

Misconduct reports: Use the USSF “7 + 7” guidelines!

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Ah, yes... You’ve just finished refereeing a difficult match that required several cautions, you’ve handed the coaches their rosters and are looking forward to getting some rest and relaxation at home, right? Wrong! Our duties as referees are not complete until we file the misconduct reports. For WSYSA matches, that means writing up one report for every time you pull out a yellow or red card.

But does this take a lot of work? Not really. Every report you write must describe the situation, the incident, the actions taken and the outcome. Stick to those four requirements and you will be done in no time. And believe me (having been there myself), the disciplinary committee members who have to deal with 30-60 of these reports every week will appreciate your attention to detail and clarity.

When filling out a misconduct report for a WSYSA match, the USSF “7 + 7” document is your best friend. To find this document, go to www.ussoccer.com. Click on “Referees”, then “Laws of the Game”, and then choose “2004 ‘7 Cautionable + 7 Sending-off Offenses’ – Amateur” from the list. Print this document and keep it handy.

When using this document, please remember that you are not filing a report for a professional division match. You are required to give a clear and concise report of the incident in plain English, so notations such as “UB 1a” mean nothing to the disciplinary committee. Please DO refer to the USSF “7 + 7” document, but write the sentence out rather than make a cryptic notation.

So what should you include in the body of the report, and where does “7 + 7” fit in? Every report should include:

1. The situation: Give the time of the match and the score at that time, along with anything of importance (previous incidents, tone of the match).
2. The incident: Tell what happened, who did it, what made it a misconduct (i.e., careless, reckless, with excessive force), and how far away it occurred from you.
3. The actions taken: Tell what you did in reaction to the incident. If you issued a misconduct, which one of the 7 reasons for a caution or 7 reasons for a send-off did you apply? Use the exact language from the “7 + 7” document.
4. The outcome: Tell what happened with this player after this incident, if anything.

So an example of a good report may read: “In minute 23, with the score 2-1 for Angels, Mr. John Smith of the Devils tackled an opponent in a reckless manner while contesting for the ball. The incident occurred inside the center circle, 10 yards from my view. Mr.

Smith was cautioned and shown the yellow card for Unsporting Behavior. There were no further incidents with this player”. Straightforward, concise and containing everything the committee needs to process it and move on:

The situation: “In minute 23, with the score 2-1 for Angels...” This lets us know it was fairly early in an offensively minded match.

The incident: “...Mr. John Smith of the Devils tackled an opponent in a reckless manner while contesting for the ball. The incident occurred inside the center circle, 10 yards from my view.” This tells us just about everything – that it was a hard tackle in a neutral part of the field with the ball involved. We also know that the referee was close enough to see it happen, and in his or her opinion, the tackle was RECKLESS. This makes it a cautionable offense according to “7 + 7”.

The actions taken: “Mr. Smith was cautioned and shown the yellow card for Unsporting Behavior”. This tells us that the referee acted immediately, and the reason why he issued the card – UNSPORTING BEHAVIOR. This is one of the seven cautionable offenses listed in the law book.

The outcome: “There were no further incidents with this player”. This tells us the player accepted the caution and settled down for the rest of the match.

See how easy it is? Actually, things can get a little more complicated when one incident results in multiple misconducts, or when you have a lot of cards to write up. But if you treat each card as a separate incident, it becomes a lot easier. Take for example these three misconduct reports, each describing different parts of the same incident –

“At minute 61, with the score 3-1 in favor of Team Blue, Mr. Bob Smith of Hooligans committed a reckless tackle from behind which endangered the safety of his opponent. The incident occurred 10 yards up field from the Hooligans penalty arc and five yards from my view. Before I was able to deal with this misconduct, another incident occurred which is detailed on a separate report. After that incident was handled, Mr. Smith was issued a red card and sent off for Serious Foul Play. He was supervised by a coach on the touchline until his parents picked him up at the end of the match.”

“At minute 61, with the score 3-1 in favor of Team Blue, Mr. Fred Jones of Team Blue struck an opponent and knocked him to the ground. The incident occurred 10 yards up field from the Hooligans penalty arc and five yards from my view, immediately after the opponent (Mr. Bob Smith of Hooligans) had committed a reckless tackle from behind against Mr. Jones’ teammate. That incident is detailed on a separate report. Mr. Jones was immediately shown the red card and sent off for Violent Conduct. He was met by his parents on the touchline and left the field.”

“At minute 62, with the score 3-1 in favor of Team Blue and after an incident detailed in a separate report, Mr. Tom Beard of Hooligans maintained a loud, persistent harangue at the referee as I was setting up direct free kick. The incident occurred at the top of the

Hooligans penalty arc and two yards from my view. Mr. Beard was cautioned for dissent and shown the yellow card. There were no further incidents with this player”.

Each of these reports, if seen separately, stands alone. If seen together, the puzzle fits together and makes sense. So when you pull that card out and write up the report afterward, make sure you follow the simple four-step formula above and use the USSF “7 + 7” guideline. This will give the disciplinary committee the full and detailed picture of what happened.

Now go out there and whistle while you work!