

GIRLS SUPER LEAGUE



**HANDBOOK FOR CLUBS & COACHES
2023-24**

GIRLS SUPER LEAGUE

HANDBOOK FOR CLUBS AND COACHES

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The following documents can be found in full on our website at www.superleagueldn.com/policies-and-procedures

Girls Super League Standard Code of Rules for Mini Soccer and Youth Football Competitions

Girls Super League Laws of the Game for Youth Football

The FA and Girls Super League Codes of Conduct

Girls Super League Safeguarding Policy

Girls Super League Complaints Procedure

INTRO

A warm welcome to all our participating clubs for the 2023-24 season of Girls Super League.

This document contains an overview of key information about the league's rules, practices and procedures. As always, our priority is to ensure that this league is a fun, safe and supportive environment for players, so that they can learn, grow and enjoy the game to the fullest extent. This is made possible when everyone in our community has an understanding of what is expected of them, and makes a commitment to hold themselves and others accountable to those standards.

We ask that the managers, coaches, and any other support staff at your club who intend to be involved with the league read through this document and discuss the relevant content with your players and their parents/carers.

At Girls Super League we believe that competitive football can transform the lives of young girls, giving them greater confidence, ambition, and resilience in their other pursuits. We're grateful to have you alongside us in working to create these opportunities for girls, and we're looking forward to a fantastic season ahead.

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RESPECT - POSITIVITY ALWAYS WINS

At Girls Super League, we believe respect and positivity leads to a safer, more inclusive and more enjoyable game. So we're asking all our clubs to support England Football's campaign to build positivity and respect in football.

What does this look like?

We expect all adults present at the league (including coaches, managers, club officials, parents, carers and spectators) to model professionalism and good sportsmanship for the benefit of our players. We know that young players play better with positive encouragement, so join us in adopting the mantra "We Only Do Positive" to make the league a place where girls love to play.

Young players spend all week at school and choose to play football to have some time outdoors, to get fresh air and to enjoy themselves. Sometimes they're happy to learn, sometimes they just want to kick a ball around. Everybody should get to play, enjoy the game, have fun with their friends and grow their love of the sport.

Tips for clubs and coaches

1. Create the right environment

- No one can win all the time – encourage players to do their best, but let them know that it is ok to lose
- Highlight the things players do well, rather than criticising mistakes or losses
- Allow players to express themselves and their personality and have fun with their friends

2. Lead by positive example

- Be humble in victory and gracious in defeat
- If a refereeing decision goes against you, consider that the way you react will set the tone for your players as well as any parents and spectators
- When emotional situations arise, be thoughtful and composed in the way you communicate

3. Understand your players

- Make yourself approachable by taking an interest in players' personal and athletic development
- Check in with players one-on-one so you know what they have going on in their lives
- Ask players about their goals and how they would like to be supported or motivated

4. Build a positive team around you

- Ensure that the people you work with are committed to the same values of respect and positivity
- Focus on each person's strengths and how they can contribute to the collective
- Identify a female coach or mentor that players can trust and talk to about topics like body image or periods

5. Instil an 'anything is possible' attitude

- Foster a culture of enjoyment, encouragement and belief, rather than expectation
- Build resilience by supporting players to overcome challenges and setbacks
- Avoid imposing limitations on what you think a player can achieve

CODES OF CONDUCT

Girls Super League adopts the following Code of Conduct agreements developed by the FA's Respect Programme:

- Code of Conduct for Coaches, Team Managers and Club Officials
- Code of Conduct for Young Players
- Code of Conduct for Parents and Spectators/Carers
- Code of Conduct for Match Officials

By participating in the league, every club agrees to abide by the principles laid out in these Codes of Conduct. Each club is responsible for the conduct of its managers, coaches, club officials, players, and players' parents/carers and spectators.

Code of Conduct documents can be found on the league website at www.superleagueldn.com/policies-and-procedures

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES FOR INCIDENTS OF MISCONDUCT

The league's approach to managing violations of the Codes of Conduct is as follows:

Three-strike rule for teams

If a team accumulates three violations of the Codes of Conduct over the course of one season, the league will have grounds to immediately dismiss the team.

