2026 MSA REFEREE MANUAL

- Covid-19
- Assigning and scheduling
- Getting ready for the game
- MSA game day procedures
- Field and player check
- MSA procedures for severe weather
- Rules and points of emphasis
- MSA special procedures
- Communicating with players and coaches
- Handling injuries
- Concussions
- Self-evaluation

For questions regarding administration matters, Laws of the Game, MSA rules and fee schedules please contact:

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For questions regarding assigning or assignments please contact:

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COVID-19

Archived web material for CDC.gov is preserved on the CDC Archive Site: https://archive.cdc.gov/

Note that the content on this site is for historical purposes only and is no longer being updated.

ASSIGNING PROCEDURES

- **Experienced mentors will work with you to develop your officiating skills and encourage you in your career as a referee.**
- **We want you to succeed and return in the fall and next spring.**
- **You will be assigned to games that match your skillset.**
- **Be patient with yourself, work with the mentors, and you will be amazed at your progress.**

We do not assign games before the season:

- **Your skills and confidence will improve through the season.**
- **We assign you to matches that most challenge your skill level.**
- **Your availability changes dramatically from the beginning of the season to its end.**
- **Assigning is a dynamic process, and your availability can change throughout the week.**

How do I get games?

- **We assign games each week by email.**
- **Please DO NOT DELAY in replying to recruitment emails from Mr. Humphrey.**
- **Assignments are based on when you are available, your skill level and your age.**

The normal weekly schedule of communications is:

- **Monday - announce times of games for the upcoming Saturday.**
- **Tuesday - publish the PRELIMINARY assignments.**
- **Wednesday - release UPDATED rosters.**
- **Thursday - distribute REVISED schedule.**
- **Friday - email FINAL assignments.**
- **Depending on the number of officials who are available, you may have 2 assignments in the Preliminary schedule but end up with 4 games in the Final schedule.**

ALWAYS REVIEW THE COMPLETE ROSTER OF GAMES.

- **If we have 30 games on a given day and you review only the first 25 games on the schedule, you may miss your assignment in game #29.**
- **Please note that Referee #1 is not necessarily the center.**
- **You will be advised of your assignment as referee or assistant referee when you check in with the referee coordinator on game day.**
- **If you have a conflict and cannot fulfill an assignment, please notify the assignor as soon as possible.**
- **Assigning questions can be addressed to Mr. Humphrey at msrahumphrey@gmail.com**

GETTING READY FOR THE GAME

Referees should start to form good habits early by developing a routine before each game.

Develop a checklist and check your equipment the NIGHT BEFORE your assignment(s).

✔ **CHECK YOUR ASSIGNMENTS**
✔ Uniform clean & ready (not in the wash!)
✔ Alternate color of uniform if possible
✔ Footwear cleaned from last game.
✔ Badge attached to uniform (use Velcro)
✔ Whistles
✔ Coin
✔ Watch(s)
✔ Pen/Pencil
✔ Notepad & Red/Yellow cards
✔ Assistant Referee flags
✔ Keep smaller items in a Ziplock bag or small box

Additional recommended items:

✔ Equipment Bag (plus a garbage bag to cover when raining)
✔ Ball pump & gauge
✔ League rules
✔ IFAB Laws of the Game app (can download onto phone)
✔ Suntan lotion (30+ SPF)
✔ Drink (water or non-carbonated)

MSA GAME DAY PROCEDURES

1. Have all your referee equipment checked and ready to go before coming to the field. Refer to “getting ready for the game”.

2. Have appropriate clothing for inclement weather.

3. Report to the mentor at your assigned field 30 mins before your game starts.

4. Prior to the game meet with your referee crew to confirm the rule variations and game duration.

5. Prior to the game do an equipment and safety inspection of teams and goals. Refer to “field check” & “check players equipment” section.

6. At half time of your game the referee crew will meet with the mentor to quickly review the first half.

7. At the end of game observe the teams until they get to their respective bench areas then meet with the mentor for final review.

8. **Keep a list of all your assignments for your records.**

FIELD CHECK

Once you arrive at the location you need to walk around your assigned field checking for:

- Dangerous items such as holes, glass, stones, or anything dangerous especially around the goal.
- The lines should be clearly visible, and field properly marked.
- **Goals (including portable ones) must be safely anchored**, and nets (if used) secured properly.
- **Ensure that the goals are positioned on the goal line i.e. back of the post on back of the line.**

PLAYER EQUIPMENT CHECK

✔ Shin guards of **appropriate size** covered by socks.

✔ Safe footwear. If in doubt consult with mentor.

✔ All jewelry removed **other than medic alert tags** (made safe).

✔ Taping is not permitted.

