

An Open Letter from the parent of a Young Referee



Do you remember your first ever job as a teenager? Perhaps you had a paper round, worked in a shop or restaurant or in an office. Do you remember how you felt when you started?

Imagine you've just started a new job, you're nervous but determined to do well. It's really busy with lots of people around and then someone shouts at you across the office in front of everyone: **"Oi, this work you've done is rubbish"**, and someone else shouts **"it's an absolute joke!"**, **"I could do better myself!"**. Can you imagine grown adults shouting abuse like that in the workplace? And yet it happens to referees week-in, week-out from the sidelines of football pitches. And even worse, some of these referees are 14 or 15 years old, newly-qualified, just starting out on their referee journeys.

I've been a football parent for many years and in all that time I've never really given much thought to what it's like to be a referee until my 14-year old son qualified as one a few weeks ago...



...By his 3rd match, he'd already experienced verbal abuse from a parent (the linesman who should have been there to support him!). While we knew that he would face these challenges, it's not until you see your child on the pitch - by themselves (you've got no team mates when you're the ref), nervous as they're new to the job, with adults shouting that they've made the wrong decision - that you realise the impact that verbal abuse can have on young refs.

"Oh c'mon on ref!"
"Are you having a laugh ref?"
"Seriously ref this is a joke!"

You might think these things are OK to shout out, people say it all the time when they are watching football on the TV, but as adults around a football pitch, we should be supporting and encouraging young refs, helping to build their confidence, so that they enjoy it and stay in the game. There is a huge shortage of referees, and every young person that gives up means that the pool is even smaller.

Without referees, there are no games.

So as the parent of a young ref, all I ask is this: the next time you are about to shout at the ref (especially a young one), please be mindful that they're just a kid, they're probably nervous and they are new to this job. Instead of shouting abuse, let's take our hats off to them for being brave and resilient enough to do a job most people would run a mile from.

From

The parent of a Young Referee



#AntiBullyingWeek