

UPSL playoff match abandoned after coach punches referee

By Nicholas Mendola | Dec 14, 2019, 5:05 PM EST

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A United Premier Soccer League playoff game was abandoned after a referee assault in Maryland on Saturday, the latest in a long line of referee abuse stories.

A player from Mass United had been shown a red card, and a member of the club's coaching staff punched the referee.

UPDATE: The league released a statement condemning the incident and vowing to stand with its referees.

The match between Mass United and World Class Premier FC (Maryland) was a Northeast Championship match, and would send a winner to the UPSL's national finals in Miami.

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The match was tied at 1 around halftime when the referee stopped play after a foul led to a skirmish between players.

According to a source, the referee mistakenly removed a red card from his pocket when he meant to show a yellow. Before the referee could correct himself, an assistant coach punched him in the face. The game was abandoned and the win awarded to World Class Premier.

The UPSL is considered to be the fourth-tier of the American Soccer Pyramid and is sanctioned by the United States Adult Soccer Association.

EDIT: An earlier post said the UPSL was in the fifth-tier of the pyramid. The league was given higher sanctioning earlier this Fall.

Referees in Berlin protested increased incidents of violence earlier this year, while Franck Ribery and Neymar have both been suspended for making contact with officials. In 2014, an American referee was killed after a player punched him in the face after a red card incident. The player was sentenced to eight years in prison.

Here's how it looked from the local angle in Maryland, with **The Montgomery County Sentinel** reporter **Carlos Alfaro Rodriguez** on scene. He confirmed the incident with *ProSoccerTalk*.

The United Premier Soccer League (UPSL) issues the following statement:

The violent conduct incident which occurred during the UPSL Northeast Conference Championship Game on Saturday night, Dec. 14, 2019, is under investigation by both the league and local authorities. The UPSL is providing full cooperation, and the UPSL league office is collecting a detailed match report from the game referees and both teams before making any final determinations, or levying suspensions and/or fines.

The UPSL does not tolerate violent conduct and/or verbal abuse, and the person(s) involved will be held accountable by the club(s) and the league. The UPSL stands with its referees and will not allow for any referee abuse.

Yan Skwara
UPSL Commissioner