COACHES, REFEREES, PARENTS

Posted by STLCoach - 04 Mar 2010 07:52

Before you scream at a ref ...
December 17, 2009 | Comments (0)
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By Donna Olmstead, for Soccer America

Sometimes as I slouch down in my lawn chair watching my grandchildren's soccer games, I indulge in wishful thinking. Only skillful, focused players on the field. Only knowledgeable, supportive parents on the sidelines. Only coaches who remember the bottom line is character development and not just winning games. Only top-notch officials running the lines and the field. Never going to happen. Like I said - wishful thinking.

Not that I'm an expert on the soccer subject. But I have spent 32 years immersed in youth soccer. As the chauffer. As the team mom. As the team grandmother. And any other position that needed a warm body. Some knowledge of the game is bound to rub off after awhile.

Now my daughter and granddaughters are referees as well as players. And I'm seeing games from a whole new angle.

Sitting on the bleachers watching my 14-year-old granddaughter play at a Disney tournament recently, I got annoyed at our parents for criticizing the assistant referee's seeming inability to be in position to make good calls.

When the parents grew vocal enough for the AR to hear, I decided to muffle the criticism. Duct tape would have done the job, but I used something more personal - an incident that happened to my 16-year-old granddaughter Emily at a different game the day before.

Emily was running the line on the parents' side and they gave her a bad time about her offside calls. The coach even went to the center ref after the game and complained about her. Fortunately, the center ref had been paying attention and said Emily's calls had been correct. This is a tough situation for a young referee to handle, and probably why the attrition rate is so high.

When I told our parents about Emily's experience, they were indignant about anyone's criticizing Emily. After all, she's one of ours. We know her. We know she's conscientious and unbiased. She knows the game both as a player and a certified official. How dare those parents and coach give her a rough time?!

Then I pointed at the AR running our line and said, "She's somebody's Emily."

I know that, in the heat of competition, everyone forgets that the officials are somebody's Emily or Tom or Dave. Parents demand superhero officials. Which, in most cases, means officials that make only calls the parents agree with. And when most of the parents don't even know the difference between being offside or being in an offside position, that would be an impossible demand.

You couldn't pay me enough to take the abuse that soccer officials take. I'd probably take the field armed with a whistle and a small caliber handgun. And because I know that about myself, I stay on the sidelines. And try to encourage parents to send positive energy toward the field. And to try to help them remember that the every official is somebody's Emily.

(Florida resident Donna Olmstead has been involved in soccer through both her children and her grandchildren, as well as housing professional players and owning and running an indoor soccer facility. She is a freelance writer and spends weekends trying to remember which tournament she's supposed to be cheering at.)

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COACHES & PARENTS AT THE GAME

Posted by STLCoach - 10 Sep 2010 06:20

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IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT AS COACHES AND PARENTS YOU CAN CREATE A NEGATIVE OR POSITIVE ENVIORNMENT AT THE MATCH.

PARENTS: PLEASE SET YOUR CHAIRS AND BLANKETS BACK FROM THE SIDELINE EVEN WITH THE BLEACHERS. THERE IS NO REASON FOR ANYONE TO BE ANY CLOSER TO THE FIELD FOR MANY REASONS. YOU MAKE A DANGEROUS SITUATION FOR FAN AND PLAYER BEING CLOSER AND TE REFEREE'S JOB IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT.

COACHES: TRY COACHING FROM A SEATED POSITION ON THE BENCH. THERE IS NO REASON EVER TO BE UP AND DOWN THE SIDELINE DURING AN ENTIRE GAME. COACHES, BY THE LAWS OF THE GAME, SHOULD BE IN YOUR TECHNICAL ARE AND AT LEAT 10 YARDS BACK FROM THE FIELD. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE THE 1 OR 2 TIMES YOU NEED T GET UP AND ADDRESS A PLAYER ON THE FIELD, BUT NOT FOR AN ENTIRE GAME. DO YOUR JOB AT TRAINING.
NEXT MATCH SIT DOWN, LIMIT YOUR CHATTER, AND TALK TO THE PLAYERS CALMLY AS THEY WALK OFF THE FIELD ABOUT THE 1 OR 2 THINGS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE THEM DO BETTER OR THEY PERFORMED WELL.

