

DEALING WITH CRITICISM / QUESTIONING FROM PLAYERS.

It has come to my attention that some umpires are not dealing with the most often asked question on a football field: "WHAT WAS THAT FOR UMP"?

Such a question is usually asked in an aggressive and unwelcoming tone.

It is always rhetorical (that is they know very well what it was for)

It is usually asked in an attempt to persuade their coach and team mates that they'd done nothing wrong and have been treated unjustly.

CAN I OFFER THESE SUGGESTIONS.

1. Pause for a second.

(By pausing your decision making is normally more measured and balanced rather than reactive.)

2. Never swear when responding.

3. Actually answer the question.

(Don't treat the question as an opportunity to respond in kind; this will only compound the problem.) (You don't have to be their best buddy but you do have an obligation to explain your decisions. The best answer to players' disputing your decision is to start by saying : "*from where I was* it was a push in the back....." or "*the way I saw it* he was shepherding him out etc....".

There is no where a player can go with your expression of your opinion.

4. Your automatic reaction should NOT be to pay a 25 metre penalty. (25 metre penalties should be reserved for the only those occasions when a player is abusive insulting or overtly demonstrative in his body language e.g. throwing his mouth guard to the ground, running at you, or continuing his questioning of you after you have provided a reasonable answer etc etc.)

5. Umpire with an inner smile. Don't umpire grumpy.

Go into the game with a game plan.

Try to put out of your mind any personal / professional difficulties you are currently experiencing outside of football. Football umpiring is part of our lives. Life and all its attendant difficulties do not disappear just because we are umpiring. We therefore need to be aware of our mood before a game and manage any difficulties it is likely to present, otherwise it will affect our umpiring.

6. Umpiring is a discipline. Always speak to players in the manner you expect to be spoken to. Whilst umpiring is a sport, hobby, pastime, game, it is mostly a discipline. Whilst enforcing discipline amongst the players, don't forget yourself. Conduct yourself in a professional manner throughout. **Rise above criticism.**