



# DON'T X THE LINE

## Press Release



reFspect

## Referee Awareness Weekend 29th - 30th March 2014

The Don't X The Line Campaign is working with The Professional Footballers Association, The Football Association, The Professional Game Match Officials (PGMOL), The Football Association of Ireland and other professional bodies to help raise awareness and eliminate problems experienced by referees at all levels of the game of football, in particular at grass roots level.

The reFspect awareness weekend is an initiative aimed at improving the behaviour of parents and spectators. By reducing the number of incidents of poor touchline behaviour we aim to maintain the current number of referees and help to attract many more new referees to the beautiful game.

We would like all football clubs to raise awareness of reFspect by signing up to support the weekend.

This can be done online at [www.dontxtheline.com](http://www.dontxtheline.com) or by calling 07951 442 480

## NO REFEREE - NO GAME

### Notes to Editors

The Don't X The Line (DXTL) Campaign was established in 2003 by its founder Malcolm Lee, to support zero tolerance amongst those people involved in football by refusing to tolerate constant aggression, verbal abuse, bullying and racism on and off the field. Mal has been commended for his dedication to the DXTL campaign and has been recognised for his efforts when he was made the National Award Winner Sir Bobby Moore, Fair Play & Respect by the FA.

DXTL Ambassadors include:

Jamie Carragher

Keith Hackett

Chris Foy Premier League Referee

Dr Esther Burkitt Psychol, CSci, FHEA, Reader in Developmental Psychology





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**Don't X The Line Campaign** is credited as the forerunner for the FA's, Respect Programme; we are a CIC and voluntary organisation. We are very proud of its achievements to date. Also, we will continue to make a difference at grassroots level by relying on the ongoing work carried out by our many volunteers

Last year, Professional clubs supported **Don't X The Line Campaign** and helped with the awareness of 'Respect the Referee'. This included promoting the message over the public address system, advertising it on club websites and a mention in the match day programme.

Some Clubs further responded by providing their logo. Also, some managers participated by wearing a lapel badge in support of the awareness weekend.

**Don't X The Line Campaign** requests the media, clubs and County FAs to offer active support, where possible for 'Respect The Referee' awareness weekend and fair play within grassroots football.

Many thanks for your continued support.

Further contact for interviews and photo opportunities are as follows:

Mal Lee (Founder **Don't X The Line Campaign**): AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW 07951442480

Website: [www.dontxtheline.com](http://www.dontxtheline.com)

Email: [mal@dontxtheline.com](mailto:mal@dontxtheline.com)



Touchline Barriers Help Referees To Combat Pitch Encroachment.



Barriers A Visual Deterrent.





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### Why We Began

I was involved in grassroots football for well over 20 years; throughout those years I have witnessed first hand aggression, verbal abuse, racist comments, bullying, and now the smoking of illegal drugs on the touchlines of some Junior Leagues. Not just on Merseyside, but leagues throughout the Country.

I have witnessed children crying because their parents are involved in fighting with the opponent parents, referees abandoning games and walking away from them, never to return to the game because of threats and abusive comments directed at them.

Committee members have stepped down due to aggressive parents, and sometimes managers. Campaigns like **Don't X The Line** must be continued to be supported by the decent people who support the sport for all the right reasons.



Don't X The Line Founder Mal Lee receiving his Bobby Moore Award.

Together we must protect our children and referees, and bring the sportsmanship and fair play back into grassroots football.

I was at one of the local parks one Sunday morning and I stopped to listen to a few abusive parents at a junior league game. All hell broke loose between the parents and players. The referee was running for his life, as a lot targeted him. Luckily it was brought to a halt by the committee and no one was seriously hurt. Why should anyone have to put up with this sort of behavior at any sporting event? This is a learning processes for our youngsters isn't it?

This was the moment that I decided something had to be done, especially to defend the referees, as unfortunately they are the ones in the firing line from all sides.

I discussed a campaign being formed with one of the local referees who told me something had to be done. Once I had returned home I started to put pen to paper with ideas; and came up with the title of **Don't X The Line**, after my wife Shirley put her input of the X instead of the word cross, which was a brilliant idea. Early that morning when I awoke at 4am, in my head were the ideas for forming the campaign. I got up went downstairs and wrote all the details down; after just 48 hours I had all the literature back from the printers and I was ready to launch **Don't X The Line**.

In January 2004 I met first with Everton Football Club, shortly followed by Liverpool FC, they both approved of the campaign and gave us their full support, with the use of logo's and museum tours for the teams and spectators who showed the best sportsmanship throughout the season within their leagues. Before long I was nominated for a Barclaycard award by Everton FC, which to my astonishment and embarrassment, I won. **Don't X The Line** became an award winning campaign. Years on we are still attracting high profile support and in years to come, and as long as it takes to improve a better life for our referees and children, we will still be here.

**R**eferees **E**xpect **S**portsmanship **P**articipation **E**nthusiasm **C**ommunication **T**eamwork

