



## Discipline, Protest, and Grievance Procedures

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### I. Purpose

The purpose of the Discipline, Protest, and Grievance Procedures is to promote and ensure uniformity and consistency in the application of the rules and procedures of USC, USCS, USSF, and FIFA. In addition, it is the purpose of these rules to attempt to regulate and control unacceptable, unsportsmanlike, and unfair behavior on the part of players, coaches, managers, administrators, fans, and supporters, in order to promote the sport of youth soccer. All questions relating to the qualification of competitors, interpretation of the rule, disputes, protests, or grievances shall be referred to the D&P Committee. The decisions of the D&P Committee shall be binding on all parties unless appealed and overturned by a higher authority.

### II. Definitions

- A. "EDDOA D&P Committee" is the body charged with administering disciplinary actions and hearing appeals that arise within the United Soccer Clubs (USC) league.
- B. "Appeals" arise as a result of an adverse decision from a protest hearing, administrative action, disciplinary hearing, or lower level appeal. Only those parties to the original action, who are adversely impacted by such decisions, shall be allowed to appeal.
- C. "Assault" is an intentional act of physical violence. Assault includes, but is not limited to, the following acts: hitting, kicking, punching, slapping, choking, spitting at or on; grabbing or bodily running into; the act of kicking or throwing any object at another that could inflict injury; damaging a uniform or personal property, i.e., car, equipment (cards, whistle, notebook, etc.) or knocking equipment or other objects out of the hand.
- D. "Abuse" is a verbal statement or physical act, which implies or threatens physical harm to an individual. It also includes verbal abuse, which is threatening, cursing, or demeaning a person or any member of his/her family.
- E. "Automatic Suspension" shall mean that a coach, assistant coach, player, or spectator shall not participate in any USC, USCS or USSF sanctioned activity, including but not limited to season games, practices, practice games, tournaments play, or friendly games. The individual must immediately surrender to United Soccer Clubs all player ID cards of the team members or player(s) suspended, until such individual petitions the USC D&P Committee (EDDOA) for a hearing and the committee reinstates. An automatic suspension may only be imposed for allegations of referee assault as per USSF Policy 531-9 or the acquisition of excessive penalty points.
- F. "Caution" shall mean when a referee shows a yellow card to a player during a game. This would include situations when the caution is not listed on the game report.
- G. "Coach" is an individual who coaches, trains, or manages a team either permanently or temporarily. This includes assistant coaches, trainers and managers.
- H. "Disciplinary Action" may be rendered by the D&P committee from a Preliminary Decision or upon the completion of a Disciplinary Hearing. This action may include but is not limited to: censure, fines as adopted by EDDOA and / or USC,

suspensions, institution of probation stipulations, prohibition of participation in specific EDDOA or USC sanctioned activities, and removal from office or official position. It shall not include the issuance of penalty points beyond that which is prescribed in the USC Progressive Discipline System

