



SOCCER

GET A
DROP
ON IT



NFHS Rule Changes Include Dropped Balls

Rules regarding procedures for dropping the ball, and improperly equipped players, were among eight rule changes approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations during the Soccer Rules Committee meeting in Indianapolis January 28-30. The rules committee for each sport meets on a yearly basis to consider rule changes.

"Our game is in pretty good shape," said Theresia Wynns, NFHS director of sports and officials education. "There will be a few changes this particular year, but the rules revisions that have

been made will not change the game for the most part."

Dropped Ball (9-2-1, 9-2-3, 9-2-5, 9-2-6, 9-3)

Any number of players, including the goalkeeper, may now contest a dropped ball. Additionally, the referee cannot decide who may contest a dropped ball or determine its outcome.

Play 1: Five players, including three from team A and two from team B, participate in a dropped ball. After hitting the ground, the ball is kicked by several players and then rolls over the

Referee Jeff Adelman of Everett, Wash., administers a dropped ball. A number of NFHS rules changes for 2019-20 address dropped-ball situations.

touchline. The referee cannot determine which player last touched the ball.

Ruling 1: Conduct another dropped ball five yards from the point on the touchline where the ball left the field of play.

Two new articles were added to Rule 9-2 to further clarify a dropped ball. Article 5 states the ball should be dropped again if it touches a player before hitting the ground or if it leaves the field after hitting the ground without

SEE "DROP" P. 2

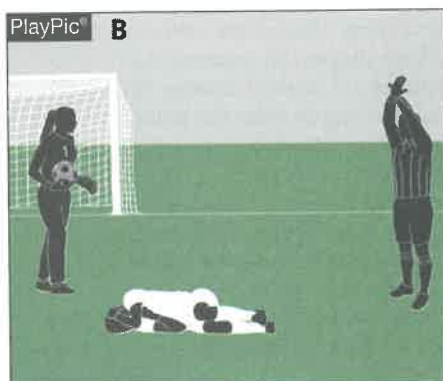
► DROP CONT. FROM P.1

touching a player. Article 6 states that, if a dropped ball enters the goal without touching at least two players, the play must be restarted with a goal kick if it entered the opponent's goal or a corner kick if it entered the team's own goal.

Play 2: The dropped ball is kicked by one player and goes directly into the opposing team's goal (PlayPic A). **Ruling 2:** The goal is not allowed; the ball must be touched by any two players before entering the goal.

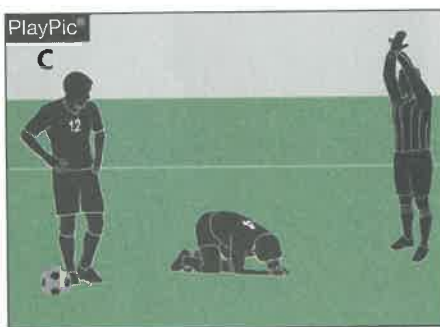


Rule 9-2-1c was amended to remove the provision that, if a team is in clear possession of the ball, the game will not be restarted with a dropped ball. The rule now states the only time a game will not be restarted with a dropped ball following temporary suspension for a player's injury or unusual circumstances is when the goalkeeper is in possession of the ball (PlayPic B).



Play 3: Following a temporary suspension of play following a player injury, which occurred while the goalkeeper was in possession of the ball, the referee restarts the game with a dropped ball. **Ruling 3:** the game will be restarted with an indirect free kick by the goalkeeper's team following temporary suspension for a player's injury or unusual circumstances when the goalkeeper is in possession of the ball.

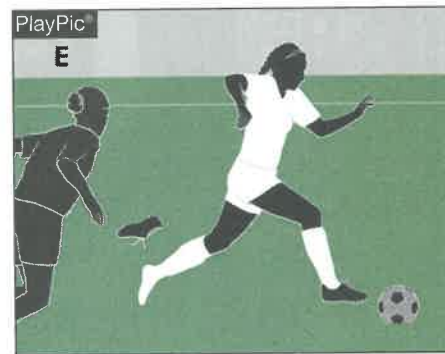
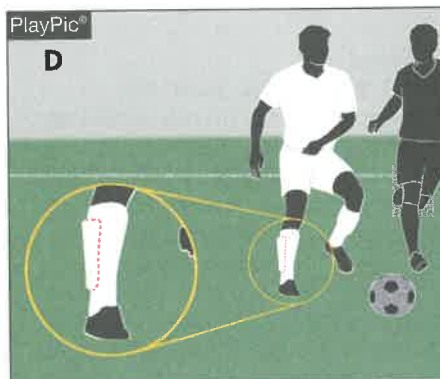
In other changes, Rule 9-3 eliminates free kick opportunities by replacing an indirect free kick with a dropped ball if the ball was not in the goal area and in possession of the goalkeeper during cases of temporary suspension due to injury or an unusual situation (PlayPic C).



Improper Equipment (4-3)

Rule 4-3 will now specify that an improperly equipped player will not require teams to play shorthanded (PlayPic D and E). The improperly equipped player will be asked to leave the field when the ball is not in play if the issue cannot be resolved immediately on the field, and the player may be replaced.

Once the offending player is properly equipped, he or she can report to an official. If the player was not replaced, he or she may re-enter the game at a

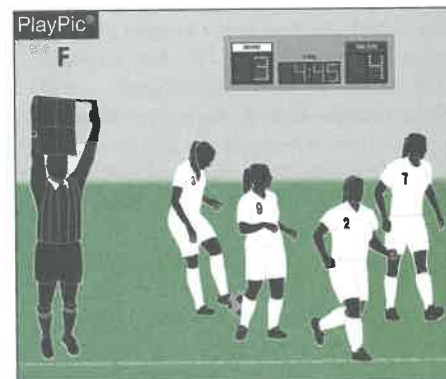


dead ball. Infringement of the rule will not cause the game to be stopped unless a referee determines the situation is dangerous.

Play 4: The referee observes that tape holding a player's religious medal to the body is loose and the necklace is outside the player's jersey. At the next stoppage, the referee directs the player to leave the field and allows the player to be replaced. **Ruling 4:** If the coach chooses not to replace the player at that time, the player whose medal has been taped to the body and the necklace removed may return to the field at the next dead ball opportunity.

