
APPENDIX H

GUIDE TO DEALING WITH
THREATS, ASSAULTS AND OTHER INCIDENTS



Guide to Dealing with Threats, Assaults and Other Incidents

Introduction

Referees are unfortunately required on occasions to deal with unpleasant and possibly volatile incidents both on and off the field of play. As the appointed official to a game, you may have some responsibility in dealing with these situations, depending on the nature of them. Referees are strongly advised to recognise the limits of their responsibilities and their own personal makeup in dealing with such incidents. No matter how confident you are in dealing with such situations, never by word or action jeopardise the safety and well being of yourself or your colleagues.

The Association recognises that individuals may respond in a variety of ways when their personal safety is threatened and has accordingly developed these broad commonsense guidelines to assist them in this regard.

If these procedures are carried out in a consistent manner, then you will be helping your colleague who may be faced with a similar situation elsewhere at another time.

Physical and Verbal Assault of Referees

If you are unfortunate enough to become the focus of physical or verbal abuse, either before, during or after a game, then you should act as follows. These actions **are mandatory**.

- a) If you are physically assaulted or verbally threatened during the game, then ABANDON the game and leave the playing area immediately.
- b) Seek assistance from either club stewards or your colleagues and make your way to the change room or other safe haven. Do not become involved in arguments or discussions.
- c) If you feel it is unsafe to try to leave the ground or require further assistance, arrange for the police to be called. Stay where it is safe until they arrive. Take further advice and directions from the police.
- d) Alternatively, leave the ground immediately and make your way to a police station to make a report.
- e) If you have been physically assaulted then you are encouraged to request that police charge the offender with assault.
- f) You are under no obligation to complete the team sheets or return the players ID cards at this stage. Take them with you and inform the club officials if they ask, that these will be returned via the League.
- g) If you have been physically assaulted and your injuries are visible, have these attended to and photographed for evidence.
- h) Contact the Association Secretary as soon as is convenient and advise of the incident. Prepare a written report and submit to the Secretary within 48 hours. List anyone who you feel may have



SAASRA MEMBERS GUIDE

APPENDIX H

witnessed the incident. Do not send the report to the League. The Secretary will review the report with you and then submit it to the League on your behalf.

- i) Complete the team sheets as best you can. Note the incident on the team sheet and advise that a written report will follow and forward them together with the players ID passes to the League as soon as possible.
- j) You may be required to give evidence to the League Disciplinary Committee. Do not accept a direct invitation from the DC to attend a hearing alone. Advise the Secretary and a member of the Management Committee will accompany you.

Incidents before the match

Notwithstanding the above actions which should take precedence in the case of assault, the following actions may be warranted with respect to incidents that occur before the game takes place.

Actions may warrant:

- Delaying the kick-off
- Warning club officials and team captains
- Postponing the game
- Reporting to League and Association Secretary (compulsory)

Prior to your game taking place you may become aware of incidents or ill-feeling that may jeopardise the safety of players, spectators or yourself and your colleagues. This could include problems between rival spectators, incidents during the reserve game (such as pitch invasion) and verbal abuse directed towards you.

You will have to judge whether the incident warrants the postponement of the game. But before doing so you should consult with the officials from the two clubs to ascertain whether they feel confident in maintaining order off the pitch and what they intend to do if a situation develops during the conduct of the game. You need to be confident that they will support you and carry out any orders or directions that you give to them. You may even consider delaying the kick-off until appropriate actions are taken to allow any ill-feeling to dissipate.

If you have any doubt then you should state your concerns to the club officials, advise of the postponement of the game and depart the ground at your earliest convenience. If you feel safe enough to do so, you should complete the teamsheets (if available) and note the action taken. You should immediately telephone the Secretary to advise of your actions and follow this up with a written report. You should send the teamsheets and report to the League.

You should take care not to be too hasty in making a decision. If the incident involves and is confined to the actions of players during the reserve game then remember that yours is a different game with different players. Take into consideration whether the referee for the reserve game was a club official or official referee. A stern warning to club officials and captains before the game that you may abandon the game if there is any sign of trouble, may suffice, at least initially. But if trouble does persist then be decisive and act swiftly.



Incidents during the match

Actions may warrant:

- Warning of club officials to maintain order
- Abandonment of the game
- Report to League and Association Secretary (compulsory)

If incidents occur off the field of play (involving spectators, club officials or substitutes) which may endanger the safety of players, your colleagues or yourself or prevent the game from being played without continual interruptions then you should:

- Temporarily stop the game
- Approach the home club stewards and advise of your concerns
- Request stewards to attend to the problem (or deal with it yourself if it involves substitutes)
- Warn of the abandonment of the game if actions are not taken or prove ineffective.

If the situation persists after the warning or the risk to safety is serious then you should abandon the game immediately.

Leave the pitch immediately. If it is safe to do so then arrange for the completion of the team sheets making note of your actions. If you feel unsafe or are threatened then leave the ground immediately, taking with you the team sheets and players ID passes.

Advise the Secretary at your earliest convenience and prepare a written report. Forward the original and a copy of the report to the Secretary together with team sheets and forward the players passes to the League.

Incidents after the match

Incidents occurring after the match need to be treated carefully and with common sense. Do not become involved in incidents that do not directly involve you. You should however take a note (from a safe distance) of what happens and provide a match report detailing the incident.

If the incident involves you or you colleague directly, then leave the ground immediately taking with you team sheets and players passes if need be. Prepare a report and submit to the League and Association Secretary.