



WFTDA OFFICIATING CLARIFICATION

How to handle issues around Skater colors and numbers

Updated July 2019

This WFTDA Officiating clarification describes the expected and appropriate conduct when handling miscommunications, intentional or otherwise, around Skater colors and numbers when officiating roller derby.

All Officiating Clarifications are considered active policy and are incorporated into formal Officiating policies and procedures during their biannual review and rewrites. In addition, WFTDA Officiating committees continuously review discussions by our members on issues related to Officiating will address needs with additional policy clarifications as needed.

Background

The WFTDA recognizes that Officials are human and make mistakes, however any action that results in a Skater of color being issued an improper cue based on the color of their skin will not be tolerated. Skaters of color carry lifetime experiences of trauma from microaggressions that can make being misidentified a severely harmful experience.

There are a number of strategies all Officials can employ to best prevent cognitive mistakes during gameplay resulting from Stroop Effect (or any reason based in cognitive function), Unconscious Bias, or Conscious Bias.

Officials should take the time during warm-ups to review team rosters verbally and to practice quiet verbal repetition of the accurate color-number combinations of all skaters. When using visual devices to easily identify skaters during gameplay, Officials should always choose equipment-based markers over skin color, cultural styles/accessories, or perceived gender presentation.

Head Officials should work with their entire crew to identify instances of this microaggression and encourage officials to address the issue with their crew members when it occurs. All Officials should be open to giving and receiving this feedback graciously.

Scenario

This scenario addresses a specific, and highly sensitive, microaggression towards Skaters of color.

Skater Red 52 is called on a Forearm penalty. The Official issuing the penalty uses the cue "Black, Five-Two, Forearm." When the Skater does not respond, the Official echoes the cue multiple times, both incorrectly then correctly, before issuing a Misconduct-Insubordination penalty for failing to leave the track. Skater Red 52 is a Skater of color.

WFTDA Officiating expects the following when a Skater of color has alleged that they have been misidentified according to their skin color rather than the color of their uniform:



Expectations of the Official Erroneously Issuing the Verbal Cue

- The emotional and physical well being of all participants is a priority. The first step is for the issuing Official to prioritize repairing damage to others over any attempt to demonstrate innocence or good intentions. WFTDA Officials are expected to both acknowledge that they are capable of errors and humbly address the issue directly.
- When an Official has misidentified a Skater of color, they should apologize directly, specifically, and immediately (between Jams is acceptable during an active game). Failure to acknowledge the damage of even unintentional actions is a violation of the [WFTDA Code of Conduct](#). It is more important to foster a safe, welcoming community than to perform false infallibility and/or avoid the need to reflect on internal biases.
 - Captains may inform the Head Officials at the Captain's Meeting that any interactions regarding misidentification should be delivered to the Team Captain rather than an affected Skater.
- Officials should not expect or force someone who has been misidentified to discuss or accept their apology. The WFTDA recognizes that being misidentified may be a triggering or upsetting experience and does not expect victims to do the emotional labor of supporting those who have wronged them. While we expect Participants to abide by the [WFTDA Code of Conduct](#) at all times, acknowledging that an Official's apology has been received is all that is expected of them.
- It is inappropriate for Officials to provide incidental reasoning as to why their cue was incorrectly issued. The reason an Official believes they issued the call incorrectly is irrelevant to the damage they have caused. Doing so calls more attention to an Official's proclaimed innocence of bias than the ownership of their microaggression.

Expectations of Participants:

- If any participant witnesses this experience, and it is not addressed during the Jam in progress, it should be brought to the Head Officials at the next appropriate opportunity. Reporting these incidents is expected of every participant, regardless of their role within the event or situation. Whether victim or witness, teammate or opponent, we all share the collective responsibility to foster safer spaces within the sport.

Expectations of Head Officials:

- Head Officials should address the issue with their crew in response to any concern being raised and ensure that the above expectations are met by the issuing Official.
- If in a scenario where other Officials can confirm a cue was not issued incorrectly, no action should be taken against the issuing Official. However, the potential negative impact on a team or individual based on simply the perception of such an incident having occurred is in and of itself a situation that should be treated with sensitivity. Head Officials should address the issue with their crews in response to any concern being raised, regardless of whether or not a particular cue was issued correctly.
- If this issue occurs during a game, whether or not an apology was issued, Head Officials are expected to prioritize checking in with teams after the game to facilitate any additional conversation desired. If present, the Games Tournament Oversight officer (GTO) and Tournament Head Officials should participate in this conversation.



Expectations of Other Officials:

- If another Official observed the incorrect cue in real time, they should immediately correct it. They should also personally make sure no additional penalties for failing to leave the track are incurred.

Failure to Act

- An Official's failure to apologize and acknowledge potential damage is grounds for being removed from a game and/or event. Uncorrected bias or even a singular instance of conscious bias by an individual Official is grounds for dismissing that Official from the game and/or event and, when applicable, examination to determine what, if any, further action should be warranted. This determination process should always happen collaboratively with the captains of each team at a time appropriate for them to hold this discussion.
- If the Head Officials are not properly meeting the WFTDA's expectations in handling these issues, it should be reported to WFTDA Grievance (via grievance@wftda.com) as a Code of Conduct violation, or, if at a WFTDA Continental Cup, Playoff or Championships, via the [WFTDA Tournament Code of Conduct On-Site Procedural Document](#).

Revisions

July 2019

Original version.

