



Refereeing and Equality - Frequently Asked Questions

April 2008

These FAQs have been provided by The FA's Referee's department to provide clear guidance on various issues relation to refereeing and equality.

My son was born with the lower forearm and hand missing from his left arm but has a full range of movement in his shoulder and elbow joints. He was stopped by the referee from taking a throw-in as he could not 'use both hands', a bit difficult when he only has one.

Referees should adopt a common sense approach and allow a person who has one arm or a shortened arm to take the throw in even though it is in breach of the Laws of the Game.

A deaf player has regularly been booked for kicking away the ball even though he cannot hear the whistle. A typical scenario is that he is driving towards the goal but is flagged for offside and the referee blows for deliberately delaying the restart of play or time wasting.

Whether the referee has been informed that the player is deaf or not the referee will need to use common sense and make a value judgement as to whether the player deliberately kicked the ball away or just carried on and tried to score a goal.

Can players wear spectacles or goggles when playing football?

Flying footballs and close physical contact make football a moderate risk sport for eye injuries. Spectacles or goggles may provide protection from injury and can also be worn with those who need to wear prescription lenses.

Polycarbonate Lenses: This is the most important property of all protective spectacles or goggles. Good polycarbonate is virtually unbreakable, and will sustain the impact of a ball or finger.

Sports Band: an elasticised band and not temple pieces should secure the frame. Players must have something that will be secured tight to the head so that the spectacles or goggles won't fall off. A frame with temples will not hold tight enough and a jab from a finger could lift the frame off and potentially damage the eye.

Although sports eyewear is intended to offer the best protection available, there is always the possibility that the wearer may sustain an eye or facial injury due to severe impact or because of the nature of the athletic activity. Referees should ensure that if a request has been made to wear glasses/goggles, that they must not be a danger to himself or to any other player.

Can a player wear long tights or trousers to play football?

Law 4 (Players Equipment) of the Laws of the Game states that undershorts are permitted provided that if they are worn they must be the same main colour as the shorts. Undershorts can be of any length but must not be excessively baggy.

Can a player wear a long sleeved undergarment?

If any undergarments (shirts) are to be worn the colour of the sleeve must be the same colour as the shirt's main colour. Long sleeved shirts are permissible under the Laws of the Game.



Can a female player wear a head covering?

This is currently being discussed by IFAB and we are waiting for clear guidance from them. In the meantime its perfectly acceptable for female players to wear head coverings for example Muslim women may choose to wear a Hijab. In these circumstances you are reminded of your duties in ensuring that player's equipment meets the requirements of Law 4 - nothing should be worn which constitutes a danger to the player or any other players.

- No jewellery – there is a requirement for the referee to inspect players equipment before the match. This would not extend to requiring a female wearing a scarf to pull it back to show she is not wearing earrings. If you believe she may be wearing earrings you have a duty to point out that they should be removed.
- Head Scarves – must be made of soft material and tied on, with no use of metal pins or anything else that could constitute a danger. Ideally the colour of the scarf will be as close to the main colour of the jersey as possible.

Hearing Aids

Plastic hearing aids can be worn for practical sessions and matches. In practical sessions an adult should determine if they are safe. In a match situation the referee would determine if they are safe and not provide any danger to the player wearing them or another player.

Player with Tourette Syndrome

The FA will be providing more detailed advice and guidance during 08/09 with regards to managing players with specific impairments e.g. Tourette Syndrome, in the meantime this is some general advice:

- If a referee is told that someone on the team has Tourettes they need to be told how that condition presents itself - i.e. what sort of 'tics' they have. Some people do not have verbal/swearing tics but may grunt or have a facial tic. Sometimes they can suppress them for a period of time but when they stop they will tic a lot - almost getting rid of the "store". Do not reprimand someone if the condition presents itself.
- Anxiety will make tics worse so anxiety before or during a match may make them more obvious to others.
- The referee could discuss with the player/official prior to the match to agree a means of coming off the pitch for a time if they sense or the referee senses that the tic-ing is getting worse and significantly interfering with others. A referee would have to make a value judgment as to the seriousness of the swearing and whether to take action to allow the person time to 'cool down'
- If the swearing was deliberately aimed at another player or official etc. then a referee should take action accordingly.

Please contact The FA by email FAMOA@TheFA.com or telephone 0207 745 4651 should you have any more questions or require clarification on any issue.

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