Open Lines of Communication

Clarifying when and how coaches can communicate with players highlighted the changes approved by the NFHS Soccer Rules Committee at its Jan. 21-23 meeting in Indianapolis. The NFHS Board of Directors subsequently approved the changes.

Effective with the 2013-14 season, coaches and players can communicate during a stoppage of play for an injury (see PlayPic A on p. 2). Rule 3-3-2b(1) still requires a coach or appropriate health-care professional to have the referee’s approval before entering the field; however, teams may now huddle and receive coaching instruction during the stoppage, which previously was prohibited.

Play 1: A7 goes down with an injury in the center circle and the referee stops play and beckons team A’s athletic trainer. Team A’s coach also goes to the center circle, speaks to midfielders A6 and A8 and yells to the bench for A13 to report to the scorer and check in. The referee waits until A13 has checked in and beckons A13 onto the field. The athletic trainer, coach and A7 depart the field.

Ruling 1: While that would have been improper last year, starting with the 2013-14 season, that is allowable.

Play 2: In addition to all the information in Play 1, team B’s coach calls for all her midfielders and attackers to come to the touchline. The assistant referee asks the players to stay on the field and the substitutes to stay in the team area. Ruling 2: While that would have been improper last season, starting with the 2013-14 season, it is allowable. Fluid bottles may be given to players and returned.

Play 3: A9 goes down hard in the center circle after a wreck with an opponent. There is no foul, but the referee stops play for the injury. As the referee turns to beckon the certified athletic trainer, the trainer is already running onto the field and is about five yards from the referee. Ruling 3: The by-the-book ruling is to caution the trainer (12-8-1a). However, good preventive refereeing is to beckon the athletic trainer with a hand gesture (even though he or she is already on the field) and as the athletic trainer and
Coach are walking off the field, have a subtle conversation with them about waiting for the beckoning signal before entering the field.

Another rule change involves electronic devices. While using electronic communication devices to communicate with on-field players is still prohibited, the use of electronic devices on the sideline is allowed.

“If a coach is on the bench and wants to use a tablet-type device to video and then at halftime show the players the rights and wrongs, they are able to do that,” said Mark Koski, NFHS director of sports and events and liaison to the Soccer Rules Committee.

Koski said the previous rule banned all communication devices, including cell phones, from the sideline. If such devices were found, a caution could have been issued.

**Play 4:** Early in the first half, team B is down, 2-0, with both goals being scored from the right side. Team B’s coach uses his smart phone to call the assistant coach sitting in the elevated pressbox, requesting that the assistant, “Try to figure out what’s breaking down.” After 10 minutes, the coach’s phone rings, he speaks for about two minutes, hangs up and then shouts positioning directions to B3 and B5. **Ruling 4:** That is legal, starting with the 2013-14 season. The electronic communication was not with players on the field during play. Using information correctly gained from a electronic communication — cell phone — the coach is allowed to verbally communicate with players on the field during play.

**Play 5:** During the first half, the assistant coach is on the sideline filming the action on the iPad and marking certain segments (PlayPic B). As the players take a water break at halftime, the head coach cues up those key plays and breaks them down for the players to view (PlayPic C). **Ruling 5:** That is legal, whether the head coach or assistant coach is the one making the comments.

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**If Goal, Then Yellow**

Another of the seven rules changes for the 2013-14 season involves the intentional fouling of a player who has an obvious goal-scoring opportunity.

New rule 12-8-2d(2) states that if a player commits a foul (handling or contact foul) while attempting to deny an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the goal is scored, that player will be issued a yellow card. If a goal is not scored, the player who committed the contact foul or handling will be issued a red card (see PlayPic A and B on p. 3).

If the foul is considered serious foul play, however, the player will still be issued a red card.

“The committee doesn’t want to penalize a team twice for the same play by having the goal scored against them, then to lose a player,” Koski said. “On the other hand, when a red card is issued when the shot is missed, the team is still suffering just a single blow.”

**Play 1:** B8 is sprinting on a breakaway with only goalkeeper A1 to beat. Just as B8 shoots, A3 uses an NFL-style wrap to put both arms around both legs to tackle and bring B8 to the ground. Miraculously, the ball enters the net anyway. **Ruling 1:** Even though a goal was scored, A3’s disproportionate and unnecessary force...
requires the red card. Had it been a simple, careless foul and the ball wound up in the net, it would have been a yellow card.

**Play 2:** A4 takes a corner kick, the ball goes to A8 who heads it toward goal. B3, seeing keeper B1 is out of position, raises an arm to attempt to block the ball. B3’s arm does contact the ball, but the ball still enters the net.

**Ruling 2:** Just like last year, because a goal was scored, B3 is shown a yellow card and the game restarts with a kickoff.

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**Home Team Must Wear White**

Another rule change for 2013-14 involves uniforms, specifically the use of tape on socks.

First, Rule 4-1-1b, as voted on and approved several years ago, the home team must now wear jerseys and socks that are solid white, starting with the fall 2013 season (PlayPic A).

