

Oregon School Activities Association

Soccer Bulletin #1

2024

This is the best time of the season. Everyone is undefeated, no one has been carded and there hasn't been a single bad referee decision anywhere! But the actual season starts next week. Coaches and referees are the adults out there. It is our job to give the players their chance to represent their school, use their skills and learn the life lessons that we learned as members of high school teams 'back then.'

As many of you have already heard, there are, essentially, no rule changes this year. There was a minor change about tape on the socks below the ankles and there was a reorganization of rule 12 about fouls and misconduct. The rule 12 reorganization was only editorial and did not change the previous rule's intention.

The OSAA Executive Board is very concerned about the enormous increase in red cards last year over 2022. With about 5,700 high school soccer games in Oregon last year, there were 198 red cards given in boys' games and 27 in girls' games. The boys' figure is the worst year on record. Second caution, language and violent conduct were the most frequent reasons for red cards last year.

Referees and coaches have to work together to reduce the number of red cards. Coaches have to use their professional judgement about when or whether a cautioned player can safely return to the game. Referees can help keep games under control in a number of ways. They can be quicker to call ordinary fouls. That doesn't mean they should ignore the possibility of advantage, but there is little chance of advantage being realized in the victim's defensive third of the field and, in most cases, in the middle third as well. If you allow advantage, do not hesitate to call the foul if the advantage is not realized immediately.

As we have done in recent years, if someone reports language, which you did not hear, about race, religion, gender, ethnicity, etc. the referee is to immediately stop the game. This is not discretionary. The referee should tell both coaches what they were told. They then give the coaches a minute or two to talk to their players about appropriate behavior. Then restart the game. Be sure to report all of the details in your game report. Of course, if you heard such language yourself, a red card is required.

When a caution is given, stop play with the whistle and signal for the clock to stop. Then take your time. Unless the situation appears volatile, make sure you have the right player(s), tell them why they are getting a caution, display the card, require them to leave the field and record their numbers, the time of the game and the reason. Then go tell the coaches the official reason e.g. "Blue seven, unsporting conduct." If the coach asks what you saw in a

civil manner, tell them, briefly, and let them get their sub ready. Taking your time, making this formal, allows feelings to calm down and it makes it clear that this behavior is not just normal soccer behavior.

If you have given a red card to a player or coach, or there has been a serious disruption to the game (e.g. ambulance called, administrator having to deal with spectator misconduct, lightning, police called, etc.) that, of course, goes in your game report. But you should also call your commissioner (assignor) right after the game. They will want to hear it from you before they get the inevitable call from the athletic director.

Early in the season, please make an extra effort to check the players for proper equipment before the game. We don't line them up or check them off against the roster, but we should wander around them during warm ups, staying out of the way, and check for shin guards of a reasonable size, jewelry, bracelets, etc. Coaches will appreciate the chance to correct their players' equipment before the game so the coach doesn't get a caution during the game for a player who is illegally equipped. You may have read that FIFA/IFAB has made the players responsible for the size and 'suitability' of their shin guards. That has NOT been adopted by NFHS, however. See rule 4.1.5.

Handling decisions may be the most often disputed calls referees make. Please review the NFHS rule about this. 12.2.2. You should be aware that NFHS, unlike IFAB and NCAA, does NOT consider use of the hands to protect 'soft tissue regions' (i.e. girls' chests and boys' crotches) to be deliberate handling. Of course, "protecting" is not the same thing as using the hands to direct the ball.

It is always possible that air quality problems may interfere with some games this fall. As provided in rule 1.7.1, the host school determines whether the game can be played up until the game begins. During the game, if they advise you that the air quality index has risen into the danger zone, terminate the game. Unlike lightning, you do not have to hang around to see if the air quality improves. If that happens, OSAA policies about interrupted contests will apply. Coaches should address their questions to their athletic director. The officials should report in their game report the time remaining in the game and the score at the point where the game was terminated.

Finally, at the end of the game, LEAVE! OSAA asks that you do not shag balls, watch handshakes/fist bumps between the players, change your shoes, eat a sandwich, etc. Pick up your bag and go directly to your car. Do not engage with any spectator, coach or player as you are leaving, no matter what they are saying. (Well, okay, if they say 'good game, ref,' you can smile and nod your thanks.) The game administrator for varsity games should offer you an escort to your car. If they do not or there is no game administrator, please put that in your game report, as well as the details of any inappropriate behavior.

Some of this may sound like it's a jungle out there but it's not. But if you are prepared to deal with those unusual or tense situations, you will be less likely to encounter them. Good luck this season.

Patrick Duffy
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