



FLORIDA EVALUATES USE OF THE 3 WHISTLE SYSTEM

Robert L. Kreuter; President High School Soccer Officials of Central Florida

Adam Smeltz and Mario Donnangelo were the keynote speakers in Orlando, Florida on Friday September 29, 2006 at a soccer referees' field clinic sponsored by the High School Soccer Officials of Central Florida.



HSSOCF is one of the largest high school soccer referee associations in Florida that is under the guidance of the Florida High School Athletic Association. HSSOCF is also a high school affiliate member of NISOA. Affiliate membership by local high school associations is strongly supported by Dr. Ray Bernabei, Executive Director of NISOA.

The clinic was attended by 119 referees from 9 different Florida high school soccer referee associations. The main emphasis of the clinic was on the 3-Whistle Double Dual System of refereeing. There was also other breakout training sessions on rule interpretation, field mechanics, the handling of frustrated players and coaches, proper pre-game warm-ups, and nutrition. On Friday night Adam and Mario presented the history, benefits, and mechanics of actually refereeing using the 3-



Whistle Double Dual System. Practical experience was then obtained on Saturday as groups of 3 referees took turns refereeing an actual game using the 3-Whistle System.

The referees who participated in the clinic found that there were a number of benefits from using the 3-Whistle

System. One benefit was more field presence. The system allows for good field coverage should an incident occur. One of the three referees is in closer proximity to the play to deal with the situation immediately. With an increasing rash of cautions and ejections in the game, this could lead to better game control and less misconduct off the ball. The center referee's main priority is still fouls and mis-

conduct. The side referee, on the other hand, must not only make fouls and misconduct a priority, he or she must also call offsides and the ball in and out play. The closest official has the first opportunity to make a decision on the call.

One adjustment side referees had to make was to be sure they stayed with the next to last defender in order to make the offsides call and to not be drawn up field during play in the center of the field. Also, side referees should never let a

player get behind them. These same mechanics need to be followed when using the 2-Whistle Dual Referee System.

All three referees share equal responsibility, however, one referee is designated the lead referee for final rule interpretation. This is usually the center referee. This does not preclude a timeout for consultation should, for example, the side referee disagrees with the center referee's call indication. We would hope these consultation timeouts would be at a minimum, however, it is important to get the right call. If simultaneous whistle situations cannot be resolved, award a drop ball.

The High School Soccer Officials of Central Florida used what they learned during the field clinic and they officiated most pre-season classic and jamboree high school games using the 3-Whistle Double Dual System. FHSAA is considering adopting this system in Florida at state playoff games and possibly during regular season play. Some comments from various referee crews and coaches from those that participated in the games using the 3-Whistle System are given below :

- Coaches liked it; we were closer to the play.
- The players did not seem to notice the difference.
- Need to practice the mechanics, it felt awkward. I found myself



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trying to get too deep and could not get back in a timely manner.

- We did two varsity games in a row and it made it physically easier. This could extend a field referee's career time.
- If you rotate positions, using the 20 minute water break time-out to rotate positions was the easiest time to do the rotation. In general, however, we felt rotating was a little confusing.
- You need to know who has the master time if the stadium clock goes out.
- Overall my experience with the system was very positive, and I enjoyed working the game. As a side referee I felt more part of the game. The referee crew seemed more like a team.
- Coaches and players seemed to have less "dialog" with the "ref" when there are three referees. Coaches appeared to get on more with coaching.
- The 3-Whistle System is good to train and develop new referees while using senior referees as side referees. Senior refer-

ees can support and train more inexperienced officials.

- Felt we didn't miss many fouls.
- It actually seemed like the referee crew had better communication and eye contact with the 3-Whistle System.
- One coach stated some officials on the crew were not as consistent as others in their calls.
- If we do the 3-Whistle System suggest we do it all season and not just during play-off games.

The goals and priorities of all high school sports are education, safety, participation, and sportsmanship. The 3-Whistle System, although currently different from their soccer mechanics, would be a benefit to high school soccer in achieving these goals. In most other sports referees share the officiating responsibility by making calls with a whistle. Why not in high school soccer?

NFHS Points of Interest

by Bob Jones,, NISOA Liaison

As we approach the soccer season, let's spend a minute thinking of a couple of points. We all are current on this years NFHS "Points of Emphasis":

- ✓ Player equipment
- ✓ Participant conduct
- ✓ End of game procedures
- ✓ Game supervision
- ✓ Field markings
- ✓ Reporting incidents
- ✓ Handling apparent concussions.

I would like to suggest that we step back and think about a couple of previous points of emphasis that concern player conduct, player safety and game management.

But before we get to that discussion remember the email I sent you about proper respect to the flag and the national anthem. When the officiating team walks to the center of the field The AR's are to each side of the center carrying their flag in their outside hand, close to their leg pointed at the ground. The center has the game ball in the left hand. After announcements and the National Anthem is to be played you face the flag (or the sound of the music if no flag is visible) remove your hat if wearing one and place it over your heart while standing with your feet together. If you are not wearing a hat place your right hand over your heart. Yes AR's this requires shifting your flag to the left hand. Music ends, shake hands, run to check nets, run to the intersection of the penalty area and goal line, wait until your other AR is in the same position, move to your line, when the players are properly on the field unfurl your flag as a signal to the center that you are ready to get it on. Don't forget to start your clock.

Simple stuff that looks professional and is in keeping with proper protocol.

Now Points of emphasis that I feel we should keep in mind. I hate to see HS players in leg braces or wearing face mask because of field injuries.

Lets think a minute about that sliding tackle. These always fire

folks up and the majority of the time someone ends up in the dirt looking for the call. Count on it. So in that split second y tion of the attack? Rule of thumb think about that rear blind side outside the normal field of vision normally in a zone 45 degrees from behind off each shoulder of the player being attacked. What was the distance the attacker ran to start the slide.

The further the run normally the more force in the tackle. Was the force of the attack excessive or violent? Where did you see the cleats - up or down?

Then there is the good old head ball where both players go to air in an attempt to head the ball. Did they go straight up or did one player come in at an angle? Watch those arms. Yes the rule book tells us players can place hands on each other. But that doesn't mean to push opponents out of the play nor does it mean a quick elbow strike to the back, head or neck. The tough call is when a player is in the air and the opponent is not who then bends at the waist so the airborne player goes over the back. Well now do we have a trip or jumping in? Think again about direction, degree of force.

The officiating team has to be in position to have a good angle of view so the proper call can be made. Was there a foul, good play or a dive? And, AR's you can assist the center with those behind the back fouls out of the centers field of view. Per that pre game conference Pop that flag, hold it until recognized, twirl it to indicate the foul and then point direction.

Centers make it a point to utilize the PROPER NFHS procedures for calling a foul or infraction. (I see too many folks using USSF procedures in HS games.) Open up your signals so the coaches, players, AR's and spectators have an understanding of what just happened. Don't forget ADVANTAGE is a DISCRETIONARY JUDGMENT and should not be used in lieu of calling that hard foul. Keep in mind you can always come back but it may be better game management to call the foul depending on field location and nature of the offense. Yesterday's 4 D's will help you with this decision.