



North Texas Soccer - Respect Our Referees (ROR) Program 2018/19

What is the Respect Our Referees program?

The Respect Our Referees (ROR) program is designed to reduce verbal abuse and inappropriate / unacceptable behavior involving soccer referees and to positively influence behavior around the soccer pitch. The goal is to provide a fair, safe and enjoyable environment for everyone involved; players, coaches, spectators and referees.

The North Texas State Soccer Association (NTSSA) publishes Bylaws and Rules which cover everyone involved in our soccer program, and clearly identifies the responsibilities of all parties and the implications of those failing to comply with these rules. Relevant sections from the NTSSA Bylaws and Rules are included in the references below. The Bylaws and Rules specify the terms “verbal and physical abuse” – but for this Program the term “verbal abuse” relates to language and behavior that demeans and dissents the referees’ decisions and their performance on the pitch.

The ROR program is covered by the NTSSA Bylaws and Rules and is intended to provide information for leagues, teams, coaches and referees. The program will also provide tools to enable referees to deal with instances of abuse, and to report them when necessary. These reports will then be handled by NTSSA and its procedures, including the Appeals & Disciplinary (A&D) committee, if required.

Why do we need a Respect Our Referees Program?

Soccer has grown immensely in our State in the last 25 years and there are more leagues, teams and players participating every week. More people are watching soccer generally, supporting both semi-professional and professional leagues. This is great news for grassroots, non-professional soccer and helps to grow the US Soccer program.

The state has a well-established recruitment and instruction program which brings in more than 3000 new referees every year. Unfortunately, our referee attrition rate is currently over 50%, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to supply the number of referees that the leagues require. This means that on any given weekend, leagues may not have enough referees to cover matches, and even the most competitive leagues have had to cancel and reschedule matches due to a lack of referees. This affects all levels, leagues, and age groups for both male and female matches. (The problem affects all sports and geographies.)

Soccer is a sport which generates a high level of excitement which leads to loud vocal support and comments. Coaches and spectators must be informed that there are boundaries which cannot be crossed without consequences. The program is not designed to dismiss coaches and abandon matches for acceptable verbal outbursts or simple questioning of a referee’s decision.



When asked, the **#1 reason** for referee attrition is “**verbal abuse**” from coaches, spectators and players. Perhaps not surprisingly, the largest loss is amongst our **youth referees aged from 12 to 16 years old**. Recent figures from the State Referee Administrator show that from a group of 100 new referees 46 return for a second year, 32 return the third year, and only 16 will return for a fourth year. **An attrition rate of 54% is unacceptable and not sustainable.**

Who does the problem affect?

The declining number of referees means that if recruitment is not maintained AND attrition reduced then leagues will be forced to conduct matches without well trained, impartial referees. This will negatively impact the safety, enjoyment and impartiality which the referee provides.

Player enjoyment of soccer is also negatively impacted by loud verbal abuse and inappropriate / unacceptable behavior by coaches and spectators.

How will the program be implemented?

The ROR program will be rolled out in two ways:

1. **Leagues** will be held accountable for their teams, coaches and spectators. Teams and coaches will be informed of the implication of referee abuse carried out by themselves and / or their spectators:

- i. Coaches for each club will be provided with a code of ethics document that they will need to sign and give back to the League, (see Reference - North Texas State Soccer Association, Inc. 2017/2018 Bylaws and Rules – 8.2 Article IV).
- ii. Each coach will also have a code of ethics document which must be signed and held by the coach for each parent or guardian of a player, (see Reference - North Texas State Soccer Association, Inc. 2017/2018 Bylaws and Rules – 8.5 Article).

2) **Referees** will be educated on dealing with verbal abuse/ inappropriate / unacceptable behavior from players, coaches and spectators. The Laws of the Game provide powers in Law 5 for the referee to deal with players and coaches, but dealing with spectators is harder, especially for young or inexperienced referees. Referees will be empowered within the Laws of the Game and with the backing of NTSSA to handle verbal abuse / inappropriate / unacceptable behavior by sending off players, dismissing coaches, removal of spectators (using the coaches or marshals), and in extreme cases by abandonment of the match.

Is the Program supported by North Texas Soccer and the affiliated Leagues?

Yes, the Program is fully supported by NTSSA and all affiliated Leagues.



What powers will the Referee have during the match when dealing with dissent / verbal abuse from a Coach?

