

Schoolgirl football referee asks parents to stop verbal abuse

Supplied by Mal Davies as part of his weekly links Communication

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A schoolgirl football referee has urged parents to respect her after she was sworn at during an under-eights match.



Emily Dyke, 14, considered quitting after she was abused by adults during two consecutive games, but she decided against it after writing a plea for support from the touchline.

The teenager, who also plays in midfield for Skelton United under-16s in Cleveland, is learning to officiate junior games and took charge of an under-nines match followed by the semi-final of an under-eights tournament a fortnight ago. She was called a “f***ing disgrace” and told “you don’t know what you’re f***ing doing” when she did not allow a goal because a shot rebounded off the bar but did not, as far as she could tell, cross the line. Emily, a student in Guisborough, was also abused in the under-nines match.

Her father, Paul, who coaches her team, asked the parents to stop swearing but said he was told: “She is a ref, she should expect abuse.”

After the two games Emily wrote to the Grass Roots Facebook page for local football teams and asked parents to consider how they would feel if their child was being targeted.

She said: “I have recently suffered some verbal abuse from people while refereeing and have found it very difficult to deal with to the point I’m now considering not doing it anymore. I’m not looking for sympathy or anything like that. I’m wanting people to realise that I’m just a child doing something I love. I want everyone to take a look at their children and put yourself in my shoes when the abuse is being said.

“I’m learning that to referee you need to have a thick skin [whatever that means]. And to also ignore people when stuff is said, but it’s hard when the name-calling continues. I hope no one is offended by what I’ve said and take the time to realise I’m a child so please respect me.”

Her father said: “It’s not just the men doing it, it’s the women too. This is not the Premier League or even the Northern League. There’s no linesman with a flag, the referees have to make the decisions on their own, so yes, she will get some wrong, but who doesn’t?”

Dyke said an independent spectator told him after the game that Emily was right not to give a goal after the crossbar rebound.

He said: "Emily wrote in to Grass Roots, not for an apology, she wanted to know why they felt the need to verbally abuse her."

Dyke warned that abuse was putting young people off from refereeing. "If you take the ref away, you are going to have no kids' football," he said.

