

Oregon School Activities Association

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Just as soon as I talk about water breaks in hot weather, we start having games shortened or cancelled due to thunder and lightning. Maybe it will go away if I talk about thunder and lightning procedures. We seem to be very clear about the 30 minute stoppage when thunder and lightning are heard or seen. Coaches and school administrators also seem to be on the same page. I'm also hearing that referees are working well with athletic directors about the effects of JV game suspensions on the varsity game. The coaches and the referees are on the same team, the team of adults that are trying to give the student-athletes the chance to play.

Two suggestions: First, when the referees meet with the game administrator (and that may be the home coach on a sub-varsity game), they should ask what the evacuation plan is in the event of lightning. They should not give you a blank look! Of course, you won't need to do this on a day when no thunderstorms are in the forecast. Second, sometimes referees are asked by coaches, players or spectators, in cases when only a part of the game is played, if the game is "official." Does it count? The answer you have to give is "That's up to OSAA." We have one referee who actually works at OSAA and even he has to give that answer! OSAA has a policy on 'interrupted contests' that addresses these situations. That policy takes precedence over NFHS rules. It is not the job of referees to interpret OSAA policies. I'm not saying that anyone has done that but it would be good if we all gave the same answer.

Sometimes, spectators get carried away. Their passion for their school and the game is too much for them. It may result in language being used that is not acceptable. If you hear spectators using language that could be considered prejudicial racial, ethnic, gender, gender preference or religious language, you must stop the game. Go to the game administrator and have them deal with the spectators. Referees do not have authority to order spectators to leave or even to be quiet. School administrators do. Do not restart the game, however, until the game administrator has dealt with the problem. This includes any offensive, abusive or insulting language, in any language. This is not acceptable in the high school sports environment. You are not being too picky if you deal with it this way. It will not go away if you try to ignore it until "next time."

We have had an issue or two already this year coming out of referees not immediately leaving the field/game site. OSAA policy is that referees are to immediately leave at the conclusion of the game. Do not stop to discuss what happened or didn't happen in the game with coaches, players or spectators. Nothing positive will come from any such discussions. We do not expect that you will literally run to the parking lot, but you should get there in a quick and orderly fashion. If your crew wants to debrief about the game, you should plan to meet somewhere away from the school/game site.

With the use of VAR for the Women's World Cup and MLS, some assistant referees are confused about when to raise the flag for offside. Assistant referees on those games are receiving different instructions than those that apply in our high school games. There are no differences in the rule about offside between high school and IFAB. The mechanics may be a little different, depending on the actual incident. If there is one, and only one, attacker who can get to the ball, and they were offside at the time the ball was kicked, raise the flag. Don't make them run 30 yards to the ball, only to have you then raise the flag. Even worse would be waiting to see if the one remaining defender will miss play the ball, perhaps right to the offside attacker. Most of the time, that defender is feeling the pressure of that attacker, causing them, to panic and miss kick the ball. The attacker's pressure, however, means they are clearly interfering with an opponent. Raise the flag.

We've had some very challenging games so far, a few with double digit cards. At least some of them appear to have turned out that way because the referees did not deal early and very firmly with poor behavior. Don't be shy about giving the cards that are necessary to control the game.

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