

Problems Outside the Touchline Introduction

An alarming increase in incidents of inappropriate behavior by adults at youth sporting events led AYSO National Referee Administrator, Joe Eldridge, to form the Safe Haven/Kids Zone Curriculum Commission. The commission's task was to develop specific training techniques – ones that deal with problems that arise outside the touchlines during AYSO games – to incorporate into the education of our coaches, referees and parents. The commission members are chairperson Joe Eldridge, National Coach Administrator John Ouellette, National Coaching Commission Chairman Bill Finkel, Section Six Director Jeff Stern, Section Twelve Coach Administrator Larry Hughes and Coordinator of Certification and Advocacy Ellisa Hall.

The commission met at the National Support & Training Center in Hawthorne, CA, on April 10-12, 2002. It solicited input from all section coach and referee staffs and from Curriculum Administrator Dave Myers. The concept for a section meeting presentation on this critical topic, including the contents of this handbook, grew out of the commission.

Provided here are training aids and reference materials for use in new volunteer and parent orientation and for training existing volunteers. Of major importance are the strategies for coaches, referees and spectators to use during games to facilitate proper sideline behavior. Regions are encouraged to use this material to develop volunteers committed to providing the best possible environment for AYSO players. In the right environment, players can enjoy the beautiful game of soccer and learn positive life lessons from appropriate behavior modeled by adults present at their games. Regions are further encouraged to reproduce and freely circulate these materials to everyone involved in their local programs – particularly the players' parents. This handbook contains useful items including:

- **The AYSO Player Bill of Rights**
- **The AYSO Parent Pledge**
- **The AYSO Coach Pledge**
- **The AYSO Referee Pledge**
- **The AYSO Player Pledge**
- **What Can I Do When a Spectator Is Behaving Inappropriately?**
- **What Can I Do When a Coach Is Behaving Inappropriately?**
- **What Can I Do When a Referee Is Behaving Inappropriately?**

Whether we recognize it or not, we are all teachers, and children watch and learn from what we do and say, in addition to what we do not do or say. Be a part of the solution as a member of the AYSO team of coaches, referees and spectators who make the best interests of the children their most important consideration.

How often have you worried that the model others set for young players is inappropriate and said to yourself, "Somebody ought to do something!"? Well, next time, demonstrate your displeasure with the inappropriate behavior and **Be Somebody!**

PROBLEMS OUTSIDE THE TOUCHLINE

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THE AYSO PLAYER BILL OF RIGHTS

AYSO players have the right to

- 1. Participate on a team without a tryout.**
- 2. Participate on a team that has been honestly balanced with the other teams in that age group within the region.**
- 3. Play at least one half of every game.**
- 4. Have appropriately trained and certified coaches, referees and regional volunteer staff.**
- 5. Receive positive coaching and encouragement for effort.**
- 6. Have freedom to try without the fear of criticism.**
- 7. Have freedom to act their age.**
- 8. Have freedom from negative criticism and undue pressure from adults.**
- 9. Have freedom from abusive behavior.**
- 10. Be treated with respect.**

A compilation of various AYSO pledges, codes of conduct, and ideas.

THE AYSO PARENT PLEDGE

In my words and action, I pledge to

- 1. Attend and participate in team parent meetings.**
- 2. Be on time or early when dropping off or picking up my child for a practice or game.**
- 3. Ensure my child is supported and encouraged by family or loved ones at games.**
- 4. Encourage my child to have fun and keep sport in its proper perspective.**
- 5. Define winning for my child as doing his/her very best.**
- 6. Endeavor to learn the Laws (rules) of soccer and support the efforts of referees.**
- 7. Honor the game and show respect for all involved including coaches, players, opponents, spectators and referees.**
- 8. Applaud and encourage players from both teams and not yell out instructions.**
- 9. Not make negative comments about the game, coaches, referees or players in my child's presence.**
- 10. Encourage others to refrain from negative or abusive sideline behavior.**

THE AYSO COACH PLEDGE

In my words and action, I pledge to

- 1. Enthusiastically support and practice the AYSO Philosophies of: Positive Coaching, Good Sportsmanship, Everyone Plays, Balanced Teams and Open Registration.**
- 2. Stay informed about sound principles of coaching and child development.**
- 3. Respect the game and know the Laws.**
- 4. Emphasize to my players that they must abide by the Laws of the Game at all times.**
- 5. Develop a true respect for the judgment of all referees.**
- 6. Develop a team respect for the ability of our opponents.**
- 7. Ensure a safe environment for my players.**
- 8. Never yell at or ridicule a player.**
- 9. Always set a good example.**
- 10. Remember that soccer is a game and all games should be fun.**

A compilation of various AYSO pledges, codes of conduct, and ideas.

