

Oregon Schools Activities Association

2021-2022

State Rules Interpreter – Soccer Bulletin #1

The high school season has finally started! All of us, referees, coaches and players, are happy to be back on the field. We are also conscious that Covid-19 could suddenly take it all away from us, so let's enjoy it while we can. Due to a major drop in the number of referees, in all fall sports, leagues, schools and referee associations have been forced to make some modifications to schedules and assignments. We are going to need all of you to get us through the season.

Speaking of Covid-19, as of today, masks are not required while playing or officiating outdoor sports in Oregon, at any level. Of course, that could change. However, individual schools or school districts can have their own rules about masks. If that is true for either or both teams in your game, enforcement of mask wearing and proper wearing of the mask is not the job of the referees. That is up to the school staff. Masks are not a NFHS rule nor an OSAA modification. Referees don't have a role in enforcement of the school's rules, anymore than we have a role in player academic progress rules, etc.

It shouldn't be surprising that, with the start of the new season, there have already been some on field challenges, some old, some new. Many of the coaches are new this year and many are new to high school coaching. There is a very good chance that some of them don't even know that there is separate high school rule book. Please work with them in a collegial manner so they understand that high school rules are different. For example, if they want to send on a substitute at a time when, by rule, they cannot sub, you might say something like "Not on a foul in high school, coach." Please don't just ignore them because that doesn't teach them what they need to know.

A lot of changes were made to the 2020 NFHS rules, to reflect changes made by the IFAB. They include the new one-sided drop ball restart in certain situations that had formerly been an indirect free kick, which includes the ball hitting the referee under some conditions, goal kicks and free kicks not having to leave the penalty area before they can be played by another player, and goalkeepers keeping at least one foot on the goal line until the ball is kicked on penalty kicks. OSAA also introduced the mercy rule. Many players, coaches and referees did not get practice with these rule changes in the 2020-2021 season. Please expect that there may be questions about these changes in your games this fall and be prepared to respond.

Any player who wishes to wear a medical device on the field, other than an insulin pump, must get permission from OSAA before the game. The coach must show you a permission letter or e-mail from Kris Welch at OSAA for a player wearing any other medical device.

The mercy rule has been easily accepted by coaches. We will play the entire first half, regardless of the score. If the goal differential is eight or more at halftime, the game is considered to be complete. Please do not accommodate any requests that you stay around so they can 'scrimmage.' If the goal differential was not eight at half time, but it reaches eight at any point during the second half, the game is over. This rule applies in all OSAA games, varsity, JV and JV2, boys and girls. Please report whether the game was ended early due to the mercy rule and the game time when that occurred. We hope that the winning coach will do the things that will keep a game from coming to an early end, but that part is not up to the referees.

OSAA has asked that referees be more vigilant about inappropriate language being used by players and/or coaches. If you hear it, it gets a card. No warning first. A yellow card is their warning! If a player reports to you that an opponent directed offensive, insulting or abusive language to them, particularly if it is of a racial, ethnic, religious, gender or gender preference nature, you are to stop the game (and the clock.) Report what you were told to both coaches and give them a minute or two to address language with their players. (If you stopped play to do this, the restart is a drop ball.) If spectators are using offensive, insulting or abusive language, you must stop the game and inform the game manager. If there is no designated game manager, the home team head coach becomes the game manager. Please give the game manager the chance to deal with the language before you restart the game.

Finally, please remember that we, the referees and coaches, are the adults out there. Referees must treat the coaches as our colleagues, giving the student-athletes the chance to play their game, show their skills, represent their school and learn the life lessons that we learned from being on a high school team. Sometimes, we, coaches and/or referees, forget that. We get so focused on this game and who's doing what out there, that we forget the big picture. Coaches are there to coach their players. They are not there to coach the referees. You may have to gently remind them of that.

Be safe.

Patrick Duffy