

DEALING WITH FANS

Within the past few months there has been an increase in incident reports filed with the UIL based on unruly spectator behavior. In a disturbing number of reports, the officials have made a bad situation worse by engaging in conversation with these unruly spectators.

Officials assigned to officiate a contest are responsible for the conduct of the contest. Controlling crowds and crowd reactions are not within the officials' province. That responsibility falls to game administrators. If spectators begin to interfere with the conduct of a contest; cause an official to become distracted through continual and unrelenting verbal abuse; or berate players, coaches, or officials in an unacceptable or vulgar manner, officials should stop the action, report the spectator(s) to the home school administration or the nearest uniformed security officer and ask that they be restrained or removed from the facility. If the home school administration or uniformed security is unwilling or unable to comply and the official does not believe the contest can be safely continued, the official must declare the contest ended at that point. If no game administrator is present, as is often the case at subvarsity contests, officials may have to call on coaches or other school personnel to remove an unruly spectator.

Officials should never engage directly with spectators. Under no circumstance should an official ever confront, challenge, rebuke, or threaten a spectator, or make gestures of any kind toward a spectator before, during, or after a contest.

Officials should respond to threats and vulgarity from spectators by using the same good judgment they utilize when ruling on a key play. Locate the game administrator, uniformed security personnel, coach, or other school personnel and request that the unruly spectator be removed. Addressing the spectator directly is a no-win situation and often serves to make a bad situation worse. Following the ejection of a spectator, file an incident report with the UIL. Incident reports can be filed on-line at www.uil.utexas.edu.