

2025 Fall Referee Update

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Important Dates

- July 29 and August 14: Regional Referee Companion Course (Dublin)
- August 9: Regional Referee Full In-Person Course (Holiday Inn Express)
- August 16: Area (15U+ games) start
- August 23: Regional (12U and lower) games start
- October 25: Last week of fall regular season games and 9U regional tournament
- October 27-30: Area 5C tournament weeknight games 15U+
- October 30, November 1-2: Area 5C Tournament (10U+)
 - No games on Halloween!
- June 2026: Section 5 Games in Huntsville
- July 2027: AYSO National Games in Huntsville!

Get Prepared for Fall Season

If you haven't already:

- Renew your volunteer registration to the “2025-2026 (MY25) Board Member/Referee Registration”
- Ensure your background check is not expired or about to expire
- Ensure your annual SafeSport training is up to date (18+ only)
 - Required every year – Full course every three years, supplemental course each year in between
- Consider refreshing all your Safe Haven courses – including CDC Concussion and Cardiac Arrest
- Start your conditioning training and health routines

Get Prepared for Fall Season

Shake off the rust at a coach training/jamboree!

- Mon 7/28: 10UG at Dublin 1 6:30-7:30
 - Tues 7/29: 9UB at Dublin 1 6:30-7:30
 - Sat 8/2: 12UB at Dublin 1 11-12:30
 - Tues 8/5: 9UG at Dublin 1 6:30-7:30
 - Thurs 8/7: 10UB at Dublin 1 6:30-7:30
 - Sat 8/9: 12UG at Dublin 1 11-12:30
-
- Email Drew if you're interested and we'll try to get a mentor there for you

Advance your game!

- Read and study the Laws of the Game (LOTG) regularly to stay sharp and up to date
 - Law changes occur every summer (discussed on supplemental slides)
 - Being a Referee Instructor, Mentor, or Assessor really helps stay well-versed
- Pursue referee upgrades to develop your officiating skills and experience
- Email Greg, Drew, or Simon with any questions about advancement

Lightning Detection System at Madison Parks

- Read the policy:
<https://www.madisonal.gov/DocumentCenter/View/17524/City-of-Madison-Parks-and-Recreation-lightning-policy>
- 15-second horn blast: lightning is in the area; leave the fields
- All-clear signal: three 5-second blasts
- 30-minute rule is not in effect as long as the system is working
- Also available via iPhone and Android apps (ThorAlert links in policy) and web: <https://360.thormobile.net/madisonal/>
- Only applies to Dublin, Palmer Main, and Palmer 7-10

Reporting Field Issues at Madison Parks

- <https://www.ayso498.org/Default.aspx?tabid=936144>
(ayso498.org -> FAQ -> Fields)
 - Click the blue “Report a Field Issue” button
 - If it’s a safety issue, also email Josh Coffey at fields@ayso498.org
 - For urgent issues, call Parks & Rec at 256-772-9300 (ext. 0)

Heat Safety

- Remember to be cautious in hot weather!
- Check wet bulb globe temperature (WBGT) using [Android app](#), [iPhone app](#), [weather.gov](#) (not recommended for mobile), or as a last fallback, the [USSF table on page 2](#)
- Extra hydration breaks **required** at least every 30 minutes when WBGT exceeds 89.6° F
 - As the referee, you have the option to add additional breaks as needed. Use them!

Referee Gear



- Maintain credibility by coming prepared and looking professional
- Current referee jersey – always tucked in, black shorts, and two-stripe socks
- On cold days, black long athletic pants may be worn instead of shorts and black long sleeves may be worn under jersey
- Black shoes/cleats are preferred, but not required
- Always bring whistle, time keeping device, something to keep score and notes, yellow/red cards, game coin, and assistant referee flags
- Black hat is acceptable if needed
 - No political/religious messaging
- Avoid wearing sunglasses