I CHALLENGE THE REFEREES TO ENFORCE THIS RULE AND KEEP THE COACHING DURING MATCHES TO THE BENCH. WE WILL CREATE BETTER SOCCER PLAYERS THRU THIER PROBLEM SOLVING AND NOT JOYSTICK COACHING.

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My daughter wants to quit!

Posted by STLCoach - 19 Oct 2010 05:51

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Steve's Coaching Clinic
My daughter wants to quit!

"I coach an U9 girls team that my daughter plays for. She is eight years old and has been playing soccer for three years.

"At first glance she looks the part, but she is not focused. Her attention span is terribly short and she keeps talking about quitting. What can I do?"

My answer

I'm sorry that your daughter is not enjoying her soccer any more.

Children rarely drop out of soccer for just one reason. Often, there is a combination of factors such as:

Coaches are not doing a good job.
There is too much pressure to win.
Team members do not get along well with each other.
These factors are especially applicable to girls. They tend to be much more team-orientated than boys who will often carry on playing regardless of the pressure to win, quality of coaching and relationships with their peers providing they are playing well themselves and/or the team is winning.

I suggest you ask your daughter why she wants to stop playing. If she says "it's not fun anymore", try to find out why and do something about it.

Maybe you need to make practice sessions more game based (rather than use drills), stop focusing on results or face up to the reasons why the team does not get on with each other.

Or you might have to do all three!

It's important to act in some way or you might find other players will leave for the same reason that your daughter wants to quit.

Good luck!

Best wishes,

Steve Watson

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Are disruptive kids ruining your sessions?

Posted by STLCoach - 17 Nov 2010 03:56

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Are disruptive kids ruining your sessions?
If you want to make the most of your time on the training ground and avoid having problems with inappropriate behaviour, you must plan your coaching sessions carefully.

What is inappropriate behaviour?
Inappropriate behaviour can be refusing to obey a reasonable instruction, challenging your authority, laziness, bullying or harming (or trying to harm) another person – it isn't playfulness or a harmless, childish joke.

You need to remember that you are coaching children and sometimes "kids will be kids"'. Don't try to stifle innocent youthful behaviour. You were young once.

Turning up at a coaching session with no idea of what you're going to ask your players to do do is like saying to them: "Hey guys, I don't know what I'm doing so why don't you just mess about while I wing it."

But planning is more than browsing through footy4kids and choosing a couple of games to play. It has to be done properly. You need to consider the ability of your players, what you want to achieve by the end of the session, (your objective), and how you are going to achieve it, (the structure of the session).

A word about objectives
When you are planning your session, stick to one objective, such as: "I want my players to learn how to defend corners" or "I want my players to learn how to shield the ball".

And don't get sidetracked! Your players will get confused if you suddenly stop working on your original objective and introduce a new one and you'll probably end up achieving neither. So if you spot an opportunity for improvement during the session don't start working on it immediately, make a mental note to address it next week or the week after.

The structure of a youth football coaching session
Every coaching session should start with a gentle warm up to focus young minds and prepare their bodies for the tasks ahead and sessions should finish with a short cool down.

Cool downs are often neglected but they are important. Even young children will benefit from a gradual tailing off of physical activity rather than an abrupt, "OK guys, that's it", at the end of a session!

Cooling down the bodies of older children helps lower their heart rate, restore normal oxygen levels in their muscles and speeds the removal of lactic acid.

All that is required is a few minutes of low intensity activity. A light jog followed by a brisk then slow walk is ideal.

What's next – drills or games?
If you're teaching basics such as shielding the ball or push passing you will need to:

a) demonstrate the skill or technique that is the focus of your session

b) move on to some unopposed practice

c) test what your players have learned in an opposed (competitive) situation.

If for example, you want to improve your players' ability to play a lofted pass, demonstrate it first, (if you cannot do it, find someone who can!). Then put players into pairs to practise for a few minutes then play a game like Piggy in the Middle and ask your players to loft the ball over the "piggy".

WARNING! Traditional drills that involve players standing around waiting for ages to kick a ball for a few seconds should not be used unless you want a dozen bored children on your hands. And bored children will look for something to relieve their boredom. Like throwing mud or kicking each other.

So when planning your activities try, as far as possible, to involve every player in every activity for 100% of the time.

On the other hand, if your objective is to improve an element of match play (such as defending/attacking corners or taking goal kicks), you may decide to move straight into a conditioned game.

