

A VIOLENCE  
PREVENTION  
GUIDE  
FOR FOOTBALL  
COACHES

COACHING  
BOYS INTO  
MEN<sup>SM</sup>



Family Violence  
Prevention Fund

unicef 

# FIFA Fair Play Code

The FIFA Fair Play Code for football summarizes the sporting and ethical principles that FIFA has always stood for:



- Play fair.
- Play to win, but accept defeat with dignity.
- Observe the laws of the game.
- Respect opponents, teammates, referees, officials and spectators.
- Promote the interests of football.
- Honour those who defend football's good reputation.
- Reject corruption, drugs, racism, violence, gambling and other dangers to our sport.
- Help others to resist corrupting pressures.
- Denounce those who attempt to discredit our sport.
- Use football to make a better world.

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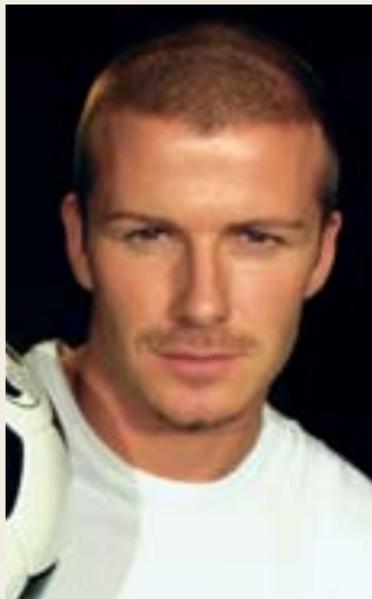
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***“Football can make a difference in helping children understand that violence is wrong. Sport can be a great vehicle to help stop discrimination, racism and violence. We need to teach children that respect of others is always the best response.”***

— DAVID BECKHAM,  
England



# Dear Coach,

Football can break barriers of discrimination, segregation and racism; bring countries together during times of conflict and crisis; and unite communities across the globe.

As a football coach, you have power beyond the pitch. While working with young people in practice drills and during matches, you can teach respect, teamwork, tolerance and integrity. What coaches do and say can change the discriminatory attitudes and damaging behaviours that are at the core of physical violence and abuse.

You can alter the damaging attitudes that create inequality between men and women, spread fighting into neighbourhoods and schools, and condone violence within homes.

In thousands of “teachable moments” with young players, you have the chance to do more than teach techniques, tactics or the rules of the game. In fact, the FIFA Fair Play Code should not apply only to the game, but to life situations as well. By encouraging players to build healthy relationships with teammates, friends, families, opponents, referees and fans, and by promoting a non-violent environment on and off the playing field, coaches can help create a more peaceful world.



*“Young people need role models who can explain that violence, especially against someone weaker than they are, is just plain bullying and is wrong.”*

— EMMANUEL ADEBAYOR,  
Togo





# YOUR ROLE

**A**thletes often describe their coaches as father figures and friends. Your players look to you for leadership, guidance and instruction. They listen to you; they respect your position and are used to following your instructions on football preparation, technique and performance.

Much of your teaching will take place on practice days. That is when you implement strategy, formulate goals, communicate expectations and build your team. The players are excited about upcoming matches and look to you for inspiration.

Players learn during practice that violence on the playing field is against the rules. They can also learn during practice that violence off the playing field is equally unacceptable.

Sit your players down and talk with them about respect, teamwork, tolerance and integrity. Be specific. Talk about their responsibility to respect each other, their opponents and their fans. Talk directly about racism and gender discrimination. Suggest they treat everyone the way they themselves would like to be treated.



