



To: State Referee Administrators  
State Youth Referee Administrators  
Chair, State Referee Committee  
State Directors of Instruction  
State Directors of Assessment  
National Referees, Assessors and Instructors

cc: State Presidents  
State Directors of Coaching

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**Subject: Management of Behavior in the Technical Area**

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The "technical area" is provided for in International Board Decision 8 of Law 1 (The Field of Play) and, in more detail, in the section labeled "The Technical Area" in the Law book. Additionally, the permissible behavior of team officials as regards the technical area is described in International Board Decision 2 of Law 3 (The Number of Players).

USSF's annual law change memorandum for 2004 noted that "many matches are played on fields which have no designated technical area." This is particularly the case in youth and at lower competitive levels. USSF advised that, in such cases, the referee could "sketch out an approximation of team technical areas for game control purposes."

In general, as far as matters which pertain to the responsibilities of the referee, only three types of persons are permitted within the technical area, depending on the rules of competition:

- Players temporarily off the field with the permission of the referee,
- Substitutes (including substituted players), and
- Team officials.

The category of "team official" includes but is not limited to such persons as coaches, assistant coaches, trainers and other medical support persons, together with any other persons formally associated with the team which the rules of competition allow. These rules may or may not specify that team officials must be named (e.g., included on a team roster), but the Laws of the Game require that the team roster list and identify the players and substitutes. Rules of competition may also mandate standards of dress for team officials

In short, in match conditions where spectators are not allowed near the immediate area of the field (for example, restricting spectators to stadium seats or behind barriers), the persons allowed in or near the field are strictly limited to players, substitutes, and team officials. **For purposes of this memorandum, anyone officially allowed in the technical area who is not a rostered player or substitute (or substituted player) is a team official.**

### Substitutes

Law 3 provides that "all substitutes are subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the referee, whether called upon to play or not." One important practical consequence of this is that substitutes (and substituted players) may be cautioned or sent off for misconduct exactly as they would be were they players on the field. Examples of behavior that might be considered misconduct if committed by a substitute or substituted player would include:

- Dissent
- Offensive, insulting, or abusive language
- Entering the field without the permission of the referee
- Violent conduct
- Unsporting behavior
- Receiving a second yellow card in the same match

### Team Officials

Law 5 (The Referee) provides that team officials must conduct themselves in a "responsible manner" (language echoed in Law 3, IBD 2, and in the section on the technical area). If they do not, the referee may "expel them from the field of play and its immediate surrounds." Law 12 (Fouls and Misconduct) expressly provides that only players, substitutes, and substituted players may be shown a red or yellow card.

What this means in practice is that team officials cannot commit misconduct within the meaning of Law 12. All actions by team officials which result in expulsion from the field must be identified as "irresponsible behavior" in the match report. The match report, of course, must provide a specific description of the behavior. The following are examples of behavior that might be considered irresponsible:

- Throwing objects in protest
- Speaking insulting words or making offensive gestures
- Kicking chairs
- Making unwanted contact with opponents
- Striking advertising boards
- Persistently and flagrantly protesting decisions by an official
- Interfering with the performance of assistant referee or fourth official duties
- Refusing to return to the technical area
- Entering the field of play without the permission of the referee

Assistant referees and fourth officials assist the referee in monitoring the behavior of persons in the technical area and in alerting the referee when such behavior exceeds reasonable bounds.

In dealing with impermissible actions (whether misconduct or irresponsible behavior) by persons who are off the field, the referee should use the same criteria and concerns they would apply to similar behavior by players on the field. For example, a substitute might proclaim disagreement with a decision by the referee. Is it dissent? Detailed guidelines have been developed and published regarding this matter and should be followed whether the speaker is a player, substitute, or team official. Language might be tolerated if uttered in a brief emotional outburst but would be unacceptable under other circumstances. After all, substitutes and team officials may become just as caught up in the emotion of the moment as any player and should be provided comparable leeway.

Although team officials **may not** be cautioned and shown the yellow card, they may be warned that their behavior is at risk of being considered irresponsible. If the behavior continues, they may be expelled from the field but not shown the red card.