

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION DISCIPLINE PROCESS FOR SMALL-SIDED FOOTBALL

Introduction

Implementing an effective disciplinary process is an important factor for all formats of football, helping to establish a quality, organised, safe and enjoyable football experience for all players and officials. The issue of discipline is of equal importance in Small-Sided Football as it is in 11v11 football, and subsequently should be shown proper attention and regard by Small-Sided Football providers when organising their competitions; particularly if the competitions wish to be appropriately sanctioned and affiliated to The Football Association.

The FA have developed this disciplinary process to accommodate the varied and different needs of Small-Sided Football. The FA recognises that applying the same disciplinary processes to Small-Sided Football as it does in 11v11 football does not satisfactorily meet the differing demands of this version of the game. However, this does not mean that The FA takes ill-discipline in Small-Sided Football any less seriously.

It is important to note for all Small-Sided Football providers, that failure or disregard in establishing and effectively implementing these FA disciplinary processes can and will lead to The FA removing affiliation and classifying providers competitions as being unsanctioned by The FA.

For all Small-Sided Football providers that affiliate to The FA nationally it is a condition of affiliation to agree to abide by the 'Heads of Agreement' that clearly state that the provider will manage disciplinary issues in accordance with The FA disciplinary process.

It is recommended that County FAs that affiliate local Small-Sided Football providers establish similar agreements.

The implementation of this disciplinary process will help create a safer and more enjoyable football environment for Small-Sided Football players and officials, but also importantly for the providers it can assist in retaining participants playing in their competition.

FA DISCIPLINARY SYSTEM FOR SMALL-SIDED FOOTBALL

1. Discipline Ownership & Control

All issues of discipline that occur at an FA affiliated Small-Sided Football provider fall under the jurisdiction of the local County FA.

The ability for Small-Sided Football providers to manage discipline in their competitions for incidents that would normally carry a suspension of less than 35 days is a responsibility that has been delegated to the provider by the local County FA.

It is at the discretion of The FA to remove this delegated responsibility from a Small-Sided Football provider if the provider is unable to demonstrate competence in handling and managing disciplinary issues. In such cases the responsibility for all discipline in that competition will be returned to the local County FA.

2. Issuing of Cautions and Introduction of 'Timed Suspensions'

In Small-Sided Football yellow cards and associated cautions are no longer employed. Referees should instead employ a blue card for a cautionable offence. The issuing of a blue card indicates that the recipient will serve an immediate 'timed suspension' ('sin bin').

The options for disciplining offenders are therefore as follows

- Player shown a blue card and temporarily suspended from play
- Player issued with a discretionary second blue card and temporarily excluded from play
- Player issued with a red card and permanently excluded from play.

A blue card offence should always be accompanied by a temporary suspension from play.

The period of timed suspension in Small-Sided Football is a recommended two minutes. The release of players from a temporary suspension should be at the direction of the Referee.

2.1. *Recording of Blue Cards*

In Small-Sided Football cautionable offences that result in a blue card and a timed suspension from the match shall not be recorded and reported by the match official or Small-Sided Football provider.

Blue card offences should not be reported back to the County FA, and no disciplinary fine shall be incurred by the player.

3. **Disciplinary Procedures for Red Card Offences**

All red card offences, regardless of the severity of the offence, shall be reported by the match official to the local County FA and the Small-Sided Football provider using the 'Disciplinary Report' in Appendix A.

It is the responsibility of the Small-Sided Football provider to ensure that their referees complete and despatch these disciplinary reports to the relevant County FA.

3.1. *'Serious' Red Card Offences (more than 35 days)*

Offences classified as 'serious' that will carry a thirty-five day suspension or above in accordance with current FA Memorandum and Procedures will be the responsibility of the local County FA. Once the County FA has reviewed the case the Small-Sided Football provider along with the player will be informed of the outcome and any disciplinary action.

Offences that carry a thirty-five day suspension are defined in the FA Memorandum of Procedures.

3.2. *'Less Serious' Red Card Offences (fewer than 35 days)*

Offences classified as 'less serious' that would normally carry a suspension of less than thirty-five days should be dealt with by the Small-Sided Football provider under the delegated-authority of the County FA.

