

**G**enerally, after cautioning or dismissing a player a referee submits a misconduct report and that is the last they hear of it. So why is your report so important and what happens to it?

All referees take enormous pride on match days to ensure they create a positive impression with the Clubs right from the very start. We, as referees, take pride in our correspondence with the Club, our appearance, our behaviour and our fitness so as to create that good impression. However, we all know that we may face difficulties, normally when the whistle blows. A referee has a number of decisions to make on the day – which category did the caution/sending off offence fall into? Who committed the offence? All this information and more will be needed for

Each charge carries a very different level of punishment so accuracy in our report leads to accuracy of sanction and this is why, elsewhere in the magazine, the importance of being concise, brief but factual has been stressed. In addition, the standard of the report will give the recipient an impression of the referee. Do you want to be considered as opinionated, a waffler, or worse, a liar or would you prefer being recognised as professional and efficient?

Having raised the necessary charge from your report, the charge is sent to the Club and they have 14 days to respond to the charge.

For sending offs in competitions/associations operating a match-based disciplinary system, the player will receive an automatic suspension based on the offence with no right of appeal

c Plead Not Guilty to the charge and request a Personal Hearing at which you as a referee would be required and expected to attend.

Should the player accept option a) or b) – then your job is done. However, should the player accept option c) and request a Personal Hearing then your duty, and yes it is a duty, is not yet complete. You will be required to attend a Personal Hearing in order to act as a witness on behalf of The Football Association. It is this part of the process that I know causes the maximum frustration to many of our colleagues. However, it is as important as any of your other refereeing responsibilities. Indeed, it is also a requirement under your duties as a referee to attend Disciplinary Hearings and one that The Football Association expects all referees to honour.

A person charged has the right to appear before a commission to challenge The FA charge, not challenge the referee. He pays for that right and the Commission would consider if the charge is proven “on the balance of probability”.

Interesting thought - if the report is brief and factual the opportunity to challenge is reduced. Many players decide to challenge and appeal because of the content of the report – not actually what happened on the day. Some, of course, take a chance to try and get a reduction on their punishment with no foundation of truth behind their appeal. A risk they have a right to take – balanced against the possible increase in sanction and a charge of costs for the hearing. There is so much that could be discussed around Disciplinary Commissions and, as I said earlier, this area is a subject that frustrates referees so much. I will cover this topic in a later issue.

We all know refereeing can be a lonely place at times, but in terms of receiving support or advice in relation to a difficult report you have to write or attending a disciplinary hearing, the County Football Associations have appointed Referee Development Officers to help you. They are all experienced in refereeing circles and are there to assist – do not be afraid in contacting them for help and support; the Referees’ Association is also there for you as well.

# WHY REPORT?

Mark Ives FA Discipline Manager and Referee

the short, concise misconduct report. What we must remember is that people’s impressions of us as referees do not stop when we leave the ground after the match. The content of any misconduct report which we submit to the County FA (or The FA) directs the proceedings from thereon. The FA/CFA official who receives the report has to decide which one of over 30 possible charges is applicable. The importance of the correct charge being raised cannot be overstated and thus the accuracy of the report is vital. Was it violent conduct or serious foul play? Was it violent conduct or an assault? Was it head to head butting or head butting to another part of the body? Was there contact? Was the language abusive, insulting or offensive or was it inappropriate behaviour to the match official?

(except mistaken identity and wrongful dismissal where a DVD of the incident must be submitted). For your information match-based discipline is coming to a park near you! From next season all the National League System (NLS) will operate on match-based discipline together with a trial for six Leagues outside the NLS, including two Sunday Leagues. More of this in a later issue.

For the rest, the person charged has three options:

- a Plead Guilty to the charge.
- b Plead Guilty to the charge and submit a letter for a plea in mitigation (mitigation could be a variety of reasons, for example previous good record over five years but in no way can the player dispute the referee report).

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## REFEREES ARE THE VITAL KEY TO MAKING ANY DISCIPLINE SYSTEM EFFICIENT

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### REF FACTS

#### Mark Ives

**1986**  
Started refereeing

**1999**  
National List Assistant Referee

**2000**  
Promoted to Level 2

**2001**  
FA County Business Development Manager

**2008**  
FA Disciplinary Manager

### To summarise what has been said about discipline in this and other articles:

- Always report Discipline that has occurred in a game. It is a requirement under referee regulations and failure to report could result in a misconduct charge against the referee.
- Ensure the report is short and concise but factual and covering all (and only) the salient points.
- Avoid your opinions and stick to the facts.
- Submit the report within two working days.
- Only send the report to the County FA and only to the official email address `discipline@countyfaname.com` (e.g. `Discipline@bedfordshirefa.com`).
- Do not send the reports to Leagues.
- Be prepared to attend disciplinary hearings if requested to do so.

In closing, it should be noted that the vast majority of match officials deliver the above very accurately but, like our refereeing, we never stop learning. Thank you for all of your support in helping deliver a sound disciplinary system.