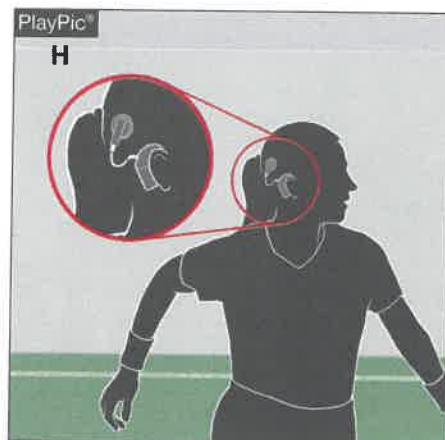
Time-Out and In (7-4-3)

Rule 7-4-3 was added to stop the clock when a substitute by the leading team is beckoned onto the field in the last five minutes of the second period, second period of overtime and fourth period of a game played in quarters (PlayPic F). In addition, Rule 3-4-3 was added to reflect that the clock should be stopped when the leading team makes a substitution within the last five minutes of the second period, second period of overtime and fourth period of a game played in quarters. These two new rules are meant to prevent coaches in the lead from wasting time and running the clock when no plays are being made. ►





► **Play 5:** With 4:45 remaining in the final period of regulation play, the referee beckons a substitute onto the field of play and stops the clock. The



substitute's team is in the lead. **Ruling 5:** The clock shall be stopped with five minutes or less left in the second period when a substitute of the team in the lead

is beckoned onto the field or when the team in the lead makes substitutions.

Advantage Signal (5-3-1d)

The final rule change was to Rule 5-3-1d that now allows officials to call out "play on" with an underswing of one or both arms (PlayPic G).

Play 6: The referee observes a foul but calls "Play On!" and makes an underswing with one arm. **Ruling 6:** An official is allowed to call out "play on" with an underswing of one or both arms.

Editorial Change: Cochlear Implants (4-2-4)

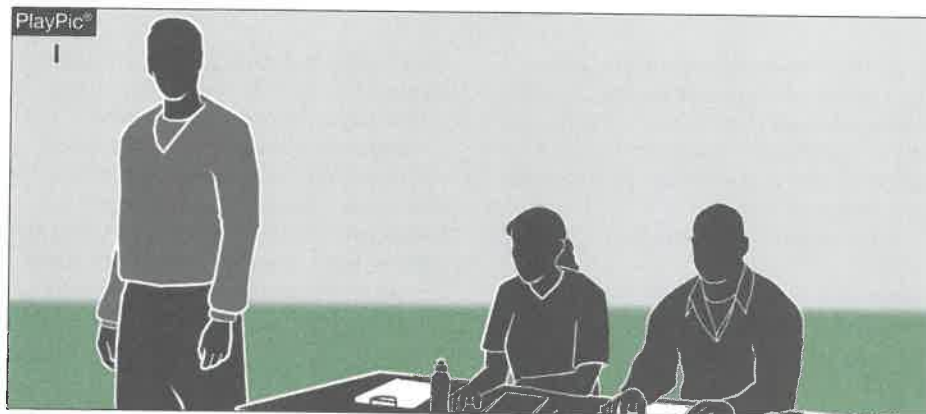
An editorial change was made to clarify that Cochlear implants can be worn if they do not provide a threat of injury to players (PlayPic H). □

POINTS OF EMPHASIS FOR 2019-20

There are three Points of Emphasis for the upcoming season, two of which deal directly with officials' communications.

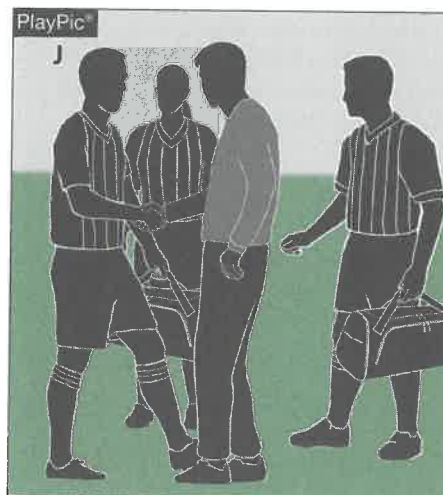
Point of Emphasis: Pregame Communication

Pre-game communication between game officials and the site administrator is something all officials should do before every contest, even when the match is being held at a site the official is familiar with (PlayPic I). The site administrator should indicate his/her general location for the contest so that referees know where to look if there is a need for host management to become involved or contacted during a match (PlayPic J).



Point of Emphasis: Communicating Misconduct

Another area of emphasis this year is communicating to the proper game personnel the nature of misconduct if a yellow or red card is issued. The referee shall communicate the nature of the misconduct to coaches, the scorer and other officials (PlayPic K). This should not be considered an opportunity for the coach to have a dialogue.

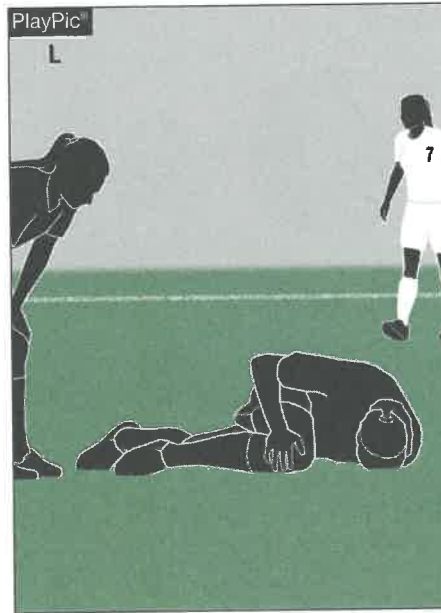


► SEE "POE" P. 4

► **POE** CONT. FROM P.3

**Point of Emphasis:
Knee-Injury Prevention**

The third POE emphasizes the need for Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) injury prevention. This injury is more common in girls' soccer than any other high school sport (PlayPic L). Girls are more likely to have an ACL injury than boys. Boys soccer has the highest rate of ACL injuries of all non-collision boys' sports. It is important that coaches plan warm-up exercise routines that help to strengthen the muscles in the knee area (PlayPic M). The goal is to teach athletes the proper manner to jump, land and run. The NFHS is offering a free course on NFHS Learn on "ACL Injury Prevention" and encourages all coaches to take this course. □



FLASHBACK: UNIFORM CONSISTENCY

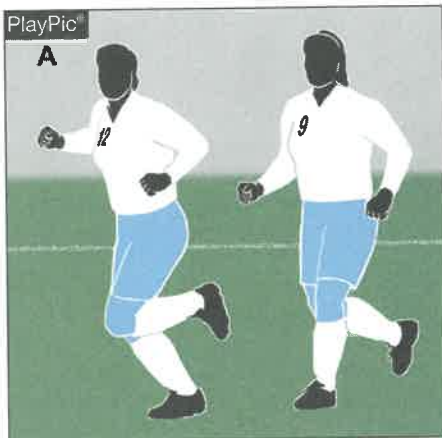
A Review of Rule Changes for 2018-19 Season

In addition to studying the new rules and points of emphasis for the 2019-20 season, officials should take a moment to review the changes made for the 2018-19 season — changes which impacted jersey color requirements.