THE AYSO REFEREE PLEDGE

In my words and action, I pledge to

- 1. Encourage and enforce the AYSO philosophies of Everyone Plays, Positive Coaching and Good Sportsmanship.**
- 2. Learn the Laws of the Game and understand the “spirit” of the Laws and help fellow referees do the same.**
- 3. Remember that the game is for the players and recognize that player safety and fair play come first.**
- 4. Honor game assignments and arrive sufficiently early to conduct pre-game duties.**
- 5. Present a positive authority-figure model when officiating.**
- 6. Always be fair and impartial, avoiding conflicts of interest and personal bias.**
- 7. Remain calm when confronted with emotional reactions from players, coaches and spectators.**
- 8. Keep in mind that the roles of the coach and the referee are inherently different.**
- 9. Support sporting behavior by players, coaches and parents of both teams.**
- 10. Respect other referee decisions and not publicly criticize another official.**

THE AYSO PLAYER PLEDGE

In my words and action, I pledge to

- 1. Play for the sake of playing a game, not just to please a parent or coach.**
- 2. Always give my best effort and work as hard for my teammates as I do for myself.**
- 3. Treat all players as I would like to be treated.**
- 4. Be a team player and not show off or hog the ball.**
- 5. Be a good sport and acknowledge good plays whether they are made by my team or my opponents.**
- 6. Abide by the Laws of the Game.**
- 7. Cooperate with my coaches, teammates, opponents and the referee.**
- 8. Never argue with or complain about referee calls or decisions.**
- 9. Control my temper when I feel I have been wronged.**
- 10. Remember that the object of the game is to win, but the goal is to enjoy myself.**

What Can I Do? Reactions to Inappropriate Behavior

The following is intended to be used as a general guide (not as a mandatory procedure) when dealing with inappropriate behavior outside the touchline. Depending upon circumstances, severity of the misbehavior, familiarity with the offender, and impact on the game and spectators, you can apply any of the following techniques that are listed in order from least to most intervention

When a Spectator Is Behaving Inappropriately

What are some of the things the coaches can do?

- Send a quick body-language message that you heard it and you don't like it.
- Move close to the spectator, if possible, and engage in non-threatening small talk.
- Explain that the inappropriate behavior is detracting from everyone's enjoyment.
- Ask another person to speak with the misbehaving spectator (assistant coach, team parent, acquaintance).
- Warn in stronger terms that continued inappropriate behavior could result in the referee asking the spectator to leave and you would support the referee's decision.
- Speak with the referee when appropriate to describe the negative effect the spectator's behavior is having on your team and spectators and tell the referee that you will support him/her in taking the necessary corrective action.

What are some of the things the referee can do?

- Send a quick body-language message that you heard it and you don't like it.
- As soon as convenient, position yourself near the touchline and quietly request the coach deal with the spectator.
- Stop the game for a general announcement from the touchline that the match is in jeopardy because of inappropriate spectator behavior and ask spectators to remember they are in an AYSO Kids Zone where unsporting behavior is not tolerated. Request coaches from both teams stand with you just inside the touchline facing the spectators to present a visual perspective that the coaches support the referee.
- Stop the game for a specific announcement to the spectator that if inappropriate behavior continues, he/she will be given three minutes to leave the area or the match will be canceled. Again request the coaches from both teams stand with you to present a visual perspective that the coaches are supportive of the referee.
- Stop the game and give the spectator three minutes to leave.
- If the spectator has not left in three minutes, terminate the game.

What are some of the things the opposing coach or opposing assistant coach can do?

- If possible, send a quick body-language message that you heard it and you don't like it.
- Remind your team and spectators that the behavior they are seeing or hearing is inappropriate and inconsistent with the Kids Zone program and ask them to let the other coach and the referee handle the situation.
- Remind your team and spectators to support the referee and to refrain from negative reactions to the inappropriate behavior of the spectator.
- Speak with the referee when appropriate to describe the negative effect the spectator's behavior is having on your team and spectators and tell the referee that you will support him/her in taking the necessary corrective action.

What are some of the things other spectators can do?

- Send a quick body-language message that you heard it and you don't like it.
- Move over to the offending spectator and engage in non-threatening small talk.
- Ask the person to help support good sideline behavior (Kids Zone).
- Tell the person how you feel about the inappropriate behavior.
- Ask the person to please stop the inappropriate behavior.
- Ask other spectators to speak with the person.
- Ask the coach to do something because the inappropriate behavior is detracting from everyone's enjoyment of the game.

What are some of the things the "regional representatives" can do?

- Regional representatives (board members, etc.) can take similar actions to those suggested for parents. They may have greater effect because of their "official" standing.

When a Coach Is Behaving Inappropriately

What are some of the things the assistant coach can do?

