## Change History

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<td>September 26, 2006</td>
<td>Lesson Plan First Developed</td>
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1. DESCRIPTION

This workshop, through a series of scenarios, puts the referee’s authority in context and gives referees concrete techniques for coping with situations in which adults interfere with children’s soccer matches through inappropriate behavior.

2. GOALS

The goal of the workshop is to help participants to develop strategies to use during a match to facilitate proper sideline behavior. The emphasis is on practical techniques applied on the field, but the workshop also reviews the support available in the AYSO program off the field, including the role of the Region in shaping proper adult behavior.

3. PREREQUISITES

None

4. STUDENT MATERIALS

AYSO Guidance for Referees, Coaches, Other Volunteers and Parents Manual (Optional)

SPECIAL INSTRUCTOR NOTE: When this lesson plan is presented at a Section Meeting, alert attendees if handouts are included in the Section Meeting Workbook which all registered attendees will receive at registration. Instructors should review the Workbook contents prior to the class to determine what has been provided. Some scenarios will have the recommended answers in the back of the workbook.

5. INSTRUCTOR EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

Power Point presentation, projector, computer, flip charts and markers.
Sample of AYSO Guidance for Referees, Coaches, Other Volunteers and Parents book

5. INSTRUCTOR NOTES

None

7. ATTACHMENTS

None
LESSON PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION  [5 Minutes]

Introduce yourself and your co-instructor(s).

II. BODY  [35 Minutes]

A. Why

1. Ask: *Have you ever been in a situation in which coach or spectator dissent interfered with the match you were officiating?*

   a. Briefly collect answers, but don’t allow too much story telling. Question responders as necessary to discover why the interference occurred and what, if anything they did about it. Make mental notes of cases in which action was not taken either early enough or decisively enough; this will be the emphasis of the techniques used in this lesson.

2. Point out that in every match the referee is faced with the possibility that he/she will have to deal with dissent from coaches and spectators. This is not a pleasant part of the job, but it is an essential one for the referee to be prepared to deal with. Recognizing dissent properly and understanding how to deal with it effectively is a necessary part of refereeing.

B. What

1. Ask: *What is dissent?*

   a. Guide the discussion to the conclusion that: Dissent is a challenge to the authority of the referee.

   b. Distinguish dissent from the more general notion of conflict. On the soccer field, dissent involves the referee (or the assistant referees), by definition. It’s a specific form of conflict. By contrast, conflict may occur between teammates, opponents, spectators, etc.

   c. Point out that dissent is different from “blowing steam”, disappointment, not directed at another individual.

   d. Discuss the kind of dissent common in professional sports and the effect this has on the actions of coaches and spectators in youth sports.

2. Ask: *What do the Laws of the Game say about dissent?* Conduct a brief discussion to elicit the following points:

   a. Dissent has a specific meaning within the context of the Laws.

   b. Dissent by players, coaches and spectators is addressed by different sections of the Laws.

3. State that although dissent is handled slightly differently depending on the individuals involved, there are common principles:
a. The Laws of the Game give the referee great power. Power is most effective when used with respect. “Speak softly and carry a big stick.”

b. Power is wielded by degrees.

c. Use only what is necessary to control the situation. A quiet word will generally be adequate for mild, brief dissent. Dissent that is public, persistent and personal must be addressed assertively and decisively.

d. Emphasize that the officiating team must remain professional, polite and respectful at all times.

4. The next level is real dissent. It is characterized by being Public, Persistent, and Personal. (The three P’s)

   a. Real dissent is an overt challenge to the referee’s authority. It is generally characterized by a one-way burst of complaining language and a disinclination on the part of the complainer to listen to the referee’s reasoned response.

   b. Real dissent interrupts the match. The instructor should give a brief demonstration that illustrates Public/Persistent/Personal, perhaps along the following lines: “C’mon ref, get in the game! Aren’t you going to call anything? Don’t you know a foul when you see it? This is ridiculous – it’s not soccer, it’s a wrestling match!”

   c. Ignored real dissent from coaches and spectators is a challenge to the referee’s authority. Match control will be weakened. Tolerating real dissent from coaches and spectators makes the job of other referees more difficult and must be dealt with promptly and directly.

C. How

Regardless of the source of the dissent – player, coach or spectator – there is a common outline in which the referee asserts his authority increasingly as dictated by the dissenting individual’s resistance. The referee must maintain a calm, professional demeanor.

