

## Respect our Referees

An integral part of your child's football at Majura FC are the referees officiating your child's games every Saturday. They range in age from as young as 13 (although Game Leaders are 12) to the mid-fifties, but the vast majority are under 16 years of age. For some this is their first year, others have some years of experience. The one thing they all have in common is that they have successfully completed an official referee's course. This 2 day course covers the football laws, practical examples of fouls, offsides etc. and a final exam. Before every season start, qualified referees attend a refresher day covering rule changes and emphasis on the laws that cause most controversy. Each Saturday, these qualified referees attend to provide structure and discipline on the football field. Like our football players, they begin as novices and develop experience and confidence as they progress. They do their best to apply the laws of football in an impartial manner. They make decisions based on what they have seen in an instant, often through a tangle of players, without the benefit of video review.

What our referees don't need is players, coaches or supporters vocally disputing decisions. This can detrimentally affect their performance and confidence, and can ultimately lead to them quitting refereeing.

As adults, we should be teaching our junior players that some decisions will be contentious but that is the nature of football, indeed any refereed sport. In fact, the FFA Spectator Code has as its first point, "respect the decision of Match Officials and teach children to do the same". Those of you who watch the professional leagues will have seen plenty of controversial decisions made by highly experienced professional referees so why berate a young, inexperienced referee in an amateur league just because you disagree with their call?

For many of the younger or inexperienced referees, it is both distressing and intimidating to be confronted by irate adults. The MFC Codes of Conduct specify expected behaviours and the Club absolutely condemns abuse or harassment of referees at any ground regardless of the perceived injustice of a decision.

This year Capital Football reported a 40% decline in referee numbers, and it would be fair to surmise that a number of those just got fed up with the disrespect and aggression from players and supporters. Already this year we have seen a number of our referees very distressed by the treatment they have received. So next time you feel like venting your anger at a referee, particularly the younger ones, please remember these four things;

- 1) They have completed a referee's course and have earned the right to officiate matches. You probably haven't.
- 2) As an adult, the Club expects you to set an example of tolerance to your children and those around you. Read and apply the Club's Code of Conduct (you will find it on the Club website).
- 3) Recognise that the referee may have seen the incident differently from you. Accept their decision and accept that you may be wrong.
- 4) Ask yourself whether you would like your own child to be harassed while trying to do their best. Club officials are always available on game day and they will speak to anybody from any club seen harassing referees. If you see a MFC player or supporter harassing a ref, please remind them of their responsibilities. If they continue, or if they are from another club, please inform a Majura official immediately.

A last word - if you think you can do a better job than the referee on the field, the Club would welcome more qualified referees, particularly of parent age.