

Headline
style for
goalposts

GOLF.....

FOOTBALL

Football out to shed its dirty image at all levels

Grassroots footballers will be dusting off their boots as the new season gets fully under way this weekend and they will be turning out with a new message ringing in their ears.

Football is looking to combat abuse towards officials, deal with aggravation from parents on the touchlines and improve the relationship between players and referees.

And the Norfolk Football Association today outlines its plans under the 'Respect' banner, aimed at improving the standards of behaviour across the professional and grassroots game, reducing the drop-out of referees and number of abandoned matches while reintroducing the fun into children's football.

Representatives from 19 of the county FA's affiliated leagues met on Thursday at Norfolk FA headquarters and lent their support to the proposals.

John Finch attended the meeting on behalf of the Breckland & District Sunday League.

He said: "I think the meeting has been very informative and has given me a much clearer view of what's expected. Respect is a programme that needs to be embraced by everyone involved in football throughout Norfolk to make it work.

"It has the potential to make a big difference, especially in the youth game. In my view, if we can address youth football now by educating the youngsters, adult football will feel the benefits in the future."

Following the mass approval from affiliated leagues, Norfolk FA will now be providing a Respect toolkit, consisting of guidance notes, codes of conduct and a Respect captain's armband to all affiliated clubs.

Youth clubs will also receive advice on obtaining spectator barriers at a subsidised rate.

Shaun Turner, chief executive of Norfolk FA, said the Respect programme will play a fundamental role in the long term future of the grassroots game in Norfolk.

He said: "The Respect programme is a positive step forward, helping us all work together to change the negative attitudes and unacceptable behaviour which have unfortunately become an all too familiar feature of football's culture.

"Respect is a whole game approach, which needs to be embraced from the Premiership down if it is to have the desired impact at the grassroots level. Research has found the main offenders tend to be male 11-a-side players aged between 18 and 30, and parents of children aged between six and 14, with key offences being the abuse of referees from players, coaches and parents, coupled with unnecessary pressure being put on children from the sidelines.

"It's going to take time before the impact of the Respect programme is

Many local-league footballers kick off their new season this weekend with one subject firmly on the agenda – respect.

Respect



SHOW SOME RESPECT: The Football Association's poster, above, shows a common scene played out on football pitches up and down the country.

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO THE RESPECT PROGRAMME

The national game

At Thursday's meeting at Norfolk FA's headquarters at Thorpe St Andrew, local affiliated leagues and clubs were invited to sign up to Respect by introducing the following steps into their matches and club management.

Step 1: Codes of conduct for players, referees, coaches and spectators, which set down basic principles that everyone must sign and adhere to.

Step 2: Designated spectators' areas defined by touchline Respect barriers, to keep spectators back from the pitch.

Step 3: Captains taking responsibility for their players and becoming the main point of contact for the referee.

Step 4: Referees managing the game and dealing with any open show of dissent.

The professional game

The Premier League, Football League, League Manager's Association and Professional Footballers Association have all openly recognised the impact that top level football can have on the game at grassroots level.

As a result, all have bought into the

Respect programme in the following ways.

Step 1: Pre-match briefing meetings between the referee, manager or senior member of the coaching staff and captains.

Step 2: Teams shaking hands before kick-off.

Step 3: Referees managing the game and dealing firmly with any open show of dissent, with captains taking greater responsibility for the conduct of their team.

Step 4: Improving behaviour in the technical area, including prohibiting the use of television monitors.

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Shaun Turner, Norfolk FA



felt, and undoubtedly there will be challenges along the way. However, this is a long-term commitment from both the FA and Norfolk County FA. Collectively everybody in football has a key role to play.

"Respect should give the opportunity to once again boost the enjoyment levels for the thousands of people who play, officiate, volunteer or solely support football in our county each week, something that has perhaps for some been the victim of the abusive pressured streak that has come to prominence in our national game. If we all play our part, together we really can make a difference."

National FA chief executive Brian Barwick wants the game to clean up its image and said: "This is not only about players and managers at the top of the game acknowledging the impact that their behaviour has further down the football pyramid, but also about addressing the most pressing issues in the grassroots game."

If you want to know more about the Respect programme contact Norfolk County FA's Respect lead officer, Raffi Coverdale, on 01603 704050 or email raffi.coverdale@NorfolkFA.com

More details on the Respect programme can be found at NorfolkFA.com or TheFA.com/Respect