There is a protocol for dealing with Coach dissent/ verbal abuse / inappropriate / unacceptable behavior which Referees will be instructed to follow:

1. For the first instance of loud, public dissent the Referee will stop the match the next time the ball goes out of play, and politely **ask** the Coach not to yell as it makes it hard to focus on the match.
2. If the problem continues, at the next stoppage the Referee will politely **tell** the Coach that they need to stop their abusive behavior or they will be dismissed.
3. If the problem persists, at the next stoppage the Referee will gather BOTH Coaches and politely **tell** the offending Coach that he / she is being **dismissed for irresponsible behavior** and must leave the area.
4. The Referee needs to make a note of the name of the offending Coach, the time of dismissal, what they said and anything else they said after they were dismissed.
5. If the Coach refuses to leave the area in a timely manner, 2-3 minutes, the match must be abandoned, and the opposing Coach informed.
6. Report the incident to the match assignor and NTSSA by emailing NTXREFEREEABUSE@GMAIL.COM

Referees will also be trained to call for help from Mentors, Marshals and field coordinators if they are available.

What powers will the Referee have during the match when handling dissent/ verbal abuse from Spectators?

When the level of spectator dissent/ verbal abuse / inappropriate behavior becomes unacceptable to the Referee there is a protocol which Referees will be instructed to follow:

1. The Referee will stop the match the next time the ball goes out of play and politely **ask** the Coach to speak to their spectators and ask them to quieten down as their behavior is making it difficult for the Referee to officiate the match effectively.
2. If the problem continues, at the next stoppage the Referee will politely **tell** the Coach that they must intervene to stop the spectator/s abusive behavior, or the spectator/s will need to leave.
3. If the problem continues, at the next stoppage the Referee will politely tell the Coach that they must **remove** the spectator/s, and they must leave the area. The match must not restart until the offending spectator/s leave.
4. The Referee needs to make a note of the time that the spectator/s were asked to leave and what was said after they were asked to leave.
5. If the Coach refuses to remove the spectator/s then the Referee will gather BOTH Coaches and politely **tell** the offending Coach that he / she is being **dismissed for irresponsible behavior** and must leave the area.



6. If the Coach or spectator/s refuse to leave the area in a timely manner, 2-3 minutes, then the match must be abandoned. Inform BOTH Coaches why the match is being abandoned.
7. Report the incident to the match assignor and NTSSA by emailing NTXREFEREABUSE@GMAIL.COM

Referees will also be trained to call for help from Mentors, Marshals and field coordinators if they are available.

What will the Referee have to do after the match?

The Referee will write up an incident report indicating the match details, steps taken in the match and specific abusive words or actions used by the coach or spectators.

This will be given to the assignor, field coordinator or League administrator.

An email incident report must also be sent to NTXREFEREABUSE@GMAIL.COM. This email will automatically be forwarded to the State Referee Committee and to NTSSA so that the incident can be investigated, and appropriate action taken.

NTSSA have specific sanctions which can be applied to Leagues, teams, coaches and spectators found guilty of referee abuse.

The incident report template for the email is in the References.

What tools and training will we offer Referees?

New referees will be instructed on dealing with verbal dissent and abuse from players, coaches, and spectators in their entry level clinics. We will work on role playing in the training.

The training will involve recognizing what dissent and abusive language and behaviors are (and permitted questioning of a decision or call), how the players and coaches should be approached and specific phrases to use.

Before starting the formal – “ask, tell, remove” process, referees will be instructed to politely speak to coaches to explain a decision, or ask them to simply quiet down.

Referees will be trained on verbal and non-verbal tools they can use to handle coaches.

To reiterate, the program is not designed to dismiss coaches and abandon matches for acceptable verbal outbursts or simple questioning of a referee’s decision.

Returning referees will be instructed at Referee Program meetings and local League Referee meetings.

Referees will be provided with Yellow and Red cards printed with the approved steps and verbiage for handling Coach and spectator dissent/ verbal abuse / inappropriate and unacceptable behavior.



Proposed Yellow and Red card templates are in the References.

How else will we promote the Program?

NTSSA will provide templates for signage that can be displayed where matches are played. These signs will be used to promote fair play, referee and player respect. Permanent signs can be attached to the walls of concession stands or restrooms, and temporary signs can be placed around the pitches.

The signs can be customized for the specific Leagues to reflect their local personality, but the key messages regarding abuse must be included on all signs.

Examples of signs and content can be seen in the References.

How else can the Program be supported at the pitch on game days?

