

FA's lessons in good behaviour for parents who scream abuse from touchline

By Ben Ellery

PARENTS who are caught swearing at referees during their children's football matches are being offered discipline courses to learn how to control their temper.

The sessions are based on motoring 'speed awareness courses' and are offered to adults who have breached the FA's Code of Conduct - which can result in parents being 'banned' from watching their own children play.

Spectators who attend the FA Respect lessons will have their 'match suspensions' reduced.

The three-hour sessions include a quiz on the Laws of the Game designed to show parents 'they do not know the rules better than the referee'.

They then watch video replays of match incidents in a bid to get them to understand the difficulties faced by officials.

Parents will then discuss what actions they could have taken to prevent the incident that brought them to

our young referees had to abandon an under-10 game because a fight broke out among the parents.

'Recently, a youth club manager rounded on a young female referee in the car park after a match.

'The parents try to live vicariously through their children and when things don't go their way they get frustrated and become aggressive.

'The sad thing is that it only serves to upset their children and they end up losing their love for the game.'

The FA reported that during a recent 15-month period there were almost 4,000 misconduct offences committed by adults at youth level football.

Former England striker Gary Lineker recently called for a 'parental culture revolution', saying that pushy parents are damaging England's chances of developing top players.

FA Respect Manager Dermot Collins said: 'So far we've run five courses and the feedback has been excellent. We had one team manager, a 17st Glaswegian, who thought it was a good idea to run on to the pitch during a game to berate the female teenage referee.

'After the course he said he had found the session really useful. It was the first time he had seen his behaviour through the eyes of someone else. Standing on the touchline and supporting your child is part of modern parenting and for some people their only experience of it is through watching screaming fans on television.

'We are just trying to give them a bit of guidance.'

The courses are being piloted at county football associations in Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Liverpool, Manchester, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Surrey.

If they are successful they will be rolled out to the rest of the country.

'A 17st Glaswegian berated a female teenage referee'

the course and fill in a postcard pledging three ways to improve their behaviour. The postcard is mailed to them the next month as a reminder to stick to their pledges.

The sessions are in response to reports of matches having to be abandoned due to alarming levels of touchline abuse.

Albert Astbury, chairman of The Referees' Association, said: 'It's a sad state of affairs that the majority of discipline reports filed by referees at youth games are for adults.

'Some of the referees are as young as 14 and it's appalling that they are being abused by those who should know better.

'Where I work in Hampshire one of