

## **JOE KNOWS AYSO Fall 2003**

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. The following are some of the interesting questions I recently received. If you have questions, please contact me at (888) 686-2976 or by e-mail at [joeeldridge@ayso.org](mailto:joeeldridge@ayso.org).

### **Question from Dave:**

Joe, I've run into a controversy over the use of polycarbonate prescription sports goggles by our 10 year old daughter during soccer play. The referee threatened ejection for the rest of the season if she insisted on wearing them, citing safety concerns. I am looking for clarification on this issue since she obviously requires them to see clearly. The referee said she must wear contact lenses (which she can't) or wear her everyday glasses in order to play (wire frames with plastic lenses). This seems absurd. Her prescription goggles are made by Rec Specs, a leading manufacturer of prescription sports lenses and exceed ANSI Standard Z87.1 for impact protection. It would be much appreciated to know what the AYSO position is on sports goggles?

The AYSO rules and regulations (section VI, Proper Dress) as well as FIFA Laws of the Game (Law 4, Safety) specify that a player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewelry). Our referee in stating that polycarbonate sports goggles (specifically designed to meet ANSI impact standards) are a safety issue appears to be perverting the FIFA and AYSO rules. Wire frame glasses with non-shatter resistant lenses are a safety hazard for all players. If prescription lenses are excluded as part of allowable AYSO equipment, a certain fraction of children will be excluded from soccer play. I'm certain this is not the intent of AYSO.

The use of polycarbonate sports goggles for soccer play is explicitly recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Ophthalmology. The entire policy statement can be found at <http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/eyewear.html>.

In fact, the use of sports goggles (prescription and non-prescription) is recommended for all players as a means of reducing (estimates are 90%) the over 730 estimated soccer eye injuries per year which occur in the under 15 age group. From a cost viewpoint, this would be prohibitive (many parents in our town can barely afford the \$30 registration fee). However, it again seems absurd to ban such prescription sports goggles for kids who need them.

Any clarification regarding this issue by the AYSO (official or unofficial) would be of great help and much appreciated. I look forward to hearing from you.

### **Answer:**

Hi Dave,

Well said and amen. Prescription sports goggles are allowed and encouraged as they are safer than regular glasses and contacts. If anyone needs more information to support this than you have already stated, please have them contact me.

**Question from Chris:**

Joe, Our local league has a rule regarding face masks for children, who wear glasses, and play goalie. Do you have any info on this subject? I know that ANY rule concerning safety is a delicate subject, but I don't know anything about the face masks. I have no idea where to even look for them or what to look for. Any help you can offer would be greatly appreciated.

**Answer:**

Hi Chris,

Thank you for your question. In AYSO, the following are the guidelines we use for wearing glasses (spectacles):

*"Players who require prescription glasses are to be allowed to wear them during practices and games. It is recommended that retaining straps be worn. Rubber bands may also be used for this purpose. Prescription goggles, such as the type used by racquetball players, are also permitted subject to the approval of the referee prior to the start of the match. Spectacle guards made of plastic or other hard material are not permitted."*

As far as face masks are concerned, if you are referring to the type hockey goalies or football players wear, we would not allow our players or goalkeepers to wear these because they are constructed of hard material and would pose a danger to other players. The hard face mask may provide the goalkeeper with a measure of protection but would definitely also pose a danger to other players who may come in contact with the goalkeeper in the course of play. If we protect the goalkeeper in this way then we would need to protect all players in the same way and this would ultimately lead to the extensive kind of equipment used in American football which would destroy the spirit and intent of the beautiful game of soccer as we know it.

**Question from Angi:**

Dear Joe,

We have a little girl on our team who has broken her wrist. She is not wearing a fiberglass cast, it is plaster and we would cover and pad it well during the game. Her mom was told by a mother whose son plays in another league that this was allowed if you have written permission from the parents and the player's doctor. Is this allowed in AYSO? Any help would be greatly appreciated.

**Answer:**

Hi Angi,

Players wearing casts and 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.

The AYSO National Rules and Regulations paragraph V.I.G states:

*"Players shall not be allowed to practice or participate in any game with any type of*

*cast or splint."*

The AYSO National Referee Program further instructs referees that players must not be allowed to participate if they are observed to have removed a cast or splint. The following is extracted from a letter to coaches, parents and players in AYSO Region 126 and is also in the "Guidance for Referees and Coaches". The letter was written by the Referee Administrator, Steven R. Homel, who is a medical doctor and a practicing pediatrician.

*"Casts and Splints: removable or fixed, hard or soft.*

*Anything worn to protect an injured part or facilitate its healing is a red flag indicating that the injured area either requires support to maintain proper alignment and or protection for proper, complete and expeditious healing. Removable cast are designed to facilitate personal hygiene and dressing, they are not designed to be removed so that a player may engage in contact sports. Doing so could aggravate an injury and prolong healing time."*

Referees are taught that player safety is of primary concern and this includes the safety of the player personally as well as other players. We may not always agree with the judgment decisions of referees but nevertheless they are empowered with the right to make such judgments. Had the player been allowed to play and subsequently seriously injured the apparently already injured wrist, the referee might be accused of using poor judgment in a match by permitting the player to participate.

I hope this is the information you needed and that the little girl's injured wrist recovers soon so she can enjoy playing soccer again.