To: All NMAA Athletic Directors, Soccer Coaches and Soccer Referees
From: Robert Zayas, Associate Director
       Dana Sanchez, Commissioner of Officials
Subject: Soccer Points of Emphasis and Clarification for the 2011 Season from the NMAA Soccer Rules Interpreters
Date: August 29, 2011

For the past three years, the NMAA has had a statewide rules interpreters program for all fall sports. The purpose of the rules interpreters program is to assist our officials in the consistent application of rules throughout the state and to ensure that coaches and officials are on the same page relative to soccer rules. In addition, the four individuals serving as rules interpreters will be the go-to contacts for rules interpretations for our coaches and officials. Their contact information is supplied at the end of this memo.

Remember as interscholastic sports officials, you are part of the educational process. Help players and communicate with them about infractions. It is okay to warn a player and explain things to him/her before issuing cards. This is part of game management and preventive officiating. Remember to exercise COMMON SENSE as you officiate.

If there is a situation that cannot be corrected relative to field markings or other equipment, make sure to file a game report with the NMAA office. You should play the game as long as the field and equipment are safe for all participants.

The Pursuing Victory With Honor patch is the required to be worn when officiating for the NMAA/NMOA. It should be worn on the chest of the shirt where the existing Velcro is located.

For the 2011 season, the Interpreters wish to draw the attention of referees to the following:

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION:**
Referees are reminded to review the Soccer Rules Changes printed in the first five pages of the 2011-12 Soccer Rules Book and the Points of Emphasis and Comments on the Rules on p. 69-70.

In addition, the NFHS Soccer Preseason Guide, published by Referee Magazine and distributed to all Groups, provides additional commentary on rule changes, referee strategy and procedures.

**PRE-AND POST GAME:**
In your pre-game discussion with coaches and captains, be brief, succinct and mention our shared responsibility for sportsmanship and Pursuing Victory With Honor. It is customary to wait after the game for a post-game handshake with players. However, use your discretion and leave the field immediately if you believe that this is appropriate.
CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT:
Recognition and proper handling of players with possible concussions continues to be a Point of Emphasis with information available at the NMAA website (http://www.nmact.org/concussion_information/), clinics, NFHS rulebooks, Preseason Guide, and other publications, and online courses. SB1, passed during the 2010 session of the New Mexico Legislature, established safety protocols and education programs to be followed by schools.

The following are mechanics for officiating a concussion in any and all sports, in concert with the NFHS Concussion Management Guidelines and additional information provided by the National Association of Sports Officials:

1) When a student-athlete displays possible signs and symptoms of a concussion as listed in the NFHS rulebook (p. 106), stop the game and visit with the athlete in question. You may want to get the closest ARs involved with you in this process.

2) Check the student-athlete's behavior against the list of signs and symptoms. If signs or symptoms are present, remove the student-athlete from the contest. Remember that an athlete does not have to be unconscious to have sustained a concussion.

3) Avoid discussing the cause with anyone, including coaches, players and fans. The atmosphere of the game may be tense. The officials' attention should be on the injured player.

4) Do not render first aid to athletes and do not attempt to move them under any circumstance (if they are on the ground).

5) Do not tell the coaches that you are removing the player because he/she has a concussion. Simply tell the coach, “I need you to take a look at Player X.” If the coach does ask why, you can state that the player exhibited one of the signs and symptoms (i.e., dizziness, disorientation, headache, nausea, etc.). Do not state that you think the player has a concussion because then you are crossing the line into a diagnosis.

6) Note the jersey number of the athlete, the time at which he/she was removed from the game and (if applicable) the time of re-entry into the game.

7) During the removal of an athlete from a contest, continue to supervise both teams, benches and keep the athletes separated.

8) The decision for a player to return to play falls on the appropriate health care professional and the head coach. The liability for returning an athlete to play is on the school personnel. Do not offer opinions about an athlete’s ability to reenter the game and do not ask questions about the medical personnel. What happens on the sidelines after you remove a player who is displaying signs and symptoms of a concussion is out of your control. Just note who you removed and when and if the player returned so that you have the necessary documentation should questions arise. Leave return to play decisions to the appropriate individuals on the sideline.

9) Should the same player, having returned to play, once more exhibit the symptoms of concussion, repeat the above process.
*** (NEW) LIGHTNING POLICY:
The following procedures will be put in place for handling contests lightning disturbances from the 2011 NFHS Soccer Rulebook (page 109, Appendix E):

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a default policy to those responsible for making decisions concerning the suspension and restarting of contests based on the presence of lightning. The preferred sources from which to request such a policy for your facility would include your state high school association and the nearest office of the National Weather Service.

