



NZTFI Referee Abuse Policy and Procedures

(Approved by the NZTFI National Development Officer April 11th 2020)

1. Scope - NZTFI Referee Abuse Policy and Procedures

1.01 The NZTFI (New Zealand Tag Football Incorporated) Referee Abuse Policy and Procedures have been developed to address the abuse of referee personnel that occurs at NZTFI Sanctioned events (or other nominated NZTFI events) by:

- Members of the Public;
- Team Officials; and
- Players.

1.02 In general Referee Abuse consists of the following:

- i. acting in an abusive, threatening, insulting, intimidating or offensive manner towards the Match Referees, Referee Support Official, NZTFI Referee Coaches; and/or
- ii. verbal and nonverbal communication which contains foul, abusive, threatening, insulting, intimidating or offensive language or which implies or directly threatens physical harm to the Match Referees, Referee Support Official, NZTFI Referee Coaches; and/or
- iii. Disputing or protesting a Referee's decision; and/or
- iv. Making an abusive, threatening, insulting, intimidating or offensive gestures to the Match Referees, Referee Support Official, NZTFI Referee Coaches.

1.03 The NZTFI Referee Abuse Policy and Procedures applies Members of the Public; Team Officials and Players that attend NZTFI Tag events.

2. NZTFI Referee Abuse Policy and Procedures Statement

2.01 The NZTFI Referee Abuse Policy and Procedures provide clarity to all NZTFI stakeholders of the policy settings and procedures for dealing with Members of the Public; Team Officials; and Players who attend NZTFI National Championships or other nominated NZTFI events and abuse NZTFI referee personnel during matches.

2.02 Abuse of referees, umpires and match officials is a global problem and New Zealand is not immune from such problems. Referees, umpires and match officials encounter an array of hostile behaviours from players, coaches and spectators ranging from verbal abuse to physical assault. The most common form of abuse exhibited is verbal aggression, with 64% of match officials in one study¹ claiming to have frequently



experienced such actions, followed by threats (36%). Worryingly 15% of the match officials reported physical abuse while on the job – and it's not rare for match officials to be hospitalised as a result of physical attacks.

2.03 The reason the NZTFI Referee Abuse Policy and Procedures have been developed is to ensure that all NZTFI stakeholders that attend NZTFI National Championships or other nominated NZTFI events are aware that abuse of NZTFI Referee Personnel is:

- a. Unacceptable; and is
- b. Subject to action by NZTFI to hold such Members of the Public; Team Officials; and Players to account for their actions.

3. Terms and definitions

3.01 While it is not possible to provide a definitive and exhaustive list of the types of conduct, behaviour, statements or practices that may amount to Referee Abuse under this policy and procedures, by way of illustration, each of the following types of conduct, behaviour, statements or practices however or wheresoever undertaken are examples of and constitute Referee Abuse:

- i. acting in an abusive, threatening, insulting, intimidating or offensive manner towards the Match Referees, Referee Support Official, or NZTFI Referee Coaches;
- ii. verbal and nonverbal communication which contains foul, abusive, threatening, insulting, intimidating or offensive language or which implies or directly threatens physical harm to the Match Referees, Referee Support Official, or NZTFI Referee Coaches;
- iii. Making an abusive, threatening, insulting, intimidating or offensive gestures to the Match Referees, Referee Support Official, or NZTFI Referee Coaches;
- iv. any threat or damage to the Match Referees, Referee Support Official, NZTFI Referee Coaches person or personal property;
- v. disputing or make any protest of Referee decisions during the match to the Match Referees, Referee Support Official, NZTFI Referee Coaches; and
- vi. acts or statements to the Match Referees, Referee Support Official, NZTFI Referee Coaches that are, or conduct that is, discriminatory by reason of religion, race, sex, sexual orientation, disability, colour or national or ethnic origin.



4. NZTFI Referee Abuse Procedures – abuse from a Member of the Public match at any NZ Tag events

4.01 NZTFI Referee Abuse Procedures when a referee/s² are abused by a member/s of the Public at a NZTFI Tag events during a match is as follows:

- a. Level 1 – Member/s of the Public abuse of a referee:
 - i. referee stops play (the referee does this when s/he can clearly identify the Member/s of the Public abusing the referee);
 - ii. all referees assemble where the referee stopped play;
 - iii. the referee requests the presence of both team captains;
 - iv. the referee advises the team captains that
 1. a Member/s of the Public has abused the referee/s and
 2. The referees will now request a NZTFI Tournament Official to come to the ground to monitor the offending Member/s of the Public behavior;
 - v. Once the NZTFI Tournament Official is in place, the match restarts where play was at when the referee stopped play; and
 - vi. The referee will complete a NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident report after the match.

