###### USAFL Umpire Association

###### Match Management Guidelines

Umpires in the USAFL work many different types of games and in all of them one of the key roles is match management. There are multiple tools and techniques umpires have at their disposal to meet this objective. This provides guidelines in the use of these tools, and to provide the specific rules regarding usage of the Yellow and Red Cards.

**LEVELS OF CONTROL**

The umpire has a hierarchy of control tools listed here, in order of severity. While the hierarchy exists for a reason, there is nothing to prevent an umpire from skipping levels and going to a higher level of control, depending on the circumstances of the infraction.

Free Kick < 50-Meter Penalty < Yellow Card < Red Card

**Free Kick**

A Free Kick may be awarded for a minor offence. Examples:

* A late hit (i.e. push in the back after disposal, which would be paid down-field).
* A player unhappy with a call argues with the umpire or uses foul language (the umpire could award a free kick to the opposing team instead of a ball up, or if a free kick was going to the same team, the umpire could reverse the kick)

**50-Meter Penalty**

A 50-Meter Penalty may be awarded for multiple reasons. Examples:

* A dangerous tackle, one in which player safety is a concern, but not egregious. In this case the umpire is sending the message for players to tackle correctly or worse penalties may be forthcoming.
* A player unhappy with a call argues demonstratively *at* the umpire or uses foul language in regard to the call (not at the umpire). This means the player says “That was a BS call” which is different from “You are the worst umpire” (angry at the call, not directly at the umpire). This falls under the “No Back Chat” mandate.
* Running through the mark. Not clearing out of the protected zone for a kicker.
* Delay of game. This includes not giving the ball on the full to the player with the free kick, or knocking the ball out of the hands of the player who has the free kick.

**Yellow Card**

A Yellow Card is issued to a player to get them to “cool off”. It is to be used to warn players that they need to play footy and if they don’t, there are consequences. Examples:

* A player unhappy with a call argues and that player has already been penalized with a 50-meter penalty. In this case, the escalation to a Yellow Card is not only merited, but MUST be issued.
* A player uses foul language directed *at* the umpire. This means the player says “You are the worst umpire” or swears directly at the umpire – making it personal.
* A dangerous tackle, one in which player safety is a concern, but egregious enough that it might cause injury. In this case, the dangerous tackle merits sending off the player but not quite bad enough to be a reportable offense. Umpire discretion here is important – player intent would be considered.

**Red Card**

A Red Card is issued to a player in order to remove them from the game. A Red Card also means that the player is reported and must go to tribunal and is not eligible to compete in any USAFL sanctioned game until the tribunal is completed and any games of suspension have been served. There is a list of reportable offences in the Laws of the AFL (which are carried over to the Laws of the USAFL). They are also listed on the Caution/Ejection form (incorporated by reference). Examples:

* A player earns a second Yellow Card. By rule this is an automatic Red Card and report.
* A player who has been penalized with a 50-meter penalty or a Yellow Card continues to verbally abuse the umpire.
* A dangerous tackle that either causes injury or is egregious and could have caused injury, especially if intent to injure is apparent, such as a player not pulling up from hitting a player who as already disposed of the footy and is not expecting to be hit because the ball is long gone. A sling tackle (such as a 360-degree spin tackle) could merit a red card without necessarily having to progress through the lower levels of penalties.

NOTE – In the USAFL, Development Accreditation and Advanced Accreditation Goal and Boundary Umpires are able to report a player. They are not allowed to Send Off (only field umpires have that right). If you have a player to report, notify a field umpire at the earliest convenience, and then at the end of the period (quarter, half, game) go with the field umpire to notify the team of the reported player that they have been reported. The reporting procedures as described below will then be in effect.

**PROCEDURES TO ADMINISTER PENALTIES**

**Free Kick**

A Free Kick is awarded at the spot of the incident or the position of the ball at the time of the whistle. There are some procedural issues that are slightly different.

* A late hit paid down field (free kick to the nearest offensive player at the fall of the ball).
* Kick out violation by defense (free kick to full back from the back of the center square).