New and less experienced referees must be supported by referee mentors, more experienced referees, and referee coordinators until they feel comfortable and confident enough to handle the match and abusive coaches and spectators.

Experienced referees, assignors, field coordinators and referee mentors must be familiarized with the ROR program to aid the new and less experienced referees in their ability to correctly apply the approved protocols.

Some Leagues have dedicated Field Marshals. These people are typically volunteers from the teams' spectators / parents and guardians.

These Field Marshals could be promoted as "Respect" Marshals.

Ideally, Marshals must be able to identify referee dissent/ verbal abuse and be able to mitigate abuse from the spectators before it becomes an issue for the players and referees, either by standing with the spectators or by politely asking abusive spectators to quiet down.

If bibs or jackets are worn they could be marked "Respect Marshals" rather than "Field" marshals.

League administrators, assignors, field coordinators and referee mentors could also be provided with the jackets so that they would be easily identified and empowered to step in when referee abuse occurs.

See sample jackets in the References.

When will the Program be implemented?

It is proposed that the Program will be launched at the NTSSA AGM in July 2018.

Referee education will begin at the All Referee clinics in the metroplex during July.



The Program will be rolled out to local referee associations and leagues after the July AGM.

Templates for Coach and parent / guardian Code of Ethics sign-up sheets will be made available to the Leagues on the NTSSA website.

Details of the Program will be hosted on the NTSSA website.

The Referee abuse email account has already been established. Emails will be forwarded to the State Referee Committee, and to any additional email addresses identified by NTSSA.

Entry level Grade 8/ 9 clinics will include training on the ROR Program and how to deal with dissent / verbal abuse from Coaches and spectators.

Local Association Referee meetings will be provided with training materials prior to their fall 2018 seasons. A train-the-trainer model will be used to provide the content to these referees.

The Yellow and Red cards will be printed and made available to local Referee associations, along with a training plan for local referee leadership.

Ian Chapman – NTX SDA – 5/27/18



REFERENCE #1:

North Texas State Soccer Association, Inc. 2017/2018 Bylaws and Rules

3.11.4 Misconduct of Spectators

1. Each team (youth and adult) in NTSSA is responsible for the conduct of its spectators. The referee has the authority to insist that the coach or acting coach deal with the misconduct of the spectators and resolve the problem. Failure to do so may result in the coach's dismissal from the field and/or termination of the match. Therefore, the coach/assistant coach/team manager is expected to control his spectators, especially on non-enclosed fields. If he is unable to do so, Member Associations, Playing Leagues and/or Tournament Officials are directed to take appropriate actions toward the identifiable, unruly spectator, or if unidentifiable, towards the team itself. Member Associations, Playing Leagues and Tournament Officials shall report spectator misconduct to the NTSSA A&D Committee for review and further action if warranted.

2. Suggested action for misconduct of spectators is:

- a. Suspend the spectator from attending future matches.
- b. Report spectator to the local Park & Recreation Department.
- c. Require team to forfeit any games at which spectator is present on the touchline (cannot keep them off public street or out of parking lot.)
- d. Require offending team to pay for presence of police at the game.
- e. Revoke and/or refuse registration to the offending team.
- f. Cause the spectator to be placed under a municipal "peace bond"

3.11.7 Misconduct Toward Referee

1. NTSSA has exclusive jurisdiction over assault or abuse of officials, both referee and assistant referee, in any competition by the State or Member Associations. This jurisdiction includes:

- a. All USSF registered referees (adult and youth).
- b. Any non-licensed person serving in any emergency capacity as a game official.
- c. Any coach, parent or junior assistant referee, serving as a game official.

2. If there is an assault/abuse of any game official by any person, including players, coaches, managers or spectators; a report of the alleged assault/abuse will be submitted immediately to the NTSSA A&D



Committee Chairman, the appropriate State Commissioner (Adult Men's, Adult Women's, Youth or Indoor), the Olympic Development Program Chairman and the Chairman of the State Referee Committee. This subcommittee, chaired by the NTSSA A&D Committee Chairman, shall review and investigate the report(s) as submitted, and upon proper investigation shall determine the seriousness of the alleged assault/abuse report(s) in a timely manner.