For example:

- First strike – Club A U14s coach uses insulting language against opposition coach
- Second strike – Club A U14s player is abusive to the referee
- Third strike & dismissal – Club A U14s parent/spectator enters the pitch and shouts at the referee

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Five-strike rule for clubs

If a club (across all teams) accumulates five violations of the Codes of Conduct over the course of one season, the league will have grounds to immediately dismiss all teams from this club.

For example:

- First strike – Club A U14s coach uses insulting language against opposition coach
- Second strike – Club A U16s player is abusive to the referee
- Third strike – Club A U10s parent berates and insults their child for their performance
- Fourth strike – Club A U14s player refuses to shake hands with the opposition after a game
- Fifth strike & dismissal – Club A U12s parent/spectator enters the pitch and shouts at the referee

Disciplinary Consequences

Violations of our Code of Conduct will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. For incidents involving coaches, managers, club officials, parents or other spectators, you may be asked to leave the pitch/grounds at the time of the incident (this does not apply to players).

Following an incident, the league will undertake a full investigation of every incident before reaching a conclusion regarding further disciplinary consequences to be applied. Depending on the severity of the misconduct, the individual, team and/or club may receive an immediate dismissal instead of a strike.

Every conduct violation will result in the following consequence:

- Incident logged against the individual, team and club

Following review, violations may also result in the following consequences:

- Required to submit a written apology
- Suspended from attending matches
- Banned from the grounds (parents/spectators)
- Required to undertake an FA education course
- Dismissal of individual, team and/or club from the league

The league may also escalate conduct violations to the County FA, which can result in fines, suspensions, or having a coaching license withdrawn.

Please note, any violations of the Standard Code of Rules for Mini Soccer and Youth Football Competitions (SCORY), including violations of governance rules and match related rules, will result in relevant fines and consequences for the club as laid out in the SCORY. Similarly, any match-based discipline, meaning violations of the Laws of the Game as enforced by the referee, will be resolved in line with the FA's Grassroots Disciplinary Guide.

AGE ELIGIBILITY AND PLAYER REGISTRATION

It is imperative that all players are registered to the league and play in the correct division for their age. This is an issue of player welfare and legal liability.

Eligibility for our divisions is as follows:

Division	School Year	Minimum age on 1st Sept. 2023
U9	Year 3 and 4	Age 7
U10	Year 4 and 5	Age 8
U11	Year 5 and 6	Age 9
U12	Year 6 and 7	Age 10
U13	Year 7 and 8	Age 11
U14	Year 8 and 9	Age 12
U15	Year 9 and 10	Age 13
U16	Year 10 and 11	Age 14

Please note: Each player is eligible for only 2 divisions. For example, a player in year 5 is eligible to play in U10 or U11. They are not eligible to play up in U12 as a U11.

All players must be registered to the league in the FA's Players Registration System. The FA requires that you include a photo of the player, and their registration will not be complete without this.

Penalties for unregistered and ineligible players

The league will conduct player registration spot checks at fixtures every week.

League staff may approach a coach and their team at any time before or after a match, or at half time, to check the players on the squad against the list of registered players on the Competition Portal.

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If a team has a player participating in the fixture who is found to be ineligible, either due to age or not being registered, the team will forfeit the points from this game. In the first instance, the club will incur a fine of £60.

If the club is found to be playing an ineligible player for a second time, this fine will increase to £80.

Subsequent offences will result in a fine of £100 for playing an ineligible player (see SCORY fines tariff 18 (N)(i)).

MATCH DAY FEES

Every team will pay £20 in match day fees on the day of their fixture. These fees must be paid by card/contactless, the league does not take cash payments. Receipts will be issued by the league.

If league staff determine that you have missed a match day fee payment, your club will receive an invoice for the amount of any missed payments. If there has been an error, and this payment was already made by your club, you will be asked to provide a copy of your receipt.

If your club would prefer to be invoiced monthly for all match fees, please contact league manager Maya Williamson at m.williamson@superleagueldn.com prior to the start of the season to request this arrangement. Invoices must be paid promptly within 14 days.

CANCELLATIONS

In order to ensure that all teams and players have a worthwhile experience in the league, it is important that everyone commits to fulfilling their fixtures.

The league will communicate the fixtures schedule well in advance so that clubs can plan ahead, and there will be no fixtures during school holidays when players are more likely to be away.