Rule 4-1-1c requires both socks to be the same color and consist of a single dominant color. A change in that rule addresses the use of tape that is applied outside of the sock. The tape must now be a similar color to the area of the sock to which it is applied. Different colored tape is not legal (PlayPic B).

**Play 1:** All the players on team B are wearing red socks and each sock has four yellow stripes around the top portion of the sock. **Ruling 1:** Those socks “consist of a single dominant color [red],” so they are legal.

**Play 2:** The sub-varsity team from school A enters the field with yellow jerseys and yellow socks. The referee does not let the game start until team A is wearing solid white jerseys. **Ruling 2:** That is incorrect procedure. The NFHS rules are written specifically for varsity-level play. Unless there is different guidance from the state association, for sub-varsity play at all levels, those uniforms and socks are legal and the game may begin.

**Play 3:** Player A7 is wearing robin’s egg blue colored socks and has light blue tape (PlayPic C). **Ruling 3:** Legal, the tape and socks are of similar color so that meets the intent behind the rule change.
Player Check-in Now Required

Revisions to two rules (3-3-2 [new] and 3-4-1b) now require players to check in with the scorer/timer — or the referee if there is not a scorer in place — prior to entering the game when a goal is scored or when a player is injured and removed from the field. After checking in, the player must wait until he or she is beckoned onto the field by the referee.

“This rule helps with game organization and allows officials to know who the players of record are,” Koski said.

At the start of each half, the players can enter the field of play without being beckoned by an official.

One major advantage of the change is to simplify and organize the substitution rules and create uniformity among coaches, officials and players.

Different areas of a state allowed players to run on at a goal or an injury and other areas of the same state demanded players wait for a beckon, as required by the other two rule codes.

There is also a major advantage for referees. Top referees mentally track certain players — the player who already has two goals in the game and is looking for a hat trick, the district’s top scorer, the players who already have one yellow card, etc.

When those players were running on and off the field with no beckon, the referee had to search the entire field looking to find out if those five or six players had left, entered or remained on the field to play. Now, tracking those players is much easier for the referee.

New Free Kick Definition

The NFHS Soccer Rules Committee also approved a change to the definition of the “free kick” (18-1-1n). Committee members agreed that just tapping the top of the ball was not “putting it in play” (see PlayPic A). For the ball to be considered officially “in play,” it must be kicked and move (see PlayPic B).

Play 1: During a corner kick, A7 touches the top of the ball and then calls for A9 to come take the corner kick. Team A, knowing its trick play is on, watches A9 dribble the ball six times to get a better angle on goal and A9 takes a shot. Team B thinks A9 violated the two-touch rule and is clamoring for a whistle. Ruling 1: Team A’s trick play is illegal, according to the free kick definition. Since A7 did not put the ball into play, A9’s second touch of the ball while dribbling is illegal (17-1-5) and team B should be given an indirect free kick.

To eliminate the confusion about the ball being in play, the free kick was re-defined.

It is important to know that definition and to study all of the definitions in Rule 18.
Potential for Dangerous Play

What the photo shows has the potential for dangerous play. But do you feel it might be whistled against the keeper or the striker? Analyze the photo and support your decision!

Keeper
The goalkeeper has bravely gone in to secure a ball. Eyes are on the ball. No appendages are hanging out or presenting any offensive threat to her opponent. She is cradling the ball and trying to bring it to her core. She is OK now and will be for the foreseeable future — no whistles against the keeper.

Vertical
Blue number 2 has gotten her foot into a precarious position. She has a decision to make. If that choice it to take shin, heel and toe straight north — straight up — she is OK. There might be the most minimal contact between number 2 and the keeper, but in this 51/49 play, that would be acceptable, given this skill level.

Horizontal
If blue number 2 makes a different choice — planting her left foot short (closer to the keeper’s arm), using her right leg and foot as a hook to drag arm, ball and shoulder forward until the ball pops free — she has chosen unwisely. Clearly a dangerous play. You could opt for kicking. You might also see how close someone can get to the careless/reckless border without drawing a caution. A hard, deliberate and forceful dragging motion only lets you decide which color card to show.

Positioning
Now, the key to getting the decision right happens almost three seconds earlier. On your standard diagonal, you would have seen the attacker’s right butt and leg, keeper’s flank and hips — none of the ball, none of the keeper’s eyes, little of the keeper’s head, only the tips of the keeper’s fingers. That’s not enough to make a decision.

Three seconds ago, you had to anticipate the play and sprint six yards directly at the goalline and start to squat to get a worm’s eye view of the action. With your eyes three feet off the ground, looking at both of number two’s feet, the keeper’s head (down and tucked), the keeper’s hands (ball only, not reaching for a foot or to defend her personal space), this photo presents an easy decision.
Is the Keeper in or Out?

There is much misunderstanding about what actions constitute a keeper having to leave the game — “attended to on the field or who is deemed injured by the referee.”

If a goalkeeper appears to be hurt, the referee may stop the clock (PlayPic A) and check to see if the goalkeeper is actually injured. The goalkeeper will not be required to leave the game until the referee determines that the goalkeeper is injured and beckons the athletic trainer and/or coach onto the field.