Last season's rule changes included:

Home and Away Team Uniforms (4-1-1a, b)

The home team shall wear dark jerseys and socks (dark is defined as any color which contrasts with white), and the visiting team shall wear solid white jerseys and solid white socks (PlayPic



A). Prior to and during the game, jerseys shall be tucked into the shorts, unless manufactured to be worn outside.

Both socks shall be the same color, with the home team wearing socks of a single dominant color, but not necessarily the color of the jersey and the visiting team wearing solid white socks. If tape or a similar material (like stays or straps) is applied externally to the socks, it must be of similar color as that part of the sock to which it is applied.

This change allows home teams to wear the school-colored jerseys at home. The change would provide the opportunity for teams to use an alternative color uniform for "special" events, if approved by the state association.

Required Equipment (Undergarment) (4-1-1d, e)

If visible apparel is worn under the jersey and/or shorts, it shall be of similar length for an individual and a solid-like color for the team (PlayPic B).

The previous rule caused financial hardships for some players and schools. This rule allows for the purchase of one set of cold-weather undergarments per player.



Acceptable Head Coverings (4-2-10)

State associations may on an individual basis permit a player to participate while wearing a head covering if it meets the following criteria:

Medical or cosmetic reasons. In the event a participant is required by a licensed medical physician to cover his/her head with a covering or wrap, the physician's statement is required before the state association can approve a covering or wrap which is not abrasive, hard or dangerous to any other player and which is attached in such a way it ►



opponent's half of the field, in order to take the kickoff (MechaniGram E).



while not attempting to play the ball, and the goal is not scored.

This change addresses the issues of denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO) that occur in the game that places a player and team in double jeopardy when applying a penalty.

Free Kick: When Awarded (13-2-1j; 13-2-3)

Direct free kicks are awarded and taken from the point of the infraction if a player, coach, or bench personnel enters or leaves the field of play without permission of an official and interferes with play or an official (PlayPic G).

► is highly unlikely that it will come off during play (PlayPic C).

Religious reasons. In the event there is documented evidence provided to the state association that a participant may not expose his/her uncovered head, the state association may approve a covering or wrap which is not abrasive, hard or dangerous to any other player and which is attached in such a way it is highly unlikely to come off during play (PlayPic D).



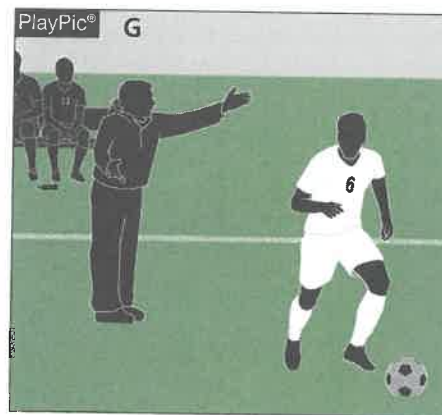
Offside (11-1-4)

A player is offside and penalized if, at the time the ball touches or is played by a teammate, the player, in an offside position, becomes involved in active play by:

- a. interfering with play or with an opponent or;
- b. seeks to gain an advantage by being in that position.

A player in an offside position receiving the ball from an opponent, who deliberately plays the ball (except from a deliberate save), is not considered to have gained an advantage. Indirect free kick at the spot of the infraction (even in own half).

This change better articulates the difference between being in an offside position and an offside violation. It also places the penalty language in a more logical place within the rule.



An indirect free kick is taken from where the ball was when the referee stopped play if a player, coach or bench personnel enters or leaves the field of play without permission of an official and does not interfere with play or an official.

This change emphasizes the importance of proper decorum and behavior from the benches.

Misconduct (12-8-1f, 15; 12-8-2d3, 4)

A player, coach or bench personnel shall be cautioned (yellow card) for unsporting conduct. This includes a player who commits an offense against an opponent within his/her team penalty area which denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the referee awards a penalty kick, if the offense was an attempt to play the ball.

A player, coach or bench personnel shall be disqualified (red card) for committing serious foul play. This includes when a player commits a foul, outside the penalty area, attempting to deny an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, and the goal is not scored. This also applies when a player commits a foul, inside the penalty area,

Definitions: Deliberate Act (18-1-1g)

A deliberate act is one in which a player chooses to act, regardless of the outcome of that action. This deliberate act is neither reaction nor reflex. A deliberate action may result in the opponent benefiting from the action (e.g., a deliberate, but misplayed ball that goes directly to an opponent). A reaction or reflex may result in that player benefiting from the action (e.g., a ball inadvertently contacting the arm and falling directly to the player's feet.)

This definition provides guidance for interpretation of rules that contain the word deliberate or phrase deliberate act. □

Kickoff (8-1-2)

At the moment of the kickoff, all players, except the player taking the kickoff, shall be in their team's half of the field. Players opposing the kicker shall be at least 10 yards from the ball until it is kicked.

This 2017 rule change allowing the kickoff to be taken in any direction has created difficulty for the player taking the kick to easily kickoff into his/her own half of the field without physically being in the opponent's half of the field. This addition to the rule would permit only the player taking the kickoff to be in the

SHIELDING AS A TACTIC

Shielding is a perfectly acceptable tactic for either team. It can be used by attackers as a means to hold a ball position that simultaneously keeps defenders away while the attacker waits for a teammate to move to a more advantageous position to receive the ball and continue the attack. It can also be used by defenders, as shown above, to keep attackers away from the ball as it is in motion to leave the field for a goal kick restart. If the shielding defender makes a mistake, not only does the goal kick restart disappear but the opposing team now has control of the ball deep in the defender's end of the field.

