



2017-18 SOCCER POINTS OF EMPHASIS

RISK MINIMIZATION

Concussions continue to be a focus in soccer at all levels of competition. The NFHS has been at the forefront of national sports organizations in emphasizing the importance of concussion education, recognition and proper management.

Discussion of proper concussion management at all levels of play in all sports has led to the adoption of rules changes and concussion-specific policies by multiple athletic organizations, state associations and school districts. Coaches and game officials need to become familiar with the signs and symptoms of concussed athletes so that appropriate steps can be taken to safeguard the health and safety of participants.

There continues to be concern from the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) about the cumulative effects of non-concussive blows to the head and body in practice and games. Research data is showing that there are significant impacts to the head when athletes are constantly “heading” the ball and in “free ball” situations where multiple players are positioning for control of the ball.

SHINGUARDS-Shinguards are one part of several required pieces of soccer equipment. Coaches need to make sure to follow the requirements for properly fitting. Verifying that the shinguards are not altered by the athlete, are worn under the sock, and are worn with the bottom edge no higher than 2 inches above the ankle. More importantly, the shinguard is required to be age- and size-appropriate. Coaches need to make sure that the required shinguard properly fits the respective player based on his/her age and size.

HEADGEAR-Though not required equipment, soft-padded headgear is allowed to be used by any soccer player. The SMAC emphasizes that there is no research or data available that shows that wearing soft-padded headgear prevents or lessens the possibility of a concussion. The determination regarding wearing soft-padded headgear is entirely up to the individual or school district. Schools, parents and students are free to make their own assessments relative to this piece of equipment. The relevant ASTM standard can be found at www.astm.org/Standards/F2439.htm.

REFEREE COMMUNICATION AND TEAMWORK

Active and effective communication among referees and with coaches and team captains is critical to ensure successful game management. Conducting a meaningful and thorough pre game with the head coach, captains, and referee crew provides an opportunity to review important rule changes, ensure players are legally and properly equipped, discourage rough play and emphasize a zero tolerance for the use of offensive or abusive language or gestures. Advancements in electronic communication devices will afford opportunities to improve communication among referees during the run of play.

RESTARTS

KICKOFF- At the kickoff, the ball shall be kicked while it is stationary on the ground in the center of the field of play. The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves in any direction.

PENALTY KICK- Once the kicker starts his/her approach toward the ball, he/she may not stop his/her movement. A stutter step is permitted, however, continuous movement toward the ball is required.

LOCATION OF OFFSIDE RESTART- Indirect free kicks for offside are taken from the spot where the offending player interfered with play, interfered with an opponent or gained advantage by being in that position.