

Match Official Abuse Initiative

Match Official Abuse (MOA) & Failure to Respect a Match Official (FTR) is causing growing concern to World Rugby, the RFU, Cheshire RFU, Lancashire RFU, Liverpool Referees Society & Manchester Referees Society. It is making the recruitment & retention of referees increasingly difficult. For this reason, the two counties are issuing the following notice to all clubs and is supported by both referees' societies.

Regulation 19.4.9 states

A club shall be responsible for ensuring that all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that its players, coaches, members and spectators conduct themselves appropriately and do not behave in a way that is improper, offensive, abusive, threatening, indecent or insulting or enter the pitch without the authority of the referee.

We ask that clubs make everybody aware of the following.

- **If in the opinion of players, coaches, spectators, and parents the referee is making mistakes and missing something this does not make MOA & FTR acceptable or allowed.**
- Players should not engage in
 - Appealing
 - Disputing decisions.
 - Making disparaging comments either indirectly or indirectly.
- Only the Captain or other designated person identified and agreed with the referee. It should be noted that.
 - It is a privilege not a right.
 - The referee can choose when he engages in discussion. For example, it will not be so as disadvantage the non-offending team.
- Coaches should adhere to the technical area protocol, a copy of which is attached. Coaches should not engage in.
 - Appealing
 - Disputing decisions.
 - Making disparaging comments either indirectly or indirectly.
- Spectators should stay behind the barrier and not verbally abuse Match Officials.

A positive approach by clubs using the above will reduce instances of MOA & FTR.

If a club has legitimate concerns about a match official's performance or safety concerns, they should be taken up with the appropriate appointing body. The President, Chair or Secretary only should raise it.

Posting comments on the Club Website or social media is not acceptable.

However, if any of the following occur then disciplinary action will be taken against the individual or individuals.

- A player is red carded for MOA or FTR.

- A coach is reported for MOA or FTR.
- A complaint is received about a spectator.
- A complaint is received about a club official.

In addition to the above CB will follow these procedures in addition to action any of the above.

The Secretary will place before the Panel a report based on the above notice. From that report and the seriousness of the matter before the Panel will instruct the Secretary to issue one of the following warnings.

- First Occasion
 - The Club will be issued with a general warning. Within fourteen days the Club will submit a document stating what actions they will be taking to stop a repeat occurrence.
- Second Occasion
 - A formal warning will be issued to the club.
- Third Occasion
 - Disciplinary action will be considered against the Club.

It should also be noted of the following points.

- The above additional actions.
 - The above is the minimum additional sanction procedure. Should there be prima facie evidence of serious MOA the Disciplinary Secretary can place before a Panel reason to take immediate sanctions against the Club.
 - Will remain on file for a minimum of one calendar year. Any additional incident within that period will result in the one year being reset.

Technical Area Protocol

Introduction

There is a growing trend to ignore the technical area. Clubs and coaches use the excuse “the referee didn’t tell me to stay in it”. It is now important that it is self-policed for removal of doubt this document sets out the technical area protocol. It is the club’s responsibility to ensure that all club personnel know and adhere to this protocol.

The Technical Area

The home club are responsible for the following.

1. Providing a permanent or temporary barrier, if physically possible.
2. A marked technical area. If it is not possible to mark a permanent technical area one should be marked out with cones or other temporary method.

Permitted Personnel

1. Coach
2. Replacements
3. Physio
4. Yellow Carded Player

Responsibilities of Permitted Personnel

Coach or DOR

1. The coach or DOR must always stay within the technical area.
2. They can enter the field of play only at half time or at the referee’s invitation.
3. If the coach wants to move up and down the touchline it must be done from behind the barrier.
4. It must be one or the other they cannot switch it must be technical area or behind the barrier not both.

Replacements

Replacements must stay in the technical area except

1. During a break in play replacements can take water on to the pitch, at the referee’s discretion. If a player requires water at any other time they must come to the technical area.
2. One replacement may enter the field of play to take on the kicking tee.
3. A player may leave the technical area to warm up prior to replacing a player. This must be done in an area that does not impact on the match in progress.
4. Wear a shirt/top on that differentiates them from the players on the pitch.

Physio

The Physio must stay in the technical area except when entering the field of play to attend to an injured player. It is advisable to agree a protocol with the match referee prior to kick off.

Yellow Card

When a player is temporarily suspended (yellow card) the player may stand in the technical area subject to the following.

1. If agreed by the match referee. The referee may require the player to stand elsewhere.

2. The player must stay silent and not shout instructions to the players.

Red Card

The player who has been sent off must go behind the barrier and cannot be in the technical area.

Discipline Sanctions

Coaches & DOR

If a coach or DOR is ordered from the technical area (red card) sanctions will be based on the equivalent on field offence.

1. An additional sanction could be added as the Coach or DOR would be expected to set an example to the players.
2. An additional sanction could be applied if the referee reports that staying in the technical area at the appropriate times was not adhered to.

Replacements

If a replacement is ordered from the technical area prior to replacing an on-field player that player can take no further part in the match.

Overall Conduct

All people in the technical area are under the same authority and control as the players on the field and are subject to refereeing sanctions.

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