## Damaging language

Coaches use language to lead, instruct and inspire. A few well-chosen words before a match or at half-time can make the difference between victory and defeat. Language can be equally powerful when used in a negative way. It is particularly dangerous when it perpetuates disrespect towards another person or group of people. Both coaches and players should avoid all of the following situations:

- Singling out a person's gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or disability when it is irrelevant to the discussion
- Using gender as an insult, for example, "You kick like a girl"
- Bragging or joking about sexual exploits, whether real or imagined
- Lewd or foul behaviour, for example, catcalls, whistling or sexual innuendo
- Derogatory language towards women, for example, calling women or girls names that relate to their sexual organs or activity. Equally wrong are expressions directed towards boys and men who don't act macho or 'manly' enough.



# Unacceptable behaviour

There is no single factor that determines when language crosses the line and becomes abusive or violent. Following are examples of unacceptable language and behaviour.

## Abuse

- Humiliating someone by harsh criticism and name-calling
- Controlling a person's actions by always speaking for them or making all their decisions
- Deliberately doing something to make someone feel diminished or embarrassed
- Intimidating someone, such as by making verbal threats, punching walls or kicking objects.

## Physical and sexual violence

Scratching, shaking, choking, pinching, throwing, shoving, pushing, biting, grabbing, slapping, punching, burning, rape, use of a weapon, use of restraints or one's body size or strength against another person, use of force or coercion to compel a person to engage in a sexual act.

***“Violence does not equal strength. Violence is not an answer. We need to focus on the impact that our actions have on others, and peace is the only way. Sport has changed my life and has made me realize the potential that each one of us can have in fighting against violence.”***

— DWIGHT YORKE,  
Trinidad and Tobago





# COACH and PLAYER PLEDGE

**T**here is no single correct way to teach boys to respect others or persuade them that violence is neither a solution nor a sign of strength. Deliver these messages in your way, in your voice. Nothing else will resonate more with your athletes.

**Consider taking the pledge below with your players:**

*“I believe in treating everyone with respect, and I know that violence is not a solution or a sign of strength. I believe that discrimination and violence are wrong and that I can help end them in my community.*

Signed, \_\_\_\_\_”



*“I have met people all over the world through football, and I can say that football knows no boundaries. It is important for kids across the globe to know that anything they dream is possible — in football and in life.”*

— THIERRY HENRY,  
France





# TEACHABLE MOMENTS

**A**s a coach, you're used to planning for potential match scenarios. The goal is to react quickly, minimizing the opposition's gain and turning the situation to your team's advantage. Similarly, throughout the season you will encounter situations that will test your commitment to non-violence. For you and your team, these are **Teachable Moments**.

Some situations or behaviours that occur with your players will be out of your control. But even these will provide you with the opportunity to talk directly with those involved and with the rest of the team to right the wrongs.

When a serious problem occurs, deal with it immediately. Talk with the entire team about positive attitudes, respect and proper conduct both on and off the playing field.

Following are some examples of typical football situations and suggestions for how you can use them to teach principles of non-violence and respect for others.

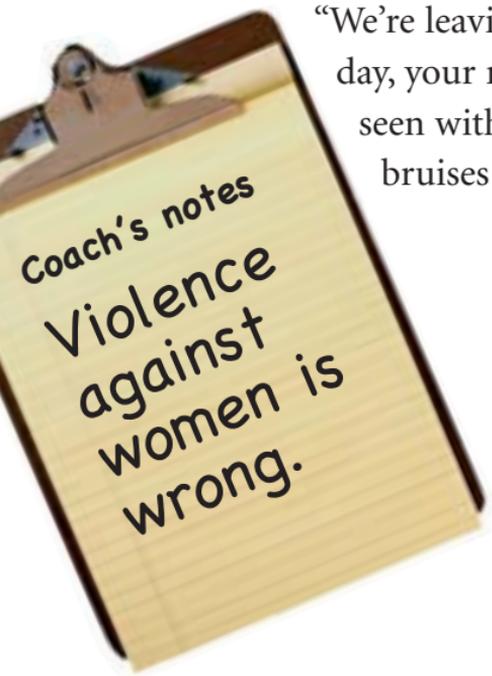


# Out of Bounds

## TEACHABLE MOMENT

Many of your players went to a party together one Saturday night. The midfielder became jealous when his girlfriend talked to another boy.