For clubs and teams, we recommend being proactive in identifying any dates where players are unavailable, in addition having sufficient squad depth to avoid cancellations resulting from illness or injury.

For the 2023-24 season, we have introduced greater fines for last minute cancellations to reflect the extent of the disruption caused by these cancellations to opposition teams and to the league. We hope that this change results in almost all fixtures being played as scheduled, and the league issuing very few of these fines.

Cancellations by clubs/teams

- More than 2 weeks before a fixture - If your team is unable to play a scheduled fixture on a given date for reasons such as religious holidays, school exams, or a county cup fixture, you must notify the league at least 2 weeks (14 days) in advance of the fixture. The league will make every effort to reschedule this fixture. In the unlikely case that this is not possible, the unavailable team will forfeit, and points go to the opponent.
- Less than 2 weeks before a fixture - If a club/team notifies the league that they are unable to fulfil a fixture within 14 days of the scheduled fixture date, the club/team will incur a fine of £50 and forfeit the game, with points going to the opponent.
- Late cancellations (48 hours before a fixture)
 - For Saturday fixtures: Any cancellations after Wednesday on the week of the fixture will result in a fine of £100
 - For Sunday fixtures: Any cancellations after Thursday on the week of the fixture will result in a fine of £100
 - No shows on the day of a fixture will also result in a fine of £100
 - In addition to the fine, late cancellations are an automatic forfeit and points will go to the opponent.

Cancellations by the league

Matches may be called off/postponed by the league for the following reasons:

- (1) Severe weather as per warnings issued by the Met Office for thunderstorms or extreme heat or cold
- (2) Issues with third party venue management eg. forced site closures

Fixtures cancelled by the league will be rescheduled for a later date, as neither of the teams involved are at fault.

The league is not able to compensate teams who have travelled to the venue but do not play due to cancellations.

SPECTATORS

Parents and spectators must not enter the astroturf pitch. There is a designated spectator area at our North London facility (see attached site plan). Coaches and clubs are responsible for ensuring that their players' parents/carers do not enter the pitch.

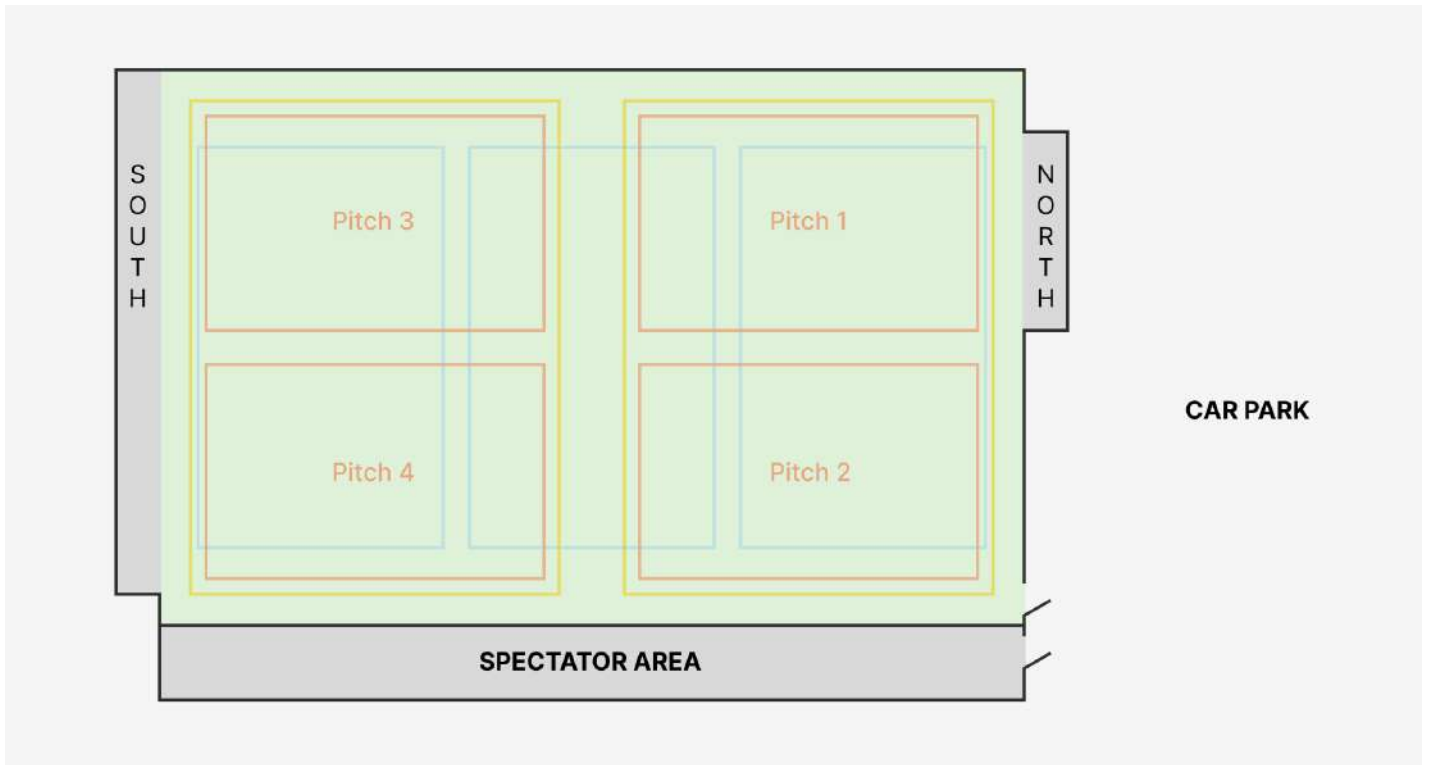
In a change from last season, parents/carers of U9s and U10s playing 5-a-side will no longer be allowed to spectate from the North or South areas, and must keep to the designated spectator area. Pitch allocations will be rotated, so parents/carers should understand that their club will sometimes play on the far pitch.