Proactive Planning
1. Assign staff to monitor local weather conditions before and during events.
2. Develop an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby shelters.
3. Develop criteria for suspension and resumption of play:
   a. When thunder is heard, or a cloud-to-ground lightning bolt is seen, the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play and take shelter immediately.
   b. Thirty-minute rule. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or flash of lightning is witnessed prior to resuming play.
   c. Any subsequent thunder or lightning after the beginning of the 30-minute count, reset the clock and another 30-minute count should begin.
4. Hold periodic review for appropriate personnel.

   NOTE: These lightning delay procedures are for all contests, varsity, sub-varsity and mid school.

*** (NEW) GAME INTERRUPTION POLICY (NMAA Handbook, Section 7.10.2)
In the event that a game must be interrupted because of conditions which make it impossible to continue play (i.e. lightning, darkness, power outage etc..) the head official/referee shall declare it an official game if one complete half, or more, of the game has been played; based upon the NFHS definition of a regulation game.

If less than one half of the game has been played, and it is a district game/post season game, the game must be rescheduled from the point of interruption/suspension of play.

If less than one half of the game has been played, and it is a non-district game, the participating schools must mutually agree to reschedule the game from the point of interruption/suspension of play or the game will be considered a non-game.

Note: If one complete half or more of the game has been played in a post-season game, it will be left up to the discretion of the tournament director and or the NMAA Executive Director to determine if the game is played to its entirety.
**** (NEW) SUB-VARSITY OVERTIME:
The membership of the NMAA recently voted via referenda to revise the overtime procedures for sub-varsity games. NMAA Bylaws now read: “Sub-varsity games are considered an official game at the end of regulation, regardless if the game is tied.”

**** (NEW) TRACKING YELLOW CARDS/INCIDENT REPORTING:
The NMAA office will no longer keep track of yellow cards. It is now the responsibility of each member school to keep track of the yellow cards of their own players/coaches. The only reports that need to be sent to our office are ejection reports and other incidents that require the attention of our office. No longer do cautions need to be reported to the NMAA. Reports of ejections and other serious incidents must be sent to Randy Adrian at randy@nmact.org within 24 hours of their occurrence.

PLAYER UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT:
It is the responsibility of the head coach to ensure that all of his/her players are properly and legally equipped for each contest. The head coach assumes that responsibility through signing off on the materials on the NMAA District Clinic online. Clarification on several often asked questions about player equipment is provided below.

1) Medical Equipment – A doctor’s note is no longer needed for casts, braces and splints. The only item which needs a doctor’s note is a protective face mask. Protective face masks may be worn by a player with a facial injury. The mask may be made of a hard material but must be worn molded to the face with no protrusions. A medial release for the injured player signed by a physician shall be available at the game site (4-2-8).

2) Ankle & Knee Braces – Knee and ankle braces which are altered from the manufacturer's original design/production are illegal. Knee and ankle braces that are unaltered do not require any additional padding. Ankle braces may be worn outside a stocking (4-2-1f). Please note that players do not need to wear a sleeve over a knee brace if the brace seems to be safe. Officials should use discretion in this matter and if the brace does not present a safety issue, do not concern yourself with the use of a sleeve.

As in the last few years, a team’s first caution for an illegally equipped player is given to the coach. In a revision to the rules, the player concerned must be removed at the time of the caution. He/she may be replaced by a substitute from the bench or one who has previously reported and may not return until the next legal substitution opportunity for that team. This caution to the coach is for Unsporting Conduct.

EXCESSIVE AND PROLONGED CELEBRATION:
When one or more players celebrate a goal, the referee will make one of five determinations:

1) The players conducted themselves according to the rules of competition and in a “Pursuing Victory With Honor”. No action is necessary.
2) The players celebrate excessively but stop upon receiving a verbal warning from the referee. No further immediate action is necessary, but a confirming warning may be issued to the coach if time before the kickoff allows. Subsequent occurrences of similar behavior by members of the same team must be sanctioned.

3) The players are guilty of unnecessary delay and cautioned for Unsporting Conduct when they aggressively seek to collect the ball from the hands of an opponent in the mistaken belief that they are speeding up the restart (the clock has, in fact, stopped). These incidents normally occur near the end of a period when the team who has scored needs another quick goal. Referees are, therefore, normally able to anticipate and prevent these situations from escalating to this point.

