

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION DISCIPLINE PROCESS FOR SMALL-SIDED FOOTBALL

Introduction

Implementing an effective disciplinary process is an important factor for all formats of football, helping to establish a quality, organised, safe and enjoyable football experience for all players and officials. The issue of discipline is of equal importance in Small Sided Football as it is in the 11v11 football, and subsequently should be shown proper attention and regard by Small Sided Football providers when organising their competitions; particularly if the competitions wish to be appropriately sanctioned and affiliated to The Football Association.

The FA have developed this disciplinary process to accommodate the varied and different needs of Small Sided Football. The FA recognise that applying the same disciplinary processes to Small Sided Football as it does in 11v11 football does not satisfactorily meet the differing demands of this version of the game. However, this does not mean that The FA takes ill-discipline in Small Sided Football any less seriously.

It is important to note for all Small Sided Football providers, that failure or disregard in establishing and effectively implementing these FA disciplinary processes can and will lead to The FA removing affiliation and classifying providers competitions as being unsanctioned by The FA.

For all Small Sided Football providers that affiliate to The FA nationally it is a condition of affiliation to agree to abide by the 'Heads of Agreement' that clearly state that the provider will manage disciplinary issues in accordance with The FA disciplinary process.

It is recommended that County FAs that affiliate local Small Sided Football providers establish similar agreements.

The implementation of this disciplinary process will help create a safer and more enjoyable football environment for Small Sided Football players and officials, but also importantly for the providers it can assist in retaining participants playing in their competitions.

1. Discipline Ownership & Control

All issues of discipline that occur at an FA affiliated Small Sided Football provider fall under the jurisdiction of the local County FA.

The ability for Small Sided Football providers to manage discipline in their competitions for incidents outlined in Table 1 below have been delegated to the provider by the local County FA.

It is at the discretion of The FA to remove this delegated responsibility from a Small Sided Football provider if the provider is unable to demonstrate competence in handling and managing disciplinary issues. In such cases the responsibility for all discipline in that competition will be returned to the local County FA.

2. Affiliation & Provision of Team Information

When affiliating competitions and slots to The FA or County FAs, all Small Sided Football providers must provide the following information for all teams playing in their competitions to ensure that disciplinary cases can be managed appropriately:

- Team Name
- Team Captain/Manager contact details (name, address, email or telephone number)

The Small Sided Football provider must also ensure that The FA or County FA is updated with accurate team information throughout the course of the affiliation period. Small Sided Football providers will not be affiliated unless this team information is provided accurately.

The only exceptions to this rule are outlined below:

2.1. Disciplinary Agreement:

On affiliation to The FA or County FA the Small Sided Football Provider signs the Disciplinary Agreement in Appendix B where the provider agrees to operate a comprehensive system of recording and maintaining accurate team and player details. This agreement also requires the Small Sided Football Provider to provide The FA/County FA with team information (team name and team captain contact details) within 48 hours of receiving a request for this information. It also accepts that from time-to-time The FA or County FA may request to undertake a random spot-check of a Small Sided Football providers competition to ensure that the provider has accurate team information for all teams in that competition.

As well as signing this Disciplinary Agreement, at the point of affiliation the Small Sided Football provider must also provide written evidence to The FA or County FA to demonstrate the current systems that they operate and maintain to record accurate team information. If the Small Sided Football provider is able to comply with these points, the organisation will not be required to provide all team information to The FA / County FAs upon affiliation. If however, the Small Sided Football provider consistently fails to provide accurate team information when requested this privilege can be revoked by The FA.

2.2. FA Small Sided Football Accreditation

Small Sided Football providers that have attained The FA Small Sided Football Accreditation have demonstrated through the accreditation process that they have sufficient systems in place for recording and managing team information, and that as part of the accreditation they will provide The FA/County FAs with team details within 48 hours when requested in order for disciplinary cases to be managed. As a consequence, accredited Small Sided Football providers will not be required to provide team information upon affiliation.