In the photo, green is shielding the ball from a white opponent. The rules

allow this blocking of the opponent because green is within playing distance of the ball. NFHS suggests this would "seldom exceed two steps (six feet)" (Rule 18.hh). Obviously, green is hoping the momentum of the ball will lead to it crossing out of the field for a green goal.

The AR, who is positioned correctly, is closely watching for three things:

- First, is green following the ball in order to stay within the legal play distance limit?
- Second, is green otherwise holding white back to prevent her opponent from getting around her? Note the possible infraction if green's left arm becomes clearly involved in holding the opponent behind her.

• Third, is white making contact with green in an attempt to destabilize green away from shielding? This remains a possibility but is not yet apparent.

There are at least these three issues that must be carefully watched. When defensive shielding occurs in the AR's area of responsibility, this can and should be left to an alert, knowledgeable AR. When this is happening on the opposite side of the field, the referee cannot afford to stand back and watch from a distance but, instead, moves decisively toward the area of the situation in order to be a "presence," which may prevent any infraction, or to sell a correct decision if there is an offense. □



Chadwick Thresher of Seattle assesses whether any infraction has occurred.

SOCCER INJURY SURVEILLANCE STUDY

As high school sports participation continues to increase in the United States, the number of sports injuries may also increase. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) and the NFHS Sport Rules Committees use information from the National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study (High School RIO™) to monitor rates and patterns of sports injuries among high school athletes. High School RIO™ is currently collecting the 14th year of sports exposure and injury data.

High School RIO™ data of the nine original study sports under surveillance shows that boys' and girls' soccer have the highest injury rates among the gender comparable sports (soccer, basketball and baseball/softball). Football is the only one



of these nine sports with higher injury rates than girls' soccer, while boys' soccer ranks fifth of those under surveillance. The most common injury diagnosis for both boys' and girls' soccer during the 2017/18 academic year was sprain/strain (boys: 48.0%; girls: 43.9%) followed by concussion (boys: 15.7%; girls: 25.4%).

While boys' soccer injury rates have dropped significantly over the first 12 years under surveillance, in 2017/18 an increase in injury rates (overall, competition, and practice) was observed. Although girls' soccer injury rates have remained relatively stable over the past

13 years, trends over time demonstrate statistically significant increases in overall and competition rates. High School RIO™ surveillance data shows girls' soccer players have a significantly higher concussion rate than boys. Understanding such patterns of injury is one important tool when considering injury prevention activities to keep prioritizing risk minimization in the efforts to keep soccer athletes as safe as possible.

If you are interested in more information on the High School RIO™ Study or a certified athletic trainer who is interested in becoming a reporter for volleyball, please visit <http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/research/ResearchProjects/piper/projects/RIO/Pages/Study-Reports.aspx> for summary reports. □

REEL IT BACK IN

Tips to Regain Game Control

If you have been an official for any length of time, you have had a game or more “get away from you.” Whether it was calling the game to allow players to play when they did not expect that, or some hidden, smoldering rivalry that erupted while it was your turn to moderate the game or just a bad situation in light, angles or partners, this is your moment to assert yourself and, by doing so, get that game back under control.

It sounds so easy when it is put that way — assert yourself and get the game back under control. The truth is far more complicated and it will take all of your skills and management expertise to turn this game around. The key to pulling this off depends on three things: understanding what went wrong, making amends to the affected parties and then changing your approach going forward.

What Went Wrong

In order to address the problem, you have to get a grip on what caused

the game to get off the rails in the first place. Replay the comments from the players — was it a situation where you thought they wanted to play but the players really did not want that? Did you hear some trash talk that could have been stopped had you listened a little closer, and did not? Was it something else, like a significant injury or foul that was missed due to the natural interferences of 20 players moving in a space, combined with different angles of sunlight, a moment of inattention on your part or something elsewhere which you thought was more important at that point?

If you can put your finger on what the problem is, you are on your way to getting the game back under control. With that said, there are some cases where you should strongly consider terminating the game.

Hidden Bad Blood

If you are familiar with working in a particular area where you know the

teams well, you may know of teams that have a rivalry. Then again, you may be helping an assigner on a new field and have no idea that the teams for some reason are mortal enemies. If a fight breaks out toward the end of any match, emotions will likely be at ragged edges. Restarting any match after a fight is likely to result in regrets, since the emotions that caused the fight are now even closer to the surface. Listen to the coaches and ask them if there is anything you need to know after clearing the offending players off the field. If there is a hint of bad blood, do the right thing and terminate the game. File the required report with the game authorities, sticking to facts only, and take this as a way to have avoided losing control a second time.

If you find yourself in a situation where that is not the case, now you have to address the hard part — making a reasonable apology to the team captains in a brief conference on the field. Start by pulling the referee

SEE “GAME CONTROL” P. 8

▶ GAME CONTROL CONT. FROM P.7

team together and explaining to the team captains what you think is going on. “Look, I know number 3 just got his ankle broken — and we did not see the play that led to it. That has to be frustrating and we apologize for that.” You can add in some more information, but do not make excuses. The referee team missed it — own the mistake.

The following discussion describes what you could do after any particularly obnoxious foul or too many “ordinary” fouls in too short a period of time — whether or not there was an injury, noticed or unnoticed.

Take a moment to establish your going-forward plan. Tell the captains what you expect — no retaliation, good clean play. Explain that you are going to significantly change the way you are calling the game — that you will be calling it tighter and, if you see any issues, the cards will come promptly. Let them know also that, if the situation improves appreciably, you would be open to adjusting your game control appropriately. Ask the captains to brief their teams on the new expectations and give them a few moments to do so.

Recovering and Change

When you blow the whistle to restart the game, the entire referee team has to be on the same page. The ARs need to be particularly vigilant in watching for things behind your back.



If play starts to get a out of hand, officials have a variety of tools to regain control.

Call fouls quickly as you see them — the first few touches and fouls should help set the tone of the game, and show the captains and teams that you are going to keep your word. This is not the time to create “phantom” fouls, just to make a call. Run harder, stay closer to play, use your ARs and get the calls right. The players will quickly realize you have re-asserted control and this,

in turn, will help to lower the game temperature. With this in mind, you have to maintain this level of control through the end of the game.

