

## **Team and Coach Discipline Protocols**

### Introduction

The objective of this document is to lay out protocols and procedures for enforcing the AYSO Sportsmanship philosophy and addressing violations of the philosophy by players and coaches. It must be stressed that the maintenance of decorum and sportsmanship at AYSO games is the responsibility of all parties—players, spectators, coaches, and referees. Everyone attending and participating in games is responsible for maintaining a positive and respectful atmosphere at games and for de-escalating disagreements and disputes.

This document outlines specific steps to be taken in the event that players and/or coaches do not uphold their obligation to act in a fashion that demonstrates good sportsmanship and respect for fellow players and volunteers. It also outlines procedures where coaches can appropriately address grievances and complaints that can include (but are not limited to) decisions by the referee crew officiating the match.

### Misconduct by Players

Misconduct by players can result in the loss of the Sportsmanship Point generally awarded to both teams for participating in the game. The decision to deduct a Sportsmanship Point will be made by the appropriate Division Director, subject to the approval of the Regional Commissioner. Actions by players that may result in the loss of a Sportsmanship Point include, but are not limited to, the following actions:

- Observed poor sportsmanship by the players, including taunting, foul language, spitting on or wetting players' hands in the handshake line, etc. The breaches can be observed and

reported to the Division Director by either the game referee or the field monitor on duty at the time of the game.

- More than one caution (Yellow Card) shown by the center referee to players on a team during the game.
- A misconduct (Red Card) shown to a player.
- Serious and/or persistent dissent by a player or players.

Note that under these protocols, Sportsmanship Points can only be deducted for actions by players before, during, and/or after games. Sportsmanship Points will not be deducted due to the actions of coaches, spectators or other adults, as a key objective of these protocols is to avoid hurting the players for actions taken by adults. Poor sportsmanship and poor behavior by coaches and other adults will be addressed separately under the provisions outlined below.

#### Misconduct by Coaches and/or Spectators

Poor sportsmanship and disruptive behavior by parties other than the players will be addressed depending on the severity of the violation. It should be stressed that coaches are responsible for the behavior and comportment of their sideline and may be sanctioned for spectators' misbehavior.

For the purposes of addressing violations, the region will create a Discipline Committee ("the Committee") that consists of the following:

- The Assistant Regional Commissioner (ARC) responsible for the division in question;
- The Regional Coach Administrator (RCA) or, if applicable, a representative of the Coaching Commission;
- The Regional Referee Administrator (RRA) or a representative of the Referee Commission;

- The Division Director (DD) governing the affected coach's team.

(The Regional Commissioner would participate if the ARC is unavailable on a timely basis.) The Committee will only be called into session as needed during the season. Decisions will be ratified by a majority vote; in the event of a tie, the ARC/RC will serve as the tie-breaker.

Breaches of sportsmanship and other violations by coaches and/or spectators (i.e., "the sideline") associated with a game will be documented by the match referee on the game card. Based on the behavior outlined on the game card (and, if applicable, in the match report), violations will be assigned three levels of severity by the RCA. The violation levels are defined as follows:

1. *Simple (Level 1)*: The sideline was argumentative, uncooperative, or disrespectful toward the game's adult referees. For cases where the disruptions were caused by spectators, a Simple violation will occur if either a) the coach eggs on the spectators (i.e., encourages the poor behavior) or b) the coach fails to try to calm down a clearly agitated sideline.
2. *Serious (Level 2)*: a confrontation occurred between the sideline and other parties, including referees, opposing coaches, and/or field monitors; a caution is issued to a coach; argumentative, uncooperative, or disrespectful behavior toward a youth volunteer; a second Simple violation is assessed during the season.
3. *Severe (Level 3)*: Ejection of the coach by the referee; a physical or threatening confrontation; severely abusive conduct toward anyone at the field; a second Serious infraction during a season; a third Simple infraction during a season.

While coaches are responsible for the conduct of their sideline, a caution or ejection of a spectator will not automatically trigger a violation. A violation will be considered to have

occurred by the RCA if the coach fails to attempt to control his/her sideline and/or acts in a manner that escalates the dispute(s). (Coaches will be encouraged to create a plan for dealing with behavioral issues, e.g., stipulating that the assistant coach will ask spectators to stop making derogatory comments about the officiating.)

The different levels of violations will be addressed through a variety of actions.

Simple: Coaches that incur a Simple violation will receive an email from their DD outlining the importance of maintaining sportsmanship at games and de-escalating disputes. The email should note the possibility of more severe sanctions in the event of additional violations, and will be copied to the RC, ARC, RCA and the RRA. A further investigation may be undertaken by the RCA or ARC if requested by the DD, the RC (or an Assistant Regional Commissioner), or the RRE.

Serious: A Serious violation will result in an inquiry by the RCA, who will report his/her findings to the Committee along with recommended actions. The Committee will vote on the recommendations, which may include a written reprimand from the RC, ARC and/or the RCA, a required meeting with the Committee, and other appropriate actions including temporary suspension from game coaching. In addition, the coach will be required to complete the Positive Coaching Alliance Double Goal program prior to acting as a coach in a game (or as soon as reasonably possible, if the Committee recommendation is delayed).

Severe: A Severe violation will result in an immediate temporary suspension from all coaching activities while an inquiry is conducted by the RCA. The RCA will report his/her findings to the Committee, along with recommended actions to be taken subject to the vote of the Committee. Such actions can include indefinite suspension or permanent removal of the coach

from all volunteer activities within AYSO. In such cases, the team's Assistant coach will be asked to take over head coaching duties if he/she is willing and is properly certified to the age level; if the Assistant coach cannot assume full coaching duties, the region will supply a coach for the term of the coach's suspension. In the event of a suspension for a Severe violation, the coach will not be reinstated until he/she has met with the Committee and has written a letter to the team's parents (to be approved by the Committee prior to distribution) explaining the reasons for the suspension and apologizing for the breach of the AYSO Sportsmanship principle. All Severe violations will also require the coach to complete the Positive Coaching Alliance materials prior to reinstatement.

#### Coaches' Match Reports

A document template will be created that will allow coaches to formally and respectfully express and report concerns and disagreements with respect to the officiating of their matches. The form will facilitate the succinct reporting of issues regarding specific calls made during games (e.g., expressing concerns regarding the referees' knowledge and interpretation of the Laws), as well as general concerns (e.g., poor or potentially dangerous field conditions). Coaches will be advised to create a report only in the event that significant problems arose during games that require the attention of the Region's board members.

Once created, coaches will send the report directly to the RCA. The RCA will, if appropriate, refer the report to the relevant parties. (For example, a complaint regarding officiating will be referred to members of the Referee Commission.) It should be stressed that the outcome of a match will never be changed as the result of a report being filed. The report

should be viewed as an outlet for coaches' feedback and concerns, as well as a way for the region to improve the quality of officiating and the relationships between coaches and referees.