



RICK EGAN / The Salt Lake Tribune

"It's unfair for 12- and 13-year-old kids to be getting these racist insults, in my opinion," says Mia Godoy (8), who plays soccer for Utah Rio FC in the Utah Youth Soccer Association. "What can they do? They can't do anything. And if they do anything, they'll be considered disrespectful. It shouldn't be that way."

## Youth soccer

County, one of the more popular elite youth soccer clubs in the state. His oldest son, Gabriel, and younger son, Matteo, have been members of both programs.

Pelaez said that while his sons were members of La Brea, there were times parents referred to their players as "Mexican" and told them, "Go back to your country."

Parents aren't the only ones who have been accused of racist language or sentiments. At times, referees have been at the center of complaints.

Diego Godoy, Pelaez and Mendez all said they or their coaches or parents have been disciplined by referees for talking to their players in Spanish.

Pelaez recalled two instances in which he was given a yellow card for coaching in Spanish. In one, he said the referee told him, "I can't understand what you're telling your kids, so you can't use that language here." In the other, a similar chain of events occurred, but the referee apologized after the game and said he'd request to have the card rescinded, Pelaez said.

Diego Godoy said in one instance, an assistant referee who he recalled being white called him a Spanish insult — one many Hispanic people find offensive and even homophobic — every time he passed the coach during gameplay.

Mendez recalled a game last year during which a referee was carding parents for encouraging their children in Spanish and threatened to end the game. That referee, Mendez said, ejected one of those parents.

Boyd said he has heard of instances where a referee carded a coach for speaking to their players in Spanish. In those cases, he gives those referees "one last shot at it to get it right." If it happens again, that referee will be fired.

"You can't coach your kids in Spanish, it's 100% incorrect," Boyd said. "I don't care what language they use — at all. Completely ridiculous. I don't want it."

Holly Gundred, director of operations for the Utah State Referee Association, acknowledged this issue has happened in the past. In one instance, she said she and Boyd talked to those involved and heard both sides of the story.

Gundred said she sent an official to that referee's next game to "not only help educate that referee, but to help educate those parents."

## Discrimination from players

Incidents like the "Coco" comment Godoy experienced seem to happen often, with players — many of them parents — using words and phrases that appear to cast as being Hispanic in a negative light.

Bryan Oviedo, a Real Salt Lake player whose family is Costa Rican, has a son who plays for a Utah Rio team. He said there was one game where an opposing player told his son, "Go eat tacos."

Pelaez said an opposing goalkeeper made a similar comment in a game last month. Once a referee confirmed the comment was said, he asked the referee to end the game.

Aside from comments made specifically to Hispanic people, Boyd said the UYSA is also trying to curb the use of a version of the N-word that ends in "a." Both of his March trainings mentioned competitions last summer where three players were ejected from

games and subsequently suspended for using the words.

Ironically, in both those trainings — one meant for coaches, the other for referees — Boyd spells out the word on a slide. His explanation for doing so during the referee training specifically is they are required by FIFA to spell out words they hear or are alleged.

"I needed them to remember you actually have to write it out," Boyd said. "And if I'm refusing to write it out in the instruction, well, that kind of sticks me in a bad spot."

Boyd said that last fall, he emailed instructions to coaches and team managers' teams with players older than 14 years old that outlined how allegations of racist language would be handled.

"For the most part, that eliminated that problem" in that age group, Boyd said. This spring, he dropped the age to players older than 12 because it turned out that language was being used by 13- and 14-year-olds.

## Reporting the problem

After a UYSA-sanctioned game, referees are obligated to submit a game report through an online portal. Coaches report scores via the same portal, and can add additional comments about the game if they choose. They can also check a box that requests the UYSA to review the game.

Boyd said coaches using the reporting tool is paramount to catching every possible instance of racist language.

"The big one is communication," Boyd said. "I have to know. Get me the info."

Trin Anglin, a state youth referee administrator, said referees are generally not aware of what parents say from the sidelines because they're focusing so much on players' safety, the game itself and handling the coaches.

"Myself, if I'm on a game, I very rarely ever hear a parent because that's not what I'm concentrating on," Anglin said. "When parents say, 'That parent said something,' that really doesn't hear it unless their voice is so loud."

Coaches admit they don't inform the UYSA about every incident. Diego Godoy didn't report when his daughter was called "Coco," which occurred in October 2022. Pelaez didn't report one of the instances where a referee told him not to instruct his players in Spanish.

Mendez said if he or his other coaches were to report every incident, they'd be "making a report every week." But he acknowledged maybe that's what it would take for things to change.

"I think we did it wrong on our end, not reporting and not following up with every single scenario," Mendez said.

Michael Anglin, another state youth referee administrator, implored parents and coaches to alert the UYSA or referee's association of incidents that they are reporting things too much.

"If you've got a consequential issue, something that needs to be addressed, something that's meaningful, you need to report it — every single time," Michael Anglin said.

Some coaches feel the UYSA doesn't adequately communicate when they do report issues. Last late month, when an opposing goalkeeper told Pelaez, "Why didn't you eat a taco," the player received a two-game suspension. But Boyd did not inform Pelaez about the disciplinary action.

Boyd said there is simply not

enough time to respond in detail to every coach or referee who reports an incident and wants to be informed about any discipline handed down.

"But," Boyd said, "I think that's a fair criticism, and a fair concern... I'll try to do a better job of that."

Gundred said she doesn't feel comfortable providing any details that go further than simply whether someone has been disciplined and for how long. Boyd also said part of the challenge in disciplining people for using racist language is when an allegation is made but no one else can corroborate.