The committee heard much anecdotal information about referees requiring the keeper to leave the field as soon as they stopped the clock. Referees can run over to the apparently injured goalkeeper, stop the clock and ask one of these questions: “Are you OK?” “Need a moment?” “Are you going to be able to stay in?” or perhaps, “Do you want your coach to come out and take a look?”

If those answers are “Yes,” “No,” “Sure,” or “No, I’m fine,” then that keeper does not have to come out of the game (3-3-2 Situation D). Restart in the appropriate way — either a dropped ball if there was no team possession, an indirect free kick if there was team possession or the correct restart if the ball was out of play when the referee stopped play.

For a field player, the referee may still check to determine if the player is injured, and if the player is, stop the clock and beckon on the athletic trainer and coach (PlayPic B). Once the clock is stopped for a potential field player injury, that injured player must leave the game (3-3-2, Situation I).

Gray Area on Injuries

By Joe Bean

What’s a referee to do when a decision has to be made that involves a complex blend of player safety, coach-player interaction and referee judgment — and there is no rule that provides specific guidance?

Take this situation from a high school championship game: A7, the top-seeded team’s leading scorer, has been on the field non-stop. When the game goes into overtime, the coach keeps A7 on the field, and with less than 10 minutes left in the last overtime period, the assistant referee hears A7 say, “Coach, take me out.”

The coach replies, “Gut it out … less than 10 minutes left. You can do it.” A7 responds, “Coach, take me out!” The coach repeats, “Gut it out.” A7 again yells, “Coach, take me out!” and the coach walks away. The assistant referee believes A7 is in distress. Two minutes later, A7 is still on the field in front of the assistant, who hears A7 say again, “Coach, I gotta come out.” The coach does not respond.

A7 collapses on the field with cramps in both legs. The referee stops the clock to summon the certified athletic trainer and coach onto the field. After talking with A7 for several minutes, the coach and trainer help the player off the field and play resumes. A7 lies down behind the bench and is given water. With fewer than four minutes left in the last overtime, the coach sends A7, who is unable to stand without leaning against the scorer’s table, to re-enter the game at the next substitution opportunity. Before A7 can re-enter, however, team B scores a “golden goal” and the game ends.

The critical issue here, according to referees I’ve surveyed, is the referee’s primary responsibility: player safety at two critical points. The first occurred when A7 repeatedly asked to be removed. The second occurred when A7, obviously in distress, reported to the scorer’s table to re-enter the game.

First point

Should the assistant referee or referee realize that A7 has been on the field for the duration of the game and overtime periods and not only wanted to come off — but needed to? In that case, the referee could have stopped the clock, talked to A7, decided that A7 was “injured” and should be substituted.

However, that is tempered, perhaps, by the realization that A7, in the coach’s experience and opinion, needs to be “pushed.” In that case, does the assistant or referee have the right to...
interfere with the player-coach dynamic? And according to what rule can the assistant or referee remove A7 — the team’s top scorer — from the field?

And that comes full circle to those seven critical words — if, in the opinion of the referee. Does the referee’s opinion — that A7 should be removed from the field, based on the player’s multiple pleas — outweigh the coach’s decision (and knowledge of A7’s durability) to keep A7 on the field?

Austin Gomez, USSF national referee emeritus, national assessor and national instructor with more than 40 years of experience at all levels of soccer, provides an authoritative answer: “We can’t force A7 to come out of the game because the player asks to leave!” he declares. “That matter is between the player and the coach. The assistant or referee could be aware of A7’s request and monitor the player, or either one could suggest that A7 sit down on the field of play, which would result in the referee stopping the game to summon the trainer.”

No referee has the right, he says, “to tell a player to leave because ‘I think you’re going to hurt yourself.’”

Responding to an injury that results in bleeding or to a possible concussion, Gomez says, puts additional responsibilities on the officiating crew. “The referee cannot allow an injured player who is bleeding to return to the field,” Gomez notes. NFHS rules (3-3-1c[3]) state, “Any player who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion …” must be removed and cannot return without clearance by a health-care professional.

Nathan Rimkus, a certified National Strength and Conditioning Association trainer since 2006, and a former high school and college soccer player, says, “Muscle cramps are a symptom of dehydration that could be categorized as severe. I would want to know the assistant heard the player’s requests to be taken out of the game, just as I would ask if the player has shown any other symptoms, such as dizziness or nausea. As a trainer, I’m there to look after the health and safety of the players.” Returning to play after cramping, Rimkus says, “depends on a number of factors. If the player seems to feel comfortable after getting hydration, and wants to go back to the game, I’d probably be inclined to say yes. The coach might have some insight into the player’s ability to push on. But I would watch that player closely for several minutes, just to make sure I don’t see any signs of further cramping, disorientation or dizziness.”

The second critical point

How important is A7 leaning for support against the scorer’s table, waiting to re-enter the game?

