

**COMMONWEALTH
SOCCER OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION**

January 29, 2018

Dear Director of Student Activities/Assistant Principals,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In behalf of our Board and President (Dick Cote), Miles and I would like to thank you for your support during the past season. From the outset in March through the playoffs/state championships, the consistent positive dialog with the association allowed us to get you games covered with a minimum amount of turbulence and quickly adjudicate issues that came up during the games such as sportsmanship and referee performance. I believe that our success can be attributed to our “team” effort/solid working relationship that we have with you.

Our Association is currently preparing for the spring season and would like to share several areas that we feel need to be addressed and solicit your assistance/input:

First – **Referee Training** – Our annual training clinic is on Saturday February 3rd at South County starting at 8:00 AM. This will be a full day of training to include rule changes, points of emphasis from NFHS, and lessons learned from last year. Regarding this last area, we would like to solicit from you and your coaches key points that you would like us to address with our referees during the training session. Please send them to me at stenner@centurylink.net. Also, for your information: **The mandatory VHSL coaches’ clinic will be online this year. Information on the clinic should be available on the VHSL website starting February 1st.**

Second – **Referee Performance** – An important part of referee development is feedback and mentoring. We believe that both yourselves and the coaches are important partners in providing feedback. We would like to encourage your coaches to use our referee feedback system which can be accessed online at (www.csoaref.org). Go to the forms section and on the very top is a link to the coach’s feedback form. These forms come directly to me and to our VP for Assessments (referee mentoring coordinator), where they are reviewed, and appropriate action is then taken. We truly appreciate your help in our efforts to make our officials better. For your information we will send out mentors and assessors to different venues during the season to evaluate our referee crew’s performance.

Third – **Red Cards** – Below is a chart of the red cards for last year. Cards were up from 2016 (96 versus 78), but less than 2015 when we had 101. Numbers wise, the boys “83” cards greatly outnumber the girls “13” red cards. The area that we need your immediate help with is **Foul/Abusive Language towards officials and opponents**. I think that we all agree that this behavior is inappropriate and unacceptable in any event but most especially in interscholastic sports. These two areas were over 20% of the total red cards. Double Yellows (the two technical fouls equivalent) and Denying an Obvious Goal Scoring Opportunity were over 50% of the cards, but this is primarily due to the strictness of soccer rules in general at the high school, college, and international levels. Note: data shown here does not includes two coaches’ ejections for unsportsmanlike conduct towards officials.

| | DY | FAL Off | FAL Opp | SFP DOGSO | SFP | VC | Taunting | Other | Total |
|-------|----|------------|------------|--------------|-----|----|----------|-------|-------|
| BJV | 2 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 15 |
| BV | 19 | 10 | 2 | 17 | 6 | 11 | 2 | 1 | 68 |
| GJV | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| GV | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 11 |
| Total | 22 | 15 | 5 | 24 | 10 | 15 | 2 | 3 | 96 |

DY – Double Yellow FAL – Foul & Abuse Language SFP-Serious Foul Play VC-Violent Conduct

- VHSL Ejection Policies (VHSL Handbook 27-11-6)
 - Normal Ejection – one game

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- Fighting – three games
- Foul/Abusive Language directed at game official – two games
- Leave Bench to become involved in an altercation – two games

Fourth – **Coach/Bench Conduct** – Occasionally, issues arise with coaches and bench conduct. If, this becomes an issue the officials will address the issue with the coach and if necessary sanction the appropriate individuals causing the issue. In the cases involving the coaches, they should expect to receive a yellow card warning for unsporting conduct. They need to understand that, if they persist in unsporting conduct, they could then be dismissed from the match (second yellow card). The only exception to this would be, if the initial unsporting conduct incident involves the use of foul and/or abusive language towards an official in which the coach can expect to be ejected (would receive a red card directly).

Fifth – **Spectator Conduct** – Soccer is a passionate game but abusing officials should not be the focus of the passion. As an old saying goes – “one rotten apple can spoil the barrel.” Although there are only a few, they are becoming more vocal and are resorting to using profanity towards our referees from the stands and going further taunting our referees after the match as they are gathering their gear or as they leave the field. This behavior is not in keeping with the VHSL Sportsmanship philosophy, which we note is part of each of your announcements before the Varsity matches, and I’m sure you agree unacceptable. Interestingly this appears more prevalent with the away crowds than the home fans. We appreciate you help this coming year in coming up with ways to deal with this issue. FYI - we began a new program last season (match inspections) in response to this issue and of the 42 inspections we did – 85% denoted inappropriate fan behavior and 20% included the use of profanity or inappropriate language. Note that this match inspection also involves an evaluation of the interaction of the coaches and players with each other and the officials, as well as, an evaluation of the officials’ performance and their impact on the match.

