



Ask, Tell, Dismiss Process

The following process is recommended for all officials to follow relative to conduct on the sideline.

Ask

If a situation arises where there is irresponsible behavior, you are to ASK the person to stop.

Tell

If there is another occurrence where there is irresponsible behavior, you are to inform that person that the behavior is not permissible and TELL them (insist) to stop. Tell them this is an official warning and will be noted in the Match report.

Dismiss

If the non-accepted actions continue, you must DISMISS that person immediately.

U.S. Soccer Recommendations

These are the recommended steps from U.S. Soccer but they are not necessary if the behavior and conduct of personnel on the sideline requires immediate dismissal. Remember, where circumstances permit, use a “gentle escalate” approach so that referee team responses match the nature of the bench behavior. Try to use the least intrusive response that will solve the problem.

In the pregame, the referee team shall establish an escalation procedure by which the AR shall notify the referee of the irresponsible sideline decorum and the subsequent process of the referee notifying the coach. Note: This does not prohibit, at any time, the referee from moving directly to the “DISMISS” stage based upon irresponsible sideline decorum.

What You Can Say

Phrases you can say to bench personnel in a polite, respectful, and concise fashion. Comments should be short, to the point, said in a way that will not provoke a negative response:

- “I hear you” or “I understand you, coach”
- “Coach, talk to me”
- “Coach, I will listen to you but not the rest of the bench”
- “I will pass along the message”
- “I will talk to the ref/AR”
- “We will talk about it at half time”
- “Talk to me rather than shouting”
- “I know how important this game is to you, it is just as important to us”
- “Coach, I understand you are upset but you need to calm down”
- “I can see you don’t agree with the call, but PLEASE – settle down”
- “Please stop being so visual. Talk to me but don’t wave your hands”
- “The ref got it, give him a chance”
- “Where are you going”
- “Don’t do it”
- “The ref was there”

- “This is a game of angles; we have a different angle than the referee”
- “If I have to call the referee over, you will be dismissed”
- “Coach, please talk to your assistant, he is getting close to making us take official action”

What You Can't Say

Officials should avoid any open ended phrases that conjure up debate or that “add fuel to the fire”.

- Curse, use abusive or insulting language: “Coach, shut up and sit down”
- Criticize the members of the referee team: “I agree – he’s having a bad day”
- Attack or criticize the coach or his team
- Say what you would have done in that situation
- Make physical contact with bench personnel
- Issue threats unless you are ready to enter the “Dismiss” phase and you are ready to follow-through
- Use phrases that invite further debate or negative discussion

Reasons Why We Don't Take Action

Don't fall into this trap, you are the referee, it is your responsibility to manage the game.

- Want to be “friends” with bench personnel
- Afraid to address or lack of confidence to deal with any altercation
- Don't want confrontation
- Don't want to be “bad guys”
- Intimidated by coaches
- Feel assignments will be impacted negatively
- Will see the coach again
- The referee may have made a bad decision. However, the referee's decision, right or wrong, should not impact other official's decision to deal with the technical areas
- Feel it is the referee's game and other officials don't want to negatively impact the referee's game

Actions That “Cross the Line”

The following is a list of actions that require the referee to “dismiss” the appropriate person from the sideline.

- Coach/bench personnel leaving entering the field to dispute/dissent a call
- Coach/bench personnel throwing/kicking anything while disputing a call
- Coach/bench personnel kicking/hitting advertising boards or bench in dispute of a call
- Directed abusive, insulting or offensive language and/or gestures
- Inflammatory and/or aggressive behavior (verbal and/or physical) with the opposition
- Interfering with the restart of play and field players
- Making unwanted and/or aggressive contact with opposing players
- Interfering with the AR or fourth official in the performance of their duties

As a General Rule

TELL twice, then DISMISS. Think persistent infringement. Try to prevent getting to the TELL stage. Remember, it is not ASK, TELL . . . TELL . . . TELL . . . TELL, then DISMISS.