



U.S. Soccer's Advice to Referees is meant to provide officials of all levels with guidance on the interpretation and application of the Laws of the Game and to create consistent guidelines and procedures for officials to follow in all affiliated competitions.

### **Ask, Tell, Dismiss**

Sometimes during a game not all the critical activities occur on the field. The bench areas, or technical areas if they exist, can be the scene of irresponsible behavior that impacts what is happening on the field. In these cases, U.S. Soccer recommends that referees use the *Ask, Tell, Dismiss* approach when dealing with coaches or other team officials.

Coaches cannot commit fouls or misconduct but they can engage in irresponsible behavior which endangers or undermines the referee's ability to manage the game.

Most of the time, coaches behave appropriately, even in the face of their obvious passion and excitement about how their team is performing. However, when those actions become unacceptable, referees must be prepared to take the following actions:

- First, when irresponsible behavior arises, the referee should ask the person to modify his or her behavior
- Second, if the behavior does not return to an acceptable level, the referee should inform the person that their actions will not be tolerated and tell him or her to stop
- Third, if the unacceptable conduct continues, the referee should take the final step in the process and dismiss the person from the field of play and its immediate surroundings

In games using assistant referees and fourth officials, the *Ask, Tell, Dismiss* process requires coordination among all match officials. Only the referee has the authority to dismiss a team official and some referees want to be involved throughout the process while others rely almost exclusively on the bench-side assistant referee or fourth official to handle the initial steps.

*Ask, Tell, Dismiss* supports the powers and duties outlined in Law 5 that require the referee to take action against team officials who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner. Note, the term team official refers not only to coaches but to other non-playing personnel on the bench or in the technical area.

Although the referee has the flexibility to decide what constitutes irresponsible behavior by team officials, some examples may include the use of offensive or insulting language or gestures, persistent questioning of decisions, kicking or throwing items, or refusing to remain near the bench or within the technical area.

*Ask, Tell, Dismiss* is intended to provide referees with a practical and flexible approach to resolve behavior issues with team officials. It is important to note that dismissing a coach or other team official does not require that each step of the process be followed. In cases where behavior is overly disruptive, blatant, or serious, the referee is always authorized to bypass any warning and immediately issue a dismissal.