- I. "Disciplinary Hearings" result from allegations of misconduct. Such misconduct must be a violation of a published rule, regulation, procedure or match related violent behavior and misconduct.
- J. "Grievance" is any complaint, which is not a protest or an appeal, but in the opinion of the complainant is a violation of USC, USCS or USSF Constitutions, By-Laws, or Rules and Procedures. A grievance shall not encompass allegations of violations of FIFA Laws of the Game or matters of referee judgment.
- K. "Preliminary Decision" is a preliminary step in the hearing process where the D&P Committee receives a properly submitted protest or grievance; or upon any other matter the Committee deems appropriate, and renders a preliminary decision of disciplinary action. If a preliminary decision is reached, the Party defending the action shall have the right to request a disciplinary hearing. After receipt of a written request for a hearing, the Chairman shall promptly schedule a hearing. If the Chairman receives no request for a hearing within ten (10) days after the party's receipt of the preliminary decision, then the preliminary decision is final. All notifications and requests for hearings under this paragraph must be made in accordance with EDDOA's Notification Requirements.
- L. "Protest" is related to a specific game and is filed by one of the involved team's officials. Only those teams involved are permitted to protest a game result. Third parties cannot file protests, on a specific game. A protest may not be based upon the judgment call of a referee.
- M. "Referee" includes the following:
  - (1) All currently registered USSF referees, assistant referee, 4th officials or other duly appointed persons to assist in the officiating of a game or;
  - (2) any non-licensed, non-registered person serving as a referee or;
  - (3) any club linesman.
- N. "Season" - The Fall season shall begin on September 1st and end on December 31st of each year. The spring season shall begin on January 1st and end on August 31st of each year.
- O. "Season games" shall mean games, which are scheduled at the beginning of any playing, season or rescheduled during the season and shall not include any tournament games
- P. "Send Offs" shall mean:
  - (1) For a player when a referee shows a red card to a player during a game. This would include situations when the ejection is not listed on the game report.
  - (2) For an adult when a referee shows a red card to an adult during a game or when the center referee asks an adult to leave the game.
- Q. "Suspension" is defined as follows:
  - (1) A coach, assistant coach, manager or trainer may not attend or observe one or more matches and may not participate in warm-up or half-time activities of the match or matches.
  - (2) A player may not play in one or more matches, however, he/she may attend the next match or matches played by the team, but not in uniform.
  - (3) Individual. Any other suspension of a person under these procedures will mean that the person shall not participate in any USC, USCS or USSF sanctioned activity, including but not limited to season games, practices, practice games, tournaments play, or friendly games. The individual must immediately surrender to the Association Administrative Assistant (Administrator) their player ID card or Coaching Pass.
  - (4) Team. A team suspension shall mean that the team shall not compete in any USC, USCS or USSF sponsored activity including practices, season games, friendly games, or tournament play. No travel permits will be approved. Furthermore, no more than five (5) players from the suspended team may transfer to or play on any one team. The coach of the suspended team may not coach any of the players of the suspended team during the suspension with the exception of his/her child.
- R. "Standing" means in matters relating to grievances, protests, appeals or other D&P actions only the following will have standing before the D&P Committee:
  - (1) Currently registered players [and their legal guardian(s)];
  - (2) USC coaches;
  - (3) An elected / appointed USC or EDDOA officer or administrator;
- S. "Team" means a recognized entity of properly registered and rostered players with at least one registered coach, organized for the purpose of playing the sport of soccer, sponsored by USC.

### **III. Line of Jurisdiction**

- A. The line of jurisdiction on protest or appeals, except in the instance of assault or abuse of a referee or as modified in playoff competition, shall be as follows:
  - 1) EDDOA D&P
  - 2) USC BOD
  - 3) US CLUB SOCCER
  - 4) As per USSF Rule 4020.

- B. Assault of Referee line of jurisdiction:
    - 1) EDDOA D&P
    - 2) USSF Appeals Committee
  - C. Abuse of Referee line of jurisdiction:
    - 1) EDDOA D&P
    - 2) US CLUB SOCCER
    - 3) USSF Appeals
  - D. Request for reinstatement following an Automatic Suspension of a Player or Coach:
    - 1) EDDOA D&P
    - 2) US CLUB SOCCER
    - 3) USSF Appeals
  - E. Decision Shall Stand Until Overturned. All decisions at all levels of the appeal/protest process shall stand and be in full force and effect until changed by a higher authority and communicated to all of the affected parties in writing.
  - F. Exhaust Lower Levels First. All lower levels of protest/appeal must be exhausted before a higher level will hear the appeal.
  - G. Appeal to Higher Level. At all levels of the appeal/protest process if a decision is not reached within 30 days of receipt of the written appeal/protest, the party filing the appeal/ protest may submit the appeal/protest to the next higher level with no additional fee.
  - H. Cannot Invoke Aid of Courts. No player, coach, official, referee, fan, supporter or their representative may invoke the aid of the courts of any State or of the United States without first exhausting all available remedies within the appropriate soccer organizations as set forth under the lines of authority herein.
  - I. Penalty for Failure to Exhaust Administrative Remedies. Any person(s) or group(s) action through the court system without exhausting the administrative remedies listed herein or in the USC, USCS, USSF rules is subject to the following:
    - 1) Automatic Suspension. The person(s) or group(s) is/are automatically suspended from all soccer activities and forfeit any appeal/protest rights. The party may petition the EDDOA D&P Committee for reinstatement upon conclusion of the D&P hearing or action.
    - 2) Liability for all Costs. The person(s) or group(s) is/are liable to EDDOA and/or USC for all expenses incurred by EDDOA and/or USC, its Member Clubs, and/or officers, directors, or administrators in defending the action, including, but not limited to:
      - a) Court costs;
      - b) Attorney's fee Cost of litigation, including depositions, expert witness fees, etc.;
      - c) Reasonable compensation for time spent by EDDOA & USC Member Club administrators and employees in responding to and defending against allegations in the action, including responses to discovery and court appearances;
      - d) Travel expenses and;
- Expenses for holding special EDDOA & USC Member Club meetings necessitated by the court action.

