

Oregon School Activities Association

Soccer Bulletin #5

2015

We are now well into the league seasons. Teams are getting frustrated that they aren't winning the games that they had hoped to win. In 6A and 5A, boys and girls, there are no undefeated, untied teams in the entire state. That means that things will sometimes get testy out there, as teams watch that dividing line between making the playoffs and going home. Even some sub-varsity games have gotten testy. Be careful out there.

Overall, we are having a very competitive season. More important, the amount of misconduct appears to be significantly less than last year. That's a good thing, as long as referees are still giving the cards that are deserved. We've seen some wonderful cooperation this year between referees and coaches, so the games are played by the student-athletes in a sporting manner.

A big piece of our apparent success so far is communication. A reasonable question from a player or coach should get a reasonable answer. I worked this last week with another referee on a varsity boys' game under the dual system. One coach came to us at halftime to ask about something that had happened in the sixth minute. My partner gave him a simple, short, clear explanation of why it was not a foul. The coach said, "Okay. Thanks," and then walked back to his team.

Now we shouldn't have to be over at the bench every five minutes explaining what just happened, but, short of that, we can communicate, as equals, with the coaches. The percentage of coaches who are reasonable people is probably as high as the percentage of referees who are! Even if we do have Stanley Screamer on the bench today, we still give them calm, brief explanations as and when we can. The coach may, literally, not have seen what happened, simply because he was turned away.

Any interaction with the bench should be short! No one, player, opposing coach, fellow referees or spectators, came to the field to watch you talk to a coach. Things are more likely to turn out for the better, rather than the worse, if you speak briefly, calmly and quietly, with no shouting from across the field.

That does not mean that we can only respond with a friendly dialog to the shouted questions that aren't really questions. Unlike on *Jeopardy*, phrasing it as a question does not make it okay! We have a number of ways to react to disagreement like that. A very short, emotional reaction, which doesn't use bad language, should be recognized as simply disappointment and probably ignored. Bad language should get a card, with the color based on the language. Continuing disagreement isn't a brief emotional reaction. It's a sign of a coach who is either 1. trying to 'work' you for the next call or 2. someone who is losing control of his emotions. Use the approach that calming this coach requires.

Unfortunately, we have had some referees who have forgotten that the referees are the third team on the field, whether there are one, two or three officials. As the student-athletes are learning, being part of a team means that we have to subordinate our personal desires to the good of the team. No matter where you go or what you do in life, there are going to be people who don't like you and/or you don't like them. We still have to get along with them, at least for this game, even if we aren't best friends forever afterwards.

The head referee is the leader of the team. Other officials have specific responsibilities as well, as outlined in the NFHS rules and modified by OSAA adoptions. Shouting at another official, berating them, body language that says you are not part of the referee team today, etc. is unacceptable. There is simply no excuse for it. It brings all referees into disrepute.

Sometimes, referees are offended by other officials or they have an opinion that another official is simply not good enough. I would encourage you to work with your commissioner in this situation. I would suggest a call or e-mail. Please do not put your comments in your game report itself! The game report is about the game, not referee inter-personal relations. You wouldn't report that the home team's striker played a great game and deserves to be All League. So don't include your opinion of your referee partners, either. Pass that opinion on to your commissioner separately.

The vast majority of referees don't have a problem getting along with one another for 90 minutes. That's part of the reasons we are having a great year so far. Keep up the good work.

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