Jargon buster – what is a conditioned game?
A conditioned game is a game of football with a twist. If you want to work on goal kicks, for example, your team plays a game of football with the condition that every time the ball goes out or a goal is scored the game is restarted with a goal kick.

This gives your players plenty of opportunities to improve their technique in match-type conditions and,

by stopping the action momentarily at key times, you have the chance to ask how they could do it better.

Learning the lesson is easier and is retained better because of the realistic context.

The importance of intensity
Your session should gradually build in intensity, not lurch from high tempo to low and back to high.

If you go from a simple warm up to an all-out exericse, then go back to demonstrating a skill, you'll have a lot of energised players who suddenly don't have an outlet for their energy. So they will start throwing mud or kicking each other – again!

Transitions are key moments
Part of your planning should be to consider how you are going to make the transition between one activity and the next.

If you have big gaps between games while you sort out equipment, children will fill the gap with an activity of their own. Behind your back.

So make sure you know what equipment you will need and make sure you have it all to hand. Set up playing areas before the players arrive and store ball and bibs where you're going to use them – not 100 yards away.

If a gap of more than a minute or two is unavoidable, give your players something useful to do such as a quick juggling contest. Or send them away for a drinks break. Don't leave them to their own devices.

Competition is vital
Football is a competitive sport and the challenge of competition is one of the main reasons children want to play the game. If you overuse unopposed drills or play games that appear to have no end result (basic keepaway is a great example of a pointless game!) your players will be bored very quickly.

And bored children will find something more exciting to do. Throwing mud fits the bill nicely.

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HEADING -THE GREAT DEBATE

Posted by STLCoach - 21 Feb 2011 05:13

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Heading – the great debate

Ever since the late 1980s when a number of studies suggested that heading a soccer ball could cause concussion, "verbal deficits" and even a low IQ, a debate has rumbled on among youth soccer coaches and the game's administrators regarding the inherent risks involved.2

The two studies that have had the most influence on the debate were carried out in Norway and Virginia, USA.

The Norwegian study reported that an unusual number of professional soccer players performed poorly in tests designed to measure their mental skills while Adrienne Witol at the Virginia Commonwealth University's Medical College of Virginia found that those players who headed the ball most frequently

had, on average, a lower IQ than players who did not head as much.3

I'm not a scientist but it seems to me that there are alternative explanations for these findings. It could be that most Norwegian soccer players and American players who head the ball more often than their team mates (defenders?) might not be the brightest of people to start with. But that's just my opinion!

But these (and similar) studies captured the interest of the media. On July 18, 1999, for example, CNN ran a story with the headline (sic) "Putting head into game may leave young soccer players dizzy" and parents became concerned that playing soccer could be more a dangerous game than they first thought.

It wasn't long before some respected soccer authorities, not wanting to take any risks with the health and safety of children, called for children to wear head guards and some have even tried to ban heading for certain age groups: Dr. Lyle Micheli, Director of Sports Medicine at Children's Hospital in Boston has been quoted on NBC News as saying:

"Children do not have the musculoskeletal maturity or co-ordination to handle a header like an adult would. Kids are not fully developed until they're about 14 years old. I recommend that no child under the age of 14 should head the ball." 4

More recently, however, it has been suggested that heading the ball poses no significant risk... providing that children are taught the correct technique and appropriate equipment is used.

The technique

Hit the ball with your forehead (the area between hairline and eyebrows). This is the thickest part of the skull and will absorb the impact of the ball. If you use any other part of your head the impact of the ball will cause your neck to flex.
Keep your eyes open – if you can't see the ball coming, it could hit you anywhere.
Keep your mouth closed – you don't want to bite your tongue!
Hit the ball. Don't let it hit you.
If your players are old enough to understand these instructions they are old enough to be shown how to head the ball.

As well as using the correct technique, it's important to use the right size and weight of ball. Basically, the smaller and lighter the ball, the better. US Youth Soccer recommends a size three ball for children under the age of eight and a size four ball for ages eight to 10. A full size (size five) ball should only be used by 11 year olds and upwards.

And make sure the balls you use are inflated properly and are not damaged. A soft, hard or tatty ball increases the risk of injury.

How to practise heading – safely!

Throughout this session, you should watch for these common mistakes. If you see one or more of them, stop the practice and remind your players of the correct technique.

