

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MATCH OFFICIALS

Under the Laws of the Game the decisions of a referee on points of fact connected with the play are final as far as the result of the game is concerned. A referee also has wide-ranging powers defined in Law 5. The exercising of such power requires a high level of ethics from referees and assistant referees (referred to in this Code together as “referees”). In addition to the quality of refereeing, the behaviour of the referee has an impact, either directly or indirectly, on the conduct of all others involved in the game. Respect for referees and their decisions is a fundamental part of the game. A Code of Conduct for Match Officials is a proper response to those expectations. While the Code focuses primarily on referees involved in top-class football, with few exceptions the basic ideas are valid for match officials at all levels, be they on the National List, or registered with County Football Associations and only involved in local football.

Obligations towards the game:

The referee has a duty to the game in its widest sense.

One of those duties is to help the game to keep moving, compatible with fair play, and to seek to ensure it is attractive and is not subject to unnecessary halts.

The referee should:

- Make every effort to prepare fully for a match, both physically and mentally. On a physical level, a referee must be able to keep up with the speed of the modern game, and be alert and close enough to take correct decisions from credible locations on the field of play.
- Not be afraid to take decisions. A referee should be fair and firm and must resist any possible influence from protests on the part of players, team officials or spectators.
- Show respect towards players and team officials.
- Be honest and completely impartial at all times, irrespective of the teams, players or team officials involved in the match.
- Decline to be appointed to a match if not completely physically or mentally fit to referee that match (because of illness, injury, or for family or other reasons).
- Inform The Football Association and/or County Association and/or league or competition directly responsible if unable to referee a team or teams for any reason.
- Refrain from requesting hospitality of any kind, or accept any hospitality offered and considered to be excessive.
- Always have regard to the best interests of the game, including where publicly expressing an opinion on the game or any particular aspect of it, including others involved in the game.
- Not tolerate inappropriate language from players and/or officials.

Obligations towards the Players

The powers of a referee must be used with wise judgment and care. Authority and a firm approach must be combined with respect.

- A referee should have regard to protecting the players.
- A referee should show due respect when speaking with the players, even in the event of infringements.
- In reports, a referee should set out the true facts and not attempt to justify any decisions.

Obligations towards fellow Referees, Assistant Referees, Fourth Officials and Substitute Referees

It is necessary for the referee's authority to be protected, not only for the sake of the game, but also in the interest of fellow referees, assistant referees, fourth officials and substitute referees. This protection should, however, not influence the over-riding regard for protection of the players.

- A referee should refrain from publicly expressing any criticism of fellow referees, assistant referees or other match officials.
- A referee should assist with the development of less experienced referees and assistant referees.
- An assistant referee should give his total support to the referee, but without undue interference or insistence.