Referee Abuse

- AYSO maintains a zero-tolerance policy regarding abuse of referees
- Email all instances of abuse to:
 - Drew Winstel, Regional Referee Administrator (drew.winstel@ayso498.org)
 - Jake Williams, Regional Commissioner (jake@ayso498.org)
 - Theresa Dickson, Regional Coach Administrator (coach1@ayso498.org)
 - Brendhan Burleson, Assistant Coach Administrator (coach2@ayso498.org)
 - Dave Hutchinson, Safety Director (david.hutchinson@ayso498.org)
 - Greg Duke, Area Referee Administrator (ara@aysoarea5c.org)
- We will address all issues reported
- USSF policy: <http://ussoccer.org/rap>

Referee Abuse Prevention (RAP)

- US Soccer has released a [Referee Abuse Prevention](#) policy effective March 2025 (the Penalties Matrix is on next slide)
- Diligently track physical and non-physical offenses involving players, coaches, and/or spectators
 - Complete an incident report in Stack Officials and send your Region Ref Admin (Drew) and the Area Referee Admin (Greg) a heads-up email
 - For non-physical offenses, understand the difference between forms of gross misconduct towards a referee and simple disappointment in the game

RAP Penalties Matrix



REFEREE ABUSE PREVENTION

POLICY 531-9 PENALTY OVERVIEW / YOUTH & AMATEUR

The Penalties Matrix defines consequences associated with physical and non-physical offenses against Referees.

NON-PHYSICAL OFFENSES of gross misconduct, abuse, and / or assault

NON-PHYSICAL*	MIN. GAMES	TIME
Insulting, Belittling, Insinuating or Taunting Behavior Undermining Referee Authority	2	
Harassment, Intimidation, Retaliation, Abusive, or Threatening (Non Physical) Language	4	
Aggression, Attacking, Derogatory, Cyberbullying, Doxing or Threatening (Physical / Violence) Language	6	6 - 24 Months
Offensive or Discriminatory Act	10	12 - 24 Months

PHYSICAL OFFENSES of gross misconduct, abuse, and / or assault

PHYSICAL*	MIN. GAMES	TIME
Minor or Slight Deliberate Touching	3	1 - 6 Months
Pushing, Grabbing, Pulling, Squeezing, Pinching, Lightly Slapping, Use of Object in Non Striking Manner, or Physical Property Damage	10	6 - 24 Months
Hitting, Punching, Elbowing, Kicking, Biting, Spitting, Choking, Tackling, Throwing or Use of Object or Any Part of Body (Forearm, Knee, Head) in a Striking Manner		12 Months - Lifetime

(*) Disclaimer: These are only a few examples of abuse – other actions or statements may also fall into this category.

KEY PENALTY FACTORS

- Single offenses are at **minimum the prescribed game penalty or time penalty** for non red zone offenses
- Penalties can be **both game and time depending on severity / circumstances**
- Second time offenders receive **double punishment**
- Third time offenders receive a **lifetime ban**
- More than one offense at the same time is **at least the punishment for the most serious offense**
- Offenses against minors are automatically subject to a **“minor multiplier” resulting in triple punishment**
- **One offense warning per league** to be managed by states and leagues collaboratively
- Game consequences are **inclusive of 1 game penalty for any red cards given**
- Optionality for **50% penalty for first offense from a minor**

“Youth soccer needs referees to grow – without them, games can’t happen”*

* Quoted from the US Soccer Referee Abuse Prevention website:
www.ussoccer.com/rap

Effective March 2025

For more information, visit: USSOCCER.COM/RAP



EVERYONE PLAYS®

BALANCED TEAMS

OPEN REGISTRATION

POSITIVE COACHING

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT



What Is Abuse?

- Public
- Persistent
- Personal
- Address with coaches first
 - If it continues, suspend the match
 - You can send off coaches, players, and spectators
 - Don't show cards to spectators – use your words, be firm, and you may suspend a match until a spectator leaves the field
 - Don't forget to document in the game report and an email to Admins
- If in doubt, report it!

