

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR BY UMPIRES

Through the continued work by unit instructional chairmen and umpire cooperation, the incidents of aggressive behavior by umpires in the CIF-SS have been dramatically reduced in the past few years. In an effort to continue this trend, the following directive from the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues is provided for your review: (*IC comments in italics*)

- Never follow or “chase” a player or coach who is walking away from you. (*This will immediately label you as the aggressor. Resist the temptation.*)
- Be careful about where you stand between innings when trouble can be expected from one side. (eg: Certainly don’t stand on the baseline in front of a dugout when trouble can be expected from that dugout.) *There is a big difference between avoiding trouble and showing everyone how tough you are.*
- Avoid the use of profanity on the field. This only leads to complaints by coaches and players that umpires are “cursing” them. (Even though this may rarely be the case.)
- Avoid caustic and antagonistic remarks. (*Outstanding umpires rarely, if ever, bait coaches into ejections. Be especially aware of your body language. Coaches, players and fans pick up on this immediately. Avoid finger pointing, folded arms, and other forms of non-verbal aggressive behavior.*)
- Do not insist on the last word during a discussion or argument. Within reason, let the coaches or players have the last comment. (*Not allowing this is probably the leading cause of prolonged discussions and ejections*)
- Be a good listener. Listen to what the player or coach has to say (*Without interruption as long as he is not repeating himself*) and attempt to answer the question without being over aggressive, sarcastic, or defensive.
- Work hard at listening to the comments you need to respond to and which ones to ignore when you are on the field. When it is necessary to respond, respond in a manner that which does not intensify the situation.
- Vary your level of intensity based on the level of intensity of the situation. (*Don’t give the impression you are not taking the game or situation seriously and by the same token, don’t overreact*)
- Think of ways to diffuse and/or end the situation rather than saying something that intensifies or prolongs the situation.
- Always review situations in your own mind, asking yourself whether the situation could have been handled more efficiently or avoided entirely.
- *Finally, **learn to walk away** after you have listened to a coach and explained your position on an issue. If he follows you, he becomes the aggressor and is subject to being ejected or remanded to the dugout for delaying the game. This is the biggest reason conversations drag on and far too many umpires are guilty of this. Once you have allowed the coach to have his say, it’s time to get the game going again. Walk away.*

--Provided courtesy Tom Hiler
Honig’s Whistle Stop