SITUATION OF THE WEEK

Situation: Both teams have been playing with the new self-start rule for a few weeks now, and they’re beginning to get the hang of it! White player #4, in midfield, checks through the sphere of Blue player #28. The official blows their whistle, indicates direction, signals the foul, and begins to direct #4 to “go 4m behind.” After coming to a settled stance at the spot of the foul, #28 takes off. The official quickly “tweets” to bring #28 back to restart, stating “I didn’t say “Self-Start!”

Response: Officials… the above scenario really is happening. We need to review proper self-start administration and make sure this important new protocol is understood by all officials, and executed properly and consistently during our games.

Let’s be very clear. The official is not required to say “Self-Start.” The offended player (the ball-carrier) is NEVER required to wait for an official to say “Self-Start.”

Right after the official blows a whistle to stop play for a foul outside of the CSA, the offended player may settle within playing distance of the foul, and initiate play with her step or with a pass to her teammate. Either one is a “self-start” and initiates play, just like a whistle would.

IF a player looks to the official, unsure if she may initiate play, the official MAY say “Self-Start,” or may indicate with a motion that the player may go. If we do give a verbal signal, it should be the words “Self-Start.”

What officials do not want to do is replace our whistle with words on every re-start. That defeats the whole intent of this new rule. Self-Starts were introduced to our game to: INCREASE THE PACE OF PLAY, AND DECREASE THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE OFFICIALS.

Ideally, in this learning season, officials will help facilitate the Self-Start in a way that will ultimately result in a quick settled stance and the fluid continuation of play – with no involvement from the official on that restart. That’s the goal!

Note: If you have any concern or confusion about restarts, it’s ok. Please bring it up at your next meeting, or call your mentor – or call me! We need to get this right, and we really need to make sure we are not over-managing our games.

Rule Reference: Page 39, Section 4 Restarting Play – Self-Start
THE GOALIE AND HER CIRCLE - HOW MUCH CAN SHE DEFEND?

Question: Can the goalie actively defend the ball if she is in her goal circle and the ball is outside of the circle? Most specifically, can she reach out and check an opponent’s stick?

Answer: Yes – she most certainly can participate as a defender for her team. Her actions, of course, must all be legal.

So, as an example, if an attack player is coming around the circle and leads with her crosse, and the goalie is in a position to make a safe and legal check, she may. Let’s play this out… the goalie makes a good check and the ball falls to the ground outside the circle. The goalie reaches out, covers the ball and rakes it in. Now we have a foul. Why? Because other players were in playable distance, so she cannot cover and rake into her circle. Goal circle foul. If the ball fell into her circle? Nice job goalie! The ball is yours.

Comments: I’m getting several questions about specific situations that aren’t specifically in the rule book. I can appreciate that it’s great when an exact example of your game situation is available, but we also need to understand that in our games there are thousands of things that can happen. We need to study the rules and work to apply them to our game situations, and further understand that if an action is not prohibited within the application of the rules in our rule book, then it is not a foul. As always, if unsure – don’t hesitate to ask the question!

Rule Reference: Rule Reference: Major and minor fouls, and goal circle fouls. Rules 9, 10 & 7 Manual, Page 66, number 25, 1 “The goalkeeper often helps her teammate with a double team….”

TEAM REQUESTED STICK CHECKS AND TIMING

Question: I had an upset coach earlier this week that felt the other team was using a stick check request as a delay tactic. I didn’t know how to respond. Does that matter? How are we supposed to think about this? What should we say to the coach?

Answer: If the stick check request is made by the appropriate people, during a time frame allowed within the rules, it’s legal. Our response to the opposing coach should be within the language of the rules, “Coach, the stick check request was made legally. The game clock was stopped, and a player on the field made the request.” The rules for team-requested stick checks are detailed in the Equipment and Uniforms section of our NFHS rule book.

Rule Reference: Rule Reference: pg 16 & 17, Section 4 Crosse Inspection
Q&A’s CONTINUED

THE DRAW—3 PER TIME BETWEEN THE RESTRAINING LINES

Question: If the center official’s hands are on the crosses for the draw, and the 3rd player between the RLs moves below the RL, can her teammate come above the RL? Is this an early entry foul?

Answer: This is a rule that is different for high school play versus higher levels. As long as there are never more than 3 players between the RLs prior to the draw, players may exchange places. Another scenario might be that right after the draw, before possession has been gained, one blue player goes below the RL, and her teammate—closer to the ball—comes up. Legal. That’s why our off-ball official needs to stay … off-ball!

Rule Reference: Page 37, Art 5, “a”

Note: The rule reference noted says nothing about an exchange of players being illegal. So—an exchange of players is not illegal. If an action is not prohibited in the application of the rules within our rule book, don’t manufacture the violation.

NOTES

We encourage and celebrate officials who understand how important it is to really study and understand the rules of our high school game. The more you know, the better job you will do. It really is that simple. However! We do not ever want to be so black and white with the printed words that we lose our ability to understand their intent: to keep the game safe and fair, and to promote a great game experience for our young athletes.

When working to apply the rules: Consider safe and fair play, and consider did the violation disadvantage the other team? Sometimes being a strong enough official to NOT blow your whistle keeps the flow of the game intact.

It’s fantastic to memorize the rules. It’s even better to understand the game and use them appropriately.

Ex 1: A defender takes a couple of steps over the RL creating an “offside” situation. Attack has the ball behind the goal cage, working to set up a play. The offside defender realizes she is offside within a moment, and runs back above the RL. In NFHS play, this is NOT a mandatory call—you may hold your whistle—you may use your good judgment. If there is no impact on play, make sure the situation is corrected and move on. We also know an offside with attack IS a mandatory call because it immediately gives the attack an additional outlet player than cannot be covered by the defense.

Rule Reference: Page 50 NOTE

Ex 2: Red team player has her foot on the circle at the draw. It’s the first time this is noticed. Rather than being preventive and telling her to stay off the line, the official immediately blows a violation and gives the White team the ball. Was it technically a violation? Yes. Could it have been preventively managed to create a more positive game experience? Think about it.
Ex. 3 Blue team attack intercepts the ball at midfield and takes off towards the goal on her attacking end. One teammate up field, and only two defenders near the CSA. A midfield defender pushes the attack player as she runs by. The attack player maintains great possession, and is still running with the ball. The official blows her whistle and stops play for a “push.” Was the push a violation? Yes. Should play have been shut down? Think about options…..

Sometimes, we can be so “black and white” that we create a tense, frustrating experience for the players on the field, and the coach’s response can also escalate. Preventive game management, an understanding of “advantage,” and an appreciation for the flow of the game are great tools for all officials. Of course your knowledge of the rules and your own good judgment will guide you on what to manage, and what needs a whistle.

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