

# Oregon School Activities Association

## Soccer Bulletin #4

2025

It is clear that, although most teams are still in their pre-league season, emotions are heating up. This behavior is going to get stronger as the teams begin their league play season, especially when traditional rivals meet up.

We have had a few fights so far this year. Fights are not common, but they do happen. They often leave the officials feeling that they have failed. So, let's think about how we can try to head them off and how we can handle them if they do happen. Before the game, check [osaa.org](http://osaa.org) to see how these teams are doing so far. Clearly, there will be different player attitudes if it's #1 in the league v. #8 than if it's #1 v. #2. A natural rivalry also demands extra preparation, even if one team isn't having a great season.

Second, try to arrive early enough for games that you can complete all of your pre-game duties before scheduled kickoff. Remember that varsity games almost always have player introductions, starting five minutes before the scheduled kickoff. We are supposed to be at the field 30 minutes before kickoff. If you or one member of the crew are, five or ten minutes late, your 30 minute pre-game window is now down to as little as 15 minutes. Experienced officials can usually feel pre-game tension. If you aren't yet experienced, ask the experienced officials on the crew what they think.

Third, call the game fairly tight, from the beginning. More games are ruined by officials not calling the game tight enough than are ruined by officials calling too much. You can always back off a bit but it's much, much harder to tighten up when the game is getting too hot. For the most part, teenage players don't have the experience to recognize the point at which players are trying to do more than they can do under control.

Fourth, typically there is an incident that sets off the fight. Usually, a defender does something that upsets the attacker, such as a small shirt grab or just a little push from behind when they are both going up for a high ball. Call those things quickly. If you didn't, maybe you were waiting to see if advantage developed, and you see any signs of possible retaliation, verbal or physical, immediately hit the whistle HARD and long! You want the players to look at you, rather than looking at what was just done to their teammate. And sprint to the spot of the incident. Don't be lazy. This is an emergency, so get there!

Finally, if you can get between the players before they get physical with each other, great. Whether you can get there in time to prevent mayhem or not, **do not touch players**,

period. Blow the whistle hard. Usually, sensible teammates will try to pull their player away. If necessary, summon the coaches. Do NOT forget the numbers of the players involved. It's always embarrassing when you card the wrong player. Get things settled down before you issue yellow or red cards. This will also give you the chance to talk to your other crew members about what they saw and what color they think should come out. This is not the time to be shy about using the red card. You really need to get the two that started it and any third player into the fray.

A few other things that have come up lately.

We have had some second caution red cards. It is important for your control of the game that you don't hurry the giving of the first caution to a player. The clock is stopped, make eye contact, give them the reason and display the card, before you send them to the bench. Don't just let them walk away. Keep them under surveillance. It's a ceremonial occasion, made necessary by the player's behavior. Taking your time will also give everyone the chance to take a breath and settle down. Be sure you then go to the benches and give both coaches the reason for the card. "White seven, caution, unsporting behavior. Bring on your sub, coach." And then get away to where the restart will be. Making a big deal of a caution may head off having to give a second one.

USSF has said that, if the ball rebounds off a player's body and makes contact with their hand/arm, that contact should be considered unintentional, based on your observation. NFHS rules do not address that subject. That decision, however, is always 'in the opinion of the referee' but a true rebound, such as off a leg or foot, is rarely intentional.

There have been a number of cards given for language already this season. Keep up the good work. Directed offensive, insulting or abusive language should always be a red card, with no warning or second chance. Incidental foul language that is heard by anyone other than you and the player should always be yellow. If you are the only one who could have heard it, you might give a yellow or you might warn them to watch their language. You can make that decision based on the heat of the game and the player's general attitude.

Be safe out there.

Patrick Duffy  
OSAA Soccer State Rules Interpreter