

# Eliminating Racist Comments

Updated for Fall '24

UYSA League Commissioner

Scot Boyd // [sboyd@uysa.org](mailto:sboyd@uysa.org)

Michelle Wixom // [mwixom@uysa.org](mailto:mwixom@uysa.org)

Blaine Burnett // [bburnett@uysa.org](mailto:bburnett@uysa.org)

801-307-5150



# The issue

We have received too many complaints of racist language being used by players and parents – even at Regional events where our players are representing UYSA and Utah.

Our goal is to do everything we can to eliminate that behavior through both deterrence and education.



# UYSA Directive to Referees:

When a coach or player shares a complaint:

- Wait for a dead ball
- Blow your whistle and send BOTH teams to their benches
- Go to the Complaining team and get the specifics
- Go to the other team and tell the coach what was allegedly said
- Remind that coach and team that comments like that are NEVER acceptable
- Bring teams back on the field and restart from the dead ball



# What is the purpose?

- To make sure the complaining players, parents and coaches feel heard
- To make sure that the ref crew is cognizant of the issue and watching / listening more closely for the rest of the game
- To deter: No player or parent will appreciate being called out



# Penalties

In game:

- If the ref crew hears the racist comment:
  - Referee discretion on the discipline
  - RARE for a racist comment to NOT BE “foul and abusive” = ejection



# Penalties

## Post game:

- League Commissioner Discretion –
  - I will add an additional game suspension for racist language ejections
  - I will require a letter of apology from the player
- If a parent made the comment:
  - Minimum - Zero Tolerance season suspension
- If there was only a stoppage and no further incident:
  - Note to club leadership and team to address the issue with all of their teams



# Nigg”a”

- UYSA was humiliated in Summer ‘23 when 3 of our players were ejected and then suspended for the entirety of Far West Regionals and Regional President’s Cup
- **DON’T USE IT!**
- **DON’T LET YOUR PLAYERS USE IT AT PRACTICE!**
- Referee discretion – but most likely it is going to be an ejection and an extra game suspension



**Our refs are on the same page**



## **Racism and What We Can Do as Officials**

We all have a responsibility to tackle racism on the pitch. From referees, to parents, coaches, and players. Many of us as officials are struggling to figure out how to handle the rapid rise in incivility, bias, bigotry, and hate speech playing out on the pitches.

We need to be keenly aware with how each team is doing and how they are feeling during a game. Whether using the N-word, putting down LGBTQIA+ people, insulting language that refers to women or telling immigrants to “go back where they came from” – create a team culture that discourages slurs, casual put-downs, and incivility.

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## Our refs are on the same page

### Racism and What We Can Do as Officials

On the sidelines and the field, keep your ear to the ground for uncomplimentary language, including that used in casual ways players could perceive as harmless or nonchalant. Stay attuned to the needs of those with marginalized identities. Think players of color, immigrants, LGBTQIA+ kids, and so on. Look for signs of tension, fear, alienation, and hurt—all possible signs of bias-based bullying.

I spoke with Scot Boyd, UYSA's League Commissioner, and he had some insight he'd like every referee to follow when dealing with racism.

"As I'm sure you all know, sometimes our players and/or parents lose their minds and stupidly choose to use racist language on the field. More often than not the referee doesn't hear it (the players aren't THAT reckless). The typical ref response was "I'm sorry I didn't hear it - I'll keep an ear out for anything further."

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## Our refs are on the same page

### Racism and What We Can Do as Officials

Going forward, we would like referees in UYSA games to use their discretion and follow the MLS Next model as follows:

- \* When a player / coach shares a complaint, wait for a dead ball.
- \* Blow your whistle and send BOTH teams to their benches.
- \* Go to the complaining team and get the specifics of the alleged comments.
- \* Then go to the other team and let the coach know what was allegedly said - and remind the coach and team that those types of comments are unacceptable.
- \* Then call both teams back onto the field and continue on from the dead ball.