If the players sense the game going back to where it was, problems could quickly re-appear, and you will once again find yourself being challenged to maintain control as the game starts to re-escalate.

When you think about this, games get out of control because the referee team does not read the players or play well, or similarly, the referee team members are too predictable, and as a result the teams are reading them too well! If you are going to referee at a match with unknown teams, you need to use as many clues as possible to figure out an effective “starting level.” That can include arriving far enough ahead of time to be able to watch the teams arrive, warm up and practice, looking for the expected set pieces or actions that could cause problems during the game, as well as other concerns.

How you respond in such situations, either by assessing the situation and addressing it or not, makes the difference between a good official and just an official. Consider the above suggestions. Keep in mind that reading the game and players properly from the start is a far better way to keep the game under control. The hard way is, trying to recover a game after it has started to run away. □

THE CHALLENGE OF DISSSENT

For referees, dissent is a challenge in two distinctly different but related ways. First, “dissent” by itself is a challenge of a referee’s decision by expressing disagreement with it specifically or with a referee’s general competence as evidenced by the most recent decision. Second, the dissent presents a challenge to the referee in determining the most effective response. The first is basically a statement of “you are wrong” and the second is “and what are you going to do about it?”

These issues intertwine because the initial impact is an almost immediate,

rapid and intensive mental review of whatever decision, action or event preceded the dissent, the result of which is either an acceptance of the criticism or a rejection of it. It is not surprising that, for most referees, the reflex is to not accept the criticism. Occasionally, when the error is undeniable, we should be ready to acknowledge the mistake and quickly determine how it can be corrected — i.e., the steps which need to be taken to set things right, consistent with the requirements of the laws or rules of the game. We may not appreciate having a mistake brought to our attention (or

the manner in which the criticism is expressed), but honesty and fairness compel us to make amends.

Dissent, however, can occur even if its core issue is correct and, therefore, even when justified, this source of dissent still offers a challenge to us in what we do about it. Acknowledging and correcting the error is only one, though a critical, element of our response. Where the dissent is misplaced or based on an incorrect understanding of a fact or rule, the challenge is to determine the extent to which we can educate the dissenter quickly and effectively without wasting ▶

► time or whether our best response must be aimed at the act of dissent rather than its correctness.

The two basic options are to ignore or respond. Ignoring often has the unintended consequence of urging further dissent, either as a continuation of the original disagreement or as a spur to further disagreements as the game continues. There is, however, a wide array of actions beyond “no action” which represent options of varying degrees of severity:

- A simple eye contact plus a stare with scrunched eyebrows that would be seen as a glare.

- A brief private conversation in passing (including such “neutral” observations as, “Thanks, but I saw it differently”).

- Any of several strong gestures that are broadly accepted as saying “no more.”

- A public conversation clearly conducted in a manner indicating your unhappiness, optionally enforced by a delay of the game.

- A formal display of a caution for dissent — either at the next stoppage or, if needed, at a stoppage called specifically for the card.

How we choose from among all these options is our challenge arising from the player’s challenge. A useful approach is patterned after what we also apply to the more serious misconduct of “abusive, insulting or offensive language”: personal, public and provocative (also known as the “3Ps”). They are considered separately and each has its own range of seriousness. In other words, the issue is the cumulative “score” on all three of them that determines which approach we ought to use. The first instance of dissent may have the referee start anywhere in the list of increasingly serious response options but, as dissent continues, the seriousness of the response needs to take into account the failure of earlier attempts to deal with the problem. As referees, we cannot afford either to be overly thin-skinned or thick-skinned, as these terms are normally used. Find a nuanced, tolerable, effective and confidently administered middle course of action. Players will challenge you until they determine your limits. But once they do, they will settle in and play the game. □



Bryan Hulen of Seattle issues a yellow card, which is one of the many tools for dealing with dissent.

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READING THE GAME

What to Look for and When to Look for It

Once a referee reaches the point where he/she knows the rules well and has learned effective mechanics, what comes next to improve his/her game and advance his/her career? There is more to refereeing soccer at a higher level than just running around calling fouls and the ball into touch. Effective game control becomes the next level of expertise to master. This is an especially important skill for the referee in officiating varsity high school matches.

But what does “reading” mean? How does a referee read the game to gain better control?

One factor the referee should realize early on in a game is what kinds of tactics are the teams using? Does one team use a slow build-up depending on using many short passes to advance? Are the opponents using quick counter attacks with long passes to advance? Cautioning players committing fouls to break up promising attacks may be necessary to take this problem out of the game. The referee must differentiate careless fouls between two players in a specific moment and tactical fouls that are part of a coordinated effort to neutralize the other team’s style of play. Some tactical fouls may be subtle or dramatic. When fouls have a purpose there is a meaning that the referee must identify and punish to show the teams they must not continue.

One team may be using an aggressive offside trap to neutralize the other team’s attack. While this is certainly within the laws when executed properly, the officiating team must be working together well to make sure it does not miss a properly executed offside trap. On the other hand, if the defensive team’s trap is not effective, the officials have to let play continue through the failed trap and deal with the ensuing frustration by the defense.

The referee will have to identify troublemakers on either team and be prepared to watch them closely to deal with them. Opponents may get fed up with one of these players and retaliate. A quiet word with these troublemakers



Jaclyn Reilman, Van Nuys, Calif., reads the action to better officiate the game.

can be effective as a warning displaying that the referee understands what is going on and is fully prepared to shut down misconduct. Other verbal methods including humor may influence troublemakers to change their ways once they realize the referee is on to them.

If a player commits persistent fouls, the referee must warn and/or caution the player involved to stop the pattern. Counting fouls is necessary to identify persistent infringement. While the laws do not state specifically how many fouls by a player are considered persistent, it is up to the referee to decide this within the context of each game using his or her own best judgment. Sometimes the “density” of fouls within a space of time or in relationship to a previous event (a goal, a sendoff, or a penalty kick) will also precipitate more fouls. Letting players know that a pattern of troublesome events will be addressed

sends them the message that the referee understands what is in progress.

One team may have a particularly skilled goal scorer who is adept at eluding defenders. Watch challenges closely when this player is involved. Does a pattern of fouls against this player by several members of the opposing team develop? Repeatedly fouling the same player by several members of the other team may also be a pattern of unsportsmanlike conduct.

