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"Pre-Match - let's talk" - by Mike Newell, Youth Referee (Surrey Youth League)

It's cold and wet. It's 10 o'clock on a Sunday morning. It's almost time for kick-off. Sound familiar? But a couple of minutes spent wisely now can make the next couple of hours a whole lot easier. It's time for your pre-match talk with the players. Not all refs do it, but it really can help set the tone for the rest of the game, particularly in youth football.

How and when you do it is down to you, and you can either speak to both teams together or individually. Normally the best time would be just after the exchange of cards and when they've finished their warm-up routines. Try to get the manager / coach there as well - they will often echo what you say to the players. And it really doesn't have to more than a couple of minutes. 'Easy and brief' was the best tip I was given.

So what do you say? Again it's down to you and will depend on the age-group, the competition, or the level the players. I usually introduce myself, ask who the captain is, and then make a simple reference to the captain's responsibilities during the game (there's a useful page in the Respect handbook that touches on these). I may mention the pitch conditions, particularly if wet, asking them, for example, to take a little care sliding in for tackles. And I'll end up by thanking them and wishing them well in the game.

All very simple, but that's all it has to be. It's your choice to do it or not, but from my experience these couple of minutes can really be time worth spent. Good luck.



Managing the Match Day Environment

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

This can be achieved by:

- The home team contacting the opposition to confirm details of the fixture. If you are the home team ensure the opposition is aware that your Club adheres to the Respect Codes of Conduct. Send the opposition a copy of the Codes requesting that their officials, parents and players are briefed that inappropriate behaviour at your ground is not tolerated.

- 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 changing room, pavilion or even on a laminated card that can be passed down a line of spectators.

- Clearly identifying to players, spectators and team officials the behaviour that is appropriate.

- 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 programme.

- The creation of designated areas for spectators is a key element of Respect - see below for details.



Designated Spectator Areas



Designated Spectator Areas

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 behaviour of spectators and their impact on players and match officials.

The ideal arrangement is to mark out a Designated Spectators' Area on the opposite side of the pitch to club officials (manager/coaches etc) for spectators to stand behind. This allows the manager/coaches of both teams to stand on the other side of the pitch, meaning players can better distinguish the advice from their team officials.

The Designated Spectators' Area should start two metres from the touchline on both sides of the pitch. Each area should run the full length of the pitch. This means no-one

should be watching from behind the goals. It is recognised however that the alignment of some public pitches does not allow for this set up in which case other appropriate arrangements should be made.

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

The safety of the players, officials and spectators is paramount. To help implement the Designated Spectators' Area, The FA has endorsed a Respect Barrier Kit which is available from www.Touchlinelogos.com - see below for more details.

Dealing with Difficult Spectators

Clubs should consider the use of a touchline manager - someone known to club members designated to help maintain a supportive playing environment. A touchline manager could be someone in the club with relevant experience (e.g. the club welfare officer or a police officer or teacher).

Ideally the individual should have authority and presence, and the ability to remain calm. The role of the touchline manager is to attempt to nip any behavioural issues in the bud, to be a point of contact during the game for the referee and to remind spectators of their responsibility. It's important that they act quickly and discreetly.

Some clubs have equipped touchline managers with a Respect bib which has increased their visibility and assisted them when required to intervene. The touchline manager is to assist 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 touchline manager to replace the referee or the normal league sanctions. They should never place themselves or others in danger.



The Role of a Touchline Manager

- Be aware - Enjoy the game but monitor the touchline
- Move towards an incident or potential incident
- Observe and analyse - Is this a significant incident likely to escalate or will a quiet reminder sort it out
- Isolate - ask the person to move away for a chat, remind them that the children are there to have fun
- Emphasise that the club is committed to creating an environment where people are treated with Respect and dignity
- Let them know that children may be influenced by their behaviour
- 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 field of play.
- 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 realise 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, explain that this behaviour cannot be tolerated, 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 County Football Association. 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 and the club will face a full report.
- Remember: if you have done all that you can the League should take this into account

RESPECT Barriers

If you would like to get your club a set of RESPECT barriers then just click [HERE](#) to order them through Touchline Logos.

And if you are from a Charter Standard Club you qualify for a 50% discount

So if your games are being spoiled by overzealous parents or supporters, who un-wittingly stray on to the playing area, interfere with the officials line of view or cause intimidation to some players, then order your set of the next Generation of FA Respect barriers today and you'll soon see a change.



individual, [click here](#).

The FA Respect Awards

A new Surrey County FA rewards scheme has launched to recognise and celebrate those in the football fraternity who have shown their commitment to the Respect programme.

The Respect programme reaches out to all grassroots parents to set a positive example to children through improved conduct on the sidelines and to act as good role models. In short, it is the collective responsibility of everyone involved in football to create a fair, safe and enjoyable environment in which the game can take place.

The FA Respect and Fair Play Awards 2012 are a way of thanking clubs and individuals in Surrey who have made a big difference to how football is played, and includes some 'money can't buy' prizes, such as a celebrity football speaker at a function or even playing a cup final at the FA's new state-of-the-art national coaching centre St George's Park.

To read more about this story and to nominate a team or

The Respect Working Group

The Respect Working Group had its third meeting in March and here at the Surrey County FA we have plenty of exciting ideas and projects we'll be working on over the next few months.

We'll be working with local clubs to make sure the every game in Surrey is played in the right environment, and your input is invaluable in this process.

If you would like ot be part of the Respect working group, email Derek.stovold@surreyfa.com to find out more.



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