

"I've Got it!"

by Ed Rae Director of Instruction

Ever heard that on a soccer field? Well we have. Absolutely nothing wrong here. In fact, free speech is alive and well in the game.

Now if a player unfairly calls an opponent off a ball or gets an opponent to give up on a challenge for a ball, then it may well be unsporting behavior. However, if and only if, it is a deliberate ruse to deceive; to fool an opponent unfairly, is it misconduct.

Verbally distracting an opponent during play or at a restart is worthy of a yellow card for unsporting behavior.

If no distraction then no infraction. No call. Nothing. Communication among players is part of the enjoyment of the game. Officials are reminded that it is the players' game. The referee's task includes facilitating the enjoyment of the players, as much as possible. Referees, players, and the good of the game are best served, if team communications proceed normally, naturally.

"I've got it!" or "My ball!" or "I go!" or "Joe's ball" or "Jane's Ball!" are all legitimate. Only if an act or words are used unfairly, should the referee take notice.

Some say FIFA forbids certain words to be spoken on the soccer pitch. No such dictate in the letter or spirit of the laws. No phrases, per se, are prohibited.

Legendary Josh Billings chides the overbearing, officious referee types;

"It is better to know nothin', than to know what ain't so!"

Law 18, Common Sense; still unwritten but frequently quoted, as the ultimate goal of refereeing:

"Intelligence in the perception of the game, the attitude of the players, the place and moment of the offense."

Michel Vautrot, FIFA Referee Committee, June 1997

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