We understand that some parents may also have a role as a coach or assistant at the club. We ask that each team be accompanied by no more than 2 coaches or club officials.

If league staff find that spectators are not keeping to designated areas or are in violation of the Code of Conduct for Spectators and Parents/Carers, the club will receive a formal caution and a record will be kept of the incident. A second incident will result in a £50 fine for the club. Repeat incidents will result in fines up to £100.

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Site plan - St James Catholic High School, NW9



REFEREEING

Our league would not be possible without the match officials who choose to spend their weekends working with us to ensure that hundreds of girls have the opportunity to play competitive football in a fun and supportive environment. As you interact with our league's referees, please keep in mind the following:

- **Referees are human, they will make mistakes.** As stated in the Laws of the Game: “Decisions will be made to the best of the referee's ability... and will be based on the opinion of the referee” and “the decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play are final. The decisions of the referee, and all other match officials, must always be respected”.
- **Teach good sportsmanship at your club.** Sometimes a ref's 'bad call' may benefit your team, and other times it will work against you. This happens at all levels of the game, and players and coaches must learn that this is simply part of the sport. We encourage clubs to have conversations with players before and during the season to set expectations about refereeing.
- **Some of our referees have more experience than others.** Grassroots youth football is the place for new or young referees to gain experience and grow their skills. At GSL we encourage young referees to work with us and offer them the mentorship of experienced referees. All of our league referees are fully qualified.
- **98% of referees have experienced verbal abuse** from spectators, players, coaches or managers. The league has zero tolerance for this behaviour and will take all necessary steps to protect referees from disrespect and misconduct.

Remember, fixtures cannot go ahead without match officials, so please be kind and respectful to our referees. The league will not tolerate any disrespect, verbal abuse, intimidation or other inappropriate conduct toward our referees.

Coaches/club officials who behave inappropriately will receive a formal caution from the league, and a record will be kept of the incident. A second incident of misconduct will result in a two match touchline ban. For any subsequent incidents, the club will be required to attend a disciplinary meeting with the league.

If you have concerns about refereeing, speak to a league representative who is on-site or email girls@superleagueldn.com.

POST-MATCH HANDSHAKE PROTOCOL

The post-match handshake protocol is compulsory across all divisions in the league. At GSL, we encourage players and coaches to be gracious in victory and defeat, and this rule is an important practice of good sportsmanship and respect for all.

