

JOE KNOWS AYSO Fall 2002

Joe Eldridge, National Referee Administrator

AYSO frequently receives questions regarding rules, regulations, policies, interpretation of FIFA Law and AYSO modifications. In my position as National Referee Administrator, I am often asked to respond.

Question:

Joe, we have a little girl on our team who has broken her wrist and is wearing a plaster cast. Can she play if we pad the cast well? We have seen children playing with padded casts in other leagues.

Answer:

Players wearing casts or splints of any kind are not permitted to participate in AYSO practices or games. Other organizations may permit this but it is not allowed in AYSO regardless of how the cast or splint is wrapped or padded. Even a doctor's written permission or parents consent does not override this ruling. We believe that these devices are to facilitate healing of an injury and the risk of further injury to the player or to other players is not worth taking.

This ruling is found in the AYSO National Rules and Regulations, VI, H, "Players shall not be allowed to practice or participate in any game with any type of cast or splint".

Question:

Joe, we bought our daughter some fairly expensive, name brand, soccer shoes endorsed by a famous soccer player. The cleats have metal tips to prevent excessive wear. A referee told us these shoes were illegal. Is this true?

Answer:

Here is a direct quote from the AYSO Interpretations, Instructions and Advice for Referees, which is written, approved, and published by the AYSO National Referee Program (NRP):

"It is the opinion of the AYSO NRP that soccer shoes or shinguards made by any major soccer equipment manufacturers are acceptable. Shoes or shinguards which are not made by major soccer equipment manufacturers are acceptable if, in the opinion of the referee, the shoes or shinguards are not dangerous to the player wearing them or another player, and the shinguards afford the player a reasonable degree of protection. Shoes: aluminum cleats are acceptable but the referee must inspect all types of cleats on shoes to ensure that there are no burrs or sharp edges and, if they exist, burrs or sharp edges must be removed before the player is allowed to participate."

The cleats you describe would be perfectly legal as long as the referee was satisfied that there were no sharp edges. If the cleats did have sharp edges, the player should still be allowed to wear them if the sharp edges were removed. A major concern of the referees is safety and a good rule of thumb for referees is that when in doubt, it is better to err on the side of safety. The referee probably felt the edges of the cleats were too sharp but there is nothing prohibiting that style of cleat.

Question:

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Joe, in a U16 girls game we had, both teams had the same color jerseys so one of the teams were asked to removed their jerseys and to wear pennies (scrimmage vest) on top of their sports bras. This situation was embarrassing for the girls and many of the parents. Is this allowed?

Answer:

This practice must not be allowed for a variety of reasons. First of all, this is not consistent with our policies and practices according the AYSO Safe Haven Program. Second, this is not consistent with the Laws of the Game which requires all players to wear jerseys (and allows the players to be identified by number). Third, permitting this activity not only places the girls at risk but also everyone else requesting or condoning the practice.

Question:

Joe, are players allowed to wear a sweatband around their head or wrist?

Answer:

The referee is responsible for inspecting the player's equipment and uniform for conformity with the Laws and to insure nothing is dangerous to either the player themselves or to another player.

At the referee's discretion, sweatbands around the head or wrist may be allowed or disallowed. Objects worn for adornment only are not necessary and disallowed. Objects worn which do not present a safety hazard may be allowed by the referee. For example a headband may be used to control long hair or to prevent perspiration from getting into a players eyes as would a wristband be used to absorb or wipe perspiration on a particularly hot day.

The use of sweatbands on the head or wrist is not a common occurrence among soccer players and is generally discouraged and disallowed because they are considered unnecessary adornment or unsafe. However, in the younger age divisions a more relaxed interpretation is not uncommon with referees. If a referee considers the sweatband is unnecessary adornment or unsafe he should simply request the player remove it.

Question:

Joe, does AYSO have a policy regarding referees officiating their own child's games?

Answer:

AYSO does not have any official policy regarding referees officiating games in which their own children are playing. It is not uncommon, however, for some regions to attempt to avoid this practice because they feel it is not the best situation for either the referee or for his or her child. The shortage of referees often makes this unavoidable.