“The referee must allow the player to enter,” Gomez says. “However, the referee should watch A7 closely on the field. At the first indication of any physical problem (in the referee’s opinion), the referee should stop the clock and bring the trainer on to attend to the ‘injured’ player. A7 must then leave the field.”

“An assistant does not have the right or duty to take a player off the field,” Gomez notes, “but can provide information to the referee at a stoppage. Attending to A7 is the sole medical responsibility and authority of the team’s trainer, coach and staff,” he says, adding that “the referee has acted appropriately and responsibly by telling the trainer and coach that A7 wanted to come off the field earlier.”

Rimkus adds a warning note: “Recovering from severe dehydration, which can result in fainting, shock and damage to vital organs, can take hours under supervised medical care. From experience, and without being on the field during that situation, I would tend to advise against continued physical activity if I suspected severe dehydration.”

Joe Bean, 2008 Illinois High School Association (IHSA) Girls’ Soccer Referee of the Year, officiates high school, college and indoor soccer. He has refereed in four high school state finals and is a certified IHSA Soccer Clinician. □
EDITORIAL CHANGE

Pregame Equipment Question Adjusted

For years, referees were asking about pregame equipment in the current tense and coaches were giving an answer in the future tense (5-2-2d[4]). An editorial change corrects the issue.

When referees asked the question, “Are your players properly and legally equipped?” the expected response was, “Yes,” but often they had on T-shirts, warm-ups, no shinguards, etc. Instead, text will suggest the referee, “… inquire of each head coach whether each of his/her players will be properly and legally equipped at the kickoff.” That is the time when enforcement and penalty take place, so it is the right inquiry.

Charging the Keeper

The goalkeeper in possession of the ball (see PlayPic) shall not be interfered with or impeded in any manner by an opponent (12-4-3). A test question on that topic was often missed during the most recent testing cycle, so an overview is needed.

Play 1: Keeper A1 catches a high ball that had rebounded off the crossbar. Her arms are well above her head. Two steps later, B8 runs into A1. Ruling 1: That is impeding the keeper and the referee could award team A an indirect free kick. If A1 still maintains control of the ball, the referee could decide that the contact didn’t rise to the level of being a careless foul and allow play to continue.

The gray area is where there is no team control. A ball comes in from the wing, it’s high and floating. Keeper goes up, defenders go up, attackers go up, there is jostling and bumping. You do not want to take away the attackers’ possibility of scoring by whistling a cheap foul. Nor do you wish to allow an easy goal because someone is shielding the keeper with a move similar to a basketball pick.

Those decisions do not come easily — work with a mentor to help you get a clearer understanding. Ask your fellow referees at halftime or after the game if your “charging decisions” were correct during that game.

Soccer Injury Rates Holding Steady

Boys’ soccer injury rates have continually decreased over time but girls’ soccer injury rates have not changed — based on National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study (High School RIO™).

As high school sports participation continues to increase in the United States, the number of sports injuries has the potential to increase. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) and the NFHS Sport Rules Committees use information from the High School RIO to monitor rates and patterns of sports injuries among high-school athletes. High School RIO is currently collecting the eighth year of sports exposure and injury data.

High school RIO data shows that both boys’ and girls’ soccer have the highest injury rates among the gender comparable sports (soccer, basketball and baseball/softball) of the original study sports under surveillance.

Football and boys’ wrestling are the only two sports with higher injury rates than boys’ and girls’ soccer of the nine sports under surveillance.

While boys’ soccer injury rates have
dropped significantly over the past seven years, girls’ soccer injury rates have not changed significantly. The most common injury diagnosis for both boys’ and girls’ soccer during the 2011-12 academic year was sprain/strain (boys: 43 percent; girls: 51.6 percent) followed by concussion (boys: 23 percent; girls: 23.8 percent). Understanding such patterns of injury is one important tool when considering a new rule change and keeping risk minimization as a priority 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 interested in becoming a reporter for boys’ and/or girls’ soccer, please visit: ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/research/ResearchProjects/piper/projects/RIO/Pages/Study-Reports.aspx for summary reports.

What Should Be on the Team Roster?

Each team shall submit a team roster, containing the first and last names and numbers of all players, substitutes, all bench personnel and all coaches to the officials at least five minutes prior to the start of the contest (3-1-3). That was a highly missed test question topic during the most recent testing cycle.

Play 1: During play, there is a man in a business suit sitting in the team area. At a stoppage, the far-side assistant asks to speak to the referee and points out that man. Ruling 1: That is legal. The referee had noticed that on the team roster provided during the pregame, the coach noted that the athletic director would be in the team area, and had written “AD R. Burns” on the roster.

POINT OF EMPHASIS

Excessive Player Substitutions

Rule 3-6 reads, “When a team repeatedly substitutes to consume time, a referee shall order the timer to stop the time clock during such substitutions and shall notify the coach of the offending team. The repetition may be construed as unsporting conduct.”