- Send a quick body-language message that you heard it and you don't like it.
- Move close to the coach and engage in non-threatening small talk.
- Explain that the inappropriate behavior is detracting from everyone's enjoyment.
- Ask the coach to take a brief time to cool down off to the side.
- Ask another person to speak with the misbehaving coach (team parent, acquaintance).
- Tell the coach that you (the assistant coach) may have to take over the team.
- Warn in stronger terms that continued inappropriate behavior could result in the referee asking the coach to leave and that you would support the referee's decision.
- Bring the situation to the attention of the referee.

What are some of the things spectators can do?

- Send a quick body-language message that you heard it and you don't like it.
- Move near the coach and attempt to engage in small talk.
- Ask the coach to help support good sideline behavior (Kids Zone).
- Tell the coach how you feel about the inappropriate behavior.
- Ask the coach to please stop the inappropriate behavior.
- Enlist the support of other spectators to speak with the coach.
- Request the assistant coach to ask the referee to do something because the behavior is detracting from everyone's enjoyment of the game.

What are some of the things the referee can do?

- Send a quick body language message that you heard it and you don't like it.
- As soon as convenient, position yourself near the touchline and quietly request the assistant coach speak with the misbehaving coach.
- Stop the game for a word in private with the coach. Ask the coach to come onto the field out of everyone's earshot and ask the coach to help you maintain a positive Kids Zone environment. Remind the coach of the options left to you if the inappropriate behavior continues, and your desire to avoid those options.
- Stop the game and tell the coach if the inappropriate behavior continues he/she will be given three minutes to leave the area or the match will be terminated.
- Stop the game and give the coach three minutes to leave.
- If the coach has not left in three minutes, terminate the game.

What are some of the things the opposing coach or opposing assistant coach can do?

- If possible, send a quick body-language message that you heard it and you don't like it.
- Remind your team and supporting spectators that the behavior they are seeing or hearing is inappropriate behavior and inconsistent with the Kids Zone program. Ask them to let the referee handle the situation.
- Remind your team and spectators to support the referee and to refrain from negative reactions to the inappropriate behavior of the coach.
- Speak with the referee when appropriate to describe the negative effect the coach's behavior is having and that you will support the referee in taking the necessary corrective action.

What are some of the things "regional representatives" can do?

- Regional representatives (board members, etc.) can take action similar to those suggested for spectators. They may have greater effect because of their "official" standing.

When a Referee Is Behaving Inappropriately

Because the referee is the authority figure on the field during games, it is often difficult to effect change immediately during the game and still maintain the respect due the referee's position of authority. The assistant referees, coaches and spectators should model appropriate behavior for the impressionable young players. When adults disagree with the behavior or actions of authority figures, care must be taken to ensure it is done in a manner that models appropriate behavior for youth.

Correcting inappropriate referee behavior is best done after the game following careful examination and review of the circumstances. The regional coach and referee administrator and regional board of directors are sources to address with concerns regarding referee behavior.

**Supplemental
And
Reference
Materials**

10 COMMANDMENTS FOR PARENTS

From *Soccer Jr. Magazine*

A soccer parent's role – whether a coach, referee or fan – is to make the game rewarding and enjoyable for the players. We already know that coaches should be good role models who keep the game fun for their players. A coach needs to teach the players to give maximum effort and win or lose with grace. The referees keep the game safe and fair, thus fun for the players. They know that the results of the game are not as important as maintaining a fun atmosphere for the kids.

But what can parents do to help? Well, they can simply be parents. They should “be there” for the kids - help them celebrate when things go well, support them when they don't and interpret the game's lessons for them. It helps to remember the “Soccer Parents' 10 Commandments” from *Soccer Jr. magazine*.

1. Learn the rules or be quiet.
2. Be quiet anyway, except to cheer.
3. Never scorn playing for fun as its own end.
4. Don't think of team spirit and fair play as the opposites of excellence.
5. Know what the coach is doing and support him or her.
6. Never let a coach abuse your child or anyone else's, verbally or otherwise.
7. Show respect for the referee.
8. If you like the soccer program's emphasis, get involved.
9. If you don't, say so, get involved and try to make it better.
10. Listen to your child.

These commandments say it all. Don't yell, except to cheer – that is, be positive. Remember that fun and fair play are important on their own. Let the coach do the coaching and the referee do the refereeing. You do the parenting. If you like the program, work for it. If you don't like it, then try to make it better.

And perhaps most importantly, listen to your child. If he or she is enjoying soccer, that's great. If not, then try to find out why not and fix it by working to change what's going on at the field or else find an alternate activity that your child enjoys. Don't make your child play soccer – or any other sport – just because you want him or her to do it. Youth sports exist to benefit the children, not to build up adults' egos.

It's supposed to be *fun*, win or lose.