Eyes closed and/or mouth open.
Using the wrong part of the head to strike the ball.
Flexing the neck to impart power to the header rather than moving the entire upper body towards the ball.
Warm up: stand half your players around the edge of a circle of cones 20 yards across. Each holds a

ball. The rest of your players jog around inside the circle. On your command, the inside players run to an outside player, receive a gentle, lobbed ball at head height and head it back. Rotate the players after 10 headers.

Progression: head the ball to the feet of the server (an attacking header) or try to head the ball over the head of the server (a defensive header).

Throw, head, score

Objective: to score a headed goal.

Set up: Divide your players into teams of four or five and set up a 20 yards by 40 yards playing area with a goal at each end for each pair of teams.

How to play: the players advance towards the goals by throwing the ball to each other.

They can only take one step with the ball before passing it again. If they take too many steps or allow the ball to fall to the ground, possession is given to the other team.

Goals can only be scored with a header.

Progression: play a small-sided game with the same teams and on the same playing area.

Award one point for a goal scored with the feet and three points for a goal scored with a header.

General coaching notes: don't practise heading too much and make sure you use the right size ball, correctly inflated, and that you correct faulty technique as soon as you see it.

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Keep the parents at bay

Posted by STLCoach - 07 Mar 2011 09:02

Tab Ramos: Keep the parents at bay

Interview by Mike Woitalla

Tab Ramos, considered one of the USA's most skillful players ever, played for the USA at three World Cups, two Copa Americas, and in the Olympic Games. Two years after retiring in 2002 from a playing career in Spain, Mexico and MLS, he founded the New Jersey youth club NJSA 04. In 2008, he coached the NJSA 04 Gunners to the U-14 U.S. Youth Soccer national title, marking the first national championship for a New Jersey club in two decades.

SOCCER AMERICA: If you had a magic wand, how would you use it to improve youth soccer in America?

TAB RAMOS: Wow. I'd have to think about that …

One of the things that's been most important for our club is, from the first moment, eliminating parents' opinions from what we do.

The opinion of the parents of the players here is completely irrelevant to us. And that's been a good formula for making this club a real soccer club.

SA: What would be an example of detrimental parent interference?

TAB RAMOS: There are a thousand things. But I'll start with an example of a parent who had the right attitude.

On our U-16 [U.S. Soccer Development] Academy team we have a great player who starts all the games. He's been at our club for four or five years and just about every year previously he's been a substitute. He did not start. He happened to be on the team that won the national championship, but he didn't start.

It's the perfect case of a parent who figured it out the right way. This boy's father is a soccer guy. He kept his son at the club even though he wasn't starting. He could have moved him somewhere else and started for another team. He stayed here while he was a substitute -- trying hard all these years. Now he's 16 -- in the year that it really matters for him -- and starts every game.

I think that's the right formula.

SA: And the wrong parental approach …

TAB RAMOS: For most other cases, parents will be looking only at two things.

No. 1. Whether your team is winning the games. So if they're not winning the games, then obviously it's time for Johnny to move somewhere else -- to the team that just beat us.

No. 2. The huge effect that the parents have on the kids when they drive home. When the parents get in the two front seats of the van and little Johnny's is in the back. And he hears the parents say, "Well, the coach this … the coach that … He only gave him five minutes. … And I was timing the first half, and he only put him in this position. …"

All that negative talk instead of saying, "You know, that's great, you only played five minutes but you tried as hard as you can. Maybe if you keep trying hard, the next time you're going to play more and impress the coach."

I think parents are very protective of their kids and obviously everyone should be, but when it comes to sports, I have yet to meet a coach who doesn't want to play a good player a lot of the time. So chances

are if your son is not playing a lot, he doesn't deserve to play at this point.

SA: Since you started the club eight years ago, what have you discovered is a good strategy to providing the children with optimal coaching?

TAB RAMOS: At our club now, we believe the best thing is have people who are experts at certain age groups.

We keep our staff at the same age groups year-to-year, so the kids go through coaches like they go to school. First grade you have Mrs. Whatever, second grade you have Mr. Something Else.

We've been able in less than eight years to identify coaches that we have fit into certain age groups better than others. They teach the game better, and we've kept them in those age groups.

SOCCER AMERICA: You were perhaps the first big teenage star in American soccer, playing in the U-20 World Cup in 1983 at age 15. Looking back, how different is youth soccer now in the USA?