- The handshake will take place immediately after the full-time whistle, before any team leaves the field of play
- Both teams will be joined by their coaches and the match official in the centre of the pitch
- The two teams will face each other and the captains will lead their team in giving three cheers to the opposition
- Each team will then line up behind their captain and shake hands with every other player
- The handshakes must not be aggressive, and no player should be left out
- Any verbal exchanges must remain respectful and congratulatory, for example, “well played” or “good game”
- Match officials and coaches should work together to ensure that the post-match handshake protocol is carried out efficiently and respectfully

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The Code of Conduct for Players states that players must “shake hands with the other team - win or lose.” Any misconduct or refusal to participate in the post-match handshake will result in disciplinary action for the offending player and team/club.

RECORDING MATCH FOOTAGE

The FA recognises the appropriate filming of players as a legitimate coaching aid and at GSL we understand that clubs may wish to record matches for the purposes of analysis and player development. To protect the safety and welfare of all our players, it is essential that best practice guidelines followed. We therefore ask that any clubs wishing to record match footage adhere to the steps outlined here.

Obtaining consent

- Teams seeking to record match footage must request permission from opposition beforehand

Clubs are advised to seek permission by utilising contact details found in the teams directory, or by speaking to the opposition coach/manager in person on match days.

If the opposition does not consent, the match must not be recorded.

Sharing match footage

- Teams must be willing to share match footage with the opposition if the opposition have consented to the recordings and the opposition make a request for the recordings to be shared

We recognise that some clubs may not have the means to record match footage. As a league community, we encourage clubs to share their knowledge and resources with one another. By sharing match footage with your opposition, you are supporting the development of every player and helping to improve the quality and experience of the league for all.

Storing and handling footage

- Footage must be stored securely and should not be stored on unencrypted portable equipment such as laptops, memory sticks or mobile phones
- Footage must be deleted/destroyed when there is a request to do so, or when the material is no longer needed

Further information

Please refer to our Safeguarding Policy or the [FA's Guidance for Photographing and Filming Children](#) if you seek further information regarding practical guidance for filming and photography. If you have any questions or you have concerns about the safety of children and young people, you should contact your Club Welfare Officer or the Girls Super League Designated Safeguarding Lead at m.williamson@superleagueldn.com or c.elliott@superleagueldn.com

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Our primary goal is always to maintain a safe, supportive and fun environment for all the players in our league. We understand that challenges may arise, and we strive to improve our league by actively listening and responding to feedback from those in our community.

To make a complaint regarding violations of the leagues rules, policies, or codes of conduct, please send an email to girls@superleagueldn.com with the subject line: Formal Complaint

Once a complaint has been received, you can expect the following response from the league:

- Within 1 working day you will receive acknowledgement that the league has received your complaint.
- You will likely be asked to provide further details such as what occurred, when and where it occurred, names and/or club affiliation of those involved, witness names and statements, etc. Please return this information within 48 hours.
- Once this additional information has been received, the league will inform you within 3-5 working days whether your complaint will be resolved internally, or if the matter will need to be escalated to a relevant higher governing body.
- Where the complaint can be dealt with internally, you will be informed by the league of the investigation timeline and any additional information the league may require.
- The league will communicate the results of the investigation to the complainant by email, detailing the findings and conclusion. The league will also outline any actions that will be taken because of the complaint as well as restating the options available to escalate the complaint further if the complainant is unsatisfied.

GSL's aim is to resolve all matters as quickly as possible. However, inevitably some issues will be more complex and therefore may take longer to be fully investigated. Consequently, timelines given for handling and responding to complaints are indicative. If a matter requires more detailed investigation, you will receive an interim response describing what is being done to deal with the matter, and when a full reply can be expected and from whom.

If you are dissatisfied with the actions taken by the league to resolve the matter or no internal resolution can be reached, the complainant is entitled to escalate their complaint to the FA. In considering your complaint, it is essential for the FA to be aware that every effort has been made to resolve the matter internally.

Contact the London FA at Discipline@LondonFA.com

Contact the FA Grassroots Discipline Team's Senior Discipline Manager, Fraser Williamson at Fraser.Williamson2@theFA.com

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SAFEGUARDING

We recognise that the welfare of all children, young people and adults at risk, is paramount and that all have equal rights of protection. We have a duty of care when they are in our charge, and we will do everything we can to provide a safe and caring environment whilst they attend our activities.