Watch for player match-ups where there is a mismatch of skills. A less-skilled defender may resort to fouling his opponent to prevent a promising goal-scoring opportunity. If the less-skilled player is on attack in possession of the ball, the referee could be prepared for simulation of a foul. Observing this early on in the game and realizing the potential for foul play should prepare the referee to warn or caution. ►

► Based on how the game is being played tactically, the referee needs to anticipate what may happen, and be prepared and in position for the next event to be close to the play. This can be especially challenging if it involves a lot of sprinting. The referee must be up to the challenge both fitness-wise and positioning-wise. Just being a “reactor” may not be enough for effective game control.

Game events like tying goals or a go-ahead goal in the last few minutes will “amp” up the intensity of the game suddenly. A referee who realizes this will

react accordingly and keep the game under control. Staying closer to the play, lending a presence or tightening up the type of fouls called may be necessary. Players will be playing harder to score another goal and the higher intensity may result in more fouls and possibly misconduct.

Listening to the players during the game and watching facial expressions or other body language can help the referee understand what frustrations may be mounting and what to watch for next. This becomes more important if there are angry exchanges between

opponents. Identifying these exchanges and expecting possible trouble is another form of anticipation.

When the players feel the referee has an understanding of how the game is being played and is dealing with important events appropriately, they will develop confidence in the officiating and settle down and concentrate on playing the game.

The referee’s job is more complex at these levels and “reading the game” will pay important dividends for a referee’s career as well as for the game. □

TAKE THE ‘I’ OUT OF ‘QUIT’

It is not always easy to be an official. That is not anything you do not already know. Sports officials are the targets of media, fans and players alike. And only on the rarest occasions do we hear acknowledgment of the skill and talent that we bring to the table. And when we do, it is typically a comment along the lines of, “Well, they finally got that one right,” or, “The officials are doing a good job letting the players play today.” Hmmm. How complimentary.

So yeah, sometimes it can be a bit overwhelming. All of us have had the desire to walk away because of frustration, exhaustion or simply being “fed up.” This may happen after a missed call in an important game. It may happen when confronted by angry parents on the way to your car after the contest. Or it may happen when looking at your schedule for the coming season and realizing that you are giving up every weekend for the next 12 to 16 weeks to a bunch of strangers because of the love of your sport, when you could be doing any number of other things.

We have all had these moments. Some decide enough is enough. But when it seems like there is no other solution, consider the following before you walk away from the avocation you love so much.

If it makes you feel any better, coaches, fans and players do not know that they do not know. Obnoxious fans, players and coaches can make it very inviting to simply walk away from

the game. But the fact is, Americans know more about “Keeping Up with the Kardashians” than they do about their own local and state governments.

So how much do you think they really know about the intricacies of the rules of the games they watch? Not to

SEE “QUIT” P. 10

National Federation of State High School Associations



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mention they often consider themselves expert at every level from high school to professional. Officials are highly trained and they know their stuff. Comments from the uneducated should be easy to ignore.

When the tough gets tougher, look to others for inspiration

Those who are professionally accomplished, or who simply exude values that we admire, can serve as motivating figures in challenging times. It can be someone as close by as the crewmate with whom you worked for years — the one who possesses the admirable qualities of patience and caring. Or the one who, amid a crazy locker room, will be the person of sound wisdom and patience. The highest levels of officiating offer fantastic role models as well, even if your goal is not to get to the big leagues. Take Ken Hudson, the first full-time African-American NBA referee; Sarah Thomas, the first female official on the NFL staff; or Dale Scott, the first openly gay MLB umpire. All three are models of integrity, class and the highest levels of professional success.

Call your mentor

We all have individuals in our lives to whom we reach out during tough times and we depend on them greatly. These are individuals we can call in the car on the way home after an inadvertent whistle, a timing error or when we misapply a rule. They are the ones who will be open and honest with us, recommend ways to improve, suggest different ideas, make us laugh and comfort us when we are feeling down. Humans have a remarkable desire to reach out and offer consolation to one another. Officials are notoriously independent, strong and Type A. Do not let the “I can look after myself” frame of mind keep you from the company of others who can help.

Learn to think differently

The majority of our performance is based on how we think and how we see the game. As far back as 1974, W. Timothy Gallwey’s book, *The Inner Game of Tennis*, challenged athletes to see themselves differently and open

their minds. Gallwey argued that 90 percent of performance is driven by the mind and while processes, rules and procedures matter, the way we think matters more. Specifically, how we make meaning, perceive the world around us and make decisions. Getting in touch with our approach releases us from our natural tendency to stay within the realm of thought in which we find the most comfort. It allows us to adopt an, “I am not quitting” mindset, even though everything around us is telling us that it would be the right thing to do. Problems are simply solutions waiting to happen. Open your mind to new ways of contributing, preparing and performing.

Try something new

If things are becoming stale on the field or court, try something you have never done before. For example, try a new position. As any official knows, learning a new position is fraught with difficulties on a number of fronts. Mechanics and movement will no doubt be different. You may find yourself calling fouls that you have never called in your entire career and to make matters worse, you must know the penalty enforcements for each of those fouls. Your visual perspective on the game will change, offering a new possibility for excitement in how you literally “see” the game.

Another option for a new contribution is to get involved with training and development of officials in your sport. Make a presentation at a local officials association meeting. It provides a sense of satisfaction in contributing to the overall good of the avocation. And it is kind of fun.

Finally, get involved with training and development of officials in your sport. It is a great way to give back and may be just the fuel you need to stay motivated.

Learn from failure

We spend much of our lives being conditioned to believe that failure is a bad thing. Granted, we strive for perfection, ensuring that our calls are accurate and enforcements are clear. News flash: Recognize you will never be perfect. Kilian McDonnell of St. John’s University and Abbey in Minnesota challenged those of us driven to perfection by reminding us in his

poem “Perfection Perfection” that the chiseled form of Michelangelo’s David actually squints, that the Venus de Milo has no arms and that the Liberty Bell is cracked.

The fact is much more can be learned from failure as opposed to success. When we are successful, we end up trying to replicate the activities that led to our success, which proves a fertile ground for a stagnant way of thinking. Instead, embrace failures, both individually and as a crew, as opportunities to learn new ways of preparation. Greet failure with an enthusiastic and inquisitive mind. Ask questions and contemplate. Since “all of us are smarter than one of us,” officiating crews are in an excellent position to do this either pregame or postgame. Failure is never a reason to quit; it is a reason to get better.