Play 1: Team A has substituted four times in the first 72 minutes of the game. When they score a goal in the 73rd minute to make the score 2-1, the coach sends a substitute to the official scorer after every dead ball and substitution. Ruling 1: Clearly, team A’s coach is attempting to unfairly waste time in the hope of hanging on for a victory. Follow Rule 3-6 and order the clock stopped. The warning could be as simple as, “Coach, no!” or perhaps as lengthy as, “Coach, we can see that you are trying to consume time by substituting, so please stop it.” It would be legitimate to have one or two substitutions in the remaining few minutes, but one at every stoppage should draw the caution for team’s A coach.

Play 2: The facts are the same as in play 1, except the score is 7-1. Ruling 2: Due to the scoring gap, you would be far more lenient with team A’s coach. Both teams still want as much playing time as possible, but it is likely the coach is talking to a player that haven’t played much this season and is getting some “mop up time.” Judge the emotions of team B to decide if you need to take the recommended actions in ruling 1.
Rule 14-1-4 reads: “Once the kicker starts his/her approach toward the ball, he/she may not interrupt his/her movement.” A stutter step is not permitted, and the action must be continuous forward motion throughout the approach.

Several referees, coaches and state associations asked the committee to look at specifying what was allowed and what was banned. The committee quickly came to the conclusion that if there were 50 actions specified, someone would attempt a penalty kick in a 51st way and there would be an argument as to its legality.

Keeping it simple, here are the key phrases — “he/she may not interrupt his/her movement,” “stutter step in not permitted” and “continuous forward motion throughout.” If a penalty kick run-up violates any of those, it’s illegal.

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The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee noted an increase in reported and diagnosed concussions in the 2011-12 National High School Sports Related Injury Surveillance Study. The recommendation of the NFHS Sports Medicine Committee is that no athlete should return to play or practice on that same day after suffering a concussion (PlayPic A). It is a repeat point of emphasis. However, if the coach sends the player to the scorer for the next available substitution opportunity, the player may enter (PlayPic B).

Available on www.nfhs.org, there is a great deal of information about concussions.

There has been an emphasis on concussions in various sports. Players, parents, coaches and administrators face a growing list of requirements from legislators and boards — learn them, know them and follow them.

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**QUICK TIP**

Vary the diagonal you use and it may allow a game to be played that otherwise might not be playable. Practice on a game a level or two below what you normally work.

The setting sun, faulty stadium lights in one corner of the field — you never know the reason why, but having experience on the “opposite” diagonal may save a game.
Taunting Leads to Disqualification

When a player taunts opposing players, opposing coaches or opposing fans, the player is to be disqualified (12-8-2b). A question on that topic was also missed often during the recent testing cycle.

In the PlayPic, a player from the black team taunts the crowd supporting the gray squad after scoring a goal. Clearly, by rule, that action is deserving of a disqualification.

Since it is an emotional sport, we encourage players, coaches and fans to celebrate successes. They should shout, scream, wave flags, make gestures, jump up and down, etc.

But, as player outbursts become more and more jubilant, it starts to grate on the team that is not successful — there is a line and referees have to determine that line.

If you see some players approaching that line, do some preventive refereeing and let them know to tone it down.

Review the 2012 Rule Changes

In addition to studying the new rules for 2013, officials should take a look at the rule changes made for the 2012 season. Following each rule change, there is a series of three numbers, which show the satisfactory responses to each rule change by coaches, officials and state associations.

- The NFHS Soccer Rules Committee has done away with the “soft red.” From the fall 2012 season forward, a red card to a player results in the team playing one player short for the remainder of the game (79/90/93).
- In rule 12-8-2d (new), whether via advantage or a failed attempt to handle a ball on an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, if the ball enters the net for a valid goal, the at-fault defender is punished by a yellow card (72/85/86).
- According to rule 14-1-7 (new), when in the taking of a penalty kick, there is an unusual situation that causes a temporary suspension of play before the ball is played or touched by another player, goal post or crossbar, the kick is retaken (91/94/100).
- In addition to the above rules changes, there were several editorial changes made to last year’s rules. Included among the changes are:
  - A corner kick shall be awarded to the opposing team when a free kick taken from outside the penalty area goes untouched into a team’s own goal (17-1-1).
  - The officials retain clerical authority over the contest through the completion of any reports, including those imposing disqualifications, that are responsive to actions occurring while the referees had jurisdiction (5-1-2).
  - The height of a corner flag shall be at least five feet rather than exactly five feet.
  - An editorial change correctly pointed out that the team roster submitted at the beginning of the game needs to list players, coaches, team members and substitutes (3-1-3).
  - Wording of “athletic trainer” and “MD/DO” are changed to “appropriate health-care professional” to allow each association to follow state law (3-3-1c 1, 4-2-8).

Marking Official and Team Areas

Team areas must be marked; however, the game may begin (1-5-3) if they are not marked. Referees notify the home team to correct the situation for future games. That was a test-question topic often missed during the recent testing cycle.