- b. Level 2– Member/s of the Public abuse of a referee continues:
 - vii. referee stops play;
 - viii. all referees assemble where the referee stopped play;
 - ix. the referee requests the presence of both team captains and NZTFI Tournament Official;
 - x. the referee advises the team captains and the NZTFI Tournament Official that
 1. a Member/s of the Public has abused the referee/s that due to the continued referee abuse by the Member of the Public that NZTFI Tournament Rule 22 is now being applied which specifically means the referee will instruct the offending member of the Public to immediately leave the park and/or surrounding playing area. If the member of the Public refuses to comply with the instructions of the Match Referees, Referee Support Official, NZTFI Referee Coaches or NZTFI Tournament Officials then the match will be stopped until the instruction is complied with.
 - xi. The referee team and the NZTFI Tournament Official will then approach the part of the field where the Member/s of the Public is located and on a best endeavor's basis deliver the NZTFI Tournament Rule 22 instruction to the offending member of the Public to immediately leave the park and/or surrounding playing area. The following options will then apply:
 1. If the offending member of the Public complies with the instruction to leave the park and/or surrounding playing area, then:

² This is defined as "Match Referees, Referee Support Official, NZTFI Referee Coaches". For clarity if a Referee Support Official and/or NZTFI Referee Coaches for a specific match at a NZTFI National Championship are abused, then the Referee Support Official and/or NZTFI Referee Coaches will bring the matters to the attention of the match referees.



- i. The match restarts where play was at when the referee stopped play; and
 - ii. The referee will complete a NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident report after the match; or
2. If the offending Member/s of the Public refuses to comply with the instructions of the referee,
then the match will be stopped until the instruction is complied with.
- xii. The referee will complete a NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident report after the match.

5. NZTFI Referee Abuse Procedures – abuse from Team Officials

5.01 The NZTFI Referee Abuse Procedures when a referee/s are abused by a Team Official at a NZTFI Sanctioned event during a match is as follows:

- a. Level 1 – Team official abuse of a referee:
 - i. referee stops play;
 - ii. all referees assemble where the referee stopped play;
 - iii. the referee requests the presence of the captain of the offending team's team official;
 - iv. the referee advises the captain the team official has abused the referee/s and that this is a level 1 incident;
 - v. The match restarts with a penalty awarded to the non-offending team at the position of the ball at the time the offence is first identified, or directly forward from this position at halfway whichever is the greatest advantage to the non-offending team; and
 - vi. The referee will complete a NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident report after the match.

- b. Level 2– Team official abuse of a referee and/or Team official abuse of a referee continues:
 - i. referee stops play;
 - ii. all referees assemble where the referee stopped play;
 - iii. the referee requests the presence of the captain of the offending team's team official;
 - iv. the referee advises the captain that the due to the team official abuse that if the referee abuse continues then matters may move to a level 3 or level 4 violation. A level 3 violation will result in the offending team's team official being sent for a period of time in the sinbin for two (2) minutes. A level 4 violation will result in the offending team official being dismissed for the remainder of the match;
 - v. The referee will direct the captain to advise the offending team's team official of the consequences of further referee abuse;
 - vi. The match restarts with a penalty awarded to the non-offending team at the position of the ball at the time the offence is first identified, or directly forward from this position at halfway whichever is the greatest advantage to the non-offending team; and
 - vii. The referee will complete a NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident report after the match.



c. Level 3– Team official abuse of a referee and/or Team official abuse of a referee continues:

- i. referee stops play;
- ii. all referees assemble where the referee stopped play;
- iii. the referee the presence of the captain of the offending team’s team official;
- iv. the referee advises the captain that:
 1. a final formal warning is being made in respect of the team official abuse and advises the captain that if the referee abuse continues from the team official that matters will move to level 4. A level 4 violation will result in the offending team official being dismissed for the remainder of the match; and
 2. due to the referee abuse the offending team official is sent for a period of time in the sinbin for two (2) minutes.
- v. The referee then advises the offending team official that s/he is now being sent for a period of time in the sinbin for two (2) minutes. Play won’t restart until the offending team official gets to the correct field position for the sinbin;
- vi. The match restarts with a penalty awarded to the non-offending team at the position of the ball at the time the offence is first identified, or directly forward from this position at halfway whichever is the greatest advantage to the non-offending team; and
- vii. The referee will complete a NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident report after the match.

ci. Level 4 – Team official abuse of a referee continues:

- i. referee stops play;
- ii. all referees assemble where the referee stopped play;
- iii. the referee the presence of the captain of the offending team’s team official;
- iv. the referee advises the captain of the offending team official that due to the referee abuse by the team official that the team official is being dismissed for the remainder of the match;
- v. Play won’t restart until the offending team official moves to and remains not closer than ten (10) metres from the field of play;
- vi. The match restarts with a penalty awarded to the non-offending team at the position of the ball at the time the offence is first identified, or directly forward from this position at halfway whichever is the greatest advantage to the non-offending team; and
- vii. The referee will complete a NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident report after the match.