#### **IV. Fees for Protests, Hearings, Grievances and Appeals**

- A. The protest fee to the EDDOA D&P Committee shall be \$250.00,
- B. The grievance fee to the EDDOA D&P Committee shall be \$200.00.
- C. When any hearing is requested of EDDOA for any other matter not specified herein a non-refundable fee of \$200.00 shall be paid to EDDOA.
- D. The appeal/protest fee to the EDDOA shall be \$300.00.
- E. All fees must be submitted in the form of cash, certified check, cashier's check or money order made payable to the EDDOA.
- F. If an appeal, protest, and/or grievance is completely successful, then all except \$50.00 of the fee submitted will be returned only after the time for additional appeals has passed.

#### **V. Notification Requirements**

- A. Proper notification will occur in writing and will be considered received when sent to the email address of record.

## **VI. Protest Procedures**

- A. There are only two (2) acceptable causes for protesting a game after it has been played. They are:
  - 1) A team plays an unregistered, ineligible, or suspended player, or;
  - 2) There has been an obvious error made in the application of the Laws of the Game that directly affects the outcome of the game. Matters of referee judgment cannot be protested at any time.
- B. To be valid and eligible for consideration, each protest filed with the D&P Committee must include the following:
  - 1) The protest fee;
  - 2) Two (2) written copies (original plus one copy) of the grounds on which the protest is lodged clearly stating the following:
    - a) Name, address, phone number, and team affiliation of the plaintiff
    - b) The date and time of the game, field location, and age level of teams involved
    - c) The approximate time of the incident in relation to the start of the game
    - d) The rule or rules which have been violated and a description the violation
    - e) The score of the game prior to the incident, after the incident, and the final score
    - f) The name of the opposing team, coach, and club Two copies of any information to be presented by witnesses, and
    - g) The name of the referee.
- C. The intention to file a protest regarding the misapplication of the Laws of the Game must be made known to the game referee and the opposing coach before leaving the field. This does not require that the protest actually be filed, but allows the referee the opportunity to write up usable game report information.
- D. All protests must be postmarked or received by the Deputy Commissioner within forty-eight (48) hours of the completion of the game being protested. Postage meter dates are not acceptable postmarks.
- E. Any protest relating to late starts, the field, goalposts, bars, or other appurtenances shall be entertained for consideration only if an objection has been lodged with the referee in writing prior to the start of the game on the official Game Report form. This protest must also be verbally communicated to the opposing coach.

## **VII. Grievance Procedures**

- A. To be valid and eligible for consideration, each grievance filed with the EDDOA D&P Committee must include the following:
  - 1) The grievance fee;
  - 2) Two (2) written copies (original plus one copy) of the grounds on which the grievance is lodged clearly stating the following:
    - a) Name, address, phone number, and team affiliation of the plaintiff,
    - b) The rule or rules that have been violated and a description of the violation,
    - c) The violating player, team, coach, or individual(s),
    - d) The age level of play involved,
    - e) Two (copies) of statements from any witnesses, and
    - f) Any other pertinent facts.