“We’re leaving!” he shouted. The next day, your midfielder’s girlfriend was seen with a gash on her lip and bruises on her arms.



## ***DEFENCE***

- Make it clear to the midfielder and the whole team that physical assault on or off the playing field is extremely serious and will not be tolerated by anyone on the team.
- Discuss the importance of respect and non-violence in relationships.
- Tell him that real men don't hurt women.
- Help him find support for a change in his behaviour.

## ***OFFENCE***

It's likely that the whole team is talking about it. They may be worried, angry or confused.

- Emphasize that jealousy is never an excuse for violence.
- Tell them that respectable men don't hurt women.
- Refer to the team pledge.

# Off Side

## TEACHABLE MOMENT

Your team is in a tight match with one of its closest rivals. Emotions are high, and there have been a lot of sneaky fouls and intimidation. Suddenly, a fight breaks out between your sweeper and a forward from the opposing team. The match comes to a standstill.



Coach's notes  
Violence  
has no  
place in  
sports.



## ***DEFENCE***

As soon as the fight starts and the action on the field comes to a stop, call the involved players to you. Gather your whole team, at half-time or at the end of the game, and talk to them. It's easier to control their behaviour and protect them from the behaviour of others when you are together as a group.

Talk to the player(s) involved in the fight. Make sure no one's hurt, and ask what happened. Violence is wrong and calls for an appropriate penalty. Let them know that a healthy competitive spirit doesn't include breaking the rules.

## ***OFFENCE***

When addressing the situation with the entire team:

- Tell them violence is always ugly.
- Explain that violence has no place in sports and that resorting to violence doesn't mean you are a stronger player.
- Remind them about their pledge to avoid violence and to respect everyone.

# Fair Play

## TEACHABLE MOMENT

Your team has just won a match. Your players are cheering and feeling a little overexcited. A couple of your players notice a girl on the sidelines. She's wearing revealing clothing, and the players start calling out to her, laughing and making lewd comments and sexual gestures.



Coach's notes

Rude and suggestive comments are disrespectful!

## ***DEFENCE***

Step in as soon as the inappropriate behaviour starts and stop what your players may view as innocent fun.

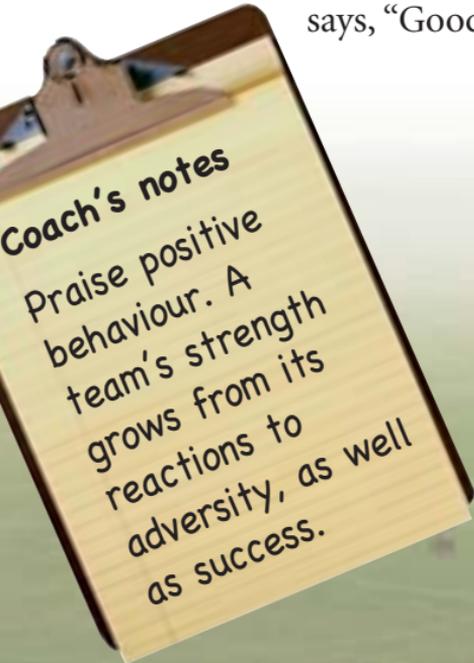
## ***OFFENCE***

- Explain that taunting people is degrading and that no one should be put down because of how they look or what they choose to wear.
- Explain that most people do not welcome that type of attention and that no one is impressed by that behaviour.
- Emphasize that as members of a team, they know how important it is to respect each other. Tell them that the same holds true in other areas of life, and they must always think about how their actions affect another person.
- Finally, let them know that the men you admire don't need to insult women to get their attention.

# Team Effort

## TEACHABLE MOMENT

One of your players makes a defensive mistake and the other side goes on to score. Your captain goes up to him, puts an arm around his shoulder and says, “Good try, you’ll stop the next one.”



### Coach's notes

Praise positive behaviour. A team's strength grows from its reactions to adversity, as well as success.