Play 1: The official and team areas are not marked. In the 20th minute, the home team scores a “questionable goal” and the visiting team coach is upset about it. The coach crosses the halfway line extended, almost standing in front of the home team bench, making comments. The referee asks that coach to return to his team area. The coach’s reply: “Where is that? It’s not marked.” Ruling 1: The referee could caution the coach for dissent. Clearly, across the halfway line extended is a known taboo. But here, the home team has created a problem for the referee team by not having the required markings.

Play 2: The official and team areas are not marked. For the third time today, the assistant referee on the bench side has made “surprise contact” with the assistant coach standing very near the touchline. Ruling 2: The referee could caution the assistant coach for unsporting conduct (12-8-1f[1]). But here, the home team has created a problem for the referee team. The potential for injury is high as someone sprinting down the line has no idea about the imminent contact.
Allow Player to Return to Action

After head-to-head contact, the referee notices signs of a possible concussion (PlayPics A and B), asks number 8 to leave the field and informs the coach (3-3-1c 3). The referee should allow number 8 to return to the game if the player’s coach has him or her report to the scorer (PlayPic C).

A concussion management question related to that was missed frequently during the recent testing cycle.

Many state associations are offering additional training, certification and directives. Follow what your state association dictates!

Sportsmanship at the Forefront

By Carl P. Schwartz

The time a student-athlete spends in high school should bring academic studies and recreational or competitive athletics. Just as the academic side teaches citizenship, the athletic side needs to teach sportsmanship.

The international sport has a Fair Play appeal, with banners, posters, flags, etc., to keep sportsmanship on everyone’s radar. The NFHS Mission Statement, the Coaches’ Code of Ethics and the Officials’ Code of Ethics all support efforts at promoting good sportsmanship.

Parents, fans, players and coaches can and should support positive sportsmanship with their encouragement and applause. Referees should take actions to prevent any unsporting act, if possible, whistle the unfair act if it takes place and punish unsporting acts with the appropriate misconduct card.

Carl P. Schwartz is Referee’s soccer coordinator.

Interscholastic Officiating Online Course

This online officials course is designed exclusively for the high school level. Introductory skills, concepts and officiating basics needed by all officials are covered. Excellent for new officials or those interested in becoming an official!

The course is available free to members of the NFHS Officials Association. Non-NFHS Officials Association members can take the course for only $20.

“Interscholastic Officiating” available at www.nfsofficials.com
Questions come up concerning a foul by a player against an opponent who is moving toward his/her offensive goal with an obvious goal scoring opportunity.

Rule 12-8-2-d2 states: A player shall be disqualified for committing serious foul play that includes a foul by a player against an opponent who is moving toward his/her offensive goal with an obvious opportunity to score and the foul prevents the goal from being scored.

An obvious opportunity to score normally means that the player has control of the ball and has gotten past all defenders except the goalkeeper or all defenders including the goalkeeper. The player could have defenders closer to the offensive goal but who are too far to the side to prevent the player from scoring. A player who fouls an opponent that meets the three criteria is to be disqualified if a goal is not scored. New Rule 12-8-1f(14) indicates that it is unsporting conduct and a caution if a player commits a foul attempting to deny an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, and the goal is scored. That is similar to last year’s new rule 12-8-1f(13) where an intentional handball to stop a goal results in a caution for a player if a goal is scored.

Please read Rule 12-8-2 Situation E in the 2013-14 rules book for examples that include the enforcement of the above rules. Following the rule and recommended procedures and making sure partners do the same provides required consistency.

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How do you know when a field is safe? There are many different aspects for which to be aware.

Grass
Certainly playing in a cow pasture with eight-inch tall grass would make a mockery of the game, causing inability to pass the ball or see opponent’s feet as you contest for the ball. Some teams apply gamesmanship — knowing a speedy opponent is coming to town, they’ll let the grass grow to hinder that faster player. If it’s safe, play; but be sure to note it in the game report to the conference.

Typically, referees can offset grass that is too long or too short to a minor degree. The advice: The faster the playing surface, the less pressure in the ball (but still firm enough to be legal); the slower the playing surface, the more pressure in the ball.

Rough surface
Poor communities may not have been able to manicure a surface. You might have to deal with small rocks — too many or too big gives concerns about player safety. Cancellation is an option, but so is asking the coach to remove the unsafe rocks. If your re-inspection shows enough of an improvement, play the game and report the facts.

Ruts
Joy-riding teens can ruin a field for months (especially if done after rain) and create hundreds of hours of work for groundskeepers. Deep ruts can make a field unplayable.

Glass, nails
If you see a single nail or glass during your pregame inspection, pick it up. If you see a broken glass bottle or a bag of nails scattered over a broad area, ask the coach to handle its removal. Then re-inspect the area. If it can’t be made safe, do not start the contest. The home school decides if a match should be started, but the referee has the power to stop a game if there are unsafe conditions.

Manhole cover
For years, a Midwestern Division I school had a large manhole cover that was 90 percent on the field and 10 percent in the assistant referee’s running lane. It was dangerous and despite pleas from different referees, the school did nothing about the manhole cover. Finally, after enough complaints over many years (and enough referees refusing to work there) they covered plywood with Astroturf and secured it to the field for matches. Do not start an NFHS contest with similar conditions.

