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**Walsall Junior Youth Football League**

**October 2017**

**FAO: Club Chair, Secretary, Welfare Officer, Team Manager/Coach and Parents/Supporters.**

**An open letter sent on behalf of the Chairman and Committee of Walsall Junior Youth Football League.**

The season is one month old and it is with regret that we feel we need to write to all clubs to seek your support in relation to discipline and Respect incidents that have already been reported to the league and the County FA.

We seem to be experiencing a larger than usual number of incidents that involve managers/coaches or parents/supporters directing abuse and threatening behaviour towards referees (and in some cases opposition parents/supporters).

We feel it is too easy to think this is always another team and to bury our heads in the sand.

As a league, we are committed to driving this sort of behaviour out of our games and to allow the children to play football in an atmosphere that is conducive to them developing whilst all associated with clubs can enjoy the matches.

We do have a small minority of people who attend matches who appear incapable of displaying civil behaviour and need to result to abusive language or threats of violence.

Perhaps a few reminders and suggestions will help us all to engage in the sport we love in the right manner:

1. Any on field issues must be referred to the County FA and we are encouraging referees and others to report these incidents – it really does not help if the reports are not being sent in. Reports are best if they are concise and factual.
2. Many of our referees are under the age of 18 and as such adults should think very carefully about how they treat them. All referees are doing a job for us to allow games to be played. It really does not help a referee to have every decision challenged from the sidelines. The adults present at matches need to set the tone and an example to the children. Coaches should mark a referee fairly at the end of the game and talk to our Referees Secretary if they have concerns or issues.
3. Clubs and Teams are responsible for the behaviour of everyone associated with their Club or Team. All clubs subscribe to the FA campaigns and values, but how many will truly implement the change that is needed to see unwanted behaviour and attitudes removed from our matches? As a league, we must follow FA guidelines with regards to incidents. We are aware that this can take time and is frustrating for all. But a club who knows it has a problem with a coach or supporter should take immediate action to remove them from the pitch side until such time that they can be trusted to act in a way that is acceptable.
4. Supporters need to be reminded that children will thrive in a friendly, secure and supportive environment. No parent needs to encroach on the field of play and verbal support should be positive comments of encouragement. Supporters have no place in making any comments towards a referee.

As a league, we are working closely with Staffordshire FA to develop every aspect of the football we offer and we will be seeking support to introduce initiatives soon, which may include Respect Marshalls from every team, to improve the climate at some of our games.

It is **YOUR** league and it is time for all teams to take a lead to work with us to ensure we can truly say we are doing all we can to implement Respect and Safeguarding into our fixtures.

We are looking for your support and ideas. If anyone wishes to discuss this further, please contact myself or any member of the committee. I hope to be able to report a noticeable improvement in behaviour in the next month.

Best wishes

David Vale (Chairman) and the Committee of Walsall Junior Youth Football League