1. **Step 1: The Immediate Response**

   a. The referee must recognize that most dissent posed as questions aren’t really seeking a verbal response, and the dissenter probably would not listen to one anyway. An immediate verbal response from the referee to dissenting coaches and spectators is most often neither appropriate not recommended. Discuss options for sending an immediate “message” to the dissenting coach or spectator, using body language.

   a. The referee must send a message that the dissent was heard, the dissent was not appropriate and that the dissent should stop. This message helps all who are watching to know that the behavior was unacceptable to the referee. There is no set formula; it depends on the situation and the referee’s personality. Demonstrate or ask a volunteer
to demonstrate some appropriate initial referee reactions upon first hearing real dissent.

b. If the dissent persists, that is, if the dissenter doesn’t back down, it’s time to escalate to step 2.

2. Step 2: The Second Response – For Coaches

a. Referees need not tolerate as much from coaches as they might from players. The game is for the players and a partnership of the coach and referee.

b. The referee must attempt to establish a partnership and authority over the coach without escalating the confrontation. Demonstrate how this second response might be done. For example “Coach, I recognize that you don’t agree with some of my calls, but your comments are interfering with the match, and they must cease now. Will you accept my decisions for the remainder of this match?” The referee must not allow the coach off the hook – he must “sign up”. The referee repeats the question if necessary. One of three things happens: the coach agrees, he refuses to answer or he explicitly says “No.”

Instructor Note: Using a prepared co-instructor or other assistant to play the role of the coach, demonstrate the three different responses a coach might give to the above referee statement. These scenarios work best when the instructor is an experienced referee and the interactions are not tightly scripted, but to keep the examples crisp, the instructor should know in advance how much resistance the coach is going to put up.

a. Case 1: coach agrees. The referee says “Thank you. I trust I won’t have to come over here again until the end of this game.”

b. Case 2: coach refuses to answer. The referee says “Coach, please remember that we are a team and I really need your cooperation.” “If we can’t work as a team, I may be asking you to find your assistant coach to replace you.” After demonstrating this scenario, the instructor should point out that is a rare coach who will maintain the dissent this far. Usually some cooler head will intervene and say “Come on, George, let’s get on with the game”, thereby providing the coach with a way out of the hole he has dug for himself.

c. Case 3: coach explicitly refuses to accept referee’s authority. The referee proceeds to step 3, that is, he sends off the coach.
3. **Step 3: The Final Response – For Coaches**

   If the coach persists with dissenting and will not agree to behave more responsibly, the coach should be dismissed from the game. “Coach, I’ve asked for your cooperation; this game is suspended until you leave the field. Please do so in the next two minutes.” If, after 2-3 minutes, the coach has not left the field, announce that the game is terminated at the xx minute.”

   Remember that the final decision as to the outcome of the game rests solely on the governing authority of the game (Region/Area/Section/Tournament director).

   Referees should say what they mean and mean what they say! Be consistent. Don’t say something that you are not prepared to follow thru with.

4. **Step 2: The Second Response for Spectators**

   a. Wherever possible, the referee should solicit the assistance of the coach when spectators are misbehaving inappropriately. Referees should recognize that coaches receive minimal training in managing spectator behavior. The referee should guide the coach so that they become partners in dealing with the spectators. Sometimes the referee may have to deal with the situation more directly.

   **Instructor Note:** Present the following scenario, or one like it, in which the referee deals with an interfering spectator. This scenario should use two prepared assistants who play the roles of the coach and the spectator.

   Referee (to coach): “Coach, the spectator over there in the blue shirt is disrupting the match with his comments.

   Coach: “Yeah, he’s driving all of us crazy. He does that every week and I can’t get him to stop.”

   Referee: “I understand your problem. I would appreciate it if you could do what you can to try to get him to understand the need to be positive. Could you give it a try? Remind everyone, this is a Kids Zone.”

   Coach: OK, I’ll see what I can do.

   Referee: Thank you. (The referee continues the game while the coach approaches the spectator.)

   *If the coach is unable to convince the spectator to quit criticizing the referee or the coach does not want to deal with the spectator.*

   Coach: I don’t feel comfortable doing what you are asking.

