

Oregon School Activities Association

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We are into it now! After one week of play, and a lot of hot weather, the teams and coaches are starting to figure out where they stand compared to other teams. Some like that information and some don't.

A huge part of our job on the field is communication. Whistle. Point. Yes, those are essential. Quite often, however, we have players that are not highly skilled and don't have a lot of experience playing soccer. I'm particularly talking about JV, JV2 and even some lower level varsity games. As a result, it is not unusual for you to, say, point in one direction for the throw-in, but the players aren't looking at you to see which way you are pointing. And then either two players run for the ball or nobody goes to pick it up.

There is nothing wrong with verbalizing "white!" as well as using the arm signal for throw-in direction. Similarly, for the ball over the goal line, an arm signal with "goal kick!" or "corner kick!" will help the players figure out what to do now. And sometimes, if white chases the ball that's going to be a throw-in for blue, "It's white's throw!" may prevent a confrontation over possession of the ball, or, worse, blue running up and taking the throw-in, which you will then have to stop and get the confused players straightened out. A quick, decisive arm signal and a clear voice will help sell the decision. "Sometimes wrong but never in doubt."

Before the game, the entire crew should introduce themselves to the coaches, at least the head coach. Be professional, be courteous, and be friendly. We, the coaches and the officials, are the adults out there. Before the game, there is no reason for us to come across like Marine Drill Sergeants. A friendly question or two, like "how's the season been going so far, coach?", may produce some very interesting and useful responses, even if you already know their record. It can set a great tone for how you work with that coach. I have had coaches tell me things about their season that they can't tell their players and don't want to tell their Athletic Director. Just show you care. And, of course, get the roster, with the coach's assurance that their players will be legally and properly equipped by game time.

OSAA wants officials to tighten up on language, taunting and other unacceptable behavior by all participants. We do not see officials giving cards for language (verbal or

physical) that should not have been given, except in very rare circumstances. We do see officials not dealing with language or not dealing with it strongly enough. For example, a player or coach who 'asks' "How much are they paying you, ref?" is NOT asking a question about the game fee. They are saying that you have been bribed. This is clearly offensive, insulting and abusive language, all three. A red card has to be given. Please include an exact quote of what was said in your game report. "bad language" is not sufficient.

If the unacceptable language is from spectators, please stop the game, at the first time it happens, and ask the game administrator (varsity games) or home team head coach (sub-varsity games) to deal with it. Trying to ignore it will not make it go away. Do not restart the game until the administrator has had a chance to deal with it. Rinse and repeat as necessary. We do not deal with spectators directly, only through the school staff. We do not have the authority to eject spectators or 'clear the stands.' And, besides, the school staff is much more likely to be effective in these circumstances, since they know the students or parents. All details should be included in your game report and that includes reports from assistant referees as well. Again, OSAA wants us to deal with this firmly, even when the players, coaches and/or spectators don't like it.

Similarly, sometimes coaches forget that they are only allowed to coach their own team. Frustration can boil over into comments about our decisions. One quick, emotional statement may need just a brief, hard stare at the coach. If it repeats or goes more than a sentence or two, it demands a firmer response, even if you think their complaint *might* be a little justified. They don't get to coach us. Let them finish saying what they say and then respond. Your response should be extremely calm and clear. For example, "Coach, we don't comment about how your team plays or how you coach. We expect the same professional courtesy from you." Then display the yellow card or red card, depending on what was said and done. And, in particular, any coach who comes to the officials at half time to complain about decisions, etc. must be shown the yellow card for dissent.

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