GUIDANCE TO CB DISCIPLINE SECRETARIES RE: UNAUTHOORISED PITCH ENCROACHMENT

I am noticing that there have been a large number of cases of poor behaviour at matches and also incidents of people, especially in age grade games, coming onto the field. Hopefully this email will be helpful in allowing you to deal with some of these incidents more easily and get the Club involved to complete most of the work needed.

Entering a pitch without permission.

No person should enter the field without permission of the Referee. This is more of an issue in the Age Grade game when people enter the field and often make contact with the players, however, the regulations apply to both adults and Age Grade cases.

If someone enters the field then this can be treated as a strict liability offence and you can issue an immediate interim suspension to that person.

The relevant reg is 19.3.8

19.3.18 *In addition to the power to issue an ISO, the RFU Head of Discipline, or a person with delegated authority, has the power to provisionally suspend any individual for a period of up to four weeks if such individual has entered the playing area without the permission of the Referee and is subject to a disciplinary or safeguarding investigation as a result. There is no right of appeal arising from this decision.*
Explanatory note: Delegated authority may be given at the discretion of the RFU Head of Discipline. **(For the avoidance of doubt all CB Disc Sec's have delegated authority)**

Please see attached a simple form that can be completed and sent out to the club on receiving a complaint.

This form can be issued immediately and it is often helpful to let the Club know that it will be reviewed once they have sent you all the information that you request.

My experience with issuing ISO's is that they have an immediate impact on the Club and they move quicker than normal to get you the information you need and to remove the suspension. Often a Club will complete its own disciplinary process in relation to the person subject to the ISO and you can chose to accept this as sufficient or, if you want, to proceed to a full hearing.

Should an ISO be put in place and not policed by the Club then you can charge the club.

There is also the benefit that the aggrieved Club feel that the matter is being addressed quickly and this also helps reduce some of the conflict between the clubs.

Any suspension that is served as part of an ISO would count towards any ban that is imposed by any future panel.

Conduct of Spectators/ Coaches/ Players

Regulation 19.4.9 is clear that Clubs have a responsibility to make sure that all people behave themselves.

19.4.9 *A club shall be responsible for ensuring that all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that its players, coaches, members and spectators conduct themselves appropriately and do not behave in a way that is improper, offensive, abusive, threatening, indecent or insulting or enter the pitch without the authority of the referee.*

Should you get any complaints about the behaviour of people at a club then you can send them the attached form and ask them to complete it before you make a charging decision.

Most clubs will again take this seriously and provide a report with their response. Should they fail to provide a suitable response then you can charge them.

Should they provide a full and proper response then you may accept that there is no need for further discipline action but could consider a formal warning or notify the Club that the information will be kept on record and used as part of consideration for any future charge, should it be necessary.

The purpose of the 19.4.9 form is to get the Club to detail what steps they are taking to correct behaviour and this in turn should reduce your/ the panels workload.

There is no need for you to ask permission to use these forms and I hope that they are useful. Please provide any feedback that you feel is helpful and thank you for all your work with this.

David Barnes
RFU Head of Discipline

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