## **VIII. Progressive Discipline System**

- A. Purpose - Misconduct of players, coaches and fans continues to be a problem in soccer. More emphasis is needed to promote proper conduct and good sportsmanship, especially in our youth competition. The following system is an effort to discourage violent play and misconduct.
- B. Responsibilities of Coaches, Players and Clubs

- 1) Maintain Control of Fans and Sideline. Coaches are required to maintain control of their players and the team's fans on the sideline. A coach or an assistant coach may be cautioned and / or ejected by a referee for the misconduct of a fan of the team which he / she coaches.
  - 2) Penalty Points. Coaches are responsible for maintaining their individual penalty points and the individual penalty points of their players. Players are also responsible for maintaining their individual penalty points.
- C. Misconduct by Fan / Supporter. The parents, fans or supporters of any USC team by attending a USC sponsored event subject themselves to the jurisdiction of the USC, the USC Appeals Committee (USC BOD) and the USC Club which they are a member. As such, misconduct by a parent, fan or supporter can be investigated and disciplinary action can be taken by any of the various levels which have jurisdiction over the team involved. If action is not taken on the local level, the USC Appeals Committee may investigate the matter and hold a hearing to determine what discipline, if any, should be provided. Such discipline can include, but shall not be limited to, prohibiting the parent, fan or supporter from attending any USC sponsored event, including games, practices and tournaments for a period of time or indefinitely. The failure to comply with the discipline shall be cause for USC Appeals Committee to discipline the player related to the parent, fan or supporter; the team which the parent, fan or supporter supports; and or the coach of such team.
- D. Penalty Points Awarded. Penalty points shall be awarded to all individual players and coaches only as follows:
- 1) Recorded cautions: 3 points per caution to the individual
  - 2) Recorded ejections: 9 points per ejection to the individual.
- E. Disciplinary Action for Penalty Point Accumulation. An accumulation of penalty points shall result in the following disciplinary actions: An individual player, coach, assistant coach or trainer shall be suspended as follows:
- 1) Players, Coaches, Assistant Coaches, & Trainers.
    - a) Second ejection – A Coach, Assistant Coach, Trainer, or other adult is suspended for the remainder of the season upon receiving their second ejection. A Player is suspended for the next three (3) games actually played by that team. (Note: the USC rules will also apply.)
    - b) A Coach, Trainer, Assistant Coach or other Adult upon being ejected or ordered away from a game by the referee of the game will not be permitted to attend any USC sanctioned game for the rest of that day and for the next regularly scheduled USC play date. (Note: the USC rules will also apply.)
  - 2) Teams. Teams are suspended for the remainder of the season upon the conclusion of the game in which any combination of players accumulates the fourth (4th) ejection of the season.
  - 3) Individuals and Teams may request reinstatement of the suspensions in this section thru the EDDOA D&P Committee.
  - 4) The D&P Committee may automatically impose the following minimum suspensions based upon the D&P Committee's review of the Referee's statement on the Game Report. When Discipline /Sanctions are imposed, they must meet the required minimums as outlined below. The D&P Committee must evaluate the incident as to intent, severity and past misconduct to determine the appropriate disciplines/sanctions. More severe disciplines/sanctions shall be imposed for multiple red cards during a season and for misconduct directed towards officials or administrators.
    - a) Ejections resulting from "offensive or insulting or abusive language"
      - i. One (1) game suspension for offensive or insulting or abusive language and/or gestures not directed at an individual.
      - ii. Two (2) game suspension for offensive or insulting or abusive language and/or gestures directed toward a player, referee, assistant referee, administrator, spectator and /or tournament official.
      - iii. Three (3) game suspension for an Adult directed to a youth referee.
    - b) Ejections resulting from "violent conduct"
      - i. One (1) game suspension: minor infractions – including but not limited to; attempting to strike, hit or punch.