As a member of SAFEcic, we aim at all times to attain best safeguarding practice throughout all our activities with children, young people, adults at risk, their parents, carers and/or families. We endeavour to provide a safe and friendly environment and celebrate all achievements. We will achieve this by adhering strictly to this policy, guidance and risk assessments. Our organisation holds current Public Liability Insurance which covers all our activities.

You can find our full safeguarding policy at www.superleagueldn.com/policies-and-procedures

Reporting a safeguarding concern or incident

If you need to report a safeguarding incident or concern please contact one of the league's safeguarding leads:

Designated Safeguarding Lead – Maya Williamson, email: m.williamson@superleagueldn.com

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Colette Elliott, email: c.elliott@superleagueldn.com

- Within 1 working day you will receive a response from the safeguarding lead acknowledging that the league has received your report.
- You will be asked by the safeguarding lead to complete an incident report form. You should return the completed form within 48 hours.
- Within 3-5 working days of receiving your completed incident report form, the league will provide an update regarding what steps have been taken to refer or escalate the incident/concern to the relevant children's or adult's social care service or to the police.

MATCH DAY RULES SIMPLIFIED

Minimum conduct expectations

As a coach/manager, please introduce yourself to your referee and the opposition coach/manager before the game.

The coaches of each team should set up on opposite touchlines. Coaches and club officials are prohibited from standing at the endlines behind either of the goals. Please note, each team should be accompanied by no more than 2 coaches.

After the match, thank and shake hands with your referee and the opposition.

Players should shake hands or fist bump after the match.

Player numbers

Age groups	Format	Minimum players	Maximum players	Maximum squad
U9, U10	5v5	4	5	10
U11, U12, U13, U14	7v7	5	7	14
U14, U15, U16	9v9	6	9	18

The Power Play Rule

This rule applies up to U12.

If the goal difference reaches 4, the losing team may field an additional player. If the goal difference reaches 5, the losing team may field another additional player, taking the total up to 2 additional players. If the goal difference falls back to 4 or 3, the losing team must remove any additional players accordingly.

Substitutes

Any number of substitutes may be used at any time with the permission of the referee.

Game time

U9s and U10s play 40-minute matches (2x 20-minute halves)

U11s to U16s play 50-minute matches (2x 25-minute halves)

Playing equipment

- Players on the same team must wear the same colour jersey or same colour bibs.
- Players must wear shin guards and shin guards must be covered entirely by socks.
- Players must wear the appropriate clothing dependent on the weather. Base layers are encouraged in cold weather. Hooded tops are not permitted.
- Jewellery must be removed.
- Correct footwear must be worn for the surface of the pitch e.g. no metal studs on blades on artificial pitches.
- Goalkeepers must wear a distinguishing playing top or bib. Goalkeepers must wear goalkeeping gloves from U11 upwards.

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Retreat Rule

For 5v5 and 7v7, opponents must retreat to their own half until the ball is in play. The defending team does not have to wait for the opposition to retreat and has the option to restart the game before should they choose to do so.

Offside Rule

There is no offside for 5v5 and 7v7.

For 9v9 (U14, U15, U16), normal rules apply, as per Laws of Association Football.

Ban on deliberate headers for U12 and below

If a player deliberately heads the ball, the referee will award an indirect free kick to the opposition. This will also mean the introduction of indirect free-kicks within mini-soccer for this circumstance.

Sin Bins

Temporary sin bin dismissals are issued at the discretion of referees as punishment for dissent.

For U9 and U10 (5v5) the temporary dismissal is 5 minutes. For U11 and above (7v7 and 9v9), the temporary dismissal is 8 minutes.

Dissent is the use of words or gestures questioning or undermining the referee's decisions. Examples of dissent include shouting at the ref, questioning the ref's ability, slamming the ball in to the ground, sarcastically clapping a decision.

How it works:

- The referee will issue a yellow card and direct the player to the touchline for temporary dismissal.
- The player cannot rejoin play or be substituted until the period expires.
- If the period has not expired at the end of the first half, it continues into the second half.
- The ref will indicate when the player is allowed to return to play.
- If the player is issued a second dissent caution, they will receive a second sin bin and cannot take any further part in the game, but can be substituted once the period expires.

Remember, foul and abusive language is still a red card offence!

For more information visit <https://www.Englandfootball.com/participate/explore/inclusive-football/Respect/sin-bins>

You can find our full league rules at www.superleagueldn.com/policies-and-procedures