

## **JOINT STATEMENT FROM CHAIR OF THE MIDLANDS REGION HOCKEY UMPIRE ASSOCIATION (MRHUA) & CHAIRMAN OF THE MENS LEAGUE COMMITTEE**

**25 February 2020**

The England Hockey Code of Ethics and Behaviour, Red Card, Matchday Misconduct and Disrepute regulations have been in place since 2008. They are in place to protect the reputation of hockey in England and to ensure that everyone who plays our sport does so in a fair, equal, safe and respectful environment.

The code applies to all those involved in hockey in England in whatever capacity, and it is important that everyone is aware of their responsibilities and behaves appropriately.

We have issued this note as a consequence of complaints received concerning the behaviour of players and coaches within the Midlands League, during the 2019/2020 season. Apart from one, they have all been in relation to abusive and unacceptable behaviour towards umpires, appointed to officiate within the Men's Midland Hockey Leagues, and behaviour either during or after games. This is a worrying trend and we all must take action now to stop it escalating.

It is nationally recognised that there is a shortage of qualified umpires, who are often asked to perform a difficult task, in ever more challenging circumstances. The recruitment and retention of these officials will only get worse, if this role is not enjoyed by those performing it, due to the abuse received from players and coaches.

Having acknowledged that fact, it is unfortunate that we must now take issue with the actions of some players and coaches.

We can wholeheartedly say that no umpire arrives at a match with the expectation of having to issue cards/MMOs or a disciplinary proceeding, but the need to do so is happening on a regular basis.

There have been a number of examples where umpires have chosen to disregard the requirements of these regulations, to avoid confrontation or prevent further complications if later appointed to the same team again, not only does this allow offenders to avoid the consequences of their indiscipline, but it also sullies the reputation of all other members of the umpiring fraternity, who are tainted by association.

Please be informed that the Men's League Committee and MRHUA will not tolerate abuse or inappropriate behaviour from anyone, directed at umpires, officiating within our Midland League's. With this in mind, if an individual commits an offence for which a Red Card, MMO or Disrepute offence is appropriate, the Men's League Committee and MRHUA will support that official.

This brings us to the thorny issue of social networks.

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter etc have grown exponentially over recent years and so have the controversies associated with comments placed on them.

We are all entitled to our opinions, and we are all entitled to express them, but the problem comes when they are there for all the world to see, including those about whom they were made. Respect is an integral part of England Hockey's identity; is a key element in the expected behavioural standards set out in the Code of Ethics and Behaviour. Whether made by players, coaches or umpires, offensive, detrimental and pejorative comments are not appropriate and you need to be aware that these comments are subject to disciplinary action in line with the Code of Ethics and Behaviour if made directly towards an umpire or posted on social media.

We accept that many of you are appreciative of the role our officials provide and that this statement does not apply to you. However, in the interests of transparency and fairness, we feel it only fair to issue this to all clubs participating in the Men's Midland League, in the hope that we as a region can put a stop to abusive and inappropriate behaviour towards our umpires, who after all are volunteers, just trying to do the best that they can.

Thank you

**Martin Gotheridge - Chair Men's League Committee**

**Laura Seager - Chair MRHUA**