The match official should complete a 'Disciplinary Report' (Appendix A) and ensure that it is sent to the Small-Sided Football.

The Small-Sided Football provider should employ the following disciplinary tariff of suspensions for less serious offences that would normally carry a suspension of less than 35 days. The provider shall not fine the player.

Match Suspension Tariff

| <i>Offence</i> | <i>Penalty (to be administered by Small-Sided Operator)</i> |
|---|---|
| Receiving a second 'blue card' in the same match | 1 Match suspension |
| Denying a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity | 1 Match suspension |
| Use of offensive, insulting or abusive gestures | 2 Match suspension |
| Attempting to kick or strike another player | 3 Match suspension |

4. **Remit of Disciplinary Action**

County FA disciplinary action arising from offences that receive a suspension of 35 days or above apply to both 11-a-side and Small-Sided Football.

Red cards administered in Small-Sided Football for offences, which would normally carry a suspension of less than 35 days are the responsibility of the organiser to deal with according to The FA's recommended tariff of suspensions. Suspension for offences of less than 35 days would only apply to Small-Sided Football.

If a player is suspended from 11-a-side football this suspension applies to all formats of football, including Small-Sided Football.

5. **Personal Liability for 'Serious' Disciplinary Offences**

Initial responsibility for a disciplinary issue will be with the individual who committed the offence. If this individual leaves the team but can be accurately identified, this individual shall remain responsible for the payment of a fine and should be suspended from all forms of football until the fine is paid.

If the individual responsible for the offence cannot be accurately identified, the responsibility for the payment of this fine will be with (in order of responsibility):

- 1) The small-sided team that the individual played for when committing the offence.
- 2) The team captain of the team that the individual played for.
- 3) The competition (i.e. the Small-Sided Football provider).

6. **Implementation of Disciplinary Procedures**

A robust disciplinary process can only operate if a record is kept of the identity of participating teams and players.

All Small-Sided Football providers should maintain details of participating teams, and team contacts prior to the beginning of a competition. Providers should ensure that these details remain updated as ultimate responsibility for identifying individuals that commit serious disciplinary offences lies with the provider.

In addition Organisers should identify a system whereby the identity of participating players is recorded prior to a game commencing. These records should be retained by the Organisers and referred to in the event of a serious incident or on suspicion that a player is playing whilst under suspension.

The existence of these systems shall be a requirement before a County FA will provide sanction to a competition taking place.

In order for an effective discipline, affiliation and referees appointment procedure to exist a good working relationship should exist between the Competition Organiser and the County FA. County FA's and Competition Organisers should establish a 'Heads of Agreement' document which identifies the responsibilities of each party in relation to maintenance of discipline and affiliation processes.

SMALL-SIDED FOOTBALL DISCIPLINARY REPORT

How to use:

- The Competition Referee should complete this form after a red-card has been issued.
- One form should be completed for each red-card.
- The first copy of this form should be retained by the competition organiser, the second to be retained by the Referee and the third copy should be forwarded to the County FA.

Referees must report to the local County Football Association any Red Card Offence.

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Venue | |
| Date | |
| Player | |
| Team | |
| Opposition Team | |

I have disciplined this player for the following Offence:

| Card Type | Offence | Please Tick |
|---|--|-------------|
| Red Card Type One (less than 35 days suspension – to be managed by competition organiser) | Denying a goal or an obvious scoring opportunity by physical means or by deliberately handling the ball. | |
| | Use of offensive, insulting or abusive language/gesture (not to a Referee) | |
| | A second blue card offence | |
| | Attempting to kick or strike another player | |
| | Serious Foul Play | |
| Red Cards Type Two (35 days or above suspension – to be managed by County FA) | Violent conduct | |
| | Kicking or striking another player | |
| | Use of offensive or insulting or abusive language or gestures directed at match officials | |
| | Spitting | |
| | Head butting | |
| | Assault | |
| | Refusing to leave the field of play when ordered | |
| | Causing a match to be abandoned | |
| Any offences where the offender has also acted in a discriminatory manner for reasons of ethnic origin, colour, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability | | |

Notes of Incident

[Large empty rectangular box for notes]

Referee Name:

Signature:

Date: