



AMERICAN YOUTH SOCCER ORGANIZATION

a nonprofit corporation dedicated to youth soccer

everyone plays®

May regions adopt local playing rules outside of FIFA and AYSO rules?

The very first line of the *AYSO National Rules and Regulations* states, “All AYSO games shall be conducted in accordance with the current FIFA *Laws of the Game* and decisions of the International Board...” The bulk of the remaining content of the *AYSO National Rules and Regulations* clarifies the kind of specific exceptions which are permitted. In the beginning of the FIFA *Laws of the Game* under “Modifications” it states, “Subject to the agreement of the national association concerned and provided the principles of these Laws are maintained, the Laws may be modified in their application...” and then specifies the kinds of modifications that are permissible. These statements endeavor to make it clear how AYSO games should be played and who, how and to what extent the Laws may be modified.

Making a local rule in the presumed interest of player safety may appear well intentioned on the surface but careful consideration must be given to the overall effect of the rule and whether or not it is permissible or, in fact, beneficial. Accidents happen in soccer and if we tried to make a rule to prevent all of them we would be overrun with rules that don't make sense. Running, jumping, kicking, heading, dribbling, tackling, shooting, and goalkeeper efforts to prevent goals all have potential to cause injury. Soccer is a contact sport and injuries are possible. It is impossible to avoid. Players and parents must recognize there is risk involved in playing sports. Reading the waiver carefully on the player registration form, which all parents are required to read and sign, makes this point very clearly.

It is the job of coaches to teach players correct technique to help them avoid injury to themselves and to others. It is the job of referees to learn to recognize when skills are executed correctly or not. Players should develop, coaches should teach and referees should learn to recognize the skills that are a part of the game of soccer. When we make a local rule that takes away one or more of the skills used in playing the game this lessens the opportunities for players to learn to execute the skill correctly, coaches to teach the skill and referees to recognize the skill performed legally. An argument could be made that such local rules actually may cause more injuries than they prevent because coaches will be discouraged from teaching correct techniques to the players since there is a local rule prohibiting the skill.