

Southern Counties Hockey Association

Conduct of players, team officials and spectators

This note is issued on behalf of the Management Committee.

Council at its June meeting discussed the annual report of the Regional Disciplinary Administrator and reports from the Umpires' Association on the number of yellow cards issued during the 2005-06 season. Council noted that there were several formal match-day misconduct reports in addition to the red cards for playing offences.

During last season Council noted that our umpires' associations were continuing to express concern at the increased lack of politeness and inappropriate off pitch behaviour by players, team officials and spectators towards umpires at all levels of the game in the South. Council noted with regret reports of umpires who had given up as a result of the increasing level of abuse.

The Rules of Hockey set down in no uncertain terms penalties for unfair and physical play and for abuse directed at umpires, other players and officials. The Rules are, in England, backed up by a Code of Discipline designed to deal with the worst offences in a fair and transparent manner. Everyone should be aware that the penalties laid down in the Code are MINIMUM penalties and that disciplinary officers and committees will set higher penalties when the offence so justifies.

Any action on a hockey field, whether impetuous or not, which if done elsewhere would render the offender liable to criminal action must be penalised with a red card.

To Clubs and Players

Our sport can only be played if each match has two umpires. As you will be aware umpires are in short supply throughout the game. Our umpires' associations are making every effort to increase the number of umpires and to improve the standard of umpiring to match the improving player standards. They will only succeed if clubs and players co-operate in this process by showing that umpires are a valued and respected part of the game and by encouraging players to learn the Rules and even, if only occasionally, to blow a whistle.

Clubs must cherish all who are prepared to blow a whistle. If things are not perfect a sensible, logical and friendly discussion over tea or in the bar in the best approach. This is a two way process and it is of course incumbent upon umpires to take part in a non-confrontational process.

The increasingly poor attitude of some clubs towards umpires remains a grave concern. This poor behaviour takes a variety of forms including on and off the pitch insults, failures to welcome umpires and in the worst cases to berate the umpire before he or she has left the pitch. Some clubs have failed to provide even the basic elements of hospitality after matches

Players are right to have high expectations but umpires will always make mistakes, but always far fewer than the collective number of mistakes by a team. Vilification of an umpire for what a player, team or coach considers an error will not assist the umpire to develop skill and empathy with the players. Abusing an umpire is purely a voluntary act and county disciplinary officers have been asked to apply a minimum 30 day ban for players who receive a red card for this offence.

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To Umpires

South Council expects all hockey to be played in a competitive but fair manner. It has reinforced previous statements about the conduct of players, team officials and spectators. It expects all umpires in hockey to act in a fair and impartial manner. It also expects that all umpires in the Southern Counties will apply the penalties laid down in the Rules of Hockey as appropriate to the offence committed.

Umpires should not accept abuse from a player during the course of the match. They should not hesitate to use a red card if the circumstances warrant. Umpires should not hesitate to report any player or team official who offends after a match with match-day misconduct report. If the indiscipline extends to other non-playing persons a report under section 8 of the National Discipline Code - *Disrepute Offence Procedure* should be made.

An umpire should not consider any subsequent action that might be taken within the context of the Code of Discipline when making an umpiring decision. It is not for the umpire to substitute his or her judgement for that of an appropriately constituted disciplinary panel. Indeed failure to apply the appropriate penalty could lead to other complications as anyone representing the non-offending club could lodge a complaint against an umpire under the same Code for bringing the game into disrepute. Also umpires' associations within the South have their own codes of conduct which require their members to umpire with a sense of justice.

Leagues too may use the maximum sanctions, which can be imposed under their rules, to discipline clubs who fail to control their members.

Council asks Counties and Leagues to ensure that any reported abuse of umpires is dealt with immediately and in accordance with the principles set out in this note.

Pitchside Behaviour

The Association has adopted a Code of Pitchside Conduct. Council expects all affiliated clubs to comply with the Code. Where the facilities are not under the direct control of the clubs, team officials and captains must still use their best endeavours to ensure that the Code is implemented.

Clubs are reminded that the home club is responsible for presenting the pitch and the goals in a fit state for play and umpires are not expected to remedy anything other than minor damage to goals nor should they have to remove non-hockey furniture from the playing area.

Counties are asked to ensure that all affiliated clubs are reminded of the Code and that Counties take steps to ensure that the Code is published in their association's handbook, website and elsewhere. Counties are the first line in ensuring that clubs, their players, officials and members comply with the highest standards of behaviour and are at all times courteous and welcoming to visiting sides, their officials and umpires. Leagues too have a responsibility in this respect. A copy of the Code is attached.

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CODE OF PITCHSIDE CONDUCT

It is the responsibility of the clubs to ensure that good manners and courtesy prevail towards the opposition, umpires and other officials before, during and after the game.

Once the pitch is available, the Match Delegate (if appointed) or home Captain shall assume authority for the pitch and its surrounding area.

Clubs are advised to ensure that they have adequate insurance cover and that they are aware of local health and safety legislation regarding the pitch and their facilities.

Captains, Umpires and Match Delegate (if appointed) should:-

- a Agree the location of managers, coaches, substitutes and suspended players during their suspensions and from where substitutions will take place.
- b Satisfy themselves as to the quality and safety of the pitch and its facilities and ensure that other pitch side furniture is removed to the safest location.
- c Check the availability and location of an emergency telephone and first aid.
- d Agree with home team officials the location and allowed proximity of spectators.
- e Substitutes should warm up in clothing in a colour other than the participating teams in the agreed area of the pitch side.
- f Coaches and managers must remain in their designated area.
- g Vocal communication by team officials and players on the bench must not, in any way, be directed at the umpires or players of the opposing team.
- h Players not taking part in the game, or those in subsequent or previous matches, must not knock up or cool down on or near the pitch while the match is in progress.
- i Post match inquests should be held away from the pitch.
- j Spectators should be advised, if necessary, of matters relating to their conduct and particularly in so far as this affects the game in hand.
- k Small children should not be allowed to wander freely around the perimeter of the pitch while games are in progress. Children should remain under the control of the parent/guardian at all times.
- l Babies in pushchairs should not be left parked on the side of the pitch.
- m In accordance with the Association's Child Protection Policy clubs must provide an area where junior players, when suspended, can be supervised. (*"Young players must not be left alone on the side-line without guidance or supervision, and they must wear adequate clothing in accordance with the weather conditions."*)
- n Suspended players must not be allowed to go behind the back-line or goal.
- o Captains, coaches and managers should be responsible for the conduct of their players at all times.

Contravention of the Guidance Notes of Pitch Side Conduct should be included in any report. Umpires should advise County/League/Tournament Officials of any abuse of these Guidance Notes.