

Soccer State Rules Interpreter Bulletin #1

The 2020 high school soccer season will be very different than any other high school soccer season. We hope there will be a season and that it will at least resemble a normal soccer season. At this point, we have to plan that's going to happen.

Many local referee associations have decided not to hold a physical fitness test this year. Nevertheless, we still have to be ready for games to start as early as August 27. We will be offering three online referee training sessions, beginning July 16, in conjunction with the USSF Oregon Referee Committee' Virtual Gold Program. There will also be a video about the 2020 rules changes available closer to the start of the season.

But we also have to be physically ready to do games. I'm sure that some of us have been running during the Covid-19 shutdown, if only because we didn't have anything else to do. And I'm sure that some of us have not. Could you go out and do a 6A boys varsity game this afternoon?

I am not a running coach or a trainer. However, I have been running for many years, to stay in shape so I can referee soccer. I don't claim to have made every running mistake in the book but I've probably made more than half the mistakes in that book!

One thing I know is that it is easier to stay in shape than it is to get into shape. And you cannot get in shape in a week or two, just like the players can't, and they're a whole lot younger than we are! The problem is that we're all a year older than we were last fall but the players are still all 14 to 17 years old.

Since you know where you are physically and I don't, I'm not going to try to tell you what distances to run, or what time you should be taking for your runs, etc. Let me outline what I'm doing, just as a frame of reference.

With the high schools in my area closed, they have also locked down their tracks. Doing sprint work is, therefore, not an option. As a result, I am running on the street, the sidewalk, and trails. I am running about six days a week. I run before work during the week because that means I won't have a lot of other demands on my time at that hour. So the message for you is to get out there at a time of day when you won't be tempted to or forced to pass up your run for the day, at least not too often. And your body needs you to run more than a couple of times a week. Otherwise, your fitness level is going backwards.

I have a variety of routes to run in my area. If you run the same route every day, you get bored. I do 1.5 to 3.5 miles per day on weekdays, with about six different routes, to fit the time available before I have to get ready for work. On the weekends, I have about ten longer routes, getting up to about seven miles. I track my times on each route, which helps motivate me to improve. So my message to you is to keep yourself motivated by varying where you run and how long you run, and tracking your results.

For me, there are some key things to running faster. I always stretch before my run. I try to take an extra deep breath about every third breath, especially when I'm approaching a hill. It also gives me a rhythm. I try to raise my knees extra high on a hill. I try to get up on my toes as much as possible,

particularly on the flatter parts of the run. Naturally, the longer distance you are running, the slower you will be. So don't go out too fast on a longer distance. My goal is to not have to walk for a while during the run. A steady pace, adjusted for hills and downhill parts of the route, will pay dividends. Picture yourself in the last ten minutes of your second high school game of the day. The players are going to be stepping it up! Sometimes on a run, I have to tell myself, "Run bravely," by which I tell myself not to worry about running out of oxygen, "Just Do It." And I watch my weight carefully, but not obsessively. An extra five or ten pounds is going to slow you down.

Be safe when you're running. I wear a Garmin watch that monitors my heart rate. I can look back after the run and see whether I got my heart going too fast or not fast enough to get a good workout. I think there are other watches that will warn you about too high a heart rate during your run. The Garmin also gives me an estimated VO2 max, which is a measure of your body's ability to take in and use oxygen efficiently. With that information, you can Google VO2 max and find a comparative chart for VO2 max scores of men or women your age.

The other safety item is visibility while running. If it's cool enough, I wear a long sleeve neon yellow top. Pedestrians may have the right of way but we still need to be very alert, just like we are on the field, right? I will always stop (and stop my watch) at any intersection with a crosswalk light. Hit the button and wait for the "walk" sign. Don't get hit by someone racing to get through on the yellow, or talking on the cellphone and turning without looking for pedestrians. (Dodged that one two days ago, even though I had the walk sign.)

If you haven't been running for a while, PLEASE do not over do it! Take it easy, at least in the beginning. Don't think, "I need to get in shape quick, so I'm going to do 10 miles today." Maybe just jog early on. Maybe even walk quickly in the beginning. And that way, the next time you run/jog/walk that route, you will show improvement! Probably once a week when I'm running in the morning, I hear an ambulance siren. The morning heart attack is not a myth. And if you are hurt, this is permission not to run. Don't try to 'tough it out.' That won't help.

But do get moving. We're two months from the start, we hope, of the fall soccer season. That means that it's time to get back in game shape. I take a lot of satisfaction doing a long sprint during a boys' varsity game and beating players down field. 'This is why I did all of that training!'

If you have questions about running and getting into shape, feel free to e-mail me. Thanks for reading this and I hope you have a great season.

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