Sixth – **School Feedback** – As in the past for all matters other than scheduling, I as the CSOA/VHSL Commissioner) will be your main point of contact on any issues that arise during the game. I will provide you any feedback that we get from the referee game reports (i.e. field player, coach, spectator issues, etc.) I will send you a red card report that you can use as a basis for your report to VHSL. I am happy to discuss the cards with you and will be the POC for any appeals. Of course, please let me know if there is an issue with one of our officials.

Seventh – **NFHS Rule Changes/Points of Emphasis and other Items of Interest** – The key NFHS rule changes and points of emphasis are attached. Please share this information with your coaches. Below are some other items of interest.

- Undergarments worn under jerseys and shorts. – Undergarments worn under shirts and short must be the same color as the either the shirt or short. This also includes compression sleeves. This means for jerseys - home they need to be white and for away they need to be dark. If you only have one color shorts, then they need to match the dominate color of the shorts, or if you have home and away shorts then you need to match each pair of shorts. (NFHS 2018 Rule Change - Our understanding is VHSL will NOT waive this rule change.)
- **Time Keeping** – NFHS **recommends** that the “official time be kept on the stadium clock; however, we understand that many of you do not have “professional” timekeepers. **Comment – The referee team will check with you prior to the game on the preferred method of keeping official time, i.e. on the clock or on the field. In keeping with NFHS there will be no added/injury time regardless of where time is kept.**
- **Games tied at the end of regulation** – All regular season games tied at the end of regulation **must** play **two 5 minute** overtimes. **Comment – both a VHSL and NFHS rule.**
- **Portable Goals** – Please insure that they are anchored with either stakes or sandbags (recommend 4)
- **Football Goals** – Football goals cannot extend over the top of the soccer goals and supports must be a minimum of two yards behind the soccer goal, unless the goals are a combination football and soccer goal. **Comment – Understand that this is a problem with many of the turf fields. Referees have been instructed to handle this situation like the combination soccer/football goal post – i.e. ball will be declared out of bounds if it hits the football goal post.)**

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- **Team Benches** – NFHS recommends benches on same side of field. If benches are on opposite sides then they **must be on a diagonal** and not directly opposite one another. **Comment – Schools may prefer benches on opposite sides of field for control purposes. This is not a problem; the only requirement is that the benches be on the opposite diagonal from each other. We also strongly suggest that they be on the opposite side of the halfway line from where the Assistant Referee (AR) normally runs along the touchline.**
- **Field Markings for Turf Fields** - Please insure that the new turf fields are properly marked to include the penalty spot, both the goal box and penalty box, the goal line between the goal posts, and the center circle. It is imperative that both the goal and penalty box lines are unbroken and clearly delineate these areas so the players and referees know exactly where they are on the field. This is especially critical on turf fields with the school names located in the football end zone areas.
- **Team Areas** – **NFHS now requires the team areas to be marked to remind coaches and players where they should remain during the game. This is basically a 20-yard area in front of the bench.** **Comment - If you do not want to mark the field, then cones would be an acceptable alternative, if, they are far enough off the line for safety of the referee team when moving up and down the line. (This area should extend from the half-way line 20 yards towards the goal line).**
- **Captain's Band** – **Captain's bands MUST be worn on the arm. They can no longer be worn on the leg.**
- **Eight Goal Rule** – The Eight Goal Rule per VHSL handbook will be in effect for all games. **Comment – If after the 60th minute a team achieves an eight-goal lead, the game will be declared over. Districts must notify VHSL if there is a district exception to this rule.**
- **JV/Varsity Game Time** – If there is an issue with the JV game starting late or weather stoppage, the referee crew will coordinate with the game administrator to determine any adjustments to the JV game and the start time for the varsity game.
- **Lightning** – The referee crew should check with the game administrator prior to the start of the game to determine any potential weather issues and if someone has a lightning monitor at the game site. We will need your assistance in this matter. If the game has to be stopped for lightning/thunder, the 30 minute rule will be in effect. If it appears that the weather delay will be substantial, then we ask that the game administrator, coaches, and referee crew sort out the way ahead. Remember a completed half constitutes a completed game regardless of score. **Comment – We would appreciate your assistance in this matter, especially with monitoring incoming storms. Trainers may have a weather APT on their phones..**
- **Face Masks** – We had an issue with a player wearing a face mask last year. Face masks are permissible, if prescribed by a doctor. **Comment – Player MUST have a Doctor's note present at the game site to be able to play with the mask.**

Finally, Dick Cote (CSOA President), Miles (Assigner), and myself again thank you and your staff for the tremendous support this past year and look forward to making 2018 even better. Please feel free to contact Miles or myself at any time, you have an issue or a question.

ASSIGNER INFORMATION

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COMMISSIONER CONTACT

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V/r Pete Stenner, Commissioner CSOA
Pete