

What is the position of our sport in relation to the use of inappropriate language on court?

Under Rule 15 – CONDUCT – the referee is required to penalise a player for behaviour that is ‘unacceptable’. “If a player’s conduct is unacceptable the referee must penalise the player stopping play if necessary”. It goes on to list various types of ‘unacceptable behaviour’ and included is ‘audible or visible obscenity’.

Rule 15 states that the referee must penalise the player so there is no room for discretion. But what type of penalty should be used?

Normally there are four options open to referees when penalising players (Rule 15.7). They can award a conduct warning, a conduct stroke, a conduct game or a conduct match.

The current WSF Guidelines to referees require a conduct **stroke** for audible obscenity and NOT a conduct warning. A conduct warning is recommended for a muttered obscenity! That would be some obscenity that wasn’t heard clearly by those present. Once, while being assessed for T grade in refereeing I was penalised by the Assessor for failing to award a stroke against a player who used the ‘F Word’ quite audibly on court. I had given a conduct warning.

So, be warned you WILL be penalised with a conduct stroke if you use ‘the F word’ on court (and there are other words too, of course!) so you might need to come up with some other tactic to express your frustration with your play, your luck or even the decisions of referees! Ask your coach for advice on this as there are many options!

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