## ***DEFENCE***

Nothing to defend against here; your reaction to a positive situation is all offence.

## ***OFFENCE***

- Tell the captain that you're proud of his leadership.
- Tell the team that the best players in the world are successful because they recognize the value and importance of everyone on the team.
- This is a great example of using one's position of leadership in a positive way.



# Red Card

## TEACHABLE MOMENT

In the middle of a training session, you overhear a couple of your players insulting another player of a different ethnic background. The name-calling consists of racist jokes and slurs. The player who is the target of their comments is humiliated and stops participating in the drills.



## ***DEFENCE***

Be sure to relieve the humiliated team member.

Call over the players who were making the slurs and taunts. Tell them directly that:

- Disrespecting a teammate is not allowed.
- Criticizing someone for being of a certain ethnic background is wrong and will not be tolerated.
- Insulting your teammates is destructive to the unity of the team.
- Don't disrespect anyone, regardless of their ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, religion or ability!

## ***OFFENCE***

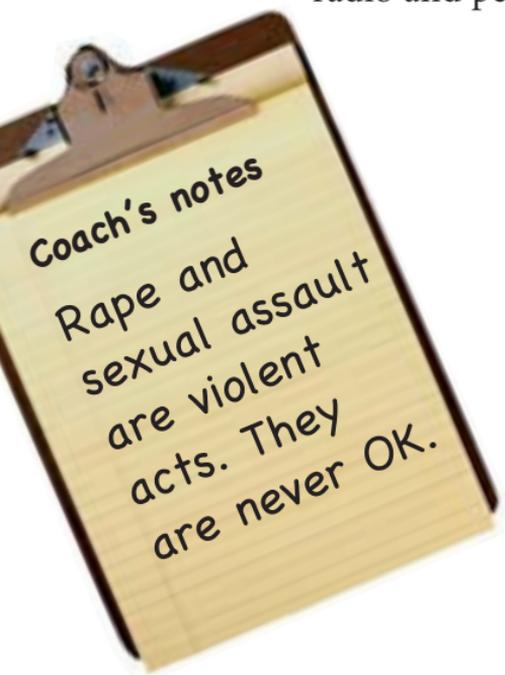
Talk to your team about tolerance, sensitivity and respect. Reinforce the “Red Card” Defence points with them too:

- Racism equals ignorance.
- Racism is wrong because it not only degrades an individual, it also reinforces negative attitudes about an entire group of people.

# Famous Foul

## TEACHABLE MOMENT

A prominent international athlete has been charged with raping a woman. It's in the newspapers, on the radio and people are talking about it.



## DEFENCE

- Talk about the allegations.
- No means no: Never force yourself on a woman or girl when she says she doesn't want to be sexually involved with you or is too frightened or inhibited to say she does not want to have sex. Ask her directly and respect her answer.
- No matter what a woman is wearing, she does not deserve sexual violence.
- Athletic talent is NO excuse to assault and disrespect anyone.

## OFFENCE

It's a crucial time to reinforce the message to your team that no matter how talented and successful you are, you are still responsible for your actions.

- Emphasize that violence against girls and women is wrong.
- Let your players know that they are positive examples for their peers if they have healthy, non-violent relationships.
- Point out players who have taken a public stand against violence and how they serve as role models in the community.
- Ask your athletes to discuss how the negative press and controversy may be affecting the perpetrator's team and his country.
- Teach players to understand that force is acceptable in football matches but is not acceptable in other parts of life.
- Discuss the point that respectable men don't need to use violence to solve their problems or impress anyone.

# Crowd Control

## TEACHABLE MOMENT

An important match between two pro teams is on TV and the radio, and you know all of your players are watching. The home team, composed mostly of white Europeans, has a new player, a black man from West Africa. Each time the African man has the ball fans start racial chants. Some spectators display signs with racist comments.



