

Oregon School Activities Association

Soccer Bulletin #1

2018

The new season is about to start! The first games are this Thursday, August 23. The teams have done try outs and practice session after practice session with their coaches, all getting ready. I hope that you are also ready. Could you go out and do a game this afternoon? Some parts of the state have had air quality issues and practices have been restricted. Until the game begins, it is the responsibility of the home school to determine whether it is safe to start the game. That includes whether air quality is unhealthy.

Besides our own uniforms, we have to inspect player uniforms and equipment before the game. This is just preventive officiating. Your inspection should be informal. No lining them up and checking them off against the roster. Please be diligent about uniform inspections from the start of the season. We are most likely to see oddball stuff, uniforms and equipment that do not meet NFHS rules, at the beginning of the season. Shirt color rules (Rule 4.1) only apply in varsity games. Below that level, shirts just have to contrast with each other. Be sure players are wearing shin guards of a reasonable size and are wearing them properly, no more than two inches above their ankles. Medical, religious or “cosmetic” head coverings (as distinct from the head padding devices that pretend to protect players against concussions) must be approved by OSAA in advance.

Work through the coach to deal with uniform problems. It is possible to be friendly, polite and professional about this and still get them legally and properly equipped before the game starts. But we do have to speak up. Remember that we must ask the head coach for both teams before the game if their players are, or will be before game time, legally and properly equipped. If a whole team’s uniforms do not comply with rule 4, please discuss this with their coach. We want to give the players the chance to play and represent their school. Any variations from NFHS uniform rules that you allow so the game can be played should be included in your game report.

Likewise, particularly early in the season, you may encounter facilities that are not correct. Your number one priority in this area is player (and referee!) safety. There can be no compromise about safety. None of us wants to be the stern bad guy who ‘wouldn’t let the kids play,’ but we also don’t want anyone hurt. Remember that team areas do not have to be marked, even though schools are strongly encouraged to do so by OSAA. Even athletic tape on the ground is better than nothing. Work with the home school’s representative to correct any issues. Any problems that can’t be fixed and which don’t affect safety or fairness of the game should be reported to your commissioner through your game report. Just marking field conditions as “terrible” is not sufficient. The commissioner is going to need details in order to approach the school.

The big facilities issue is usually goals being secured to the ground. If they are not secured (sand bags on the back bar or otherwise incapable of tipping over), they must be secured before the game can begin. No exceptions! No “we’ve never had to do this before” excuses. It’s been a lot of years since the rule was adopted. We realize that some games are played off campus, usually in a public park, and the home school has little or no control over the facilities. Sorry. That may be a reason there is a problem, but we still absolutely cannot play with unsecured goals at any level, even if that means that the game cannot be played today.

We, the coaches and the referees, are the adults out there, giving these high school players the chance to be part of a team, show their skills and represent their school. We are there to bring justice to the game. When player behavior begins to approach the line or crosses it, we need to let them know that. There will always be some players who do things they shouldn’t do. Our goal is to get them back under control so they and everybody else out there can play the game.

Work with their coaches and even their teammates to make this happen. Every year, I hear some horror stories about referees and/or coaches from other states. I don’t think we have much of that in Oregon. Last year, we had over 5,000 high school soccer games in Oregon. There were only six red cards to coaches! That is an amazing statistic, since it is FAR lower than the number of football coaches, basketball coaches or baseball/softball coaches ejected in high school games last year. It is a tribute to soccer coaches and referees understanding the spirit of high school sports. None of us, coaches or referees, are perfect, but we can almost always work together for the good of the players, their schools and the game.

Good luck with your season. Feel free to contact me with any questions or issues you have.

Patrick Duffy

OSAA State Rules Interpreter