

This may be something of immediate interest to the referees. I will hold off on sending any more until you have time to look at these. Legal Issues

I have some background to discuss legal issues for referees. I am a member of the bar and I have considerably in this area. Today nearly anyone can be the subject of a law suit. It requires only that someone thinks you did something wrong and an attorney willing to take the case. Referees need to protect themselves as much as possible. Even just defending a suit can be expensive.

If you are going to referee you need liability insurance. USSF, NISOA and TSSAA provide insurance for games that are sanctioned by that body and assigned under the rules of that group. If you only accept games from one of these and accept none from coaches or team parents and members you would be okay, but many of us do at least a few games that are not sanctioned.

There are many independent amateur leagues, middle school leagues, parochial school leagues and independent youth associations. Most will have injury insurance for players, liability insurance to protect themselves and insurance to protect their officers and directors. In some cases referees are included but others not. If you work for that kind of group you should have some form of blanket liability coverage such as that provided by the National Association of Sports Officials.

Accepting games from coaches and other team officials puts you at higher risk. The players are probably protected but you may not be. If you accept such an assignment check with the assignor to see if they agree that you are competent to do the game. If the league is unsanctioned (so called outlaw leagues) you place yourself in extreme risk from a liability standpoint and an injury standpoint.

Doing your job properly will reduce your chances of being sued and reduce your chances of being found liable. If you are found liable it is unlikely the issue will be game control. Courts don't generally second guess referees. If they do it is because the referee failed to take action after repeated specific warnings. If you don't do what the Laws tell you to do you are more likely to be at risk.

Get to the field 30 minutes before game time as you are supposed to do. Use part of that time to inspect the field. There are several possibilities of unsafe conditions. Debris such as broken glass, cut up cans. On less well maintained fields you can find holes and rocks and on better fields sprinkler heads that don't seat properly

Remember it is required that goals be securely anchored. If there is an unsafe condition you are not required to fix it but to notify someone who can. If you want to help your efforts will be appreciated. Don't start the game until the conditions have been corrected.

Also take time to check players equipment. Shin guards are required to be worn, be covered by a sock, be sized appropriately for the player and not be altered in any way by the player. A brief inspection usually will confirm everything is good. Sometimes

something doesn't look right and a closer inspection is needed. Be satisfied everything is okay.

All sets of rules prohibit the wearing of dangerous equipment and all jewelry is considered dangerous except for medical and religious items. Players should be inspected for visible items before the match. Don't ask players to remove regular equipment for a more detailed check. If they assure you they are wearing no jewelry accept that unless you see it.

Do not ever intentionally touch a player unless you are a licensed provider rendering emergency treatment. You may be responsible for making things worse or you may be accused of unacceptable contact. Call for assistance when a player needs it.

Your chances of being sued are small and chances of losing are even smaller. Even so if you have assets to protect don't take unnecessary risks.

Al Baer