

PLAYER MANAGEMENT & HANDLING CONFLICT

In the main, players accept that umpires have a difficult job to do and they will generally want what we want: a tough game played in good spirit. Keep in mind that the control of players in a team is always the responsibility of the captain. If the captain is acting to control an issue leave them alone unless they are unable to do so. We must not act to diminish the captain's authority.

Still, players have different approaches and will try to make the game conform to their concepts. Most time, this will be the same as yours. When it isn't then you must act.....

Overview

Act swiftly, but don't act too early! Given the advice in the previous paragraph, it is easier to resolve issues by acting as soon as any unacceptable player behaviour is detected... but don't go too hard too early! Usually a simple word to the player(s) does the trick. Strong but neutrally expressed positive steps are the best approach. Don't judge!

Something like, "Ok! You've both had a say, now let's get on with it!" is enough to let them know you are alert, firm and will monitor it.

Do not accept "But what about them...!!" replies. Reiterate your last statement and restart play. A glance at the captain is always a good idea. It gives a subtle signal that they may have to take control.

Set clear boundaries and stick to them. The Preamble to the Laws and the provisions of Law 42 (Unfair Play) demand a set of behaviours that we are obliged to enforce.

Follow through if you have to. Players do not respect you if you talk big on the field and then decide not to proceed with the appropriate action after the match. They can detect inconsistency. In their minds it reflects on all umpires, and they will have less faith in all umpires.

Next match, the umpires will be tested again.

Remember our role is to witness the incidents and refer possible infractions of the rules to the authorities, not to punish.

Judgements of incidents and any penalties are Tribunal responsibilities, not ours.

There are several types of dispute that can arise. Most common is the conflict between players that tends to escalate gradually. If you do see matters becoming difficult, here is a step by step guide to handle them.

In the event of low level unacceptable behaviour act immediately and escalate if necessary as follows;

1. Talk to the player(s).

Have a quiet word with the player(s). In the vast majority of cases this is all that is required.

In any case, when convenient, privately inform your partner of your concern and action.

- For a batsman, talk to them when appropriate possibly when they are the non-striker.
- For a bowler, talk to them immediately so that they understand that what has happened is unacceptable.

2. If the player does not respond correctly, talk to their captain.

Remember if the player at fault is a batsman, they act for the batting captain.

Between overs, have a quiet word away from others. Most captains will take action and no more is needed.

Reinforce with the captain that the resolution lies with them and it is their first responsibility to solve the matters at hand.

3. If the player still does not respond correctly, tell your partner.

Inform your partner what has happened without unduly stopping the game.

This ensures that if it recurs, your partner knows the player has already been talked to. It also means you are both prepared if you do have to take more serious action.

This level of minor, but unacceptable behaviour may continue and would therefore demand a stronger action from you by way of a report.

The VSDCA Executive and the Umpires Executive will support any umpire that takes a strong stance on unsportsman like behaviour.

Brian Goodman
VSDCA Education Officer