Referee Mentorship

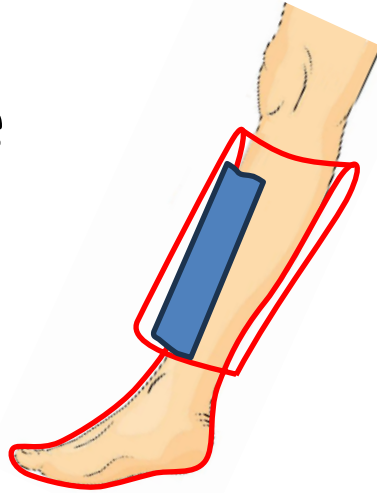
- We launched a referee mentor program in 498
 - Improve new refs' confidence
 - Protect youth refs
- Requirements to be a mentor
 - 25+ games, including 5 at 10U+
 - 18+ years old
 - Regional Referee or higher
- Interested in being a mentor or mentee? Email Drew
- Referee mentor class coming soon

Remember your pre-match routine!



Pre-match duties

- Field safety check
- Referee conference
- Player check in
 - Shin guards



Pre-match duties

- Field safety check
- Referee conference
- Player check in
 - Shin guards
 - Footwear



Casts and Splints versus Braces

Casts and splints are designed to completely immobilize the joint and are **disallowed** for practice and games. They may not be removed to be able to play or practice. Examples of casts and splints:



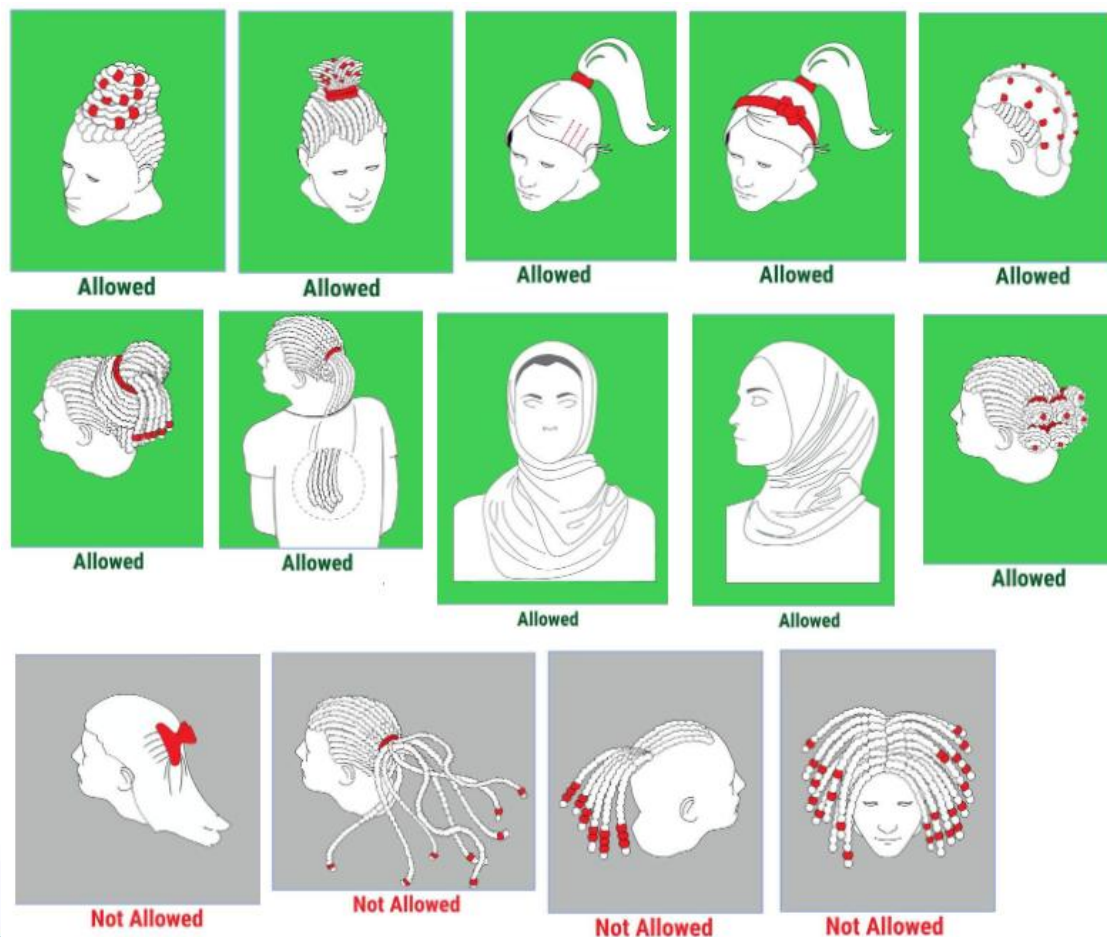
Casts and Splints versus Braces (cont'd)