✔ Nothing dangerous (no watches, no metal hair clips).

✔ Hoodies, if worn, must have the hood tucked into the jersey.

✔ If ball caps are worn by goalkeepers, are they safe?

✔ Team colors including the goalkeepers.

✔ If in doubt check with mentor.

✔ **ABSOLUTELY NO EAR-RINGS ALLOWED**

MSA PROCEDURE FOR SEVERE WEATHER

We play games in inclement weather, if deemed safe, but not in lightning or thunder conditions. If lightning or thunder is observed a designated person will sound a siren and the fields will be cleared immediately.

Seek appropriate shelter.

MSA will not assume any responsibility for people remaining outdoors.

No game will resume until 30 minutes after the last lightning strike or the sound of thunder.

RULES AND POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- **No intentional heading by players from U-8 to U-12**
- **Intentional heading = foul with an indirect kick (IFK) to the other team. If defender within their own penalty area, restart on the penalty area line closest to where offence occurred.**
- **No offside in U8 games**
- **Slide tackling or playing ball while on the ground is permitted if done safely.**
- **From U8 to U10 on goal kicks the non-kicking team must be in their own half until kick is taken.**
- **From U8 to U10 the goalkeeper cannot punt the ball directly over the center line. If done it is a foul with IFK being taken on the center line by the other team.**
- **Scores are not kept until final tournament weeks but get into the habit of keeping a record of the game during the season.**
- **Yellow and red cards are permitted if warranted.**
- **Substitutions can be made on goal kicks, throw-ins, prior to any kickoff and injuries. No substitutions on corner kicks or free kicks unless for an injury.**
- **Either team can substitute at any substitution opportunity. Even if the possessing team (the team with the ball) DOES NOT substitute, the other team CAN substitute.**

- **Substitutions are made at center field, and with the referee's permission. Substitutes must be standing at midfield BEFORE the stoppage that initiates the substitution.**
- **No coaches or spectators are permitted to loiter behind the goals.**
- **Only coaches, assigned referees and players are permitted on the bench side.**
- **Players and coaches must remain in their assigned technical area: approximately 10 yards away from the center line and at least 10 feet behind the touchline.**
- **Spectators must remain at least 10 feet behind the touchline to ensure AR, player, and spectator safety.**
- **MSA will not tolerate inappropriate behavior from bench personnel or spectators. AR2 should not hesitate to report inappropriate fan behavior to the referee and/or mentor.**
- **MSA has distributed a Referee Guide to Assist Coaches and parents. These documents appear at the end of this manual so you can be advised of the standards MSA has set for its coaches and parents.**

MSA SPECIAL PROTOCOLS

If a player suffers a head injury for any reason the player must be removed from the game and cannot return until cleared by a medical professional. No clearance = no play but refer to U.S. Soccer Concussion Management Program guidelines.

- **If a player is injured during play, stop the game, and call the coach onto the field to handle the injury. The player must leave the field and may return to the game, with the permission of the referee once play has restarted or be substituted.**
- **A player cannot wear hoodies up while on the field. It must be tucked in.**
- **A player cannot wear jewelry. Taped earrings, cloth wristlets and necklaces are not permitted.**
- **Medical bracelets, if worn, must be taped but the medical information must be visible.**
- **Hats may be worn in cold weather but must be brimless and soft.**
- **Uniform must be the last outer piece of clothing.**
- **Substitutions can be made as per the Rules and Points of Emphasis sheet.**
- **Keep games on time. If a team cannot field the prescribed number of players, the game can be played with fewer players. The coach of the team with a full roster is not required to play down but can choose to do so.**

COMMUNICATING WITH PLAYERS, TEAM OFFICIALS AND SPECTATORS

Clear confident whistling and signals are an important part of refereeing. It shows everyone that you are certain of your decision and that in turn leads to confidence in you as a referee from the players, coaches and fans. If they are confident in what you are doing, they are less likely to question your calls and therefore there is less likely to be a problem. Always be respectful of the players and team officials and if you have reason to speak with them during or after a game do so in a calm and polite manner. This may help to defuse a heated situation which in turn can help eliminate potential problems.



If you see a foul blow your whistle with a loud sharp tone so that everyone can hear it. Delay in giving a foul can lead to people getting upset. Once you have blown your whistle to stop the game everyone will look at you to see what is happening. At this time, you **clearly indicate which team has been awarded the free kick by pointing the direction in which they are attacking. Your arm should be straight but raised slightly** as in the illustration to your left. The same signal applies for a throw-in or corner kick (although in this case the arm is higher). If the award is a goal kick point downward at the goal area.