5. Terms and References

a. Referee assault is an intentional act of physical violence at or upon a referee, (an act intended to bring about a result that will invade the interests of another in a way that is socially unacceptable. Unintended consequences of the act are irrelevant.). Assault includes but is not limited to the following acts committed upon a referee: hitting, kicking, punching, choking, spitting on, grabbing or bodily running into a referee; head butting; the act of kicking or throwing any object at a referee that could inflict injury; damaging the referee's uniform or personal property, i.e. car, equipment, etc.

b. Referee abuse is a verbal statement or physical act not resulting in bodily contact, which implies or threatens physical harm to a referee or the referee's property or North Texas State Soccer Association, Inc. 2017/2018 Bylaws and Rules Revised January 2018 39 equipment. Abuse includes but is not limited to the following acts committed upon a referee: using foul or abusive language toward a referee; spewing any beverage on a referee's personal property; spitting at (but not on) the referee; or verbally threatening a referee. Verbal threats are remarks that carry the implied or direct threat of physical harm. Such remarks as, "I'll get you after the game" or "You won't get out of here in one piece", shall be deemed referee abuse.

c. Misconduct towards a referee means persistent statements or physical acts directed toward a referee during or after a game, that do not constitute referee assault or abuse as provided under Federation Policy 531-9, but that mistreat the referee or are inappropriate or unacceptable statements or acts, and may include the following:

- i. excessive incidences of foul or abusive language at the referee;
- ii. statements that diminish the authority of the referee;
- iii. Statements or acts that serve to intimidate without threatening physical harm to the referee.
- iv. Examples of misconduct that arise under the description above include the following:
 1. confronting the referee without physically threatening the referee;
 2. spitting on the ground or in the air but not at the referee;
 3. throwing or kicking an item as a sign of disrespect or dissent but without the chance of hitting the referee;
 4. Re-entering the field.



These are only some of the examples of possible misconduct and are not all-inclusive, but apply only in the following situations:

- i. if a proceeding is brought against an individual for referee assault or abuse, or both, under Federation Policy 531-9; or
- ii. If the individual is ejected from a game and, after the ejection, engages in conduct that is misconduct under this policy.

8.1 NTSSA CODE OF ETHICS FOR COACHES

ARTICLE IV - RESPONSIBILITY TO OFFICIALS

1. Officials must have the support of coaches, players and spectators. Criticism of officials undermines their purpose in the game. Coaches must always refrain from criticizing officials in the presence of players.
2. Coaches should strive to develop a line of communication with officials, giving each an opportunity to better understand the problems relating to their specific area. This section shall not be taken as an encouragement to debate referee decisions during the match.
3. On game day, officials should be treated with respect before, during, and after the game. Officials should be addressed as "Referee" or "Mr. /Ms. Referee" and not by name. Professional respect should be mutual and there should be no demeaning dialogue or gesture between official, coach, or player. Coaches must not incite players or spectators or attempt to disrupt the flow of play.
4. Comments regarding an official should be made in writing to the appropriate organization assigning the official

8.2 NTSSA PARENT'S CODE OF CONDUCT

5. Do not openly question an official's judgment and honesty. Officials are symbols of fair play, integrity, and sportsmanship.
13. A parent must never be verbally or physically violent or threatening with any coach, parent, player, or representative of their Member Association or NTSSA

REFERENCE #2 - NTX Referee Abuse Report Information

Name:

Contact phone number:



Referee age (if under 18 years):

Date / time / location of the match / field number:

League / Clubs involved / Age group / Gender:

Details of the abuse; specify the Coach or spectators of the team involved, what happened, what they said and what you did.



REFERENCE #3 - RED / YELLOW CARDS – WITH SPECIFIC PHRASES TO BE USED BY REFEREES FOR TRAINING

NTX Respect Our Referees - Coach Verbal Abuse

1. When there are loud and public abusive comments from the Coach, stop play when the ball next goes out.
2. Politely **ask** the Coach – “Please don’t yell at me as it’s making it hard for me to focus on the match.”
3. If the problem continues, at the next stoppage, politely **tell** the Coach – “Please stop your abusive behavior, or you will be dismissed.”
4. If the problem persists, at the next stoppage, politely **tell** the Coach “You are being **dismissed for irresponsible behavior** and you must leave the bench area.”
5. Make a quick note of the time they were dismissed, what they said and anything else they said after they were dismissed.
6. If they refuse to leave the bench area in a timely manner (2-3 minutes), then the match must be abandoned. Tell the opponents Coach what has happened and why. Leave the pitch
7. Report what happened to your League, Assignor and to NTXREFEREEABUSE@GMAIL.COM
8. DON'T FORGET YOU HAVE THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE LEAGUE AND NORTH TEXAS SOCCER

