



Game Disrepute and Mass Confrontation
2009 Referee Program Directives
February 2, 2009

Game Disrepute: The Definition(s)

- Involves at least one player and sometimes two or more opposing players adopting an aggressive attitude towards each other or the match officials. The actions of the players bring the game into disrepute.
- Usually the ball is dead (out of play). Players feel at liberty to have a “go” at each other because they don’t have to chase a live ball. These are volatile situations. Because the ball is dead, a specific foul cannot be called but that should not prevent the referee from taking appropriate action
- Actions that detract from the enjoyment of the game. Something where the general fan says, “That is not what I want to watch.”
- Aggressive behavior toward an opponent or behavior that attempts to provoke an opponent or the benches. For example: Trying to get a negative reaction from the opponent (like taunting an opponent).
- Treating the game, the referee, or the opponents in a disrespectful manner; often the player is attempting to show he is above the game.

Mass Confrontation: The Definition(s)

- The concerted actions of three or more players (may be from either team):
 1. **Toward the referee by multiple players of the same team**
Disputing a decision by surrounding the referee or hindering or forcing movement by the referee. Involves aggressiveness toward the referee, AR, or fourth official. Players are trying to intimidate one or more of the officials to influence a current outcome/decision or a future outcome/decision.
 2. **Toward opponents by multiple opposing players**
Coming together to engage in a physical and/or verbal confrontation. Involves a swarm of opposing players exhibiting aggressive behavior toward each other. Physical contact is often a by-product of the acts. Intimidation and a source of strength are trademarks.
- Game Disrepute can quickly escalate and become Mass Confrontation.

Characteristics and actions required by officials to prevent escalation:

- **Caused by a trigger issue**
Follows an issue or foul that is sensitive to players like a hard foul in front of the bench or a foul where the safety of a player is endangered. Consider the

foul to a goalkeeper or key player. The player who runs into the goal to retrieve the ball after they have scored a goal can also ignite a confrontation.

- **Recognize the trigger issue**

Officials must immediately recognize the flash point or trigger issue. Failure to recognize or a slow response by the referee will result in further escalation. Before the game, discuss trigger issues with the referee team based upon the characteristics of the teams/players involved and store that information in your databank. For example, teams have certain players who are more protected by their colleagues than others. These players can often be the trigger points for mass confrontation between opponents. Identify them before the first whistle.

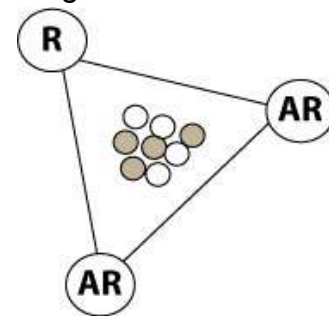
- **Get there to diffuse**

Once mass confrontation among opponents arises, a member of the referee team must get there immediately to prevent escalation. For each step you are late, it allows one more player to participate.

- **Separate and disperse**

The first official on the scene should work to carefully separate the immediate players. Once three or more players enter the scene, the referee should step back and observe the situation. The two assistant referees should also take a vantage point to observe the actions of the players while the fourth official maintains his position and monitors the bench area unless he can get to the scene sooner than the bench side AR. If this is the case, the bench side AR assumes the duties of the fourth official. This procedure forms a triangle (the “triangle of control” as diagrammed to the right) around the confrontation and maximizes the sight angles from which to monitor the situation and gather information. As the situation settles, officials should attempt to channel opposing players into safe zones away from the hot spot in a positive, non-threatening manner.

Triangle Of Control



- **Observe and prevent others from joining in**

All four officials should not focus on the same hot spot or become too involved in gaining control of the situation. As stated above, form a triangle around the situation, observe, and make notes (mental and otherwise). Look for positive ways to prevent other players from joining in as these players often add “fuel to the fire.”

- **Dispense appropriate misconduct**

Once the situation is under control and players have been channeled to safe zones, the referee team must quickly dispense the appropriate punishment. The referee should ensure he has solicited the input of the other officials prior

to taking action unless immediate action is required to control the situation and the perpetrators are clear. Violent conduct should be the first line of focus.

Warning Signs or Flashpoints

Game disrepute and mass confrontation can happen at any time in the match. There is normally a trigger situation. For this reason, the referee must not let his guard down and get complacent.

1. Severity of the initial foul
2. Zone of contact / location on the field:
 - Near signboards / walls
 - Near benches
3. Ball is often out of play or not playable
 - Near the boundary lines
4. The distance a player runs to become engaged in the situation
5. Score
6. Time
7. Physical contact that is a step above normal play
8. Player standing over another player (intimidating stance)
9. Players putting hand or finger near opponent's face
10. Players running into the goal to get the ball after a score
11. The comments between players
12. Delaying a restart
 - Standing over or directly in front of a ball when a restart is contemplated
 - Carrying / throwing the ball away
 - Kicking the ball way
13. Body stance and aggression displayed
 - Invasion of body space
 - Chest-to-chest
 - Push or shove
 - Touching the face of the opponent
14. Collision with the goalkeeper
 - Players continuing their run toward the goalkeeper
15. Challenge off the ball
16. Frustration levels / Temperament of the game
 - What the players are saying to each other
 - Body language

How It Should Be Handled

1. Recognize the flashpoint or warning signs (Awareness)
 - Anticipate and expect the unexpected
2. Become the "third man in"
 - Get there early: the closest official

