



Injury Management
2009 Referee Program Directives
February 2, 2009

Identifying “Seriously Injured” Players

Law 5 – The Referee, contains the following Power and Duty of the referee as it relates to the management of injured:

“Stops the match, if in his opinion, a player is seriously injured and ensures that he is removed from the field of play. An injured player may only return to the field of play after the match has restarted.”

As a result, the referee has the initial responsibility to determine whether a player is “seriously injured.” This determination can be influenced by multiple factors like:

- The location of the injury on the player:
 - Injuries to the head, neck, or facial region should be considered serious in nature
 - Injuries to the lower extremities are often less serious and do not require immediate attention. Cramps are generally not considered a serious injury
- The age of the players involved. Younger aged players require more immediate attention
- The immediate reaction of the player

Only when the referee has determined that the player is “seriously injured,” should the referee stop play regardless of whether the ball is in play or not.

Procedure For Dealing With Injured Players

Referees should consider the following steps with handling player injuries:

1. During play, referee makes a quick assessment of whether the player is “seriously injured”
2. Referee only stops play for **serious injury**. Otherwise, the referee waits until the ball is out of play to address the injured player
3. Once play has been stopped, the referee should question the individual player to see if the player requires assistance from medical staff.
4. If the player requires attention, the referee should authorize no more than two medical staff to enter the field to attend to the player
 - At the professional level, team administrators (coaches, etc.) are not allowed to enter the field, only medical personnel. Medical personnel are to be held to the same standards of responsible behavior while on the field as they are held to while in the technical area

- At the youth level, no more than two individuals (non-players) may enter the field to care to the injured player. However, while on the field (during the assessment of the extent of the player’s injury), these individuals are not permitted to dissent nor should they be permitted to coach the other players. The same standard of responsible behavior is required of the individuals while on the field as they are held to while in the technical area
- 5. Concurrent with the entry and signal for the medical staff, the stretcher should also enter the field thereby facilitating the quick removal of the player
 - In games without a stretcher, the personnel assisting with the care of the injured player are responsible for the safe mode of transport of the player from the field
 - Players are not required to use the stretcher to leave the field. They may exit by foot
- 6. The medical staff shall assess and arrange for the player’s safe and swift removal from the field
 - Players are not allowed to receive treatment on the field of play
 - In games without medical personnel or stretchers, the attending personnel shall assume the medical staff responsibilities
- 7. No treatment on the field is permitted
 - Unless serious injury (e.g.: head/neck, concussion, swallowed tongue, broken leg, etc.)
 - Once the medical staff or attending personnel are beckoned/authorized onto the field by the referee, the injured player is required to swiftly leave the field of play either on the stretcher or on foot. Failure to leave the field will result in the player being cautioned for unsporting behavior

Returning to the field: Once the injured player has left the field, the injured player may only return under the following circumstances:

1. Once play has been restarted
 - Ball in play: reentry must be from the touch line
 - Ball out of play (dead ball situation): reenter from any of the boundary lines
2. After having received a signal from the referee to reenter the field
 - The referee must “wave on” the injured play prior to the player returning
 - The referee should not allow the player to return until such time as the ball is in a safe location thereby ensuring the reentering player nor his team will gain an unfair advantage through his reentry
3. The referee may allow the assistant referee or fourth official to verify the player’s “readiness” to reenter the field but the player may only reenter once the signal from the referee is given
 - Verifying the “readiness” relates to the assistant referee or fourth official ensuring the injured player meets all the requirements of the Law prior to reentry. For example, the injured player has had all blood removed from his uniform or from his body

- After having received a signal from the assistant referee or fourth official, the referee may authorize the injured player to return to the field of play and the referee does not have to verify the player’s “readiness” as this has been done by one of the other officials

Team Responsibilities Relating to Injured Players

Since the referee will only stop play for “serious injuries,” it is the responsibility of each team to determine whether to continue to play or to play the ball out of play. A team with an injured player who continues playing assumes the responsibility in the event they lose possession of the ball. Similarly, a team is not required to play the ball out of play when an opposing player has been injured (a non-serious injury). It is hoped that “fair play” will prevail.

Referee Stops Play While Ball Is In Play

In the event the referee stops play due to a serious injury (the ball was in play), the referee must restart play with a dropped ball from the position of the ball when play was stopped (Exception: If play is stopped when the ball is in the goal area, then the restart is a dropped ball on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was located when play was stopped).

Teams are encouraged to use “fail play” when returning the ball into play. However, the referee cannot be responsible for nor legislate the manner in which a team returns the ball into play.

Goalkeeper Injury

In cases involving an injured goalkeeper, the following exceptions are to be made:

- Only the goalkeeper is injured:
 - Treatment is permitted on the field
 - The goalkeeper is not required to leave the field of play after treatment
- A goalkeeper and a field player(s) on either team are injured simultaneously:
 - In the event a goalkeeper is treated on the field at the same time as a field player, no player is required to leave the field of play