

ASK A SOCCER REFEREE

Answers to Laws of the Game and Practical Refereeing Questions

PERSONAL, PUBLIC, PROVOCATIVE = MISCONDUCT

When deciding what to do about either dissent or the use of offensive or insulting or abusive language and/or gestures, the referee must analyze the situation and apply The Three Ps. Was the language Personal? (I. e., directed at someone in particular.) Was the language Public? (I. e., was it loud enough to be heard by others on the field and in its vicinity?) Was the language Provocative? (i.e., could it have led to player management problems involving the other team). If the answer to these questions is yes, then the matter must be dealt with by the referee and the nearest official to the referee must make sure that he or she learns of it as quickly as possible.

If a referee does not take action when incidental profane language is used by a player or coming from the team touchline, then the referee is allowing the player or bench personnel to define the tone of the match. This I personally have found out to lead to greater difficulties latter on in the match where now the profane language is directed at another player or the referee. The allowing of incidental profane language establishes it as appropriate language for the match. When this language is established in the players' minds it has a high probability of being taken to the next level of being directed at a teammate, an opposing player or a member of the refereeing crew.

The referee must ask himself the question, "Do I want to take corrective action early?" or "Do I want to deal with a more serious situation later on?"