

Soccer Points of Emphasis - 2021-22

By NFHS on February 21, 2021

soccer

Properly Worn Uniforms and Marked Fields. It is important that games are played on fields marked in a consistent manner, and players wear uniforms according to NFHS rules. If a field is improperly marked and/or if a team wears an illegal uniform the referee shall contact the state association, who will work with school administrators to make appropriate changes. In addition, during pregame communication with school administration, game officials are also encouraged to communicate these corrective actions directly to administrators.

Reckless and Serious Foul Play. Soccer is a contact sport and as such officials must be prepared to effectively manage the flow and intensity of the game. Understanding the differences between fair and hard play and a foul that is either Reckless or Serious is important to ensuring fair play and the safety of the players. Reckless play is defined as “a player has acted with disregard of the danger to, or consequences for, the opponent. A player who displays reckless play shall be cautioned.” Serious Foul Play is defined as “any play in which the player commits one of the offenses punishable with a direct free kick and uses disproportionate and unnecessary force against an opponent while playing for the ball.” It is critical that officials recognize the differences between the two and the corresponding penalty. Although officials cannot eliminate a player from engaging in reckless or serious foul play, there are Preventive mechanics that can be used to control this type of play from occurring during the match by:

- Addressing fair play and good sportsmanship during the pregame meeting with the coaches and captains. Let them know your expectations for competitive and fair play.
- Talk to the players and captains during the match. When the intensity of play increases and fouls become more prevalent remind the players of your expectations. Control the temperature of play by warning, whistle and when necessary cards.
- Deal with reckless or serious foul play immediately. Be sure to let the players and coaches know that you will not tolerate that level of play during the match. When warranted use cards to address these behaviors.
- Use of Headsets. Officials who have used headsets in communicate between and among the crew have found this to be an effective tool in helping to control play and deal immediately with unsporting and dangerous play.

High School Athletics is Education-Based. High school athletics are education-based, and for this reason some mechanics of our game are intentionally different from other levels of soccer. Playing sports and participating in interscholastic activities is a privilege that students earn by maintaining academic standards and good conduct in and outside the classrooms.

As an extension of the classroom, the goal of education-based athletics, in addition to core academic subjects learned in the classroom, is that students experience additional educational opportunities through their participation in sports. Beyond the specific skills of a sport, these individuals have the opportunity to learn important principles that can guide them the rest of their lives. Learning the life skills of

sportsmanship, playing by the rules, teamwork and perseverance will pay huge dividends throughout these students' lives. Certainly, improving skills and winning games is a part of the overall goal, but the quest to win games, events, and championships cannot come at the expense of providing these educational opportunities.

The required pregame meeting is a time for officials to communicate expectations to both head coaches and captains. This meeting for both head coaches and captains should cover pertinent rules, sportsmanship, the coin toss, and legally equipped players. This meeting is a purposeful start to an education-based interscholastic match.

Sportsmanship: Interscholastic athletic programs must promote good character, enhance the integrity of education, and foster civility in society. Student-athletes, coaches and all others associated with interscholastic athletic programs, as well as those who attend interscholastic athletic events, should adhere to the fundamental values of honesty, integrity, respect, caring, cooperation, trustworthiness, leadership, tolerance, and personal responsibility.

The message of good sportsmanship should be addressed by school administration with their students, coaches, parents, and spectators alike, which includes a message which prohibits taunting and the use of profanity during games. Coaches and officials should model good sportsmanship during the pregame, game, and post-game. A short but firm statement by the official outlining the action that will be taken for unsporting conduct would be appropriate. Check with your state association. They may have provided a statement for use by officials in the pre-game meeting.

Professional Responsibilities for Officials. Officials are an integral part of education-based athletics and for this reason it is important that officials conduct themselves in a professional manner that upholds the dignity of this vital role. For this reason, an official shall prepare themselves both physically and mentally, shall dress neatly and appropriately, shall master both the rules of the game and the mechanics necessary to enforce the rules, shall exercise impartial authority in a firm and controlled manner and shall stay up to date with game management and health and safety requirements. Additionally, officials shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession in all interactions with student-athletes, coaches, school administrators and spectators alike.

It is important that officials take steps to educate themselves with the NFHS Officials Code of Ethics in the soccer rules book as well as their state association's officials' handbooks.