



WMYSA Whisper Campaign Parent Expectations

As a parent of a youth player, I suspect you would be outraged if another parent said anything negative about how your child was playing. After all, aren't they trying, don't they have feelings and don't you as a parent have protective instincts which would make you outraged? News Flash, referees are human also, no different than your own child and they do sometimes have parents who are in attendance and within earshot of what you are saying. So why are we subjecting them to the same unwanted behavior we just denounced for our own children? The simple reason is we get caught up in the moment.

Why is it we all know right from wrong, yet we still let emotions control our behavior? The reason is we are all creatures of habit with an internal need to belong. As the swing of the game moves in your favor, chemical reactions in your body make you feel good. Likewise, as things go against you they make you feel dejected and negative. These mood swings alter behavior and make you more susceptible to what is called "contagion theory." This is where we do things we normally wouldn't. When we are in large groups our brains cognitive functions tend to switch making self-reflection more difficult. This allows people to do things they normally wouldn't. Examples are rioting after a Michigan State Game or verbally abusing or chasing after a youth soccer referee.

If you want an official to be better at their job, then give them the room to learn. Heckling them splits their attention and makes it even more difficult to make well informed judgment calls. This is a slippery slope because the more nervous they get, the more debatable their calls become which riles up the parents and coaches that much more.

If you have a complaint about an official speak to your coach or a club official about your concerns. There is an established process they can use to bring this concern forward to the leagues attention. WMYSA does not tolerate abusive behavior towards officials. You should realize during the game the officials will hold your coach responsible for your conduct. Your' coach can be cautioned and even removed from matches as a result of parental behavior. When parents can be identified for these actions, the league can and will impose sanctions on them, the coach or even the entire fan base as well. Only you can prevent this from getting that far!

To address the ongoing issue WMYSA will be launching its *Whisper Campaign* starting this fall. This campaign will be broken down in two phases centered around the three principles of Respect, Recognition and Restraint. Respect should be given to the officials, players and spectators at all times. Recognize when you or others begin to show frustration. Restrain yourself and help others to do the same when frustration sets in by whispering.



West Michigan Youth Soccer Association



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- NEVER throw things at an official or touch them.
- NEVER follow an official off the field after a match regardless of the reason.
- NEVER enter the field to speak with a referee.
- NEVER publicly question the referee's judgment or their honesty.
- NEVER yell at the referee(s), including criticism, sarcasm, harassment, intimidation or feedback of any kind before, during or after the game.
- Parents and spectators shall not make remarks to the referee(s) or advise the referee(s) to watch certain players or attend to rough play.
- The only time a parent should address an official during a match is to draw their attention to an injured player.
- Parents and Fans should not yell instructions to players from the sideline and allow coaches to properly instruct.
- Don't make negative comments about players on either team. This can set other parents off and be detrimental to the players who hear the comments.
- Parents and fans should recognize effort, good play and sportsmanship by cheering for both teams.
- Parents and fans should remind yourself and others about ***Whisper Weekends*** before the game and as you begin to see frustration building. It is your job to help deescalate each other so the game can go on without interruption.
- Understand officials are in control of the game. They have the authority to remove parents, coaches even the entire sidelines if behavior is deemed unacceptable. When this occurs WMYSA will investigate the situation and apply further sanctions as deemed appropriate,