Remember you are making a difference. Sports officials are the impeccable combination of intellectual preparation, technical skill, poise and presentation. Sporting events do not happen without them. And while most of us would agree that the less the official is part of the game the better, it does not mean the officials do not play an essential role.

Officials who politely banter back and forth with nervous young men and women about to perform in a challenging sports event may just be the catalyst that young athletes need to perform their best, perhaps even achieve a state record. The referee who helps a coach keep his or her composure after a disputed call might have just given that coach the intellectual capacity to make a better decision about a future play. That contributes directly to the success of that coach’s team.

Sports officials attend to everyone, so let us be honest — fans are consumed with their team, coaches are consumed with their players and players are consumed with their performance. But officials are the lynchpin. They serve as the glue that keeps the contest on track. They are the conductors of the sporting orchestra. Without them, nothing starts and everything stops. Most importantly, officials who look sharp, carry themselves with professionalism and do so with humility are the best ambassadors for any sport. There may not be a better reason *not* to quit. □

DEMONSTRATION EFFECT

Lower-Level Players Cannot Always Copy Higher-Level Play

The “demonstration effect” occurs when people see something done in one context and they match or copy the behavior in a different context. If the behavior in the original context is new, surprising, appears to be pleasant or fun (or “cool”) and is seen to be accepted, it is more likely for observers to attempt the same behavior in what they feel are similar conditions.

We gripe about this all the time. In our case, it happens both top to bottom and sideways. By “sideways,” we mean the tendency of players to copy the behavior of their contemporaries observed elsewhere or at other times (e.g., in the game just before theirs, at a tournament, their opponents in one of their games. By “top to bottom,” we mean copying the behavior of players in games at higher competitive levels — particularly when seen on television or as a spectator and when the game and/or the teams and/or certain players are considered prestigious (high-level matches). But “top to bottom” can occur just as easily observing an older sibling or simply attending a high school match.

For younger, less experienced players, it is one of the ways in which they pick up tricks, techniques, ploys and different methods of play. Unfortunately, these things being learned can, when copied, turn out to be inappropriate for that player’s match level, either because their current physical talents are not adequate for the job or because what the younger player is “demonstrating” is not exactly the same thing as what they think they saw. Also unfortunately, the younger player tends to expect the same results, both in terms of his or her own performance and how the referee responds to the action.

This produces the dreaded, “But this was OK in the X vs. Y game on TV last night,” when the player gets whistled and/or carded. And what we would like to, but will not, say is, “And you are not Ronaldo.”

Yes, the “demonstration effect” can get very bothersome. When refereeing at a lower level and seeing a player



Players will sometimes try to copy higher-level play, but they do not always have the ability to emulate those higher-level players.

trying something out that we are sure he or she picked up watching WC, MLS, adult amateur or NCAA games, it is easy to think that our refereeing life down here would be so much easier if those referees “up there” just called the game “the way they should” and not provide bad examples of player behavior to go publicly unpunished. All this does, so the argument goes, is give younger players the notion that such behavior is acceptable ... so why not do it themselves? And if we call them on it, they think we are inept and got our badge out of a cereal box. Obviously.

The point, though, is that if referee A were to officiate, say, an MLS match the way referee B would referee a high school game, referee A would be doing the MLS players a disservice — just like referee B would be doing the high school players a disservice if referee B officiated them the way referee A would an MLS match.

Some might express shock at this and say, “But the offenses are the same. Should not they be treated the

same?” And the answer is that, with some exceptions, the offenses may be the same but how you handle them can differ greatly. The games are different, the players are different, the incentives are different and the entertainment aspects are different. In an MLS match, for example, there might be “writhing on the ground” and some of it may be a serious attempt to gain a beneficial but unearned call from a distracted referee, while at other times it is merely for show and all parties know it and act accordingly. A caution for such simulation or fakery is unnecessary because no benefit was gained and no participant (player or referee) was fooled. What the casual observer is missing is the brief eye contact, the referee smile, and a silently mouthed “not this time.”

Does that sometimes make the job of officiating a high school match difficult when the players are trying out things they learned from “the big levels”?

Yes. But sorting that out comes with the job of officiating. □

WARNING AHEAD

Warnings done correctly can be very useful, but if they are used in the wrong situation, they can hurt more than they help game control. There was an instructor who would frequently say, “If you warn a player, the guy he just knocked down is going to think that, if all the player gets is a lecture for sore ribs, I will do that too.”

The reason that a referee may want to talk to a player is that showing cards too often diminishes the value of the caution, so a warning can save you from cautioning. The comment above is saying that warnings should be used only for offenses that are just a bit over the limit.

The line between where you would show a card and just give a warning depends a great deal on the temperature of the game. If the game is well under control with few fouls and no or only a few cards, you would be more likely to warn rather than card.

If fouls are coming quickly at a rate faster than they should and/or are overly hard and you have already shown three or four or more cards, the game is heating up too much and it is too late for a warning. And if the foul was hard or tactical, a warning is not going to be seen as adequate for the victims.

If the game is having serious control problems and the yellow card is not getting respect, you may want to up the ante. A comment loud enough to be heard, saying something like, “You guys are not paying attention to the yellow card but I have a red one too” may get them to become more attentive.

There are some different ways to give warnings. The “quiet word” is just a brief, private conversation, perhaps as you go by the player, letting him know that what he did was more than you want and he needs to calm down. If the game has not gotten too hot, this can be very effective.

If the foul was harder and/or things have heated up, you may want to take a few moments and talk to the player more publicly to let both sides know something is being done. If what is being said is quiet, it allows you to say things



Christopher Calderon of Long Beach, Calif., gives a warning to a player. Sometimes warnings — without the need to show a card — are an effective tool for managing a situation.

you would not want to say publicly. Perhaps something like, “That was not as bad as it looked, but let’s tone it down.”

Some referees like to use firm gestures along with a conversation when they feel a public warning is the better way to handle the incident. You must

make it clear to everyone that better behavior is needed.