TAB RAMOS: It's so much different and so much better. It's more organized. There are more people involved in soccer who know what they're doing and leading the way in many good clubs.

Before, you rarely had someone who knew about soccer unless it was a parent of someone.

Not to say there aren't a lot of things wrong with youth soccer, but we've come a long way since when I grew up playing.

Soccer has become a huge sport and kids have great choices and opportunities to play for some great clubs who are going to give them an opportunity to advance.

SA: So you've seen significant improvements in youth coaching?

TAB RAMOS: I think it's improved tremendously. There are so many people who have played the game. So many people who have taken their coaching licenses, learning the game, studying the game.

There's so much soccer available on TV now, which is huge for the development of the kids as well. Watching the Premier League or La Liga, whatever, there's always soccer on TV. There's exciting soccer with good players.

All those things have had a huge effect.

SA: For sure a very positive of recent years is that Barcelona, which plays entertaining and successful soccer, is being watched by American coaches …

TAB RAMOS: The effect that Barcelona has had on world soccer and will have over the next decade is huge. We were just getting to the point of where it's almost like to step on the field you needed to be 6-foot-2, and that was all that mattered.

SA: And Barcelona's Lionel Messi, Andres Iniesta and Xavi all stand barely 5-foot-7 tall and finished top three in the 2010 world player of the year award …

TAB RAMOS: Being a 5-foot-7 guy, I can tell you that if I have a 5-foot-7 guy and a 6-foot-2 guy who play exactly the same, I'll take the 6-foot-2 guy. But now I know that it's OK for me to take the 5-foot-7 guy who can play better than the 6-foot-2 guy.

Not only do I know that, but everybody knows that. That you'd rather have the guys who can play first, and size is second. And I think Barcelona has had that effect on world soccer.

SA: So do you think this has an effect on American youth soccer where an emphasis on results so often leads to a playing style based on a big, strong kid in the back booting the ball up to the big, strong kid upfront?

TAB RAMOS: At the youth game it continues to happen. I can tell you at the Development Academy level you rarely find teams who don't want to play. They all want to play. They want to go forward. Some teams obviously have better players than others, but for the most part it's really been a good experience.

We had a webinar the other day that [U.S. Soccer Youth Technical Director] Claudio Reyna ran and it was basically more about playing offensive soccer and getting the outside backs coming out of the back and becoming part of the offense, and that kind of thing.

I think it's the beginning of a lot of changes and a lot of exciting stuff that's going to be happening down the road and I think we're going to be developing a lot better players.

SA: One of the side effects of youth soccer's incredible growth is the emergence of competing organizations. What are the pros and cons of that?

TAB RAMOS: It's difficult because now we're talking about business, companies trying to make money from it.

I think personally there's too many competitions, but the fact that U.S. Soccer has its own league [Development Academy] makes it simpler at least at the older age groups.

Players are starting to figure out the Academy is the place to be.

The rest are always going to have as many leagues as possible. Businesses are always going to be out there trying to make money, create competition and trying to sign up teams.

SA: It seems that the USA is producing more "good" players than ever. That our role players are better than a couple of decades ago, but the country doesn't produce truly exceptional players at the increased rate we would expect …

TAV RAMOS: I think exceptional players are not developed. I think they're born.

An example: At my club, players who've been training the same way for six or seven years, who've been taught the same things for six or seven years. Who have had every single aspect of their game put in front of them the exact way -- and they're completely different players.

Some can make perfect passes, an excellent through ball. Some can't complete three passes in a row to a teammate 10 yards away.

How do you explain that? I think some people just have god-given talent and some don't.

(Tab Ramos, the President and Executive Director of New Jersey club NJSA 04, was inducted into the National Soccer Hall of Fame in 2005.)

(Mike Woitalla, the executive editor of Soccer America, coaches youth soccer for East Bay United in Oakland, Calif. His youth soccer articles are archived at YouthSoccerFun.com.)

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Campaign against ref abuse

Posted by STLCoach - 06 Apr 2011 08:27

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Campaign against ref abuse should target coaches

By Paul Gardner

The English Premier League's chief executive (that's the sort of title we have in soccer these days), Richard Scudamore, has been giving some thought to the matter of referee abuse in his league.

He is evidently not happy with what's going on -- so it seems likely that some sort of clampdown on player behavior may be in the offing.

