



# Opposing Coach Abuses Officials And Players And Encourages Foul Play

*This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.*

**“In my son’s U-11 travel soccer league, one of the opposing coaches consistently abuses officials, her own players, and our players and coaches. Her team has developed a reputation for dirty play that she does not discourage; when an experienced official disallows it, the coach complains of bias. Some of her players and their parents also behave as she does. Despite our filing reports, the league refuses to penalize her. What is our next step?”**

## PCA Response by Mike Town, PCA Trainer–Hawaii

This is an unfortunate scenario we hear about too often. Where winning at all costs is the only goal, anything goes, and sport culture degrades, be it professional, college, high school or U-11. That’s part of the reason a coach can be the most important character educator in this society. Hopefully a parent or coach attempted to discuss this issue with the coach in question (and not right before or right after a game).

However, the real responsibility lies with the league’s board of directors, which must address this issue constructively given its fiduciary duties. The board must take a firm stand – rather than relying upon parents or opposing teams to take action – to set the tone clearly and articulate a positive culture that engenders respect for officials, the opposing team and the sport itself. The board should step out boldly via training for all coaches, collegial discussion, informal intervention and ultimately enforcement.

By your description, if board members were attending games, they would see for themselves how this coach behaves. Whether your board is absent, unperceptive, simply clueless or unresponsive, any and all of those traits must change.

Among the actions to consider is raising the issue specifically and transparently at a board meeting with officials and coaches invited. It must be made clear that such behavior by the coach (or any similar coach) should change dramatically. If there is a dispute or differing perceptions, so-called dirty play and unsportsmanlike behavior can be chronicled via league observers, including video.

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Also, consider mediation; there are volunteer neighborhood mediators who conduct facilitative mediations. In a civil, courteous and dignified setting, issues and interests are articulated and solutions offered. Finally, the board might have to consider probation or sanctions, such as suspending the coach.

If you do not get a satisfactory response from the board, another option is to refuse to schedule games with this team, especially if foul play jeopardizes players safety.

*PCA Trainer Mike Town is a retired family court judge, based in Hawaii, who has coached basketball collegiately in South America, as well as volleyball, swimming and outrigger canoe paddling.*

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