4) Celebrations that represent, in the opinion of the referee, “a delayed, excessive or prolonged act by which he or she attempts to focus attention upon him or herself and/or prohibits a timely restart of the game,” are now considered a separate form of Unsporting Conduct for which a caution is issued. This is no longer a “Yellow/Red” offence that results in the player being disqualified but replaced. Circumstances under which the referee must caution a player include:
   a. They do not stop upon the referee issuing a verbal warning;
   b. They remove their shirt or cover their head with it;
   c. A theatrical or choreographed act. The referee will issue a caution to all players involved – but the time necessary to orchestrate such an act is invariably enough time also for the referee to intervene to prevent it from occurring.

5) When a player is guilty of taunting (“use or word or act to incite or degrade an opposing player, coach, referee or other individual”), either during a goal celebration, at the end of a game, or at any other time, he/she must be disqualified, shown the red card and is not replaced. A celebration which is directed at any way toward an opponent, the opponents' team and coaching area or spectators will be considered taunting and will be shown a red card.

GOALKEEPER INJURIES:
If a goalkeeper is treated on the field for an injury, he/she must be substituted. Referees should hesitate before bringing someone on the field to tend to a goalkeeper, unless it is a serious or obvious injury in order to allow a team's goalkeeper of choice to continue playing. Gesture to a coach to wait before he/she comes on the field. If a trainer enters the field without being beckoned, politely ask them to return to the team area until summoned. AR1 should facilitate this process.

ADDITIONAL POINTS OF EMPHASIS:
1) “Elbows”. With explicitly stating it in these terms, NFHS is asking referees to prevent and penalize the dangerous and illegal use of elbows using the same parameters as set out in USSF's “Contact Above the Shoulder” position paper that is posted at a number of websites.

2) Handling. NFHS wishes to emphasize that handling offences should only be called when the player's action is deliberate. This includes the notion of “making yourself bigger” as well as moving a hand or arm to protect oneself after the ball has been
played in your direction. There are two article on handling in the NFHS Preseason Guide.

**HANDLING:**
Pursuant to Rule 12-2, “A player shall be penalized for deliberately handling, carrying, striking or propelling the ball with a hand or arm.”

3) A player, who is part of the wall during a free kick, maintains his/her hands and arms stationary relative to body is not deemed handling. If he/she moves his/her hands or arms to protect him/herself is handling.

4) Players who “make themselves bigger” by extending their hands or arms while defending a free kick are deemed to be handling if the ball strikes their extended hands/arms.

**TIE GAME PROCEDURE FOR ALL VARSITY CONTESTS:**
The tie game procedure for all regular season district and non-district games can be found in NMAA Handbook Section 7.17.1J. (Sub-varsity or junior high contests are at the discretion of game officials and host site administration.)

Procedures for Varsity contests are as follows:

1) If the game is tied upon completion of two forty-minute halves of play, a maximum of two ten-minute sudden victory overtimes will be played to determine a winner. Should the two overtime periods not determine a winner, Kicks From the Penalty Mark will be held, in conformance with the procedures in the NFHS Soccer Rulebook, until a winner is determined.

2) If the score remains tied after each team has had five kicks from the penalty line:
   a. Each coach selects five different players than the first five who have already kicked to take the kicks in a sudden victory situation, the teams kicking in the same order as determined by the coin toss. If one team scores and the other team does not score, the game is ended without further kicks being taken.
   b. If the score remains tied, continue the sudden victory kicks with the coach selecting any five players to take the next set of alternating kicks. If a tie still remains, repeat step #3 for regular season contests and other applicable games in which a winner must be determined through a progression.

**Managing Kicks From The Mark**

1) The only people allowed at the center circle are the five selected to take the kicks from the mark. After everyone is brought to the center to explain the game procedures, only the five taking the kicks will remain at the center. Everyone else retires to their respective team areas. After the first round of kicks, if additional kicks are necessary, the first five kickers retire to the team area and the next five come to the center circle.

2) Once it is determined that a team has won and that the other team cannot catch up, no further kicks need to be taken.
3) The coach can pick any players off the bench for subsequent kicks from the mark after the first round of kicks.
4) There must be 10 different kickers for the first two sets of kicks. After the first two rounds of kicks, a coach can choose to repeat kickers from the initial 10 or can choose from his/her players on the bench.

The soccer rules interpreters for the 2011 season are:

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If you have rules questions, you are asked to call or email the individual in your region of the state for clarification and interpretation.

Thank you for your attention to this information. If you have questions or if you need additional information on the rules interpreters program, please feel free to contact us. Have a great season!