Soccer fans may well wonder what difference that will make. We have, after all, lived through all sorts of clampdowns on all sorts of things in soccer over the past, say, two decades. And, frankly, I don't think one of these campaigns has been worth a bag of beans.

FIFA is the usual source of clampdowns. The tackle from behind was going to be banned. It is still very much around. There was the war on players not tucking their shirts into their shorts -- remember that one? -- and that had little or no effect. Players are not supposed to rip their shirt off after scoring, they get yellow-carded for it, but they still do it (and I wonder why -- it's hardly a natural reaction, and players got by without shirt removal for more than 100 years of this sport), there was supposed to be a clampdown on the use of elbows but if there is, no one's noticed it, and of course the campaign to abolish diving that manages to trap more innocent victims than it does true culprits.

Those are the more substantial clampdowns. I could add in the more ephemeral efforts to counter encroachment, shirt-pulling, and tactical fouls. The fact that all of those infractions are still going strong tells the story. Clampdowns now come over as PR campaigns, short-lived tremors of indignant grandstanding that quickly die off as a new source of discontent is discovered.

Scudamore is trying to do what MLS Commissioner Don Garber has set out to do this season in MLS: to change player and referee attitudes. Scudamore wants less referee abuse, Garber wants more adventurous play. Not easy -- and particularly problematic when both Scudamore and Garber pay scant attention to the role of coaches in these transgressions.

The most disturbing case of referee abuse so far this season in the EPL has involved a top coach -- ManU's Alex Ferguson, who is sitting out a 5-game touchline ban. Alongside Ferguson's misbehavior it is worth considering the case of Rafael, ManU's young Brazilian fullback, found guilty and fined for swearing at a referee. Is it to be expected that players will behave better than their coaches? Their older, more-experienced and presumably wiser coaches?

The sort of behavior that Scudamore is deploring -- showing dissent at referee decisions, and the mobbing of referees by groups of players -- would simply not happen if coaches make it clear that any player guilty of such conduct will be fined, heavily, or even suspended -- not by the league, but by his club.

If clubs -- not just EPL clubs, but all clubs, everywhere -- do impose such punishments, then they are keeping very quiet about it. The discipline required in these cases, to be effective, must start at home --

with the club and with the club coach. If Ferguson can go after referees in the tunnel, if he can publicly accuse them of bias, why should his players feel obliged to show referees any respect?

Scudamore focuses on the behavior of players, pointing out that they “enjoy a privileged life” and that “extra responsibility comes with the territory.” He then feels obliged to almost apologize for his criticisms, insisting that he is not “demonizing” players.

Yet, without a similar -- or even harsher -- criticism aimed at the coaches, that is exactly what his campaign is going to look like.

If Scudamore, for whatever reason, does not wish, or is afraid, to nail the coaches, he has a perfectly acceptable way of accomplishing that end without seeming to do so. Simply by punishing the clubs. No individual need be named -- it is just the overall disciplinary record of the club that is under fire.

That can be measured by a club’s foul count and by the number of yellow and red cards it accumulates. This is an indirect way of assessing the coach’s behavior, even though he does not commit any fouls, and cannot be carded (cards are issued only to players). But the sort of anti-referee post-game comments that got Ferguson into trouble should also be taken into account. So, too, should any behavior -- such as referee-mobbing -- that might lead to a charge of “bringing the game into disrepute.”

As for punishment -- the club can be fined, though to be effective the fines would probably have to be so high that they would simply be unacceptable to everyone. A much more threatening move would be to combine a fine with a deduction from the team’s points total.

Maybe Scudamore’s move will result in that sort of action. But I seriously doubt whether anything will come of his words. Why is the clampdown (if that’s what it is) being introduced when the season is almost over? Most likely because of Ferguson’s high-profile case -- even though Scudamore has trained his sights on the players, not the coaches.

But what makes any firm, decisive action most unlikely, is the news that Scudamore and the EPL will be discussing the matter with “the English Football Association as well as the bodies that represent players, managers and referees.” With that many points of view to be considered, you can be sure nothing decisive will emerge. Merely an agreement by everyone to behave themselves in the future ... an agreement which will rather quickly be forgotten as things get back to normal.

We have taken this route before. Very recently. At the beginning of its 2008-09 season, the EPL introduced a campaign “inviting” players to show respect to the referees. You can tell that initiative never got off the ground -- or why would Scudamore now feel obliged to revisit the referee-abuse topic?

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