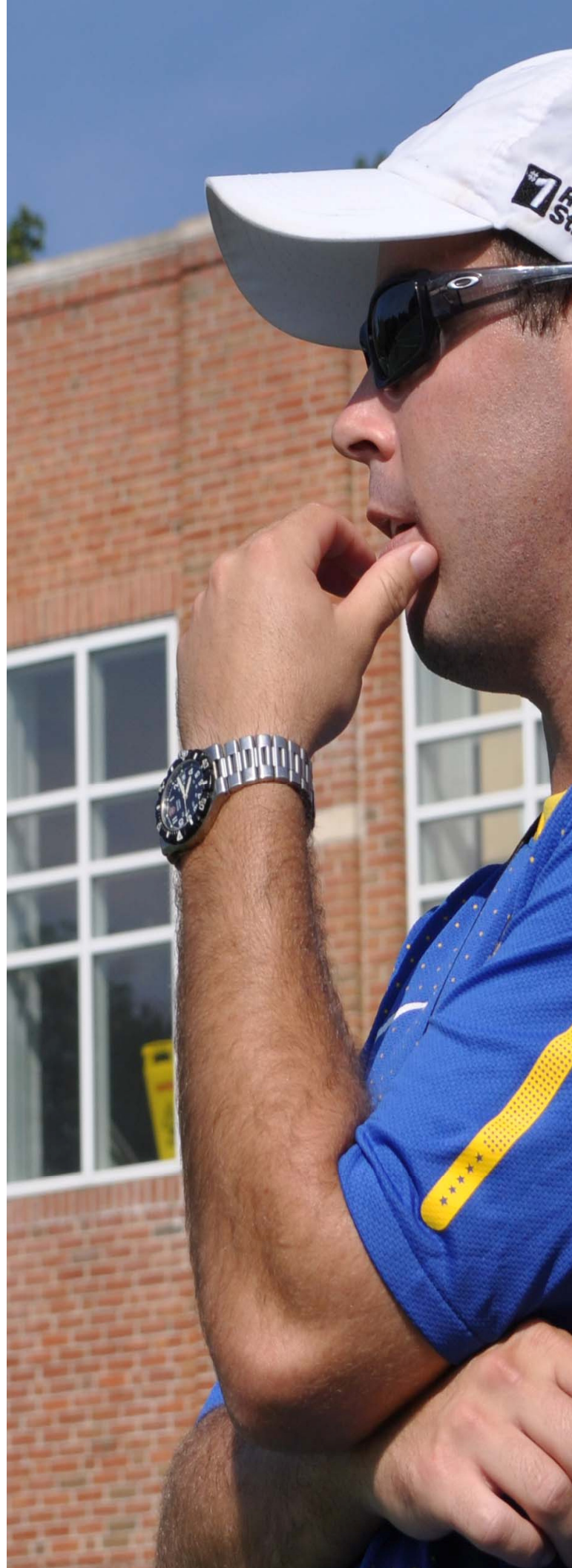
Players and spectators will often take their lead from the management of a team. If a coach or team official is yelling at referees it is likely that players and spectators/parents will do so too. Coaches and officials have a responsibility to behave themselves in a way which reflects the **Respect** Codes of Conduct.

## **Take action to make the Respect Codes of Conduct meaningful**

Get all organization and club participants, whatever their role, to sign on to a Code of Conduct followed by the management of the organization or club monitoring adherence. Of course as a result of monitoring it will mean that additional education or action is required. For more serious cases a warning may be administered or a temporary withdrawal of club privileges imposed. For serious or persistent cases a committee may need to consider suspending or even withdrawing an individual's membership.

Promote **Respect** by including **Respect** advertising in the club's handbooks, programs and website. This material can be downloaded at:

[www.usrefereeconnection.com/RespectProgram](http://www.usrefereeconnection.com/RespectProgram)





# **Respect the Code of Conduct**





## Respect Code of Conduct

# Young Players

We all have a responsibility to promote high standards of behavior in the game.

As a player, you have a big part to play. That's why USRC is asking every player to follow a Respect Code of Conduct.

### **When playing soccer, I will:**

- Always play to the best of my ability
- Play fairly – I won't cheat, complain or waste time
- Respect my team-mates, the other team, the referee and my coach/manager
- Play by the rules, as directed by the referee
- Shake hands with the other team and referee at the end of the game
- Listen and respond to what my coach/team manager tells me
- Talk to someone I trust if I'm unhappy about anything at my club.

**I understand that if I do not follow the Code, any/all of the following actions may be taken by my club or organization**

### **I may be:**

- Be required to apologize to my team-mates, the other team, referee, coach or team manager
- Receive a formal warning from the coach or the club
- Be substituted or dropped from matches
- Be suspended from training
- Be required to leave the club.

### **In addition:**

- My club, organization or league may make my parent or guardian aware of any observed or known violations of the Code of Conduct



## Respect Code of Conduct

# Parents and Spectators

We all have a responsibility to promote high standards of behavior in the game. This club/organization is supporting the USRC's Respect Program to ensure soccer can be enjoyed by all in a safe, positive environment.

Remember youth soccer is a time for youngsters to develop their technical, physical, tactical and social skills. Winning isn't everything.

Play your part and observe the USRC's Respect Code of Conduct for parents and spectators at all times.