The goal of this is to emphasize that these comments are not appropriate and to let the victimized players feel heard

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## Our refs are on the same page

### Racism and What We Can Do as Officials

If YOU hear any racist comments, use your discretion for your determination as to the proper penalty - But I would say that there is almost no way a racist comment isn't both "foul" and "abusive".

And yes - the N-word can be considered to be foul and abusive regardless of who it is said to. (Context matters) We are warning all of our teams' players to NOT use the word, even conversationally, on the field.

Ejections for racist comments carry at least a 2-game suspension.

As always - write it up well in your report so the League can follow up - especially if we have teams where this happens in multiple games. (end Scot's quote)

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## **Our refs are on the same page**

### **Racism and What We Can Do as Officials**

Racist incidents happen every day, at every level of soccer. This is something that makes soccer less safe for everyone. Just like you have a plan for inclement weather, let's have a plan for how we will respond when a racist incident occurs in our space during your pregame discussion.

I also spoke with Daniel Radford, USYS Senior Manager of Referees, who wanted to remind each official, "Remember; when hearing any racial comment on the pitch to recognize it, address it, and take care of it immediately. If it is brought to your attention and you did not hear it; make sure you are in constant communication with the coaching staff to rectify the situation immediately. Remember the importance of calm communication when dealing with the issue."

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## Our refs are on the same page

### Racism and What We Can Do as Officials

Always be fair when you manage rules and focus on the player gaining an understanding of how painful and damaging bigotry is. This will allow the player who acted inappropriately to learn from the incident and apologize sincerely. This is true discipline, which means “to teach,” rather than being only punishment. Listen to the player/coach/parent who misbehaved and invite them to substitute knowledge, and understanding for the fear and ignorance that may have driven their behavior.

I found a quote that I will leave you with... “Oftentimes, people either were exposed to these things in other environments, and it’s become normal for them, or they feel threatened. They really need to have the opportunity for someone to listen to what is at the core of the anger or brutality that they’re experiencing.”



## **Espanol:**

### **El racismo y lo que podemos hacer como Árbitros**

Todos tenemos la responsabilidad de luchar contra el racismo en el terreno de juego. Desde árbitros, hasta padres, entrenadores y jugadores. Muchos de nosotros, como árbitros, estamos luchando por averiguar cómo manejar el rápido aumento de la incivilidad, los prejuicios, la intolerancia y el discurso de odio que se desarrollan en las canchas.

Tenemos que ser muy conscientes de cómo lo está haciendo cada equipo y cómo se sienten durante un partido. Ya sea usando la palabra N, menospreciando a las personas LGBTQIA+, insultando con lenguaje que se refiere a las mujeres o diciéndoles a los inmigrantes que "regresen de donde vinieron", Debemos crear una cultura de equipo que desaliente los insultos, las humillaciones casuales y la incivilidad. Mantén el oído atento al lenguaje usado in las bandas del campo y en el campo de juego que no sea halagador, incluido el que se usa de manera informal que los jugadores podrían percibir como inofensivo o indiferente. Mantente en sintonía con las necesidades de las personas con identidades marginadas. Piensa en jugadores de color, inmigrantes, niños LGBTQIA+, etc. Busca signos de tensión, miedo, alienación y dolor, todos posibles signos de acoso basado en prejuicios



## **Espanol:**

### **El racismo y lo que podemos hacer como Árbitros**

Scot Boyd, comisionado de la liga de UYSA, y dio una idea que le gustaría que todos los árbitros siguieran cuando se trata de racismo.

"Como estoy seguro de que todos saben, a veces nuestros jugadores y/o padres pierden la cabeza y eligen estúpidamente usar lenguaje racista en el campo. La mayoría de las veces el árbitro no lo escucha (los jugadores no son TAN imprudentes). La respuesta típica del árbitro fue: "Lamento no haberlo escuchado, estaré atento a cualquier otra cosa".