In one of Boyd's March trainings, he outlined a new protocol for referees who are told about allegations of racist language. If a referee hears any racist language, they are empowered to take any disciplinary action they deem necessary, including ejection.

"If we verify that racist language has been used, it's an automatic two-game suspension," Boyd said. "If it's a parent who used racist language, more likely than not they're out for the rest of the season. I don't want to see them on the sideline."

Diego Godoy said that process was not followed during the game last month, and that he submitted a complaint to UYSA.

"The referee just laughed in our face, screamed in our face, talked to my players, and screamed at them," Diego Godoy said.

## What are the solutions?

Oviedo made it clear the impact that hearing racist language as a preteen can have.

"A kid who is starting a career and wants to be a professional — they treat them like that now, who is going to want to be a professional after that?" Oviedo said. "If it's from now, they may even have trauma."

That's why coaches and parents of teams with minority players want the UYSA to help them feel heard. Too many times, they say, their issues and complaints feel cast aside or underinvested.

"I think it's taking forever to solve the problem because there's not enough time or attention to the scenarios," Mendez said.

Oviedo said maybe more players should get trained on the UYSA zero tolerance policy related to racist language.

The UYSA says it's doing the best it can to reduce racist language, and educate everyone involved on its efforts and how they can help.

"For the most part, all of our coaches, all of our players, all of our parents are great," Boyd said. "Ninety percent of our games go off without a hitch. But 10% of the games, you're going to have moments in a game where it's blood in the water."

"What I'm asking our parents, referees, coaches, players is, in those moments, to be at your best, not at your worst. Unfortunately, sometimes they're at their worst, and that's what we end up having to deal with and trying to fix."

Godoy considers herself a feisty player with the ability to turn out comments related to her on-field performance — comments she says are particularly when it comes to racism and discrimination.

"It's unfair for 12- and 13-year-old kids to be getting these racist insults, in my opinion," Godoy said. "What can they do? They can't do anything. And if they do anything, they'll be considered disrespectful. It shouldn't be that way."

## BRIDGE

Phillip Alder



## The tough defense to win four tricks

Dale Carnegie said, "There are four ways, and only four ways, in which we have contact with the world. We are evaluated and classified by these four contacts: what we do, how we look, what we say, and how we say it."

There are four tricks, and only four tricks, that are needed to defeat a contract of four spades. East needs to bear that in mind when defending in this deal.

West leads the club two. South wins with his ace, plays a spade to dummy's ace, and returns a spade. East is in with his king. What should he do now?

East knows that West led a singleton, because he would have led the four from a doubleton four-two. And when a player knows

North		09-29-24	
♠ A 3 4			
♥ J 10			
♦ A Q 9			
♣ K 10 8 6 3			
West	East		
♠ J 9 8	♣ K 3		
♥ Q 8 7 5 2	♥ A 9 6 4		
♦ 8 6 4 3	♦ 7 2		
♣ 2	♠ Q J 9 7 5		
South			
♠ Q 10 7 6 2			
♥ K 3			
♦ K J 10 5			
♣ A 4			
Dealer: South			
Vulnerable: Both			
South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
Opening lead: ♣ 2			

his partner has a void, there is an automatic reaction to give him a ruff. But East should pause for a moment and ask where the other two defensive tricks will come from. The play cannot go club ruff, heart to the ace, second club ruff, because West has only one trump left.

The defense must take two heart tricks. This is easy if West has the king, but in case he has the queen, East should immediately shift to a low heart.

Yes, declarer might rise with his king and win an overtrick, but that is unlikely. If West will probably concede that if West had queen-high hearts, he might well have led the unbid suit; but with ace-high hearts, he would not have led it.

The main point, though, is that East must make declarer guess, not give him the contract on a silver platter.

## LOOKING FOR THE PUZZLES? » B9

## Gordon Monson

Commentary » He brings Utah's sports superstars into focus



## Dodgers' Ohtani throwing from 60 feet as Tommy John recovery continues

By JENNA WEST

Two columns

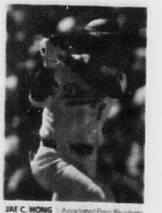
Eight months after undergoing Tommy John surgery, Los Angeles Dodgers superstar Shohei Ohtani is throwing a baseball from 60 feet — and his pitches have reached 80 miles per hour.

Ohtani, who is not expected to pitch in games until 2025, provided an update on his recovery Monday.

"Usually anywhere from 60-70 pitches, in that distance," Ohtani said through an interpreter before Monday's game against the New York Mets, which was postponed due to rain. "Just continuing to increase the distance and the pitches, and just seeing where that goes. I'm not going to go out there, but that's the progression."

Ohtani underwent Tommy John surgery — the second of his career — in September as a member of the Los Angeles Angels. The recovery hasn't slowed him down at the plate, where he leads the majors in batting average (.236). He also leads the National League in slugging percentage (.621) and OPS (1.024) and paces the Dodgers in home runs (18) and stolen bases (12).

Ohtani, who has



JAE C. HONG / Associated Press. He posted

The Dodgers' Shohei Ohtani

appeared in 53 of L.A.'s 55 games as a designated hitter, has recently been playing through a hamstring contusion he suffered during a pickoff throw last week. He has remained in the lineup — Ohtani hasn't missed a game since May 12 — but manager Dave Roberts told him to "be smart" with it.

Ohtani, who turns 30 on July 5, signed a 10-year, \$700 million contract with the Dodgers this offseason. The two-way star won American League MVP awards in 2021 and 2023 in part for his prowess on the mound; over the last three seasons, he produced a 2.84 ERA in 72 starts, with 542 strikeouts in 428 1/3 innings pitched.

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