Braces provide support while still facilitating full range of motion at the joint and are **allowed** unless otherwise deemed unsafe by the referee.

Examples of braces:



Jewelry



- Hair beads are becoming more popular, and new guidance has been given to allow them if all three of the following conditions are met:
- They are restrained (e.g., bun) such that they are not able to flail about (see examples)
- The parent understands that their child will be hurt worse if hit in the head
- They are not otherwise deemed unsafe by the referee

Jewelry (cont'd)

- Earrings are disallowed – no if, ands, or buts
 - Compliment their new piercings and set a friendly tone
 - Give them the choice to either remove them and play or leave them in and sit out
 - They may not cover them with tape or bandages to play
 - Get the coach involved early – they should back your decision 100%
- “Welded” permanent jewelry is disallowed – either find a way to remove it or sit out this game (taping it down is not sufficient)
- Consider your fellow colleagues – inconsistency or “this time” considerations on disallowed equipment and jewelry is a safety liability, and it sets the next referee up to deal with the “they let us play with it last week” arguments

Other Medical Devices

- Other medical devices are allowed providing they are safe. Some form of taping/wrapping may be required



- **The Referee decides what equipment is permitted, with safety as the priority**

Stack Officials

- Games will continue to be posted to Stack Officials for referee self-assignment
- [How-To Guide](#)
- Referee Admins reserve the right to remove referees from the roster who have not completed their volunteer registration, training, background checks, etc..
 - Email your Referee Admins if you have trouble or issues ref1@ayso498.org, ref2@ayso498.org

15U Games

- For Area 5C games, 14U-16U divisions have been combined into a 15U division due to number of players in each division
- Game considerations shall be made with respect to 16U division rules
 - Two 40-minute halves
 - Monitored substitutions
- Be mindful on hot days and consider taking quick water breaks as needed for player and referee safety

Madison-Specific Changes for 2025-26

- Palmer 2 and Dublin 4 have lights
 - Expect fields' default age groups to adjust, especially Dublin 3-4 and Palmer 1-2
 - We have clearance to use the fields all day on Saturdays, so we will have more games in the late afternoon/early evening to avoid the hottest part of the day for games running through Labor Day weekend
 - AYSO 498 Board is working on finalizing these changes

Madison-Specific Changes for 2025-26

- Coaches will be expected to turn in lineup cards
 - Let the coaches maintain them during the matches
 - Sign the front of the card post-match to verify that the score is correct
 - Coach admins will take care of Everyone Plays compliance
 - Exact mechanism for turning in the cards is TBA

Area 5C-Specific Changes for 2025-26

- Referees 14+ can get paid!
 - Set up financial details in Stack Officials to receive payments
 - [How-To](#)
 - You have the option to decline payments too
 - Area policy will be emailed to all referees once completed
 - Getting paid or not has no impact on RAP; the policy is still very much in force

Area 5C-Specific Changes for 2025-26

- Hybrid assignment model
- Until 3 days before match, games are open for self-assignment
- After that, RRA (or delegate) will assign games based on referee skill level and availability
 - You must either confirm or decline the assignments (notifications come via email)
 - Set your availability on <https://stackofficials.com>
 - [How-To](#)
- As always, referee administrators reserve the right to change assignments based on coverage needs, skill levels, and any reason at all