   Referee: OK, thank you anyway. The referee then goes near the touchline but remains on the field of play and makes the following announcement:

   Referee: Ladies and Gentlemen, due to the unsporting behavior of a spectator this match is in jeopardy of being terminated early. Let’s all
please remember that we are in a Kids Zone and negative or unsporting comments are not tolerated. If I must stop the game again because of the inappropriate behavior of a spectator, that spectator will have 3 minutes to leave the area or the game will be terminated. Thank you (the referee then resumes play).

There are now two possible results

A. If the spectator “signs up” and stops behaving inappropriately, the situation has been resolved.

B. If the spectator continues to be negative or dissent with the referee decisions, then the referee should stop the match and go to Step 3.

5. Step 3: The Final Response for Spectators

When a spectator persists with inappropriate conduct, the referee should go to the touchline near the spectator and say something like: “Sir, we can no longer tolerate your inappropriate behavior. You have 3 minutes to leave the area or I will be forced to terminate this game.” The referee should not engage in any further conversation with this spectator. At the end of 3 minutes, if the spectator is still present, the game should be terminated.

Instructor Note: Time and space permitting, the following activity is fun to do and provides lots of interaction with the attendees. In advance, prepare two co-instructors (or attendees) to play the role of an out of control coach and an out of control spectator. First the “coach” will make dissenting and derogatory comments to the volunteer referee as he/she pretends to referee two invisible teams. The volunteer referee is asked to do whatever he thinks should be done. Since the actions of the volunteer referee cannot be predicted, the moderator (lead instructor) must be prepared to intervene at appropriate times to make relevant points. Then the coach is quiet and the “spectator” begins dissenting with the volunteer referee who reacts and provides an opportunity for appropriate teaching points to be made.

Scenario # 1 Dealing with Coaches (Slide #6) (15 Minutes)

Introduction:
The instructor should make appropriate opening comments regarding the extensive effort and long hours of rehearsal time that have gone into the performance everyone is about to witness. Explain that one of the “actors” (the referee) became ill at the last minute and that a volunteer is needed to play the role of the referee. Explain that it is not necessary to have any experience as a referee since we are only interested in what the volunteer thinks the referee should do. An attempt will be made by the team of “highly skilled performers” to recreate situations to which the volunteer referee must react.
The moderator should enlist the active involvement of the audience to play the role of good AYSO moms and dads who have come to watch their little darlings play soccer.

The referee should always attempt to deescalate the situation.

**Act One:**

As play continues, the coach begins to berate the decisions of the referee with comments like:
- “Hey Ref, get in the game, that was a foul!”
- “Come on Ref, call them both ways.”
- “What was that?”
- “Do your job Ref before someone gets hurt!”
- “Are you blind?”
- “You suck Ref!”

Coach runs on to the field to argue with the referee.

The following is approximately how the coach scenario should unfold:

As play continues, the coach begins to berate the decisions of the referee.
- “Hey Ref, get in the game, that was a foul!”
- “Come on Ref, call them both ways.”

The referee sends a quick body-language message that he heard it and didn’t like it.
- Coach settles down for a short time
- Coach then begins to escalate his critical comments

The referee runs by the coach’s area without stopping play and offers a quick friendly warning.
- “Let’s keep the comments positive coaches, remember we are in a Kids Zone.”
- Coach settles down for a short time

As play continues, the coach escalates his critical comments.
- “Come on Ref, that’s terrible!”

The referee stops play and calmly walks to the touchline and asks the coach to join him on the field.
- Referee quietly asks the coach to walk with him away from the players and out of ear shot of everyone.
- Referee, while walking or standing beside the coach (not face to face) in a calm but resolute tone explains the need for the coach to settle down and the consequences the referee will be forced to impose if the comments continue.

Coach returns to touchline and referee resumes play.
• Coach settles down for a short time.
• Coach then “loses it” slamming his clipboard down and curses.

Referee stops play and goes to touchline.
• “I’m sorry coach, your behavior is unacceptable. You have a choice to make: please immediately leave the field or the kids and I will leave early; I will terminate this game.”

Moderator stops the action at appropriate intervals and solicits comments from the audience regarding the action taken by the volunteer referee and whether or not the action taken was appropriate. After a few comments, the moderator should select another volunteer to play the role of the referee. The “coach” should now escalate the dissent to the next level of inappropriate behavior. Again at appropriate intervals, the moderator should stop the action, solicit comments and then select another volunteer referee.