### **I will:**

- Remember that kids play for FUN
- Applaud effort and good play as well as success
- Always respect the referee's decisions
- Remain outside the field of play and within the Designated Spectators' Area (where provided)
- Let the coach do his or her job and not confuse the players by telling them what to do
- Encourage the players to respect their opponents, coaches and referees.
- Avoid criticizing a player for making a mistake. Mistakes are part of learning
- Never engage in, or tolerate, offensive, insulting, or abusive language or behavior.

**I understand that if I do not follow the Code, any/all of the following actions may be taken by my club or organization**

### **I may be:**

- Issued with a verbal warning from a club/organization or league official
- Required to meet with the club, organization or league.
- Required to meet with a club committee
- Required to attend a USRC education course
- Required to leave the field area by the club
- Requested by the club not to attend future games
- Suspended or have a club membership terminated
- Required to leave the club along with any dependents.

### **In addition:**

- The club, league or organization could impose a fine and/or suspension from the club.



## Respect Code of Conduct

# Coaches, Team Managers and Club Officials

We all have a responsibility to promote high standards of behavior in the game.

This includes preventing abuse of referees and the unacceptable behavior of over competitive parents, spectators and coaches on the sideline.

Play your part and observe The USRC's Respect Code of Conduct in everything you do.

### **On and off the field, I will:**

- Show respect to others involved in the game including referees, opposing players, coaches, managers, officials and spectators
- Adhere to the laws and spirit of the game
- Promote fair play, sportsmanship and high standards of behavior
- Always respect the referee's decisions
- Never enter the field of play without the referee's permission
- Never engage in public criticism of the referees
- Never engage in, or tolerate, offensive, insulting or abusive language or behavior.

### **When working with players, I will:**

- Place the well-being, safety and enjoyment of each player above everything, including winning
- Explain exactly what I expect of players and what they can expect from me

- Ensure all parents/guardians of all players under the age of 18 understand these expectations
- Never engage in or tolerate any form of bullying or emotional or physical abuse
- Develop mutual trust and respect with every player to build their self-esteem
- Encourage each player to accept responsibility for their own behavior and performance
- Ensure all activities I organize are appropriate for the players' ability level, age and maturity
- Co-operate fully with others in soccer (e.g. officials, physicians,) for each player's best interests.

### **I understand that if I violate the Code, any/all of the following actions may be taken by my club, organization or league:**

- Be required to meet with the club, organization or league
- Be monitored by another club coach
- Be required to attend an USRC education course
- Be suspended by the club from attending games
- Required to leave or be fired by the club

### **In addition**

My Coach Certification or membership may be withdrawn.





## Respect Code of Conduct

# Referees

We all have a responsibility to promote high standards of behavior in the game. The behavior of referees has an impact, directly and indirectly, on the conduct of everyone involved in the game – both on the field and on the sidelines. Play your part and observe USRC's Respect Code of Conduct for referees at all times.

### **I will:**

- Be honest and completely impartial at all times
- Apply the Laws of the Game and competition rules fairly and consistently
- Manage the game in a positive, calm and confident manner
- Deal with all instances of violence, aggression, unsporting behavior, foul play and other misconduct
- Never tolerate offensive, insulting or abusive language or behavior from players and officials
- Support my match official colleagues at all times
- Set a positive personal example by promoting good behavior and showing respect to everyone involved in the game
- Communicate with the players and encourage fair play
- Respond in a clear, calm and confident manner to any appropriate request for clarification by the team captains

- Prepare physically and mentally for every match
- Complete and submit, accurate and concise reports within the time limit required for games in which I officiate.

**I understand that if I do not follow the Code, any/all of the following actions may be taken by my club, league or organization:**

### **I may be:**

- Required to attend an USRC education course
- Required to meet with the appropriate Referee Association



## Respect Code of Conduct

# Adult Players

Players tell us they want a referee for every match, yet thousands of match officials drop out because of the abuse and intimidation they receive on and off the field. Respect your referee today and you may just get one for every match this season.

Play your part and observe USRC's Respect Code of Conduct for players at all times.

### **On and off the field, I will:**

- Adhere to the Laws of The Game
- Display and promote high standards of behavior
- Promote Fair Play
- Always respect the match officials' decisions
- Never engage in public criticism of the match officials
- Never engage in offensive, insulting or abusive language or behavior
- Never engage in bullying, intimidation or harassment
- Speak to my team-mates, the opposition and my coach/manager with respect
- Remember we all make mistakes.
- Win or lose with dignity. Shake hands with the opposing team and the referee at the end of every game.

**I understand that if I do not follow the Code, any/all of the following actions may be taken by my club, league or organization:**

### **I may:**

- Be required to apologize to team-mates, the other team, referee or coach.
- Receive a warning from the coach
- Receive a written warning from the club committee
- Be required to attend an USRC education course
- Be dropped or substituted
- Be suspended from training
- Not be selected for the team
- Be required to serve a suspension
- Be fined
- Be required to leave the club.

### **In addition:**

- The club, league or organization could impose a fine or other sanction against my club.



**Respect**

**US REFEREE CONNECTION**  
RESPECT PROGRAM

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**[USRefereeConnection.com/Respect Program](http://USRefereeConnection.com/Respect Program)**