En el futuro, nos gustaría que los árbitros en los juegos de UYSA usen su discreción y sigan el modelo de MLS Next de la siguiente manera:



## **Espanol:**

### **El racismo y lo que podemos hacer como Árbitros**

- \* Cuando un jugador/entrenador comparte una queja, espere a que haiga un paro de juego.
- \* Haz sonar tu silbato y envía a AMBOS equipos a sus banquillos.
- \* Acuda al equipo que compartió la quejas y obtenga los detalles de los supuestos comentarios.
- \* Luego vaya al otro equipo y hágale saber al entrenador lo que supuestamente se dijo, y recuérdle al entrenador y al equipo que ese tipo de comentarios son inaceptables.
- \* A continuación, llame a ambos equipos de vuelta al campo y continúe desde la pelota muerta.

El objetivo de esto es enfatizar que estos comentarios no son apropiados y que permitan que los jugadores victimizados se sientan escuchados.

Si USTED escucha algún comentario racista, use su discreción para determinar la sanción adecuada, pero yo diría que casi no hay forma de que un comentario racista no sea "asqueroso" y "abusivo".





## **Espanol:**

### **El racismo y lo que podemos hacer como Árbitros**

Y sí, la palabra N puede considerarse asquerosa y abusiva, independientemente de a quién se le diga. (El contexto importa) Advertimos a todos los jugadores de nuestros equipos que NO usen la palabra, ni siquiera conversacionalmente, en el campo.

Las expulsiones por comentarios racistas conllevan al menos una suspensión de 2 partidos.

Como siempre, describa detalladamente en su informe para que la Liga pueda hacer un seguimiento, especialmente si tenemos equipos en los cuales esto sucede en varios partidos".

Los incidentes racistas ocurren todos los días, en todos los niveles del fútbol. Esto es algo que hace que el fútbol sea menos seguro para todos. Al igual como tienes un plan para las inclemencias del tiempo, tengamos un plan sobre cómo responderemos cuando ocurra un incidente racista en nuestro espacio durante tu discusión previa al juego.

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## **Espanol:**

### **El racismo y lo que podemos hacer como Árbitros**

Daniel Radford, Gerente Senior de Árbitros de USYS, quien quería recordarle a cada oficial: "Recuerden; Cuando escuche cualquier comentario racial en el terreno de juego, reconózcalo, abórdelo y ocúpese de él de inmediato. Si te llaman la atención y no lo escuchaste; Asegúrate de estar en constante comunicación con el cuerpo técnico para rectificar la situación de inmediato. Recuerde la importancia de una comunicación tranquila cuando se trata del problema".

Sé siempre justo cuando manejes las reglas y concéntrate en que el jugador comprenda lo doloroso y dañino que es el fanatismo. Esto permitirá que el jugador que actuó de manera inapropiada aprenda del incidente y se disculpe sinceramente. Esta es la verdadera disciplina, que significa "enseñar", en lugar de ser solo un castigo. Escuche al jugador/entrenador/padre que se portó mal e invítelo a sustituir el conocimiento y la comprensión por el miedo y la ignorancia que pueden haber impulsado su comportamiento.



## **Espanol:**

### **El racismo y lo que podemos hacer como Árbitros**

Encontré una cita con la que te dejo... "Frecuentemente, las personas que estuvieron expuestas a estas cosas en otros entornos, y esto se ha convertido en algo normal para ellos, o se sienten amenazadas. Realmente necesitan tener la oportunidad de que alguien escuche lo que está en el centro de la ira o la brutalidad que están experimentando".



## US Dept of Justice reached out to us...

- They had heard of UYSA's efforts to combat racism and reviewed our on-line PowerPoint last Spring.
- Clayton Fong
  - Conciliation Specialist
  - US Department of Justice Community Relations Service
- He believes our efforts could serve as a model for other youth sports leagues for combating racist conduct.
- Mr. Fong has offered the DOJ's Conciliation Services to help mediate and facilitate communication should issues arise.
  - We hope we will never need to use him, but value the connection and additional resource.



# Please contact us with issues!

Three (3) people in the office are Spanish-fluent  
We want to help.

UYSA

Scot Boyd // [sboyd@uysa.org](mailto:sboyd@uysa.org)

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