



## Greater Northwest Soccer Association Zero Tolerance Policy

The Greater Northwest Soccer Association's purpose is to create and maintain a soccer program based on the ideals of good sportsmanship, honesty, loyalty, and courage taught through organized athletic activity. All persons participating in the program shall strive to develop fair play among the youth, and place secondary importance on winning games. The Zero Tolerance policy is intended to further ensure that the playing experience is in accordance with these ideals and principles.

**The purpose of this policy and its enforcement is first and foremost to eliminate referee abuse, both physical and verbal, and to discourage public dissent of referees.** All coaches, assistant coaches, team managers, spectators, and players shall support the referee crew. Failure to do so undermines the referees' authority and has the potential to create a hostile environment for the players, spectators, coaches and referees alike. Negative or critical comments directed to any member of the referee crew, whether before, during, or after the game, will not be tolerated. It is never acceptable to physically or verbally abuse referees in any situation. Coach or spectator concerns about the quality of officiating should be communicated in a polite and constructive manner to the Association Director of Referees or another member of the Board of Directors.

**This policy and its enforcement shall also serve to ensure that the behavior of all coaches, players and spectators at GNWSA sanctioned events is in compliance with GNWSA and North Texas State Soccer Association (NTSSA) Codes of Conduct and Ethics, regardless of whether the behavior is directed towards the referee crew.** It is the responsibility of all coaches to maintain the highest standards of conduct for themselves, their players, and their spectators. Failure to do so may result in the coach being sanctioned as well as the offending party. Abusive or obscene language, violent play or conduct, fighting, or other behavior deemed disruptive or unethical will not be tolerated. All GNWSA Officials and Board Members have full authority to enforce this policy. Zero Tolerance violations will be taken very seriously and may result in dismissal from the fields and disciplinary proceedings with the possibility of suspension and additional sanctions imposed by NTSSA.

**In accordance with this Zero Tolerance policy, communication with the referee crew during a game is strictly prohibited except in the following circumstances:**

**Coaches:**

- Responding to a referee who initiates communication.
- Requesting a substitution.
- Pointing out emergencies or safety issues.
- Requesting clarification of a call provided the request is courteous and non-argumentative.

**Spectators:**

- Responding to a referee who initiates communication.
- Pointing out emergencies or safety issues.

**Players:**

- Communication between players and referees during a game is governed by FIFA Laws of the Game.

**Failure to comply with these rules of communication during the game will result in the referee issuing a Warning, Caution, or Dismissal to the offending party depending on the seriousness of the infraction.** The seriousness of the infraction is solely the opinion of the referee responsible for the match. In the case of a Dismissal, the offending party must leave the field of play and be out of sight and sound of the game. If the offending party does not leave the field, the referee may abandon the game. There is no questioning of a Caution or Dismissal at the field. The only avenue for appeal is a properly constituted Appeals and Disciplinary (A&D) hearing conducted according to the Association or League Bylaws. Nothing in this rule may be construed to limit the referees' discretion as granted by FIFA Laws of the Game.

**Communication with the referee crew before or after a game is limited to polite and friendly comments only.** A coach may ask a referee to clarify a rule or call but may not harass, intimidate or threaten the referee in any way. Failure to comply may result in dismissal from the fields and disciplinary proceedings with the possibility of suspension and additional sanctions imposed by NTSSA.

**Note to Referees:** Any Caution or Dismissal requires a signed Misconduct Report detailing the incident. Include just the facts and what was said, verbatim, especially if the language was profane, foul, or threatening. In cases where a match is abandoned by the referee, the status of the match can ONLY be determined by the proper Association or League authority.