

Oregon Schools Activities Association

Soccer SRI Bulletin #4

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We have had some significant bumps in the last week or so. There have been enough of them that we need to talk about some extreme situations and how to handle them.

Many long time referees have learned to notice small things that can happen during a game which precede major troubles. They only learned these skills from bad experiences, unfortunately. Since they are subtle, it is very difficult to try to give referees a checklist of "If you hear this...." Nevertheless, we need to talk about some of the signs.

Coaches yelling at officials. We cannot ignore this. If nothing else, ignoring it leads quickly to players also yelling at or otherwise disrespecting referees and their decisions, not to mention spectators. Very few coaches want to get sent off. They know that being red carded will lead to trouble with their boss, the Athletic Director. Therefore, a quick, early caution will stop most coach dissent. Some coaches think that they can get away with voicing their disagreement by making it brief, subtle and/or of moderate volume. Do not fall into the trap of letting the coach continue to make comments, decision after decision, in this way. Using your best judgment and any previous experience with the coach, you may be able to avoid a caution with a recommendation to the coach that they not go down that path. However, you could think of their dissent as persistent infringement and we know that we have to card persistent infringement, although we try to warn first.

Opposing players talking to each other. I've seen players talking, individually, in a friendly way to opponents, maybe even giving them a friendly pat on the back or arm. That's great. It's a sign that the players are enjoying the game and have a good attitude. But, far more often, the verbal interaction is not friendly. Even worse, it's usually timed so that you don't hear what's being said. If you see players interacting like that, you should do a 'fly by.' Get over there, even if it takes you out of your normal route, because this may be much more important than seeing who gets that throw-in over in the other direction. "How we doing over here, guys?" Or, maybe you've seen some minor pushing that's led to some tit for tat retaliation. "Guys, keep your hands to yourself." Again, you must take action if you see this. If foul language is reported, whether you heard it yourself or not, stop play, stop the clock and ask both coaches to take a minute or two to discuss language with their team. This needs to happen every time!

Spectators mocking the officials or the other team. This is a giant red flag. The longer you ignore this behavior, the worse things will get. I guarantee it. Stop the next restart, stop the clock. Tell the game administrator what you're hearing and ask them to deal with the spectators. If there is no separate game administrator present, the home team head coach is the game administrator. They have to be the ones to go deal with it. Do not deal with spectators yourself. In either case, hold the restart of play until you see that the game administrator has gone to the spectators and has completed what they are going to do. Do not

just restart the game and hope for the best! You are not being a jerk for calling out this kind of behavior. There is no place for it in high school soccer.

Belligerent behavior during or after the game, from coach, player or spectator(s). We're talking people not just yelling loudly but also approaching you. The game administrator or campus security is required by OSAA policy to offer to escort you to your cars. Most games, that's not really necessary. However, don't feel you are being a coward by requesting an escort after a hot game. We have had referees assaulted in this situation, when there was no escort. Some escorts, unfortunately, are unwilling to actually tell the angry people to back off. If that happens, you need to include it in your game report. Do not engage in conversation with the angry people, no matter how wrong they are. Just keep going. IF YOU EVER FEEL THAT YOU ARE IN PHYSICAL DANGER, CALL 911. I strongly recommend that, when you leave for the parking lot after the game, you have your phone in your pocket, just in case.

Masks. The one good thing I can say about wearing a mask during a game is that it does keep your nose warmer on those cold days. Nobody wants to wear them but, right now, they are the price of playing, coaching and officiating. Referees have NO responsibility for people on the bench, coaches or subs, or in the stands wearing masks. In the vast majority of cases, there are no problems with players on the field and their masks. If a player's mask or gaiter is leaving their nose exposed or even their whole face, we are required to ask them to fix it. Almost all kids will take care of it without any problem. Sometimes, we have to ask the same player on more than one occasion. Maybe their mask just doesn't fit very well. You have to use your best judgment about that player and whether they are trying to comply or just ignoring you.

If they are ignoring you, swing by their coach. "Coach, eight's mask is down again and he's ignoring me. Thanks, coach." One of two things will happen then. Either the coach gets them to comply or the player doesn't comply. If the player doesn't comply, at the next stoppage, send them to the bench to adjust their improper equipment, even if they immediately pull it back up. They now must leave the field. They cannot just pull it up and come back because they ignored your previous polite requests to do so. The coach can sub for them. If they don't sub for the player, that player can return at the next dead ball, assuming that the player now is wearing the mask properly.

We have had a very small number of coaches whose behavior has conveyed that they are not willing to deal with their players' mask issues. You still send the non-complying player to the bench to adjust their mask. If the coach is not owning it, put it in your game report, so that others can deal with the coach's attitude.

Occasionally, we have had a coach demand that the referee deal with the mask of a player on the other team. It is not the job of the opposing coach to police the other team's mask compliance! "Coach, you take care of your players and the other team's coach will take care of their players." And, if they're going to continue to argue about it, caution them for dissent. It is never appropriate for one team's coach to make comments about the other team or get into a dialogue with the other team's coach.

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