



GVSA Clubs, Teams, Players, and Families,

As we head into the start of our 2022 competition year, we want to share some positive details about the ongoing Respect Campaign, of which you are all an important part. As the club soccer world continues to change from season to season, one topic remains at its foundation is that of RESPECT. No matter the level of competition, no matter individual roles, no matter win or loss ... we all must work together to ensure that universal RESPECT is at the forefront of all our actions.

We have made continued progress in maintaining game day behavior since our campaign started back in 2013. As with all things, there is always room for improvement. Overall, the league is experiencing fewer game-report "follow ups" and fewer disciplinary issues related to game day behavior. - this is great - keep up the strong efforts. However, what we have been witnessing is that, when there are issues, they tend to be serious and of the scope that require disciplinary action.

In light of the tumultuous times in which we are living, a visible reduction in patience and grace being shown in everyday life outside of soccer, and the reports that we are getting about aggressive behavior by players, coaches, and spectators within soccer in other leagues, we want to make sure that the concept of RESPECT is a defining part of YOUR league.

A few things are currently in motion:

- 1) We continue to work closely with the Grand Valley Soccer Officials Association (GVSOA) to ensure uniform and consistent completion of game reports and sportsmanship reporting. This will continue to set a working baseline to help the Sportsmanship Team support respect activities within their clubs and teams.

The league, and all of soccer, faces a significant challenge ... a lack of game officials. We continue to struggle to find qualified referees (largely due to the abuse shown to officials during games). As such, the sport struggles to ensure the assignment of full referee crews to games. Meanwhile, the number of teams & players continues to grow. In the end, what we are faced with is a significant problem: fewer referees to call more games, younger referees working through "on the job training", and the age-old challenge to treat the officials with respect.

As we head into this competition year, recognize that there will be officiating challenges for us all to face. We must all show patience and grace and respect toward the officials and each other.

2) We are once again providing a visible reminder of the importance of respect through the provision of Respect Campaign banners to each club.

3) We will be initiating a campaign that will highlight clubs, teams, players, coaches that show high levels of support for the respect campaign. Based on the game reports, when 5 rating is recorded, the appropriate group will be formally recognized by the league. In addition to collecting the referee-reported gameday sportsmanship scores, the league invites sharing of POSITIVE respect moments within games. This sort of internal and cross-club respect collaboration will work to highlight the 'goodness' that is out there ... and we know that it is!

4) We are reiterating the league's availability to support club Respect Campaign programs. If you have questions about how to start or strengthen your own programs, if you need an outside voice to underline the work that you are already doing, or need any other sort of support, contact me directly at brucelane4gvsa@gmail.com or 616-510-0774.

5) We will continue to follow up with clubs when game report sportsmanship scores reflect a 2 or 1.

Thank you all for your continued Respect Campaign efforts. This is a very important matter. Thank you for being part of West Michigan soccer and for sharing your passion for the beautiful game!

Play On! Your GVSA Respect Team