- ii. Two (2) game suspension: major infractions – including but not limited to the aggression of a player towards an opponent with clearly no intent to play the ball; fighting, hitting, or punching.
    - iii. Team suspension: including but not limited to any coach, player, substitute, or spectator entering a fight in progress or committing an action resulting in law enforcement being called; entering the field of play without permission of the referee to participate in an altercation.
  - c) Spitting – Three (3) game suspension - is defined as spitting upon an opponent or any other person.
- 5) For the purposes of this section only, “regularly scheduled” means the game days routinely scheduled by a competition’s scheduler. “Regularly scheduled” does not mean make-up games scheduled on a day when the competition as a whole is not scheduled to play.
- 6) Coaches will acquire penalty points cumulatively as a single entity, person or individual regardless of the number of individual teams he / she coaches or trains. Example: A coach with three (3) teams who accumulates three (3) points in a game with each team has a total of nine (9) points.
- 7) Penalty Point Challenge. Any challenge to penalty points must be by protest at the game in which the points are accumulated. A protest must be filed before or just after the end of the game. The protest must be made known to the opposing coach and the referee. Furthermore, the protest may not be based upon a judgment call of the referee. Within forty-eight (48) hours of the game, a written protest must be emailed to the EDDOA that will forward it to the Appeals Committee Chairperson for investigation and a hearing. No appeal shall be allowed from the decision of the committee hearing the matter.
- F. Revocations of Cautions, Ejections and Penalty Points. Cautions, ejections and penalty points may only be revoked by the USC Appeals Committee.
- G. Forfeits. Any team that forfeits two games in a season shall be brought before the USC Appeals Committee for possible disciplinary action.
- H. Ineligible Player. Any coach or assistant coach who is responsible for knowingly playing an ineligible player will be subject to suspension from participation in any USC sanctioned program.
- I. Team Forfeits. Any team shall forfeit and game(s) in which it played an ineligible player.
- J. Referee Involvement. The minimum suspension period for referee abuse shall be at least three (3) scheduled matches within the rules of the competition. Longer periods of suspension may be provided when circumstances warrant.

## **IX. Hearing Procedures**

- A. General.
  - 1) No Conflict of Interest. Members of any committee hearing a protest, appeal, disciplinary hearing, or grievance shall be composed of persons having no conflict of interest in the matters being heard, and having no association with the principal parties in the matters. No person may adjudicate a matter at more than one level.
  - 2) Record of Hearing. The chairperson of the committee shall appoint one committee member to make a record (minutes) of the proceedings.
  - 3) Types of Hearings: Open Hearings.
    - a) Open hearings shall be held with the principal parties, witnesses for both sides, and all necessary evidence, actually appearing before the members of the Hearing Committee. Testimony from witnesses need not be taken in the presence of other witnesses, but the principal parties shall be present for all proceedings except the deliberations of the Hearing Committee.
    - b) Closed Hearings. Closed hearings require that all testimony and evidence (including the rules) be submitted in writing. The committee members on an individual basis may consider testimony and evidence, with a decision by mail or conference call.
    - c) Preliminary Decision. Both an open hearing and a closed hearing may be preceded by a

Preliminary Decision. A preliminary decision is not a separate hearing, but is a preliminary step for a hearing. A preliminary decision may be rendered upon a review of any information received and any preliminary investigation the chairman deems necessary. If a preliminary decision is reached, the Party defending the action shall have the right to request a disciplinary hearing. After the Chairman receives receipt of a written request for a hearing, the preliminary decision is rescinded and the Chairman shall promptly schedule a hearing. If the Chairman receives no request for a hearing within ten (10) days after the party's receipt of the preliminary decision, then the preliminary decision is final and cannot be appealed.

B. Notification of Hearing

- 1) Proper notification of a hearing will be given whenever an open hearing is scheduled. All parties must receive notification no later than three (3) days prior to the hearing. Individuals may waive their rights to the three (3) day notice, if done so in writing prior to the start of any hearing.
- 2) Proper notification will occur in writing and will be considered received if sent in compliance with the Notification Requirements as set forth above in Section V.
- 3) Hearing notification letters will contain the following information:
  - a) Date of letter
  - b) Mode of delivery
  - c) Reason for the hearing and the case number
  - d) Role of the individual being requested to appear at the hearing (witness, accused, etc.)
  - e) Date, time, location of the hearing
  - f) A brief description of the procedures of the hearing.