If the free kick you have awarded is an indirect kick, for say an offside or dangerous play (i.e. a goal cannot be scored directly from it), then you must communicate this to everyone. Once you have signaled the free kick as described above, raise your arm straight in the air. **You must maintain this signal from before the free kick is taken until it has gone out of play, played by another player or if you a certain that the ball will not enter the goal.**



If a player is fouled (not seriously) and that team retains possession of the ball you can, if you wish, play advantage by allowing the game to continue. By shouting “play on, advantage” loudly and sweeping your arm(s) forwards and upwards as in the illustration to the left everyone will know that you have seen the foul but have chosen to allow the play to continue.

HOW TO HANDLE INJURIES

Injuries are a fact of life in sport, but how they are handled by match officials can play a big part in how the participants feel about the referee's overall performance in that game.

Even if there was no foul involved, managing injuries is an important skill.

Stop Play - sounds simple enough, but often does not happen quickly enough. The referee has the power to stop play at any time for an injury, which, in his/her opinion is serious. What is considered serious will often depend on the particular game - in a youth game, a ball in the face or head or kick on the knee that causes a player distress should be considered serious enough to stop play if the player stays down. Team staff should be called onto the field without delay.

Stay attentive to the field - once the team is looking after the injured player, the referee should remember their responsibility to maintain control over other things on the field. Players may be upset, thinking there should have been a foul or penalty. The referee should take up a position to be close enough to the injury to supervise the handling of the injury, but also where they can keep an eye on the rest of the field for potential problems. Five to ten yards is often an appropriate distance keeping most players in your view.

Choose your words carefully - injuries are often 'tense' moments in the game, and the official may have cause to offer words of consolation, reassurance, instruction, advice, or calming words to those who are upset. Think before you speak, and then do so in a calm, professional manner.

If there is blood - ensure that safe practice is observed. The player MUST leave the field of play. Blood on wounds must be cleaned and covered before the player can return to the field, and clothing with blood must be replaced, even if the blood is dry. If any blood gets on the playing surface, it should be cleaned up before the game restarts.

Remember - at an injury, many eyes will be on the referee, watching how the stoppage is handled.

CONCUSSIONS

A concussion can be difficult to recognize on the field. Most occur without a loss of consciousness or an obvious sign that something is wrong with a player's brain function. They can occur at any time throughout games or practice, as a blow to the head or body from contact with the ground, the ball or another player. Working with leading physicians for more than a decade, U.S. Soccer created Recognize to Recover resources that will help coaches, players, parents and referees identify the signs and symptoms of concussion and immediately take action.

RECOGNIZE: Changes in brain functions:

- **Unaware of game (opposition colors, score of game, last play)**
- **Confusion**
- **Amnesia (does not recall events prior to the hit or after the hit)**
- **Drastic changes in alertness**
- **Does not know time, place or date**
- **Slowed responses to questions or conversation**
- **Decreased attention and concentration**

Mental and emotional changes:

- **Depression, Anxiety, Anger, Irritability, Emotionally unstable**

Physical changes:

- **Headache, Dizziness, Nausea, Loss of balance, Feeling dazed**
- **Seeing stars or flashing lights, Ringing in the ears, Double vision**

RECOVER

- **Remove, Evaluate and Rest are key steps to treating a concussion or other head injury in soccer. When a concussion is identified quickly, it prevents the injury from getting worse, and prevents the player from staying off the field for even longer.**

- **Remove**
  An athlete who experiences a blow to the head or body should immediately be removed for play and should not return to play until he/she is evaluated. When in doubt, the athlete should sit out.

- **Evaluate**
  Have a health care professional evaluate the athlete immediately. Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself.

- **Rest**
  Never rush a return to play. A return to play should only occur after an athlete has been cleared by a medical professional. If you rush the return, a player is at significantly higher risk for more problems in the future.

At MSA field the responsibility should not lie with young, inexperienced officials. MSA experienced mentors or experienced referees should monitor any head injury closely and act within the U.S. Soccer Concussion Management Program guidelines.

http://www.recognizetorecover.org/#us-soccers-comprehensive-player-health-and-safety-program

AS A REFEREE, HOW AM I DOING?

Refereeing a soccer game is rarely an easy thing to do. So why do we do it? For many of you it is a way of earning money. For others, it is another way to enjoy and participate in the world's most popular sport. Whatever your reason becoming a better referee is a worthwhile thing to do.

For the young referee especially officiating teaches self-confidence, time management, and organizational skills. You must make decisions quickly and confidently and have the ability to deal with people in a firm, fair and polite manner. Many of these qualities are necessary when you go for that first interview and subsequently into the workforce. You can set your schedule to fit in with other activities in which you participate, you get fresh air and exercise and earn pocket money at the same time! It can only be a win-win situation.

