

SPECTATOR BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT POLICY

FOR APPLICATION ACROSS ALL FOOTBALL SOUTH COAST COMPETITIONS

We are all aware of the challenges being experienced due to referee shortages. A key reason for this is because match officials leave the game because of abuse.

There have been a significant number of instances where referees have been subject to abuse by spectators last season, as in many seasons' past and this has developed and worsened in recent years.

The purpose of this policy is to identify key areas that clubs must focus on to manage match days and alleviate abusive behaviour when it arises. These areas will impact on match day operations with the goal of ensuring that there is a significant reduction in abuse on match days and a more respectful overall environment for all participants in football, across all levels of football.

This policy sets out the following:

1. Obligations of the member club in relation to spectator management.
2. The actions Jacketed Officials must undertake should any spectators behave in an offensive, insulting or abusive manner towards Match Officials on a match day.
3. Training in conflict management that can be provided upon request by FSC or appropriately qualified Club Officials with respect of ground official responsibilities.
4. The potential consequences to non-compliance in relation to match day obligations by a member club.

1. Club Obligations

Here are the steps that each member club needs to follow to ensure spectator management complies with FSC's policy

- A. Prior to each match, you are to determine who the lead Jacketed Official (ie Ground Official) is, together with others who will also be jacketed officials with responsibilities for ensuring code of conduct compliance.
- B. A Jacketed Official is to Accompany Match Officials to and from the gate/entry to the field of play; prior to the start of the match, at half-time and full time. A Jacketed Official can also enter the field of play at the conclusion of the half/match for the purposes of escorting the match officials off.
- C. The Jacketed Officials must be clearly visible to the Match Officials prior to the commencement of a Match.
- D. Ensure that all jacketed officials appointed by the club undertake the responsibilities below.

Member clubs are required to have the appropriate number of jacketed officials in place as set out in the Competition Regulations for the competition being played. Should there not be the required jacketed officials present, the Referee may choose to not officiate the game and the club breaching the policy will incur the referee fees (to be split equally if both clubs are non-compliant).

2. The Responsibilities of the Jacketed Officials

The role of the Jacketed Official is to ensure that, at all times, Spectators comply with the FFA Spectator Code of Behaviour (listed below). The role of a Jacketed Official is defined in the FSC competition rules.

Jacketed Officials are responsible for monitoring match day matters which are outside of the field of play and technical areas of the ground.

If any spectators are behaving in a manner that is offensive, insulting or abusive towards the referee, or there are other breaches of the Codes of Conduct, Jacketed Officials are responsible for ensuring:

1. the abusive behaviour is addressed promptly, and
2. the person or people involved cease their abusive and rule breaking behaviour.

This will involve:

1. communication with the person or people who are breaching the code of conduct notifying them of the unacceptable conduct and
2. continuing to monitor to ensure the behaviour is modified to no longer breach the code of conduct.

All persons at the ground must abide by requests of the Jacketed Official and in the event of continuing improper conduct, or offensive, insulting & abusive language by any persons at the ground, then any appropriate requests made by the Jacketed Official shall be final and complied with immediately. This could include a direction to leave the venue if the spectator fails to modify their behaviour. If required, the Home Club official representative is to contact the police or relevant emergency services for support.

In extreme cases of abuse, it may be necessary to stop the match until the spectator is spoken to or dealt with by the Jacketed Official. The Referee has the specific right to hold a match from continuing and requiring a Jacketed Official to address an issue in relation to code of conduct breach by a Spectator, before the match continues further.

3. Training Opportunities

If your club wishes to participate in training for Jacketed Officials, this training will be conducted free of cost on up to two occasions per season, with experienced Officials from within FSC and Member Clubs conducting sessions that are designed to assist Jacketed Officials to understand how to approach and manage spectators who are in breach of the code of conduct.

4. Non-Compliance by a Club

If a club fails to comply with their responsibilities in this area, this can potentially lead to serious concerns about the safety and welfare of Referees and assist in perpetuating the decline in the number of available Match Officials. Poor behaviour of spectators also has a negative impact on the ability for families and rule abiding spectators to enjoy football in a family friendly and respectful environment.

If a member club is not acting responsibly in respect of application of the policy above and are failing to comply with their Roles and Responsibilities, the Member Club may be fined by FSC or dealt with in accordance with the FSC Disciplinary and Disputes Regulation.

Due to the specific issue being addressed relating to the safety of the Match Day Environment, FSC also reserves the right in circumstances where there are three or more policy breaches that have been reported in respect of a club during a season to:

- a. Not send Match Officials to the Member Club for their Match Days, with Officials re-deployed to member clubs who are more effective in their implementation of this policy, Or
- b. Reversing the fixtures of the member club for a nominated period, with the club losing the opportunity to host a match or matches, on account of their failure to meet the requirements of this policy.

The parties who are authorised to raise concerns about a Club's Compliance for consideration of a potential breach include any Football South Coast Referee, Referees Assessor or Football Council Member. Any allegation of breach becomes a disciplinary matter for consideration under the FSC Disciplinary and Disputes Regulations.

The consequences are not the aim of the policy, nor is there a desire for them to ever be required. However, they are being notified at this stage so Member Clubs can be aware of the seriousness with respect to how this issue will be approached and the commitment to enforcing the policy. We aim to work together with Member Clubs to ensure a safer environment for all in the coming seasons.

In the event the following occurs the Referee, Assessor or Football Council Member is to submit an incident report:

- i) There were no Jacketed Officials at the ground that presented themselves or they were not listed on the team sheet
- ii) The Jacketed Officials did not adequately deal with or address inappropriate spectator behaviour
- iii) Misconduct has occurred during the match by that Club's Spectator(s)

Date: February 2023

Football Australia - Spectator Code of Conduct:

SPECTATOR CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

A spectator present at a Match or otherwise involved in any activity staged or sanctioned by FFA or an affiliated Member Federation, District Association or Club must:

- (a) respect the decisions of Match Officials and teach children to do the same;
- (b) never ridicule or unduly scold a child for making a mistake;
- (c) respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person regardless of their gender, ability, race, colour, religion, language, politics, national or ethnic origin;
- (d) not use violence in any form, whether it is against other spectators, Team Officials (including coaches), Match Officials or Players;
- (e) not engage in discrimination, harassment or abuse in any form, including the use of obscene or offensive language or gestures, the incitement of hatred or violence or partaking in indecent or racist chanting;
- (f) comply with any terms of entry of a venue, including bag inspections, prohibited and restricted items such as flares, missiles, dangerous articles and items that have the potential to cause injury or public nuisance;
- (g) not, and must not attempt to, bring into a venue national or political flags or emblems (except for the recognised national flags of any of the competing teams) or offensive or inappropriate banners, whether written in English or a foreign language;
- (h) not throw missiles (including on to the field of play or at other spectators) and must not enter the field of play or its surrounds without lawful authority; and
- (i) conduct themselves in a manner that enhances, rather than injures, the reputation and goodwill of FFA and football generally.

Any person who does not comply with this Spectator Code of Behaviour or who otherwise causes a disturbance may be evicted from a venue and banned from attending future Matches.