**50-Meter Penalty**

A 50-Meter Penalty is paid from the original spot of the infringement moving directly towards the center of the goal line. The distance of the award may be less than 50 meters depending on the game:

* Division 1 at USAFL Nationals is paid out at 50 meters.
* All non-Division 1 games at USAFL Nationals it is paid out at 25 meters.
* USAFL Regional tournaments it is paid out at 25 meters unless the tournament specifies differently
* Other USAFL matches it is paid out at 25 meters
* Metro matches (if played on a soccer field or gridiron/football field) is usually paid out at 15 meters, but might differ depending on the metro league rules of the host club.

**Yellow Card**

A Yellow Card has a number of procedures:

* The player must leave the field immediately and not participate on field for fifteen (15) minutes of game time.
* The replacement player may come directly on field (to save time) and does not have to wait for the sent off player to leave the field (same as the blood rule interchange).
* Play cannot resume until the sent off player is off the field.
* The free kick is awarded to the offended player, or if for umpire abuse, the nearest player of the offended team.
* A 50-meter penalty is awarded (see procedure above for the 50-meter penalty).
* The reporting umpire must complete the Caution/Ejection form immediately following the game (form available here in the USAFL UA website [LINK].

**Red Card**

* The player must leave the field immediately and is not eligible to participate in any USAFL sanctioned game until the tribunal is completed and any games of suspension have been served.
* The team of the reported player plays one player short for fifteen (15) minutes of game time. After the fifteen minutes have expired, the replacement player may come directly on field. The field umpire, at the time of the Red Card being issued, should confer with both teams to let them know when that time will occur, and involve the game’s time keeper if necessary.
* Play cannot resume until the sent off player is off the field.
* The free kick is awarded to the offended player, or if for umpire abuse, the nearest player of the offended team.
* A 50-meter penalty is awarded (see procedure above for the 50-meter penalty).
* At the conclusion of the match, the reporting umpire must notify the coach of the team of the reported player that the player has been reported and must go to tribunal. If this occurs during a USAFL run match (Nationals or Regionals), there is a tribunal process in place that will be completed as quickly as possible before the player’s next scheduled game. All other reports will be sent to the USAFL within 48 hours for a tribunal to be convened.
* The reporting umpire must complete the Caution/Ejection form immediately following the game (for USAFL run match (Nationals or Regionals). For all other matches the time limit is 48 hours. This document is used to convene the tribunal. Failure to complete the form would result in the report being thrown out (negating the purpose of reporting the player in the first place).
* The reporting umpire may be required to attend the tribunal (when a Not Guilty plea is entered) and submit evidence and answer questions. This would be coordinated so that all required attendees are able to be part of the tribunal (including video conference if necessary).

**MATCH CONTROL TECHNIQUES**

There are additional methods to send a message to players that they need to stay in control and within the rules of the game, or penalties may be forthcoming.

* At the start of the match when teams are lined up: remind players that back chat is not tolerated. Sample language, “The first offence is a warning. The second offence is a 50-meter penalty. The third offense is a Yellow Card…. You have all received your warning. Are there any questions?” Then when it happens in the game you pay a 50-meter penalty because they were all warned and had a chance to ask questions.
* If a player gets mouthy, being loud enough for everyone to hear, but is not speaking directly at you (in other words, the player is voicing an opinion about the umpire but knows not to do so directly at the umpire (yes, this is a player tactic). Ask the player, “Are you talking to me?” Smart players will know that they have been heard and you are about to issue a penalty for back chat. Less smart players might actually answer in the affirmative (yes, this has happened), in which case, blow the whistle and pay the 50-meter penalty.
* Players away from play are elbowing each other and it starts to get a bit worse (elbows start to come up, rather than shoulder bumps). You, as the second, or third field umpire, could approach the players and ask them to keep the elbows down. For example, you could say, “Hey, Guys… this has been a good, clean game so far. Let’s not get out of control, because I don’t want to get my cards out – I really hate having to do paperwork and you don’t want to have to watch from the sideline.” Yes, this has been used and yes, it works, because the message just got sent (without a whistle) that you are watching and if they keep going there will be consequences for them.