C. Agenda for Open Hearing. All parties, including witnesses, will be brought into the hearing room. The following items will be described by the chairperson:

- 1) Names of the parties involved (team, association, etc).
- 2) Specific event involved (game, tournament, etc).
- 3) Date of occurrence.
- 4) Rule number and description of rule(s) allegedly violated.
- 5) Procedures for Open Hearing:
  - a) The parties shall be allowed to remain in the hearing room. All witnesses are to wait outside of the hearing room.
  - b) All written evidence should have been presented in advance for distribution and inclusion in the evidence packet.
  - c) All written evidence presented at the hearing will be passed to the chairperson. The committee will decide on its acceptance as proper evidence.
  - d) All questions/statements from involved parties will be addressed to the Chairperson who will ask the appropriate individual for an answer/rebuttal if he/ she deems it pertinent.
  - e) Movant/Appellant will present case.
  - f) Witnesses for Movant/Appellant will be called individually.
  - g) Committee members may question parties and witnesses as deemed necessary.
  - h) Respondent/Appellee will present case.
  - i) Witnesses for Respondent/Appellee will be called individually.
  - j) Committee members may question parties and witnesses as deemed necessary.
  - k) Witnesses may be recalled after initial testimony for further testimony and/or clarification as necessary.
  - l) Movant/Appellant may make a closing statement.
  - m) Respondent/Appellee may make a closing statement.

- n) Open hearing adjourned. The parties are excused and the committee shall deliberate.
- o) The Chairperson may place restrictions on the time allowed for presentations, statements, and other items at his/her discretion.

D. Evidence and Testimony:

- 1) All evidence, such as identification cards, team rosters, referee game reports, letters, proof of age documents, and other sources of written or printed information shall be the original or official only. No copies shall be accepted unless the committee is convinced that the original document has been lost or destroyed.
  - 2) All testimony shall be limited to the principal parties, eye-witnesses, and the recognized authorities on the subject (such as registrar on registration matters).
  - 3) If a witness cannot appear at an open hearing, written testimony may be accepted. Notarization may be required at the option of the hearing authority.
  - 4) Character witnesses and other third-party (non-eye-witness) shall not be allowed.
  - 5) The Chairperson may limit the number of witnesses if the testimony is repetitive and in the interest of time.
- E. Documentation. All written or printed evidence shall be maintained for a reasonable length of time from the final conclusion of the matter. A directory of documents should be created and maintained with the minutes and decision.

F. Decision

- 1) The decision of the committee shall respond only to the specific complaint or appeal.
- 2) Any other issue and/or rule violation, which may become known or apparent during the hearing, shall be referred to the appropriate authority, except for physical violence, assault of a referee, or abuse of a referee which shall go immediately to the EDDOA D&P Committee. This referral may be accompanied by a recommendation for appropriate action.

G. Notification of Decision.

- 1) The parties will be notified of the decision in a reasonable amount of time after the hearing. Every effort will be made to make the notification within seventy-two (72) hours after the hearing. The notice may be orally or in writing. If notified orally, the parties shall also be notified in writing within ten (10) days of the hearing according to EDDOA's Notification Requirements (V.).
- 2) Written notification shall contain:
  - a) Date of the hearing
  - b) Decision including any disciplinary action and the effective dates;
  - c) The right methods and requirements of appeal.

## **X. Appeal Procedures**

A. All suspensions, decisions on protests or grievances upheld or overruled, or rulings by the EDDOA D&P Committee are subject to appeal to the next higher authority.

- 1) No preliminary decision of the EDDOA D&P Committee shall be appealable. Instead, the party disputing the preliminary decision shall first request a hearing before the EDDOA D&P Committee. Only a final decision of the EDDOA D&P Committee after a hearing shall be appealable.

B. Levels of Appeal.

- 1) EDDOA D&P Committee
- 2) USC Board of Directors
- 3) USSF National Appeals Committee

C. All appeals must be submitted according to the time deadlines and procedures of each level of appeal. Any required appeal fee must be submitted with the appeal.