5.02 If a team official is dismissed for the remainder of a match for a level 4 referee abuse incident as per 5.01 d, then the team official is subjected to an automatic three (3) match suspension excluding byes. There is no right of appeal to the automatic suspension.

5.03 The NZTFI Judicial Commissioner in his/her discretion:

- i. may review the automatic three (3) match suspension if on review of the NZTFI Referee Report the commissioner determines that three (3) match suspension is manifestly inadequate; and



- II. subject to giving the team official the opportunity to make further representations on the matter, may impose additional sanctions on the team official.

6. NZTFI Referee Abuse Procedures – abuse from Players

6.01 The NZTFI Referee Abuse Procedures when a referee/s are abused by a player/s in a team at a NZTFI sanctioned event during a match is as follows:

- a. Level 1 – Team player abuse of a referee:
 - i. referee stops play;
 - ii. all referees assemble where the referee stopped play;
 - iii. the referee requests the presence of the:
 1. captain of offending team of the player; and
 2. the offending player;
 - iv. the referee advises the captain and player that the player has abused the referee/s and that this is a level 1 incident;
 - v. The match restarts with a penalty awarded to the non-offending team at the position of the ball at the time the offence is first identified, or directly forward from this position at halfway whichever is the greatest advantage to the non-offending team; and
 - vi. The referee will complete a NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident report after the match.
- b. Level 2– Team player abuse of a referee continues:
 - i. referee stops play;
 - ii. all referees assemble where the referee stopped play;
 - iii. the referee requests the presence of the:
 - a. captain of offending team of the player; and
 - b. the offending player;
 - iv. the referee advises the captain and player that the due to the referee abuse that if the referee abuse continues then matters may move to a level 3 or level 4 violation. A level 3 violation will result in the player being sent for a period of time in the sinbin for two (2) minutes. A level 4 violation will result in the player being dismissed for the remainder of the match;
 - v. The match restarts with a penalty awarded to the non-offending team at the position of the ball at the time the offence is first identified, or directly forward from this position at halfway whichever is the greatest advantage to the non-offending team; and
 - vi. The referee will complete a NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident report after the match.
- c. Level 3– Team player abuse of a referee continues:
 - i. referee stops play;
 - ii. all referees assemble where the referee stopped play;
 - iii. the referee requests the presence of the:
 - a. captain of offending team of the player; and
 - b. the offending player;
 - iv. the referee advises the captain and player that:



- a. a final formal warning is being made in respect of the player abuse and advises the captain that if the referee abuse continues that matters will move to level 4. A level 4 violation will result in the player being dismissed for the remainder of the match; and
 - b. due to the referee abuse that the offending player is now being sent for a period of time in the sinbin for two (2) minutes
 - v. The match restarts with a penalty awarded to the non-offending team at the position of the ball at the time the offence is first identified, or directly forward from this position at halfway whichever is the greatest advantage to the non-offending team; and
 - vi. The referee will complete a NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident report after the match.
- d. Level 4 – Team player abuse of a referee continues:
- i. referee stops play;
 - ii. all referees assemble where the referee stopped play;
 - iii. the referee requests the presence of the:
 - a. captain of offending team of the player; and
 - b. the offending player;
 - iv. the referee advises the captain and the offending player that due to the referee abuse by the player that the player is being dismissed for the remainder of the match;
 - v. Play won't restart until the offending team official moves to and remains not closer than ten (10) metres from the field of play;
 - vi. The match restarts with a penalty awarded to the non-offending team at the position of the ball at the time the offence is first identified, or directly forward from this position at halfway whichever is the greatest advantage to the non-offending team; and
 - vii. The referee will complete a NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident report after the match.
- 6.02 If a Player is dismissed for the remainder of a match for a level 4 referee abuse incident as per 6.01 d, then the Player is subjected to an automatic three (3) match suspension excluding byes. There is no right of appeal to the automatic suspension.
- 6.03 The NZTFI Judicial Commissioner in his/her discretion:
- I. may review the automatic three (3) match suspension if on review of the NZTFI Referee Report the commissioner determines that three (3) match suspension is manifestly inadequate; and
 - II. subject to giving the Player the opportunity to make further representations on the matter, may impose additional sanctions on the Player.