Some of you will decide that you want to improve yourselves further and reach the highest level that you can through upgrading clinics and on-field evaluations of your performance designed to help you get better. Hard work, persistence and dedication will also prove to be rewarding with the opportunity for higher-level games, travel and the chance to meet new friends.

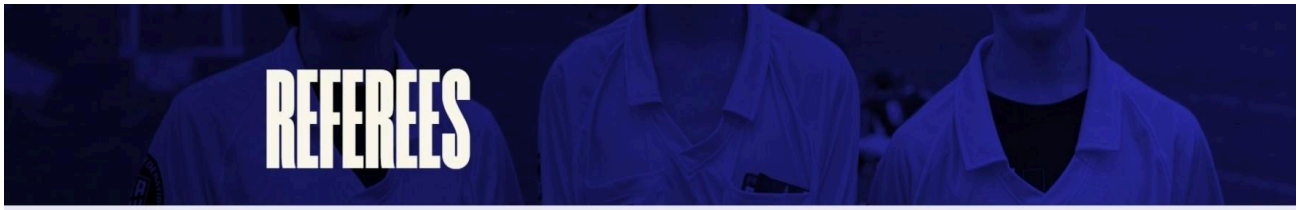
But no matter what route you decide to take how many of us regularly evaluate ourselves as a referee? "Self-development" can be done by examining your own performance but is preferable when done with another referee also intent on self-improvement. By asking yourselves a series of questions after every game you will get a sense of where you can improve.

Ask yourselves these simple questions for example:

- **Did I look the part? Was my uniform clean and tidy? Shirt tucked in, socks pulled up?**
- **Was my whistle used effectively? Was it loud and confident for fouls such as pushing, tripping and unfair tackles? Was I firm in getting the "wall" back 10 yards?**
- **Were my signals clear and smart and did I always raise my arm for an indirect free kick?**
- **Did I talk to the players clearly and effectively to prevent them from fouling and tell them the color of the team that was entitled to the throw-in, goal kick or corner kick?**
- **How well did I keep up with play? Was I inside or close to the penalty area when the ball was there? Was I close by to deal with the foul on the goalkeeper?**
- **How often was I caught out of position? How many times did I have to make a decision from 20 yards or more?**
- **Was I fair to both teams? Did I allow myself to be influenced by the appeals of players or the yells of coaches or fans? Was I always polite and respectful?**
- **Did anyone get hurt? Did I protect players from foul play by dealing with it early in the game?**

It is not possible to have a referee mentor at every game, but it is important that as referees, like players, we always try to improve ourselves.

The question is then, "As a referee how am I doing?"



We want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for your dedication and hard work. Your role is crucial in ensuring the smooth running of our games and providing a positive experience for all players, coaches, and parents.

MICHIANA SOCCER ASSOCIATION

ABOUT MSA SPONSORS REFEREES RESOURCES LOGIN REGISTER

BELOW YOU WILL FIND IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS THAT WILL HELP YOU STAY INFORMED AND PREPARED FOR THE SEASON.

2024 MSA Referee Manual (.pdf)
A guide to understanding how assignments are made and what to expect.

2024 MSA Assigning Procedures (.pptx)
A guide to understanding how assignments are made and what to expect.

2024 MSA Game Day Procedures for Referees(.pdf)
Detailed instructions to help you navigate game day responsibilities smoothly.

2024 Law 12 and 13 (.pptx)
A presentation covering the key laws of the game, focusing on fouls, misconduct, and free kicks.

2024 Law 12 Quick Reference Chart (.pdf)
A handy reference for quick checks during games.

2024 Dealing with Inappropriate Bench Behavior (.docx)
Guidance on managing and addressing inappropriate behavior from team benches.

2024 Game Day Expectations for Coaches (.docx)
Outlines what is expected from coaches on game days to ensure a respectful and smooth game environment.

2024 Guide to Help Coaches Understand Refereeing (.docx)
A resource to aid coaches in understanding refereeing decisions and processes.

2024 Guide to Help Parents Understand Refereeing (.docx)
Helps parents understand the rules and the role of the referee, promoting a supportive atmosphere.

2024 Mentor Form - Assistant Referee (.docx)
A form to help mentors provide feedback and support to assistant referees.

2024 Mentor Form - Referee (.docx)
A form to help mentors provide feedback and support to referees.

2024 MSA Mentoring (.pptx)
A presentation on the mentoring program, aimed at developing and supporting referees.

2024 Offside - No Videos (.pptx)
An in-depth look at the offside rule without video content.

Please take the time to review these materials thoroughly. They are designed to enhance your knowledge, skills, and confidence on the field. If you have any questions or need further assistance, don't hesitate to reach out. Thank you again for your invaluable contribution to our league!