



### **Warning from Essex CB Discipline Committee – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

Touchline behaviour in our County has reached an all-time low. Incidents of spectators and coaches entering the field of play are now common place, and we can no longer tell ourselves that we are better than football. Referees, particularly within youth games are now deciding that they are not prepared to officiate in the face of such poor behaviour.

All Clubs must be aware that it is their responsibility to ensure their spectators and coaches do not breach the Core Values and do not enter the field of play. It is no defence to say that they went on the pitch to protect players – any individuals doing so will face lengthy bans and their clubs will face the potential imposition of strong sanctions.

I will list below just a few of the sanctions imparted this season.

1 – U 14 parent entered field of play to “protect his son who was in danger” and physically manhandled opposition player. Ban from all touchline involvement for 40 weeks imposed.

2 – Coach U18’s went on to pitch and kicked an opposition spectator who was on the pitch illegally. Ban from coaching and touchline for 24 weeks.

3- Abandoned U18 match due to spectators going on to pitch and fighting – individuals banned and both teams made to play a closed game ie without spectators present. Both teams banned from cup competition, both clubs severely warned as to future behaviour.

4 – Club with 8 discipline cases in this current season, including 3 serious breaches by spectators. Sanctions were a 4 league points deduction, suspended 10 points deduction over next season, closed games imposed for both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2nd XV, plus removal of permission to play 17 year olds in the adult game.

5 – Adult spectator went onto pitch in an adult game and punched an opposition player. Ban of 48 weeks from all rugby activity.

These cases are a shameful reflection on our game, but I could have listed several more which are equally damning.

So as we build to the climax of the season, with festivals and cup finals, I am putting all clubs on notice that any instances of behaviour that bring the game into disrepute will be dealt with most severely, whether at youth or adult level. League points deductions for next season and bans from cup competitions are likely to be invoked, along with impositions of closed games.

**You must as a Club respond to this letter by email to confirm receipt**, and inform me of the actions you are taking to ensure this message is relayed to all members, spectators, coaches and players. Failure to do so will lead to the imposition of stronger sanctions if your Club appears before us.

Yours sincerely,

Laura Wakefield

Chair, , Essex County RFU Disciplinary Committee

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