NTX Respect Our Referees - Spectator Verbal Abuse

1. When the level of spectator abusive comments become unacceptable to the Referee
2. Stop play when the ball next goes out.
3. If the problem continues, at the next stoppage the Referee will politely tell the Coach that they must remove the spectator/s, and they must leave the area. The match must not restart until the offending spectator/s leave.
4. The Referee needs to make a note of the time that the spectator/s were asked to leave and what was said after they were asked to leave.
5. If the Coach refuses to remove the spectator/s then the Referee will gather BOTH Coaches and politely tell the offending Coach that he / she is being dismissed for irresponsible behavior and must leave the area.
6. If the Coach or spectator/s refuse to leave the area in a timely manner, 2-3 minutes, then the match must be abandoned. Inform BOTH Coaches why the match is being abandoned.
7. Report what happened to your League, Assignor and to NTXREFEREEABUSE@GMAIL.COM



REFERENCE #4 - RED / YELLOW CARDS TO BE ISSUED TO REFEREES

NTX Respect Our Referees - COACH

When there are loud and public abusive comments from the Coach.

1. **ASK** "Please don't yell at me as it's making it hard for me to focus on the match."
2. **TELL** "Please stop your abusive behavior, or you will be dismissed."
3. **REMOVE** "You are being dismissed for irresponsible behavior and you must leave the bench area."
4. Report the incident to your Assignor and to NTXREFEREEABUSE@GMAIL.COM

NTX Respect Our Referees - SPECTATOR

When spectator abuse is unacceptable to the Referee, speak to the Coach.

1. **ASK** "Please speak to your spectators and ask them to quieten down as their behavior is making it hard for me to referee the match."
2. **TELL** "Please stop the spectator's abusive behavior, or they will be removed."
3. **REMOVE** "Please tell your spectators that they need to leave the area. The match will not restart until they leave."
4. Report the incident to your Assignor and to NTXREFEREEABUSE@GMAIL.COM

REFERENCE #5 – SAMPLE FIELD / PITCH SIGNAGE







2 sided Free Standing



Wall Mounted



Guiseley Juniors
Football Club

ATTENTION

PARENTS & SPECTATORS

PLEASE REMEMBER

**THESE ARE CHILDREN
THIS IS A GAME
IT'S ABOUT FUN FIRST
FACILITATE - DON'T COACH (THEY HAVE ONE)
THE KIDS CAN HEAR YOU, BE POSITIVE
COACHES ARE VOLUNTEERS
REFEREES ARE HUMAN
THIS IS NOT THE PREMIER LEAGUE**

**We want an environment that assists in
the DEVELOPMENT of our young players.**

This is their game, please let them play!



WE NEED YOUR HELP

The average age of a referee is 16
They can start as young as 12

We lose 40 - 45% of all newly registered referees
before their first season is over

HELP US KEEP THE YOUNG REFEREES IN THE PROGRAM

- R** - **Respect** the young referee
- E** - **Encourage** them with some praise
- F** - **Forgive** them if they get a call(s) wrong
- E** - **Embolden** them by thanking them
- R** - **Remain** kind if you think a call is incorrect
- E** - **Elevate** them with a positive comment
- E** - **Enjoy** the game

You wouldn't want an adult yelling at your child.

Every referee has attended a referee clinic, passed the test, received their badge and is excited to get started. They will make mistakes and that's OK.

Help us change the negative statistic of 40 - 45% by leaving a positive footprint at every game you watch.

Thank you - North Texas Referees





REFERENCE #6 – SAMPLE RESPECT MARSHAL JACKETS





REFERENCE #7 – ADDITIONAL SAMPLE SIGNAGE RELATING TO SPECTATOR ABUSE OF PLAYERS:



