



2010

E.M.S.O.A.

SPRING

NEWSLETTER

Asking the Coach Isn't Always Enough

Question - Most, if not all, NFHS rules require the officials to ask head coaches before the game if their players are legally equipped and/or using legal game equipment. Say a coach answers in the affirmative. During the game, a coach notes to an official that an opposing player is wearing illegal cleats. The official inspects the shoes and says they're legal. If someone subsequently gets injured, and after the game it's found that the item was indeed illegal, is the official liable?

Answer – One of the reasons that the rules require officials to confirm with coaches that their players are legally equipped is that coaches are in the best position to know. No one wants to set aside 30 minutes before each game while the officials check the legality of each player's equipment. Plus, the burden and responsibility for doing that really ought to be on the coach.

That doesn't absolve the officials of all responsibility though. If during the time of an official's jurisdiction he/she has (or should have) reason to doubt the legality of equipment, the official has the **obligation** to step in and make sure no one is being put at risk. The **standard** is whether a reasonably observant official would have noticed the problem. If so, the official **must take remedial action**. Obviously, if someone raises an issue about a piece of equipment, the official will have to at least investigate and, if necessary, decide whether the equipment is legal or not.

If the official allows the player to continue with equipment, which is later found to be illegal; the fact that the coach made the same mistake won't help a lot. Ultimately, the official is going to have to show he/she acted in the same fashion as any other reasonable official with the same experience and training. In short, the official is going to have to say, "Anyone could have made the same mistake." Obviously, if there's a lawsuit brewing over an injury, the coach is going to be on the hook too. He or she will have every motive in the world to agree with the official that anyone could have (and in this case) miss the illegal spikes. **However, that's going to be a hard sale to make to a judge or jury if the rules governing equipment are straightforward and the spikes are clearly illegal.**

Relying on a coach's pregame confirmation will only get an official so far. **Once the issue becomes reasonably apparent to an official or is specifically raised, the legality of equipment (particularly if it relates to safety) is no place for an official to err.** It does not happen often, but when it does, take your time and get it right. If it's in black and white, the official is not going to get very far explaining why he or she did not enforce the clearly written rule. Don't just figure that since the coach said it was OK, you're in the clear. **A coach's confirmation does not mean that the official does not have to act reasonably in observing, applying the rules and protecting the players.**

Reprinted from NASO May 2010

This article is for informational purposes only and is not legal advice.

In Memoriam

Stephen Ardizzoni
July 2009

Andy McConnell
December 2009

CONGRATULATIONS

Joel Perry and **Dave Blanchard** were named "Officials of the Year 2009" by the Eastern Mass. Soccer Coaches Association at their annual banquet in January of 2010.

Cal Perry was named a member of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Soccer Officials Association Hall of Fame at the February meeting in Worcester, MA.

The following E.M.S.O.A. members have been voted to "Life Memberships" by the Executive Board: **Edward T. Ahearn, Douglas Haddad, Kenneth Henderson, Jim Livingston, Mark Paul, Peter St. Clair, Donald Fredericks, Joel Simmons and Robert D. Stowell, Sr.**

To the more than 170 members of the E.M.S.O.A. who were assigned to officiate the MIAA 2009 Interscholastic Soccer Tournament games.

MISOA REFEREE UNIFORM POLICY

In order to promote a consistent statewide uniform policy and to assist in keeping costs of uniforms in check, the MISOA Executive Board has approved the following policy regarding Interscholastic Soccer Official's uniforms.

The PRIMARY uniform shall be GOLD shirt with Black Pin Stripes and Black Cuffs and Collar. The SECONDARY or ALTERNATE uniform shall be BLACK shirt with White Pin Stripes and Black cuffs and Black collar. SOCKS shall be BLACK with 3 WHITE stripes at the top.

Note: Any color shirt is acceptable so long as:

1. Both Officials are wearing the same color shirt and socks.
2. The shirt is appropriate relative to the two teams playing.
3. The appropriate local Soccer Officials Assn. badge is on the left breast pocket.

REMINDER TO ALL EMSOA MEMBERS

This is a good time to get in touch with League Assignors for whom you are working and provide them your availability and any others who you feel are able to use your services. For a list of assignors check out www.emsoa.org and click on the Commissioners (Assignors) link.

NASO IT'S OFFICIAL

Leave Your Ego at Home by Don Dennison

Donald Trump once said, "Show me someone without an ego and I'll show you a loser." From another viewpoint, writer Lucille S. Harper stated, "The nice thing about *egotists* is that they don't go around talking about other people." Ego is a topic rarely covered in soccer clinics or publications but certainly needs to be addressed.

All of us have egos and certain inherent attitudes, but we have to know how to harness those traits that adversely affect our performance on the field. Then we must emphasize those positive elements that are valuable to controlling a match.

Assignments. Consideration of *ego* and *attitude* begins when you are first assigned a match. When you are assigned to a lower level high school high varsity or junior varsity match, do you think to yourself, "*Why me?*" If you regularly work at the "*quality*" high school varsity level you might see the assignment as a letdown. The players don't have that attitude, to them, every match is a their World Cup final. No match assignment should ever be considered beneath your ability level. Treat every match with the same positive attitude. Each level of play brings its own problems and unusual situations (speed of play, counter attacks that test your sprinting ability, etc.)

Attitude and ego go hand-in-hand, with a positive approach to both, you convey to the teams, coaches and spectators that you are professional, fair-minded and in charge. Attitude is not necessarily a bad thing. You have to have a positive attitude.

Postgame analysis. Concerning attitude, you should ask yourself a number of questions about your last match. Did I appear confident throughout the match? Did I inspire respect? Did I overlook major issues and decisions? Was I a showman? Did I have any distracting mannerisms?

Many of us dig ourselves into a hole by being overly demonstrative in giving excessive hand signals and using a loud voice. We are not the main attraction on the field. All it does is draw unneeded attention to the official.

Ego. What is it? It can be defined as conceit, self-importance, being better than the others and cockiness. It's best to leave it at home. Don't give the players and coaches the impression that you are a martinet or a robot with no feelings. It is far better to show them that you are refereeing their contest from the heart and mind rather than by a strictly by-the-book, unthinking manner. Show compassion and care. It helps to smile when possible. Talk to the players when it is appropriate, but never talk down to them. That is especially important when giving a warning or a caution. Far better to say, "ease up on future contact with the keeper," than "That was dumb. What were you thinking?" Interactions with coaches and players should be cordial and non-confrontational. Don't threaten them or shout. Keep your voice calm, but firm. When everything else on the field is inflamed, you have to be the calming influence.

You can be authoritative with a positive attitude, but leave your ego at home.

Don Dennison, a NISOA National Clinician and NISOA National Assessor from Rockville, Md.