Wrong lines
Part of the enjoyment and equality of the game is playing on a standard field. If you are on a field that has mis-marked lines — or worse, no lines — then enjoyment and equality suffer. Correct what you can in the time remaining before kickoff and make a report so the problem is solved for next time.

Lacking corner flags
Famous British referee Jack Taylor had inspected the field prior to a World Cup contest, but it was not until he was walking the teams out for the introductions that he noted the corner flagposts were missing. As the anthems were playing, he sent someone into the equipment rooms to get the flags in order. If they are missing, ask a coach to acquire safe corner flags. A match cannot be started without corner flags. Report the facts in your game report.

Football goalposts
Many communities use a combination soccer goal/football crossbar. There are usually several cross-hatched pipes above the soccer crossbar and under the football crossbar. The school/coach ought to have a ground rule to cover the combination goal.

If they do not, the most common is: Any ball striking any post that is not part of a normal soccer goal is out of play and will lead to either a corner kick or goal kick, based on which team touched the ball last.

Pre-existing conditions.
Items such as power lines and tree branches (items there before the game and not generally subject to being moved) are pre-existing conditions. If you see something like that around your field, ask the home coach to explain the ground-rule to the opposing coach and the official crew and discuss it with the team captains during the pre-game conference.

Carl P. Schwartz is Referee’s soccer coordinator.

(From left) High school officials Taylor Williams, Richmond, Va.; Doug Morgan, Glen Allen, Va.; and George Sprosty, Henrico, Va., inspect the field for any safety hazards.
How to Manage Penalty Kicks

By Joe Manjone

Rule 14-1-1 directs that “a penalty kick shall be awarded when a foul, which ordinarily results in the awarding of a direct free kick, occurs within the offending team’s penalty area.”

A direct kick foul by a defender that you call outside the penalty area should be called the same way inside the penalty area. Do not hesitate to make the call because it is in the penalty area. By not making the call, you are taking a scoring opportunity away from the attacking team.

Rule 14-1-2 tells us that, “All players except the kicker and the opposing goalkeeper shall be within the field of play but outside the penalty area and at least 10 yards from and behind the penalty mark until the ball is kicked.”

Make certain that all players except the kicker and goalkeeper are behind the penalty mark and outside the penalty areas until the ball is kicked. Get players whose feet are touching the penalty-area line to back off before the whistle is blown. Watch for players touching the penalty-area line or crossing the line after the whistle is blown and the ball is kicked. Those are considered encroachment violations and can be by either the attacking or defending team.

The kicker and goalkeeper are to be inside the penalty area at the time of the whistle to start play.

Rule 14-1-3 requires, “The opposing goalkeeper shall stand on the goal line, between the goal posts, until the ball is kicked. Lateral movement is allowed, but the goalkeeper is not permitted to come off the line by stepping or lunging forward until the ball is in play.”

The assistant referee or the side referee needs to make that call. They are in position to see if the goalkeeper steps or lunges forward before the ball is kicked. After the ball is kicked, forward movement is permitted.

Penalties for 14-1-2 and 14-1-3 vary, depending on the team committing the violation and if the goal is scored or not.

An infringement by the defending team (encroachment or the goalkeeper moving forward) is not penalized if the goal is scored, but requires a re-kick if the goal is not scored.

If there is encroachment by the attacking team and the ball enters the goal, the kick shall be retaken. If the ball rebounds into play or is deflected out of bounds, an indirect free kick is awarded to the defending team at the spot of the encroachment. If the ball is saved and held by the goalkeeper, play shall continue. If both teams commit infringements, the kick is to be retaken regardless of the outcome of the first kick.

Rule 14-1-4 controls the action of the kicker and indicates that, “the ball shall be kicked while it is stationary on the ground from the spot or any place on the penalty mark. To be in play, the ball shall be moved forward. Once the kicker starts his/her approach toward the ball, he/she may not interrupt his/her movement. Failure to kick the ball as specified shall result in a rekick.”

Allow the kicker to place the ball on the penalty kick line or penalty mark but make certain that part of the ball is touching or over the line or mark.

The ball must move forward. It cannot be kicked backward or to the side. It must move in front of the plane of the penalty mark or line. A ball could just be touched and move forward slightly, but if that happens, the kicker cannot touch or kick it a second time unless another player touches the ball. If the kicker kicks the ball a second time before it touches another player, the defending team is to be awarded an indirect kick from the spot of the second kick (see 14-1-5).

The kicker cannot interrupt his/her movement toward the ball. He/she cannot stop and restart or turn and kick the ball backward. If the ball is not kicked properly, a re-kick is taken. If the kicker continues to improperly kick the ball, a caution for delay should be given and the kicker shall leave the field.

Rule 14-1-5 governs the kick and indicates, “After the penalty kick is properly taken, the ball may be played by any player except the one who executed the penalty kick. The kicker may not play the ball until it has been touched or played by another player on either team.”

As indicated previously, a ball that is played by the kicker a second time before it touches another player results in an indirect kick for the defending team.