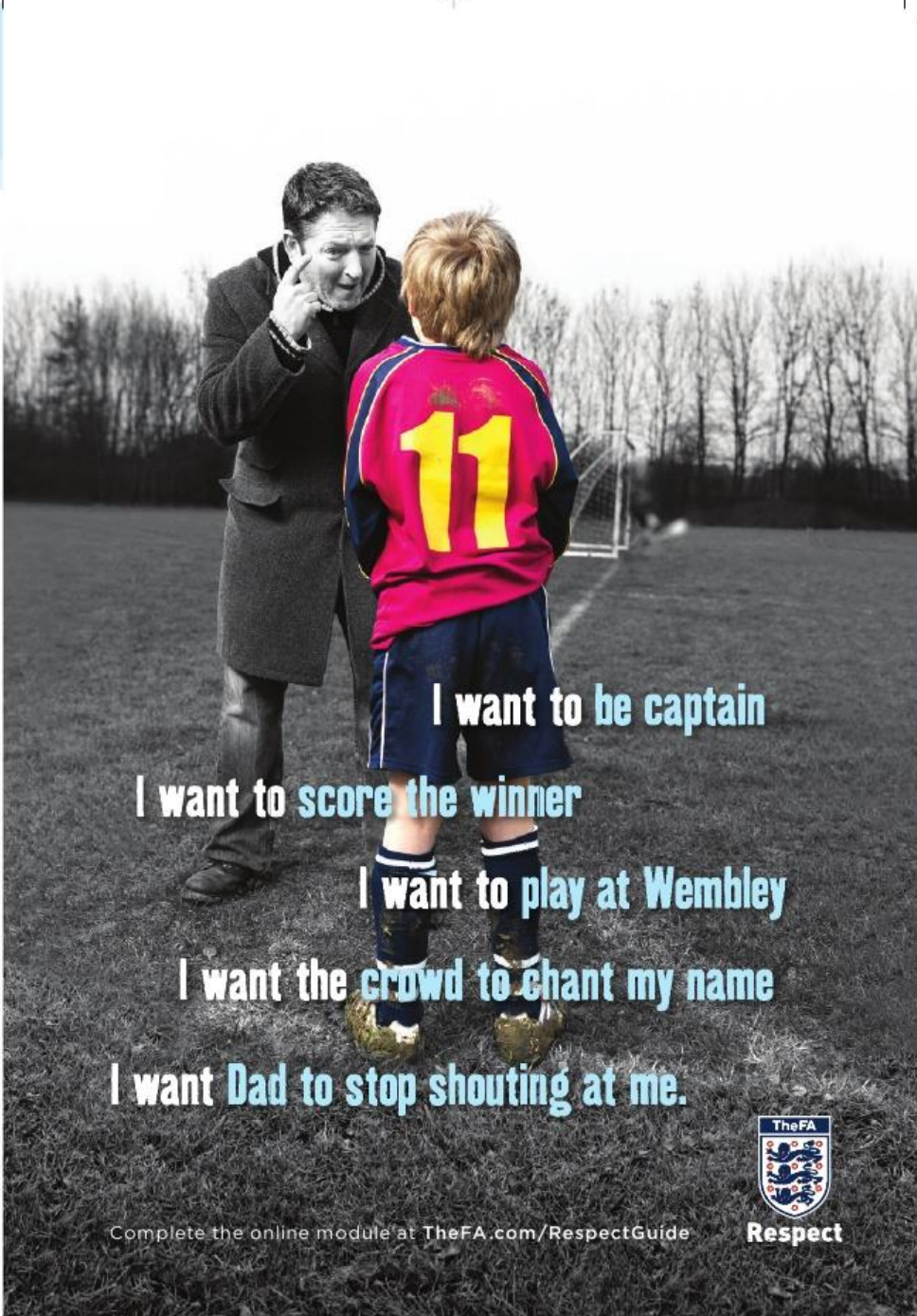
THANKS DAD

You think you're 'supporting'
your son. His team-mates think
he's a loser because his Dad
mouths off from the sidelines.

Are you losing it?

Respect 

TheFA.com/respectguide



I want to be captain
I want to score the winner
I want to play at Wembley
I want the crowd to chant my name
I want Dad to stop shouting at me.



Respect

Complete the online module at TheFA.com/RespectGuide




REFERENCE #8 – ADDITIONAL SAMPLE SIGNAGE RELATING TO PLAYER ABUSE OF REFEREES:

A man with a beard and dark hair, wearing a red soccer jersey with a white diamond logo, stands with his arms crossed against a black background. The text "THIS GUY'S A COMPLETE JOKE" is overlaid in large white letters. Below this, smaller white text reads: "You think mouthing off at the ref's 'all part of the game'. Your team-mates think you're an embarrassment. Start thinking straight or risk losing more than the game." At the bottom, it says "Are you losing it?" in red, "Respect" in white, and the FA crest. The website "TheFA.com/respect" is in the bottom left.

THIS GUY'S A COMPLETE JOKE

You think mouthing off at the ref's 'all part of the game'.
Your team-mates think you're an embarrassment.
Start thinking straight or risk losing more than the game.

Are you losing it?

Respect 

TheFA.com/respect

