

NorCal Premier Concussion Initiative and Protocols

Effective 2016-04-01
(abridged)

There are three facets to the Concussion Initiative and Protocol.

1) DELIBERATE HEADING OF THE BALL

- **IT IS AN OFFENSE FOR A PLAYERS OF U11, U10, U9 AND U8 TO DELIBERATELY HEAD THE BALL.**
- **When a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick (IFK) should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense.**
- If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the IFK should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred, same as any other IFK in the goal area.
- If a player does not DELIBERATELY head the ball, then play should continue.
- **NorCal HIGHLY recommends that during the team check-in, the referee crew inform team officials and players of enforcing this new rule. Not everyone is aware of this new rule.**
- If a goal is scored by a player deliberately heading the ball, the goal should be disallowed and IFK should be awarded.
- The IFK is awarded NOT FOR A DANGEROUS PLAY but for the safety of the player.
- THERE SHALL BE NO CARD GIVEN FOR THIS ACTION.
- THERE SHALL BE NO CONSIDERATION FOR PERSISTENT INFRINGEMENT FOR THIS ACTION.
- THE IFK IS CONSIDERED TO BE A TEAM VIOLATION. THERE IS NO PUNISHMENT FOR THE INDIVIDUAL PLAYER.

2) DEALING WITH "HEAD INJURIES" AND "POTENTIAL HEAD INJURIES"

- Head injuries may be caused when two players challenge for air ball and their heads collide, goalkeeper or any player collision of their head against goal post, player hitting their head against the ground or receiving a blow to the head by an elbow, a kick or during a fight or mass confrontation and on and on.
- When there is a "head injury" or "potential head injury", STOP THE GAME, immediately evaluate the injured player(s), and call the coach(es) onto the field.

What are the signs of concussion?

Headache, Loss of consciousness, Confusion, Double/Fuzzy vision, Dizziness, Balance problems, Nausea, Slow reaction time, Amnesia/Difficulty remembering, Difficulty concentrating, Sensitivity to light and noise, Feeling sluggish, foggy or groggy, Feeling more emotional than usual and Irritability.

In dealing with "Head Injuries" and "potential head injuries", **I recommend asking the player three simple questions:**

What is your name? What is your birthday? What day is it?

This should give you a quick evaluation of the player's state of mind. Call the coach onto the field immediately if you suspect any "head injuries" or "potential head injuries". Once coach comes onto the field of play for the injured player then the player needs to be off the field for evaluation. The FIFA/USFF protocol for goalkeeper exception and two player's injuries does not apply for NorCal hosted events. **The player MUST leave the field of play for evaluation.**

If the coach or Health Care Professional ("HCP") determines that the down player cannot be moved due to the severity of the injury, you must comply with their instructions and wait for the arrival of medical personnel.

As a referee, once you determine that the player might be suffering from "head injuries" or "potential head injuries", DO NOT ALLOW THAT PLAYER TO RETURN TO PLAY IN THAT GAME UNLESS THE PLAYER HAS BEEN CLEARED BY A HCP.

This rule is modified in NorCal hosted events/tournaments when there is a HCP on site to make those determinations.

NorCal teams MAY have a HCP on their staff. It is the team's responsibility to inform the referee BEFORE the KICK OFF as to the identity of team's HCP. If no HCP is identified before the KICK OFF and a player leaves the field of play due to "head injuries" or "potential head injuries", THAT PLAYER CANNOT RETURN TO THE PITCH FOR THAT GAME. DO NOT REMOVE THE PLAYER PASS OR HOLD ON TO IT. You are however required to fill out an incident report by using this link:

http://www.norcalreferees.com/incident_report/

WHAT IF???

1. After the player is off the pitch for "Head Injuries" and "potential head injuries", WHAT IF the coach decides to put him/her back into the game:
DO NOT ALLOW THE PLAYER TO RE-ENTER THE GAME.
2. In number 1 scenario, WHAT IF, the coach says that he takes full responsibility for the player's safety:
DO NOT ALLOW THE PLAYER TO RE-ENTER THE GAME.
3. In number 1 scenario, WHAT IF, the parent or parents of the player says that they would take full responsibility for the player's safety:
DO NOT ALLOW THE PLAYER TO RE-ENTER THE GAME.
4. In number 1 scenario, WHAT IF, the parent or parents or coach or team officials or another team parent of the team says that they are a physician or nurse or athletic trainer or HCP and they are allowing the player to come back to the pitch and will take full responsibility for the player's safety:
DO NOT ALLOW THE PLAYER TO RE-ENTER THE GAME...
...UNLESS THE HCP WAS CLEARLY IDENTIFIED BEFORE KICK OFF.
5. In number 1 scenario, WHAT IF, the president or Director of Coaching of the club order you to allow the player to come back on to the pitch or you will not be paid for the game or you will be fired and he or she will take full responsibility for the player's safety:
DO NOT ALLOW THE PLAYER TO RE-ENTER THE GAME.

**PLAYER SAFETY IS
OUR NUMBER ONE JOB**

3) MODIFIED SUBSTITUTION RULES (NPL)

- Modified substitution rules to allow players who may have suffered a "head injury" or "potential head injury" to be evaluated without penalty.
- If a player suffers a significant impact to the head and is removed from the game to be evaluated for a "head injury", "potential head injury" or concussion, that substitution will not count against a team's total number of allowed substitutions in a NorCal NPL game.
- If a player evaluated for a "head injury" or "potential head injury" has received clearance from a designated HCP to return to the game, the player may re-enter at any stoppage of play. The evaluated player must replace the original substitute and will not count as a substitution.

The HCP should be a licensed healthcare professional such as an athletic trainer certified (ATC), or physician (MD/DO), with the skill set in emergency care and sports medicine injuries and with knowledge and experience related to concussion evaluation and management.

We as referees shall not get involved in determining the HCP certifications or qualifications. After a carded team official (coach, assistant coach or trainer) identifies their team's HCP, then it would be the team's responsibility to insure their HCP qualification.