

Junior League Policy

Zero Tolerance for Swearing

Preamble

The prevalence of swearing in soccer, predominantly in the older age groups, is a problem that has not yet been satisfactorily dealt with at any level of the game. The Laws of the game provide for a player to be sent off for the use of foul, abusive and/or insulting language, but the definition of foul language has widely varying interpretations even among our referees. This policy is intended to have a two-fold affect. First, to educate players not to swear, and second, to ensure that all players, spectators and officials enjoy the World Game.

What is the policy?

Simply put, the policy is:

A referee will send a player from the field if:

- a) The referee hears the player swear and can identify that player; or
- b) Upon a report from an assistant referee officially appointed to the game who has heard the player swear and can identify that player.

For the purposes of this policy, words which a normal person would consider to be swearing should be penalised. Racial, religious and sexual slurs are considered to be abusive language and should be punished under existing offences.

This policy applies to the Soccer Canberra Junior League Under 11 and older competitions. For Under 10 and younger competitions, Junior Clubs can devise their own policies to counsel offending players, and should instruct their referees accordingly. In doing this, clubs should be mindful that some younger teams will be involved in inter-club competitions, and should devise policies that can be applied to their own players without having implications for players from opposing clubs.

Referee's Discretion

There will be times when an injured player lets a swear word slip out and the context of the swearing will have to be considered by the referee. An injury that leaves the player writhing or crying on the ground may result in an expletive from that player, and the referee will have to use his/her judgement in determining whether a red card is warranted. If the language is NOT directed at anyone else and is curtailed quickly, the referee may decide that a red card is too harsh. A reminder to the player to be careful of what they are saying may be sufficient in the circumstances.

If the swearing is self directed (for example, if the player makes a mistake), the referee should consider whether anyone else was likely to have heard the player swear and if so, send the player from the field. Where it is a self directed, quiet expletive, the referee may issue a stern warning or a yellow card. However, repeated offences like this should result in a straight send off. If the swearing is directed at anyone else, the referee will have no discretion. The offending player will be sent from the field.

Penalties for a send off under this policy

The penalty will be as prescribed by the relevant Regulations / By Laws under which the game is being played. FIFA have decreed that any red card is an automatic one-match suspension, and this should be enforced. The Disputes and Disciplinary Convenor may make any other determination he/she is allowed to under the relevant Regulations / By Laws.