



S.outhern O.ldtimers F.ootball A.ssociation

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Attention: All Associated with SOFA

Subject: Abusive Language and Racism

Background:

The SOFA Executive has received numerous emails regarding an incident that occurred on Monday, Jul 30. This issue was discussed, in depth, at the most recent SOFA Executive meeting on Wednesday, Aug 8. Each Executive member (present) stated that this language and behavior is tantamount to racism (verbal abuse – at the very least), and, is completely contrary to the mission and ideals that SOFA represents – ‘the opportunity to play the sport of soccer in a recreational manner’ (Article 3) and ‘all members shall not discriminate against other members’ (Article 16, b).

In addition, FIFA (the world governing body of soccer) has been very aggressive in its attempts to eliminate racism, ‘with the recent revision of article 58 of the Disciplinary Code, which explicitly states that any form of disparaging, discriminatory or denigrating statement or action must be punished with a suspension, fine or other sanction’.

A Call to Action:

1. As stated by the Extraordinary Congress in March 2000 and the FIFA Conference Against Racism in Football (Buenos Aires, July 6, 2001) we **all** have a responsibility to denounce and sanction all persons verbalizing or openly promoting racism.
2. While the SOFA Executive is responsible for direction and discipline within the League, we cannot control the actions or behavior of its individual members. Each team must recognize the need to deal directly with their member’s irresponsible behavior. SOFA will require that each team provide a written statement of their team’s policy on abusive/racist remarks (both by players and team followers) and the internal sanctions they will impose on such players/followers.
3. A specific directive will be sent to all SOFA referees to be firm and decisive in addressing any abusive and/or racist language, excessive foul language, derogatory/inflammatory remarks.
4. From this moment forward, all red cards that involve abusive and/or racist language/comments will be sanctioned severely by the SOFA Disciplinary Committee.
5. Consistent with Article 58 of the FIFA Disciplinary Code, any SOFA member (this includes all players, coaches, followers, officials) that utters racist remarks/language is subject to a minimum suspension of 5 games.

Sincerely,

Garry Hellinga
President, SOFA