Use these or variations to keep the game on the right track. Much depends on how serious the incident was and some on how you communicate with others. □

THE KEY TO SIDELINE MANAGEMENT

Depending on your level of training and experience as a referee, communication may not seem to be a top priority for officiating games. However, behind knowledge of contest rules and game mechanics, referee/coach communication may be one of the most important tools for game management. As with all types of communication, the only reality that matters is the perceived reality.

The Pregame Conference

First impressions are everything. The coach/referee conference is an opportunity to demonstrate confidence, organization and professionalism. It is shocking to hear that some officials choose to skip this meeting altogether, and some coaches report having to initiate it themselves. If possible, it is best to call both coaches together for a common conference, putting everything out in the open and ensuring that they receive the same message.

Coaches may have different “wish lists” for the conversation before the game, but certain standards are a must at every level. All coaches want to see a crew that is organized and professional. They understand that referees are human and that mistakes may happen. At the high school level and below, most coaches are also able to accept that referees have varied levels of training and experience. What coaches cannot abide is evidence that a referee may have preconceived notions about a game before it begins.

Coach Logan Minshew of Fredericksburg (Texas) High School remembers a playoff game where a referee disclosed that he “normally (called) boys’ games.” This referee may have been used to calling for boys instead of girls, but the perception of the coach in that moment was that the referee was disinterested in the game that he was about to call. “I understand that it is a completely different game,” Minshew said, “but I would never go to my team and say, ‘I normally coach boys, but I got assigned girls.’”

As an official, be careful not to say anything before the game that may be

viewed as bias. John Brockway, head coach at Taylor (Texas) High School, put it this way: “The referee telling me that he knows something about the other team, or that he knows something about my team before the game, really turns me off.” Though you may have done your research in preparation for the game, it is not advisable to discuss your viewpoint with the coaches. Coaches want objectivity from referees.

Coach Cory Maxwell of Marble Falls (Texas) High School also stressed the importance of addressing all procedural issues before the game begins. “Are your kids equipped? Where is your administrator? Do we have an ambulance? Do we have water? Do we have the national anthem? Do we have roster announcements?” These are questions that Maxwell is impressed to hear from a referee before the game. “It is the guys who lay it all out before the game starts ... (that) make you feel more comfortable,” he said.

Building Relationships

Introducing the crew to both coaches shows that the center referee is the leader and mentor of a well-organized group. Most coaches will respect a leadership mentality, being leaders themselves, and they want to see cooperation and respect from all three referees.

If it is clear that a positive relationship exists among the members of the referee crew, a coach’s level of respect for that crew is likely to increase. If there is a lack of cooperation or signs of dissent among the referees, it adds fuel to any conflict that may arise during the game.

Brockway speaks about the value of a referee who is willing to build a sense of “kinship” with the coaches. “When a referee asks, ‘How is your year going?’ or, ‘Is there anything I should know about the team?’ you can tell that he has some knowledge ... and has some kind of soccer background.” Brockway notes that playing experience is an important element that allows coaches and referees “to have more of an

understanding throughout the game.”

It is important not to cross the lines of familiarity with coaches or players. Address coaches by their professional titles, avoid calling players by name and do everything possible to appear objective. Though you may be aware of reputations involved, speaking openly about them only sows the seeds of doubt in a coach’s mind. Even as you remain impartial, the coach’s perceived reality is that the contest may not be called solely according to the rules.

The Impact of Emotion

Though it can be tempting to shut down or to fire back when being hounded by a coach, a successful communicator and relationship-builder is willing to pause for a moment to address a coach’s concerns. Do not ignore a coach who is asking a question. Even if it is as simple as saying, “Coach, I hear you, and I will do my best to watch that,” a referee should acknowledge the coach on the sideline.

Minshew mentioned the importance of being willing to discuss a critical call. “I think there are some times when you have a question about what they saw. I try to be as professional as I can, but I need to be able to address that information with my players.” Referees should realize that coach comments are not always personal challenges or dissent. Some coaches are just trying to collect information for their own game-management purposes.

Remember that it is not about you, it is about the teams. Show empathy for the players. An awarded penalty, a red card or a close offside decision can have an enormous impact on a game. Always strive to keep the game in check without drawing attention to yourself. Think about de-escalation so that you become a calming influence on the field. There is never a reason to threaten cards or to tell coaches how to do their jobs. There is never cause to point a finger or to place blame. Take on the role of the peacekeeper and see how it will improve the experience for all parties. □



CAN TOUCHING BE PUSHING?

In the large majority of cases, merely putting a hand (or even both hands) on the back of an opponent would not constitute a foul. After all, the foul is called “pushing” for a reason — if there is no push, there is no foul ... usually.

The critical question is, why did an opponent put her hand (or hands) on the player’s back? What was the player doing at the time?

Consider the following scenario. A15 is at a location where she judges a ball struck high in the air is likely to descend and believes she is in a good position to gain control of that ball. Unexpectedly, she feels a hand (or hands) on her back with just the smallest amount of pressure. She was not aware of anyone there, much less close enough to have touched her, and no opponent had touched her on the back so far in the normal course of play. She briefly turned her head to see who it was and, as a result, was distracted enough that, in fact, an opponent coming in from the side was able to get a foot on the ball before she could.

Now, was the touch on the back innocent ... or was it deliberate? While not exactly an example of the usual pushing foul, was it done for an unfair and otherwise unsporting purpose? Did all this occur under circumstances in which it would be an entirely normal, though unwelcome, response to be distracted ... and particularly at a critical moment? What was her reaction to the event and its consequences?

The older and more experienced the players, the less likely it is that events occur by accident. If you judge the contact was innocent, ordinary and performed with no unfair intent (and particularly if it did not have the result of distracting the player who was touched), a simple comment in passing to the toucher to keep her hands off opponents would be sufficient. If you judge otherwise, and particularly if it had what you believe was the intended result (with advantage not being an option), call a pushing foul — it was not strictly “careless” but it was certainly intentional and unfair. And players are not supposed to touch opponents in general anyway.



When a player puts a hand on an opponent, what contact results in a foul?
Trung Pham, Kirkland, Wash.

As you move up the competitive ladder, your sense of what is a foul (and even whether it should be whistled or not) has to become more complex. It will need to take into account a number of questions that may not have occurred to you when you started officiating. Mastering this

change will get you recognized as capable of more challenging games. It also means that you will need to recognize when there is a potential for the above game situation and will have moved into a position to see what most needs to be seen at that moment. □