Rule 14-1-6 covers a penalty kick taken after time has expired.

If the ball touches the goalkeeper before passing between the goalposts when a penalty kick is taken at or after the expiration of time, the goal will count. If a penalty kick foul occurs just before the expiration of time, play shall be extended so that the penalty kick may be taken.

When play is extended, the kicker may play the ball only one time, the ball is in play until its momentum is spent, it goes out of bounds or is retouched by the kicker or another player other than the goalkeeper.

Follow the indicated procedures in every high school game you work. Make certain your partners do the same. Remember, if you call a direct kick foul against the defending team outside the penalty area, you need to call the same foul in the penalty area — even though it results in a penalty kick. By not calling that foul in the penalty area, you are preventing the attacking team from a goal-scoring opportunity.

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QUICK TIP

How well did you handle the points of emphasis last season? Review your officiating. Looking back, did you do what your association, league or governing body (NFHS or your local officiating board) asked you to do about the more important aspects of the game? Even if it was a uniform issue and your preference is to not worry about uniform infractions, did you do what the bosses asked you to do?
Soccer Officiating, the High School Way

By Joe Manjone

It seems that at almost every high school rules meeting, someone invariably asks: “Why aren’t high school sports rules the same as those used by other organizations? It would be so nice to be able to call games under one set of rules.” That statement is true. It certainly would be easier on officials if all levels, organizations and leagues of the same sport used the same rules. However, that is not the case now, and it is doubtful that it ever will be.

Similarly, the high school rules of team sports like basketball, football, soccer, baseball and softball are different from the professional, international or college rules in those sports.

The reason that there is a need for different rules is simply because the goals and priorities of each sports organization and level are different. For example, in professional sports the spectator is a major concern, so many rules changes are made with the spectator in mind. Those same rule changes are not needed for amateur or youth games where the participant is of primary concern.

Participation in high school sports is not as popular and almost unheard of in other countries. In most foreign countries, sports clubs rather than high schools sponsor competition for youth. Sports in foreign countries are not considered an extension of the classroom as in the U.S. Development and recreation are the primary aims of most club sport programs. Thus, the goals and the rules needed to govern the competition are different from high school rules.

The goals of all high school sports are education, safety, participation and sportsmanship. High school sports rules are made with those four goals in mind. Examples of how each of those goals affects high school sports rules are provided.

Education

Sports are considered an extension of the classroom. In sports, the student-athlete is educated socially and physically as well as the mentally. Sports are an excellent media through which that education can be delivered. The official is part of the education process and must be able to communicate with players, coaches and spectators, so that everyone is informed and can learn from the experience.

To better enable that communication, meetings between coaches, players and officials are mandatory, signals are utilized, and all cautions and ejections must be reported and explained to each coach. To properly educate the players and coaches about high school sports, it is extremely important that the official be consistent, call by the rules established for high school sports, lay aside rules from other governing bodies and concentrate on the game at hand — the high school game.

Safety of Participants

That is the biggest priority in high school sports. It is also the reason for the emphasis on the equipment check, the verification of legal and safe equipment by the referee and the rule that requires the official to stop the game when an injury occurs, no matter the position of the ball. Also, the rule that requires injured players to leave the game, when the referee stops the game for an injury is the result of that big concern for safety. Because of a stress on safety, coaches are also involved in the safety aspect. Coaches must verify to the officials that all players are properly and safely attired.

Participation

Allowing more players to participate in the game and thus receive the many benefits associated with playing high school sports is a goal in all high school sports. That goal has resulted in the inclusion of liberal or unlimited substitution rules that apply in a number of different substitution situations. Also, timing rules that allow for more playing time have been added in some sports to provide additional participation.

Sportsmanship

Because sportsmanship is a high priority, a statement discussing its importance is spoken or read to players and coaches before each game. Also, a number of caution and ejection rules and penalties have been established to eliminate acts of non-sportsmanship. Most schools have sportsmanship events for players, coaches and spectators and many states offer sportsmanship awards to member schools.

Fundamentals of Sport

With the four previous considerations in mind, the committees that determine the rules for each sport try to provide a high school game that is similar to the collegiate, professional or international play that the high school coaches and players are familiar with. However in most instances because the goals for offering the high school game are different from other competitions, differences exist.

With the emphasis on safety and sportsmanship, the “flow of the game” principle, commonly followed in professional or college sports, has no place in the high school game. When “the flow of the game” is the major consideration, the referee tries to keep the game moving and the ball in play by disregarding minor fouls. However, those minor fouls later often result in retaliation fouls, poor sportsmanship and injuries. Safety and sportsmanship, not the “flow of the game” must be the main concern when calling fouls in the high school game.

So, the next time you hear someone ask, “Why are high school rules different and why can’t all rules be the same?” You can now provide the answer. The rules are made to meet the needs and goals of high school sports. Also, you can emphasize the goals of high school sports and what the referee must do to meet those goals. Hopefully, that knowledge will add to your enjoyment of officiating high school soccer, and allow you to be a better high school referee.

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