- Act quickly
 - Defuse it before it starts or escalates (especially to prevent game disrepute from escalating to mass confrontation)
 - Do not be the one that raises the temperature of the situation as a result of your actions/approach
 - Attempt to separate players (when only 2 involved) or channel them to neutral areas
3. Body language and voice
 - An authoritative approach should be used without “adding fuel to the fire”
 4. Consider getting the card out quickly to discourage others from joining in
 5. Once game disrepute becomes mass confrontation (3 or more players):
 - Step back
 - Form “triangle of control”
 6. Identify / Observe players
 - Negative players / instigators / escalators / third man in
 - Positive players / peace makers: use them to facilitate control
 7. Take notes
 8. Isolate players: once issue settles, step in
 - Channel players to neutral areas
 - Administer any obvious red cards
 9. Referee team meet, if required
 10. Issue formal sanctions (misconduct) to any other player(s)
 11. Get the game restarted as soon as possible

Roles and Responsibilities of the Referee Team

Note: roles vary based on the position of the situation on the field and the relative position of the officials to the incident.

Entire Team

1. Pre-Game
 - Establish the “game plan”
 - Review the logistics as well as roles and responsibilities in the pre-game
 - All team members are empowered to ask questions in order to clarify
2. Discuss use of the “triangle of control”
3. Closest official becomes “third man in”
 - Get there as quickly as possible to defuse and prevent escalation
4. Identify the:
 - The instigator
 - The retaliator
 - Third man in
 - The escalator
 - The player who comes from distance to be involved (may be the “escalator” or “third man in”)
5. Pay special attention to contact in the face area

6. Post-Game paperwork
 - Ensure complete and accurate descriptions and reasons are provided in game report – be specific

Referee

1. Identify the flashpoints
2. If 2 players are involved attempt to intervene until it becomes 3 or more players, then step back and form “triangle of control”
 - Defuse and minimize
3. Consult with crew regarding misconduct
 - Make sure everyone is aware of the information you require from them
 - Ensure the following individuals are clearly identified:
 - a. Instigator
 - b. Retaliator
 - c. Escalator
 - d. Third man in
 - e. Anyone who has come from a distance to get involved
4. Administer misconduct
5. Restart game as soon as possible
6. Heighten awareness in order to be cognizant of retaliation

Closest AR

1. Enter field if:
 - You can prevent the situation from escalating (third man in or can prevent others from participating)
 - Game disrepute turns in to game misconduct (more than 2 players involved)

Note: if the fourth official is closer to the incident and he can arrive sooner, then assume the role of the fourth official and monitor the technical areas
2. Step back and observe if further game misconduct occurs
 - Take mental or written notes
3. Provide information to the referee

Furthest AR

1. Enter field if:
 - Game disrepute turns into mass confrontation (more than 2 players involved)
2. Quickly form the third point in the “triangle of patrol”
 - Take a very wide view to capture any fringe misconduct
3. Observe
 - Take mental or written notes
4. Provide information to the referee

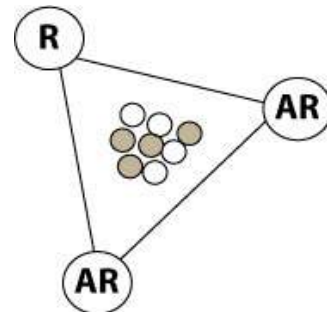
Fourth Official

1. Remain at the bench area to ensure no one from the technical areas enter the field of play unless:

- You are closer to the incident than AR1, then you enter the field and follow the same steps noted for the “Closest AR.” AR1 will assume the fourth official responsibilities

The “Triangle of Control”

The “triangle of control” is to be utilized in all instances of game misconduct following the steps outlined above in accordance with the roles and responsibilities provided.



Dealing With Misconduct: Taking Official Action

Referees are encouraged to consider the following as situations involving misconduct on the part of the participants. Based upon the severity of the players’ actions, the referee should make a determination as to whether the misconduct warrants a yellow or red card.

1. Game Disrepute

- If the situation involves only 2 players, the referee has flexibility and discretion to manage
- Particular focus should be given to the **Instigator / Aggressor** -- the player who aggressively initiated the game disrepute. Referees are encouraged to deal more firmly with this player
- The aggressive nature of the confrontation should be considered when determining the sanction
- The referee is encouraged to consider cautions to both participants if both players act in an aggressive and intimidating manner

KEY: The referee should ensure both players are punished uniformly

2. Third Man In

- If a **third man** joins the game disrepute and causes it to escalate to mass confrontation, this player must be cautioned for unsporting behavior.
- The **third man in** may be sent-off for violent conduct if his actions so warrant

3. Mass Confrontation

- Once game disrepute becomes game misconduct, referees should monitor for the **third man in** and take appropriate action as noted above
- Should the situation warrant it, the referee should look for a 1 and 1 situation for cautions (**minimally 1 player from each team** must be cautioned in cases of mass confrontation)

KEY: The referee should ensure offenders are punished uniformly

4. Use of Hands / Arms: Violent Conduct

When evaluating player behavior / actions during times of game disrepute and mass confrontation, referees should pay particular attention to the following:

- Hands out: are hands used to defend or are they used to intimidate and aggressively inflame the situation?
- Location of contact with the hands/arms/elbows:
 - (a) Above the shoulder to the front of the face is a red card for violent conduct
 - (b) From the side to the back of the head (from the ears back) is minimally a yellow card but may be a red card depending upon the aggressive or violent nature and intent of the contact

In all cases, referees must follow the 2009 U.S. Soccer Directive relative to “Contact Above the Shoulders.”