Moderator questions:
• Were the coach’s actions appropriate?
• Were the referees actions appropriate?
• What happens if the coach will not leave?
• What if there is no assistant coach?
• Is it appropriate to punish the kids for the behavior of the coach?
• Will this action improve future behavior?

Scenario # 2 Dealing with Spectators (Slide #7) (15 Minutes)
Act Two:
As play continues, a spectator begins to berate the decisions of the referee with comments like:
• “Hey Ref, get in the game, that was a foul!”
• “Come on Ref, call them both ways.”
• “What was that?”
• “Do your job Ref before someone gets hurt!”
• “Are you blind?”
• “You suck Ref!”
• “Take him out Billy, don’t let him foul you like that.”

The spectator runs on to the field to check on their “injured” child and to argue with the referee.
A heated and prolonged argument ensues which entices the coaches and other spectators to enter the field and “join in the fun”.

The following is approximately how the spectator scenario should unfold:
As play continues, the spectator begins to berate the decisions of the referee.
• “Hey Ref, get in the game, that was a foul!”
• “Come on Ref, call them both ways.”
Handling Dissent from Coaches and Spectators

The referee (and coach) should send a quick body-language message that they heard it and didn’t like it.

- The spectator settles down for a short time
- Spectator then begins to escalate his critical comments

As play continues, the spectator escalates his critical comments.

- “Come on ref, that’s terrible!”

The referee runs by the coach’s area without stopping play and politely asks the coach to help the spectator understand about the Kids Zone program.

- Coach says “I’ll try.”
- Coach asks team parent and other spectator to speak with the irate spectator.
- The spectator settles down for a short time
- Spectator continues to escalating his critical comments

The referee stops play and calmly walks to the touchline and asks both coaches to join him on the field near the touchline.

- Referee quietly asks the coaches to stand beside him (shoulder to shoulder) facing the spectators
- Referee makes a short announcement to the spectators.
  “Ladies and Gentlemen, due to the unsporting behavior of a spectator, this match is now in jeopardy. If the unsporting behavior continues the spectator will be given three minutes to leave the area. If they do not comply, the match will be canceled. Please remember we are in an AYSO Kids Zone.”

The referee instructs the coaches to return to the touchline and then resumes play.

- Both coaches request that the spectator settles down because “The referee is serious and we will all be going home early”.
- Other spectators begin approaching the irate spectator and overwhelm him with Kids Zone pins and conversation about AYSO philosophy.

Moderator stops the action at appropriate intervals and solicits comments from the audience regarding what action the volunteer referee has taken and whether or not the action taken was appropriate. After a few comments, the moderator should select another volunteer to play the role of the referee. The “spectator” should now escalate their performance to the next level of inappropriate behavior. Again at appropriate intervals, the moderator should stop the action, solicit comments and then select another volunteer referee.

- Were the spectators actions appropriate?
- Were the referees actions appropriate?
- Were the coach’s actions appropriate?
- What should the referee and coach have done and when?
- Is it appropriate to punish the kids for the behavior of the spectator?
- What should the other spectators have done and when?
Will this action improve future behavior?

III. CONCLUSION  [5 Minutes]

A. Final thoughts:
   1. Dealing with dissent is never fun, but it is part of the referee’s job.
   2. Referees often mess up in applying the procedure. Practice makes perfect!
   3. Remember that refereeing is a role you play. The way you deal with dissent is part of the role, even though it may be quite different from your real-life persona.

B. Reiterate the following essential points:
   1. The referee has broad authority, which should be wielded professionally and by degrees.
   2. Distinguish disappointment from dissent.
   3. Recognize pointless dissent, which requires a response, but not formal action.
   4. At the first sign of real dissent, begin the three-step process. Refer attendees to handouts and procedures outlined in AYSO Guidance for Referees, Coaches, Other Volunteers and Parents book.
      a. Attempt to quell it with a short response.
      b. After interrupting or delaying the match to deal with dissent, require the dissenter to “sign up” for the referee’s authority.
      c. If a dissenting coach or spectator “breaks the agreement”, tell him so, then dismiss or terminate, as appropriate.
   5. Maintain a professional demeanor throughout.

C. Show AYSO Guidance for Referees, Coaches, Other Volunteers and Parents book (if available) and recommend everyone get one.

D. Thank participants and tell them to remember that...

In AYSO, it’s about more than the game!