

Head Injury Safety

Welcome to the Fall 2014 season. Thank you for all you do to make The Beautiful Game possible for players, spectators and yourself.

Undoubtedly, you are aware of the growing, and important, talk about head injuries and concussions.

To this effect all registering referees are being trained on head injuries during the re-certification classes and online material as part of the re-certification class. Many referees have already seen this material while others have not. Concussions are a hot button for not just soccer, but football, hockey and others sports as well. All of us need to be alert for potential head injuries to players and if there is any question as to a potential head injury, get the coach or a trainer onto the field to check on the player. We need to be proactive about this. We need to keep the players safe with all injuries and not just head injuries, but there is extra emphasis on head injuries at this time.

Here is a link to the US Youth Soccer concussion resource website and has links to other websites as well:http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/.../concussion_resources_from_c.../

A couple of things we need to think about as referees:

- 1) We are not medical staff, we do not diagnose an injury. However, we do play a role in safely enabling coaches and their staff to safely tend to an injured player.
- 2) Do not, do not, do not, use the word concussion, use "potential head injury" instead. Again we are not stating that a player has a head injury we are only stating that it is possible and do not use the word "concussion".
- 3) Know the signs of a potential head injury, "http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/pdf/athletes_Eng.pdf" has a link to a good fact sheet of the symptoms.
- 4) If you suspect a potential head injury, get a trainer or a coach on the field quickly. This is also true for any serious injury, ie, broken bone, heat stroke, etc.
- 5) Multitask for all serious injuries, especially potential head injuries. Two players heads collide and one or both go down, blow your whistle and immediately call for a coach or trainer. Do this while you are moving to the injured players, don't wait to check on the players first, call the coach/trainer as you are moving towards the players.
- 6) The goalkeeper is sometimes in a uniquely compromised position. The specific language regarding "possession" or "control" by a goalkeeper is: "the goalkeeper having the ball trapped between one hand and a surface (which may include the other hand, the ground, a goalpost, or the keeper's own body)." So, we will support you, as referees, who oversee youth/non-professional games if you call a foul or simply whistle the play "dead" and allow a free kick without necessarily calling a foul if there is anything even resembling possession or control -- a fingertip, a heal a shoulder. We can support you as being proactive about player safety.
- 7) Persistent infringement -- if a player or players repeatedly foul, it is within your power to issue a yellow card warning. Obviously, trifling infractions impede on the enjoyment and flow of the game but so too do players/teams who continue to foul. The player who commits his or her third or fourth foul of a similar nature, even if they appear mostly accidental, needs to change how they play or regain better control of their body.

We all need to be aware that potential head injuries are very serious.

A couple of other items from the first couple weeks of the season:

- 1) Be on time to your games, this means arrive BEFORE the game, plan on being at the field 30 minutes prior to the game is the time. That way if anything comes up you have a couple of minutes to deal with it. A great example is getting stopped at a train crossing for 5 minutes, you would still have 25 minutes before the game starts to introduce yourself to the coaches, check in the players, conduct a pre-game with your crew, conduct a coin flip and start the game on time. "Early is on time, and on time is late."
- 2) Blow your whistle. We can work with referees that maybe call too many fouls, but it is much harder to work with referees that call too few fouls. Now I am not telling you to call every foul in the game as there are many fouls that are trifling, but many times the feedback is the referee did a good job with the fouls they called, but they let too much go and didn't call enough.
- 3) Be consistent on the fouls you call and on the ones you don't. Again see #2 above about calling fouls.
- 4) Have fun, Have Fun, and Have FUN.
- 5) Be professional, look, act and be professional. Pull up your socks, tuck in your shirt, point with straight arms (applies to AR's as well when signalling) and be confident out on the field.
- 6) Lastly have a good rest of the season.