



Referee Abuse- Zero Tolerance Policy

A zero tolerance policy on referee abuse is, unfortunately, commonplace in every youth sporting organization. A recent trend of increased abuse towards referees of youth sports. Many of HFC United's referees, as well as our nearby soccer communities, are youth referees who live in our community and many even play for our club. Around 70 percent of new sports officials are gone within three years, unable to handle the abuse (source- <https://www.newsday.com/opinion/editorial/parents-youth-sports-referees-bad-behavior-long-island-1.31690130>). HFC United's policy, as set forth below, is simple, and "to the point": Any physical or verbal abuse of referees is as unacceptable. It is never acceptable for spectators to criticize referees, verbally or otherwise, at any HFC United (HFC) event.

Our Policy

1. Spectators shall not address any member of the referee crew in a negative manner – physically, verbally, or with gestures during or after a game.
2. Spectators shall not make any comments to any referee suggesting to make a call or to comment on a call made or not made.
3. Complimenting a referee briefly after a game is acceptable, and probably appreciated. However, sitting back and watching the game unfold while letting the referees do their job to the best of their ability is the best approach- no interaction with the referees equates to no issues.
4. Referees make mistakes like everyone else- and that's okay. Many of our youth referees are learning their craft and the transferable life skills of how to make educated decisions in split seconds. There are procedures for coaches and HFC officials to report concerns regarding the quality of the officiating. Spectators are to leave this process to the coaches and HFC officials to handle. Regardless of the quality of the officiating, it is never acceptable for a spectator to abuse or criticize a referee.
5. Any reporting of referee abuse while attending an "away" game or event featuring an HFC player or team will be reviewed and will be reported to the opposing team, event host, and/or any governing league body of the event or HFC.
6. Ignorance of this policy is not excusable.

How to Report any Violations of this Policy

1. Anyone may report violations of this policy by emailing the travel director at hfcunited.board.travel@gmail.com.
2. To make reporting as comfortable and easy as possible (as HFC would not like any violations of this policy to not be reported), anyone may report violations to any coach, assistant coach, team manager, director(s) of coaching, club administrator, referee coordinator, or any board member where they will be assured that the travel director will be emailed regarding the reporting of any violation of this policy.
3. Furthermore, those reporting a violation will be kept anonymous, with only members within HFC with a "need to know" being informed and agreeing to confidentiality.
4. Each reported violation will be reviewed by HFC and, if appropriate and justified, disciplinary sanctions will be imposed on any person(s) who are found to have violated this policy.



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Disciplinary Sanctions for Referee Abuse

HFC may, in its discretion, impose disciplinary sanctions on any spectator it finds to have violated this policy. Sanctions will vary on a case-by-case basis, with abuse of a youth referee bearing more weight of the severity of sanctions imposed. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, the following-

- Written warnings
- Refresher trainings
- Game suspension
- Suspended until the end of the season
- Permanent ban from all HFC activities

Applicability of the Policy

This policy applies to spectators, while coaches and player conduct shall be addressed by the player's coach, officials of HFC, as well as by the outlined rules of all governing bodies in which HFC is associated within (such as, but not limited to, US Soccer, US Youth Soccer, MYSA, US Club Soccer, TCSL, among others not listed).

Without referees, HFC cannot fulfill its mission statement, which reads-

HFC United Soccer is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation that is committed to providing a quality soccer program in Hastings and the surrounding community. HFC United's focus is to develop each member, whether they are a player, coach, referee, manager, or parent to their fullest potential at all levels of participation.