7. General provisions

Referee discretion - Level 1 to Level 4 decision making (under section 5 and 6)

- 7.01 The NZTFI Referee Abuse Policy and Procedures provide for a four-level system for referee abuse by Team Officials and Players under section 5 and 6 of this document.
- 7.02 For clarity the four-level system for referee abuse under section 5 and 6 of this



document does not mean the system is applied sequentially by starting at level 1; then followed by level 2; etc etc.

- 7.03 Referees under section 5 and 6 of this document have the discretion to enter into the four-level system at any level depending on the severity of the referee abuse.
- 7.04 Under section 4 (NZTFI Referee Abuse Procedures – abuse from a Member of the Public match at NZ National Championships or other nominated NZTFI events) it is a two-stage sequential system with referees starting at level 1 and then escalating to level 2.

NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident reporting

- 7.05 For clarity only one report per person is required for NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident reporting in a match for either a Member of the Public; Team Official; or Player.
- 7.06 Although for each level there is a requirement at the end of each level that NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident reporting is a required, the requirement is for only one report per person irrespective of whether a Member of the Public; Team Official; or Player proceeds through only one or multiple levels within the NZTFI Referee Abuse Policies and Procedures framework.

Team Official – Sin bin position

- 7.07 A team official sent from the field of play for a period of time is to remain five (5) metres beyond the midpoint of their attacking touchdown zone line (sin bin) until recalled by the Referee. The team official is allowed to join his/her team at half time.
- 7.08 The team official must remain mute in the sinbin and not in any way communicate with his/her team.

Support Referee and NZTFI Referee Coach³

- 7.09 If a support referee and/or NZTFI Referee Coach is abused on the sideline, the support referee and/or NZTFI Referee Coach should follow play and not disadvantage the non-offending team. When possible, the support referee and/or NZTFI Referee Coach will gain the attention of the control referee who will follow the steps indicated in the NZTFI Referee Abuse Policies and Procedures framework.
- 7.10 The support referee/s should always remain mute during feedback to the captain and not initiate an interchange.

NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident reports – post NZTFI Sanctioned Event

- 7.11 All NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident reports and disciplinary outcomes issued by NZTFI Judicial Commissioner following a NZTFI National Championship will be emailed to the following key personnel within 14 days of the NZTFI Sanctioned Event:

³ A NZTFI Referee Coach is defined as a qualified NZTFI Referee Coach who has been formally appointed by the NZTFI National Director of Referees (or his/her nominee) to be a referee coach to the specific NZTFI National Championship (or other NZTFI nominated event) match.



- a) New Zealand Secondary School Championships: to the Principal of the Secondary School of the participating team; and
- b) Other NZTFI National Championships: to the Chair and or President of the Provincial Association participating team.

7.12 The purpose of this reporting is to ensure that Referee Abuse Incident reports and disciplinary outcomes issued by NZTFI Judicial Commissioner are transparent to the key leadership of the School or Provincial Association.

7.13 The NZTFI National Referees Director and NZTFI National Development Officer will be responsible for implementing 7.11.

Monitoring NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident reports

7.14 All NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident reports will be tracked and monitored by the NZTFI National Referees Coordinator and NZTFI National Director of Referees.

7.15 The NZTFI National Referees Director and NZTFI National Development Officer is delegated authority to bring any past NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident reports to the attention of the NZTFI Judicial Commissioner in any future NZTFI Referee Abuse Incident reports lodged in respect of the same person.

NZTFI Referee Signal – stoppage in play for Referee Abuse notification

7.16 At all levels of the NZTFI Referee Abuse Policy and Procedures, when referee abuse occurs the initial referee process is:

- i. referee stops play;
- ii. all referees assemble where the referee stopped play.

7.17 The assembly of referees is designed to ensure that all three referees are aware of the referee abuse.

7.18 The referee signal to stop the game and call the support referees to the control referee is as follows: use the current full time whistle/signal of two hands up, palms faced outwards signal followed by a Tee signal like the Sin-bin but raised well above the head of the control referee.

Interpretation of the NZTFI Referee Abuse Policy and Procedures

7.19 The Chairman of the NZTFI Judicial, Legal and Constitutional Committee shall have the power to rule on any issue of interpretation of NZTFI Referee Abuse Policy and Procedures, and/or on any matter not clearly provided for in the NZTFI Referee Abuse Policy and Procedures, which ruling shall be final and binding.