## ***DEFENCE***

- Tell your players that what they saw the fans doing was cruel and disrespectful.
- Let them know that racist attitudes, comments or jokes are not allowed from your team, whether directed at a team member or an opponent.

## ***OFFENCE***

- Tell your players that we are all fans, and that rude fan behaviour lowers football's reputation.
- Remind them to treat everyone the way they would like to be treated, both on and off the playing field.
- Tell them that it's fine for fans attending, watching or listening to a match to be excited and passionate about their loyalties, but there is never an excuse for racist, violent or disrespectful behaviour.
- Emphasize that respect and tolerance are matters of personal responsibility.

# Last Defender

## TEACHABLE MOMENT

You've noticed that one of your players is intimidated by his father and is uncomfortable around him. Your player begins missing practice a lot and seems withdrawn. You check in with him and ask if everything is OK. At first, he responds that "Everything is fine." Over the next couple of weeks and with more missed practices, you approach the player again and he shares that his father has hit him and his mother, and that the violence is getting worse. Your player is scared, hurt and helpless.



## ***DEFENCE***

- If you are worried about the immediate physical safety of your player, call the police, social services or a local organization that works in the area of domestic violence or sexual assault.
- Assure the player that the abuse is not his fault.
- Be patient, listen and build trust with your player.
- Offer to help by providing your player with resources and referrals to a local NGO that can provide safety.

## ***OFFENCE***

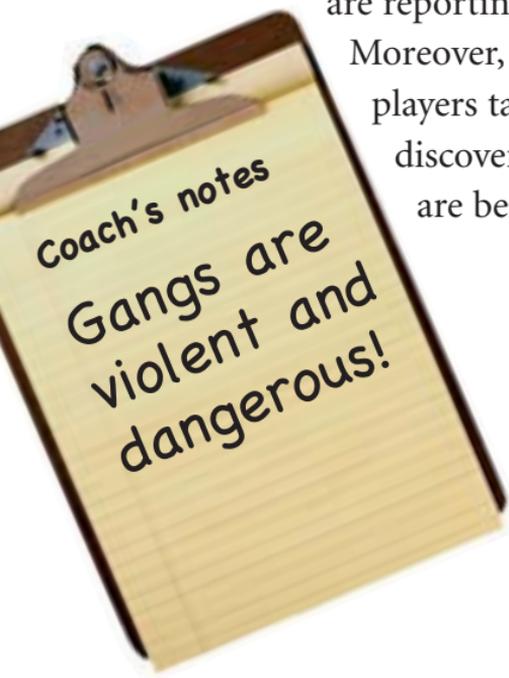
- You may be your players' 'last defender'; remind them that you are there to support them and that they can always come and talk to you if they're experiencing violence.

# Breakaway

## TEACHABLE MOMENT

Gangs are a growing problem in the neighbourhood. You've noticed them yourself and local newspapers are reporting increasing violence.

Moreover, you've heard some of your players talking about them and you discover that a few of your players are being recruited.



## DEFENCE

There can be a lot of peer pressure on your players to join a gang. Moreover, some gangs are revered by young people who may think the gang members are strong, tough and popular.

- Youth join gangs for a variety of reasons: the need to belong, low self-esteem, peer pressure, boredom, academic failure and lack of employment.
- Talk to the players that were approached and those that seem most vulnerable. Have your support, and that of the team, provide the sense of belonging and confidence that gang membership promises.

## OFFENCE

Gang members often engage in vandalism, theft, assault and the sale of drugs.

- If your players are feeling pressure to join a gang, tell them that they should rely on each other for support and friendship on and off the pitch.
- Reinforce that violence NEVER equals strength.
- Look out for signs of gang involvement: change in player's friends, change in dress (such as wearing the same color combination all the time), secrecy, flashing hand signs, income from unknown sources, alcohol and drug use or diminished interest in family and school.
- Contact your local police department to find out if any gangs are active in your community.



## For more information, contact:

Family Violence Prevention Fund

[www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org)

UNICEF

[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

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