

## **Policy 531-9. Misconduct Toward Game Officials**

### **Section 1. General**

Misconduct against referees may occur before, during and after the match, including travel to or from the match. Misconduct may occur also at later times when directly related to duties of a game official as a referee.

### **Section 2. Rule Application**

(A) This policy shall supersede any inconsistent rules of Organization Members that pertain to assaults or abuse upon Federation referees, assistant referees, the manner and means of hearings, appeals, and rehearings in matters pertaining thereto.

(B) Nothing in this policy rule shall be construed to restrict or limit any league, event/tournament or Organization Member from applying equal or greater restrictions to anyone not listed in section 4(a)(1) of this policy (i.e., a spectator associated with a club or team).

(C) This policy shall not apply to players, coaches, managers, club officials, or league officials while participating in Professional League Member activities.

### **Section 3. Terms and References**

As used in this policy --

(1) "Referee" includes the following:

- (a) all currently registered USSF referees, assistant referees, fourth officials or others duly appointed to assist in officiating in a match.
- (b) any non-licensed, non-registered person serving in an emergency capacity as a referee (under Rule 3040).
- (c) any club assistant referee.

(2) "Hearing" means a meeting of at least three neutral members, one of whom is designated or elected to serve as chairman. The hearing shall be conducted pursuant to guidelines established by the Organization Member.

- (3) (a) (i) Referee assault is an intentional act of physical violence at or upon a referee.  
(ii) For purposes of this policy, "intentional act" shall mean an act intended to bring about a result which will invade the interests of another in a way that is socially unacceptable. Unintended consequences of the act are irrelevant.
- (b) Assault includes, but is not limited to the following acts committed upon a referee: hitting, kicking, punching, choking, spitting on, grabbing or bodily running into a referee; head butting; the act of kicking or throwing any object at a referee that could inflict injury; damaging the referee's uniform or personal property, i.e. car, equipment, etc.

- (4) (a) Referee abuse is a verbal statement or physical act not resulting in bodily contact which implies or threatens physical harm to a referee or the referee's property or equipment.  
(b) Abuse includes, but is not limited to the following acts committed upon a referee: using foul or abusive language toward a referee that implies or threatens physical harm; spewing any beverage on a referee's personal property; or spitting at (but not on) the referee.

### **Section 4. Jurisdiction and Hearings**

(A) General

- (1) When any amateur or professional player, coach, manager, club official or game official assaults or abuses a referee, the original jurisdiction to adjudicate the matter shall vest immediately in the

responsible Organization Member which is affiliated with the United States Soccer Federation.

(2) When an allegation of assault is verified by the Organization Member the person is automatically suspended until the hearing on the assault.

(3) The Organization Member must hold a hearing within thirty (30) days of the verification by the Member of the abuse or assault or, if applicable, the thirty-day period provided by subsection (B)(3) of this section. If the Member does not adjudicate the matter within that period of time, original jurisdiction shall immediately vest in the Federation's Appeals Committee to adjudicate the matter, to which the same provisions as to the term of suspension shall apply.

(4) Failure to hold the initial hearing shall not rescind the automatic suspension.

#### (B) Events and Tournaments

(1) In the event an assault or abuse of a referee occurs in an event outside the alleged offender's home state, the referee shall (A) immediately notify the Event/Tournament Chairman, and (B) forward a copy of the game report and his/her comments on the incident to the Event/Tournament Chairman.

(2) The Event/Tournament Chairman shall have the right to immediately convene a hearing at the site of the Event/Tournament, at which the alleged offender, the coach of the alleged offender when the offender is a player and the game official should be present. Information presented at this hearing shall promptly be relayed to the alleged offender's Organization Member President by the Event/Tournament Chairman, both orally and in writing; however, failure to provide written information shall not restrict the offender's home Organization Member from taking action with regard to any referee abuse or assault.

(3) Final jurisdiction shall vest with the alleged offender's home Organization Member. A hearing shall be held by that Organization Member within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the initial report of the abuse or assault on a referee.

### **Section 5. Penalties and Suspensions**

#### (A) Assault

(1) The person committing the referee assault must be suspended as follows:

(a) for a minor or slight touching of the referee or the referee's uniform or personal property, at least 3 months from the time of the assault; (b) except as provided in clause (i) or (ii), for any other assault, at least 6 months from the time of the assault:

(i) for an assault committed by an adult and the referee is 17 years of age or younger, at least 3 years; or

(ii) for an assault when serious injuries are inflicted, at least 5 years.

(2) A State Association adjudicating the matter may not provide shorter period of suspension but, if circumstances warrant, may provide a longer period of suspension.

#### (B) Abuse

The minimum suspension period for referee abuse shall be at least three (3) scheduled matches within the rules of that competition. The Organization Member adjudicating the matter may provide a longer period of suspension when circumstances warrant (e.g., habitual offenders).

### **Section 6. Appeals**

A person who is found to have committed abuse and/or assault may appeal to the Appeals Committee by following the procedures of Federation Bylaw 705 within ten (10) days from receipt of the decision of the Organization Member.

### **Section 7. Procedure for Reporting Assault and Abuse**

(A) Procedures for reporting of referee assault and/or abuse shall be developed and disseminated by the National Referee Committee to all Federation registered referees.

(B) Referees shall transmit a written report of the alleged assault or abuse, or both, within 48 hours of the incident (unless there is a valid reason for later reporting) to the designee of the Organization Member and the State Referee Administrator. For tournaments or special events, the referee shall

transmit a written report to the tournament director on the day of the incident and to his home state SRA within 10 days of the incident.