

MATCH DAY GUIDELINES FOR COACHES

The junior section committee of Sittingbourne Rugby Club are committed to the playing safety and welfare of all coaches and players. Coaches have a particular responsibility to protect their players from child abuse and themselves from wrongful accusations. To assist coaches in fulfilling these duties on match days the committee strongly urges coaches to adhere to the following guidelines: -

1. The parents and/or guardians of all players should be informed by coaches of match venues, start and expected finish times and your own contact details on match days. Coaches should also ensure they have contact details with them for the parents and/or guardians of all players, in case of an emergency.
2. Always ensure that there is someone with you, a second coach is ideal but otherwise a trusted parent, with whom you can leave the players should you have to leave the team, e.g. to accompany an injured player to hospital.
3. Adhere to good practice to reduce the risk of wrongful accusations. Do not put yourself in a situation where there is only you and a player and ensure that you and any other adults present change and shower separately to the players.
4. Whether home or away, as coach you should ensure before warming up or playing commences that: -
 - The playing surface is free of litter, broken glass, dog faeces etc.
 - Post protectors are fitted and flags are flexible or cladded.
 - The immediate perimeter of the pitch is free of obstructions/hazards.
 - The playing surface is not frozen or baked hard by the sun.
 - First aid facilities are available.
 - Players have the appropriate playing kit.

You may feel that the above is the responsibility of the home club, but remember your players are your responsibility - so please check that the above has been properly carried out.

5. Rugby is a contact sport and should be refereed and played in a manner that keeps the game safe to minimise the risk of injury. For home games it is your responsibility to ensure that you arrange a competent referee. However, at an away game, if you feel the standard of refereeing is such that player safety is being compromised you should speak to the home team coach immediately and request a replacement referee. If no replacement is obtainable then you should withdraw your players from the pitch.
6. If you encounter repeated dangerous play, which is not dealt with adequately by the referee, or feel that your opponents are playing beyond the rules because they are being unethically encouraged by parents, fellow players or coaches to do so, you must take immediate action.
7. The level of appropriate response in such a situation is always difficult to determine but it is a coach's responsibility to take the necessary action and the following should be considered: -
 - Temporarily stop the game and see if matters can be resolved between coaches, the referee and team captains. Make it clear that if the game is not played within the rules you will withdraw your players.
 - Withdraw your players and end the game.
 - If you withdraw your players please ensure you obtain the referee's and your opponents' coach's contact details.
 - Make an immediate note of why you withdrew your team and any actions taken.
 - If you consider that specific physical abuse has been directed at one of your players, particularly if from an adult, consider calling the police. If you feel it is necessary to call the police you should endeavour to contact the parents and/or guardians of any involved players immediately.
 - Stay calm in all your dealings with the other club.
8. Once you have returned home, you should contact the following as soon as possible to verbally advise them of what has happened; Gary Hodkinson – Chairman, Bill Dorton – Vice Chairman, Lisa Candy – Child Protection Officer. You should then

immediately follow this up with a brief note in writing to all of the above. The Chairmen of the junior section will then contact the Chairman and Secretary of the main club. How the matter will then be dealt with, will be decision for the main club committee. However we would expect their decision to be based on the RFU child protection guidelines, which should ensure the club fulfils its responsibilities under the Children Act, in consultation with the junior committee and, if possible, in accordance with the wishes of any involved players' parents and/or guardians. Following such incidents, and prior to the annual fixtures meeting, the junior committee will also decide on whether there are any teams that it no longer considers appropriate for us to be arranging matches against and advise the Fixtures Secretary accordingly.

9. In addition to contacting the above junior committee members please ensure you follow up the incident with parents. It will do us no credit if players are returning home with stories of on/off pitch violence, dangerous play, etc. and parents are not aware that the club is dealing with the incident in a responsible and professional manner.