3. Issuing of Cautions and 'Timed Suspensions'

In Small Sided Football yellow cards and associated cautions are not employed. Referees should instead issue a blue card for a cautionable offence. The issuing of a blue card indicates that the recipient will serve an immediate 'timed suspension' ('sin bin').

The options for disciplining off enders are therefore as follows:

- Player shown a blue card and temporarily suspended from play
- Player issued with a discretionary second blue card and temporarily excluded from play
- Player issued with a red card and permanently excluded from play

A blue card offence should always be accompanied by a temporary suspension from play. The period of timed suspension in Small Sided Football shall be two minutes. The release of players from a temporary suspension should be at the direction of the Referee.

3.1. Recording of Blue Cards

In Small Sided Football cautionable offences that result in a blue card and a timed suspension from the match shall not be recorded and reported by the match official or Small Sided Football provider. Blue card offences should not be reported back to the County FA, and no disciplinary fine shall be incurred by the player.

4. Disciplinary Procedures for Red Card Offences

4.1. 'Serious' Red Card Offences

Offences not classified in Table 1 below will be the responsibility of the local County FA. Once the County FA has reviewed the case the Small Sided Football provider along with the player will be informed of the outcome and any disciplinary action.

For these offences match official are required to complete the Disciplinary Report in appendix A and submit a copy to the Small Sided Football provider and the relevant County FA.

4.2. 'Less Serious' Red Card Offences (as outlined in Table 1)

Offences classified within Table 1 should be dealt with by the Small Sided Football provider under the delegated-authority of the County FA covered in Section 1 above. The match official should complete a 'Disciplinary Report' (appendix A) and ensure that it is sent to the Small Sided Football provider. The Small Sided Football provider should employ the following disciplinary tariff of suspensions in such cases as outlined in Table 1. The provider shall not fine the player.

Match Suspension Tariff:

Table 1

Offence Penalty

(to be administered by Small Sided Provider)

Receiving a second 'blue card' in the same match	1 Match suspension
Denying a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity	1 Match suspension
Use of offensive, insulting or abusive gestures	2 Match suspension
Attempting to kick or strike another Player	
Violent Conduct	
Serious Foul Play	3 Match suspension

5. Remit of Disciplinary Action

Any suspensions for offences dealt with by the County FA that are not covered in Table 1 apply to all levels of football (i.e. 11 a side and Small Sided Football). Red cards administered in Small Sided Football for offences within Table 1 are the responsibility of the organiser to deal with according to the FA's recommended tariff of suspensions and are from Small Sided Football only.

6. Personal Liability for 'Serious' Disciplinary Offences.

Initial responsibility for a disciplinary issue will be with the individual that committed the offence. If this individual leaves the team but can be accurately identified, this individual shall retain responsibility for the payment of a fine and should be suspended from all forms of football until the fine is paid in accordance with the Football Debt recovery process.

If the individual responsible for the offence cannot be accurately identified, the responsibility for the payment of this fine will be with (in order of responsibility):

- 1) The small sided team that the individual played for when committing the offence.
- 2) The team captain of the team that the individual played for.

7. Implementation of Disciplinary Procedures

A robust disciplinary process can only operate if a record is kept of the identity of participating teams and players. All Small Sided Football providers should maintain details of participating teams and team contacts prior to the beginning of a competition. Providers should ensure that these details remain updated. In addition Organisers should identify a system whereby the identity of

participating players is recorded prior to a game commencing. These records should be retained by the Offence Penalty (to be administered by Small Sided Provider)

Organisers and referred to in the event of a serious incident or on suspicion that a player is playing whilst under suspension. The existence of these systems (in line with Rule 2 of this policy) shall be a requirement before The FA or County FA will provide sanction to a competition taking place. In order for an effective discipline, affiliation and referees appointment procedure to exist a good working relationship should exist between the Competition Organiser and the County FA. County FA's and Competition Organisers should establish a 'Heads of Agreement' document which identifies the responsibilities of each party in relation to maintenance of discipline and affiliation processes.