USSF-Specific Changes for Youth Referees

- Green badges for youth referees
 - Optional in 2025-26, required in 2026-27
 - Helps identify that the referees are youths and are protected extra by RAP (triple punishment)
 - The absence of a green badge does not signify the absence of a triple punishment
- Contact Drew if you'd like to exchange your badge

2025-26 Updates to the LOTG that Affect Us

- Law 5: Referee counts down the final 5 seconds of the 8-second limit for GK possession with hands/arms (see next slide)
- Law 8: Dropped balls outside the PA are awarded to the team that would've gained possession if it was obvious
 - Otherwise, fall back to the last team to touch the ball
- Law 9: IFK and no misconduct for team official/sub touching the ball as it's leaving the field of play with no intention to interfere unfairly
 - Example: coach picking up the ball to speed up a throw-in
- Law 11: Clarification on offside moment of judgment on GK throws
 - Judgment at the last moment of GK contact

2025-26 LOTG Update: GK possession

- Law 12: Goalkeepers have 8 seconds to release the ball after controlling with hands/arms
- Violations are punished by a corner kick to the other team at the side nearest the GK
- Count the first 3 seconds in your head, then signal:
- Hand up, 5 fingers, hand down, hand up, 4 fingers, hand down, repeat
- You have leeway to determine when the GK has control
 - Give 9U/10U players a little slack, especially for build-out line
- Explain this to the players during your pregame speech!

Law 14 Update (June 2, 2025)

- If, when taking a Penalty Kick, the kicker accidentally double touches the ball during the kick motion (e.g., their plant foot slips), the restart is different:
 - If the kick would've otherwise been a good goal, retake the kick
 - Otherwise, restart with an IFK to the other team unless you're playing advantage going out
 - Kick is recorded as a miss if it happens during a penalty shootout and wouldn't have otherwise been a good goal
- Details: <https://downloads.theifab.com/downloads/circular-31?l=en>

Additional Updates to the 2025-26 LOTG

- Law 16-17: Added “See also” bits to refer to extra scenarios resulting in goal/corner kicks
- VAR Protocol: competitions may now announce the result of a VAR check to the crowd
- Law 3: Competitions have the option to implement the “Only the Captain” guidelines
 - USSF recommends it, but AYSO has not issued guidance yet
- Full changes: <https://www.theifab.com/law-changes/latest/>
- USSF guidance: <https://www.ussoccer.com/laws-of-the-game-changes>
- AYSO guidance: https://ayso1ref.com/lib1/pdf/2025_Referee_Guideline.pdf

Throw-In Guidance

- Remember the spirit of Law 15 is to get the ball back into play
- Don't penalize trifling offenses
- Focus on verbiage: try saying "improper" or "incorrect throw-in procedure", not "bad throw-in"
 - In the younger divisions where this occurs the most, being told they did something "bad" can affect their confidence
- During your pregame, let the coaches know of your plans for any possible re-doing of improper throws due to being the beginning of the season
 - Suggested: 12U – 1st week only, 9U/10U – 2 weeks, 8U – all season

Club Linespersons

- Get parents involved to help on the line – this is a big way to get them into the fun and possibly recruit them at the end of the game or season
- Let them know you only need them to signal when the ball goes out of play
 - They are not expected to run – just be positioned at the touch line to see along its entirety
 - Quickly demonstrate how the whole of the ball must be completely out
 - No pressure for them to signal direction – just raise the flag straight up
 - **They do not and should not try to help with offside calls**
- Be friendly, encouraging, and grateful
 - Smile and make it fun for them
 - Remember their name and thank them after the game
 - Invite them to get fist bumps as part of your officiating team at the end of the game
 - Encourage them to get officially trained

Classified Ads

HELP WANTED

We really need volunteers from our officiating family to fill the following positions for our region (click hyperlinks for job descriptions):

- [Assistant Regional Referee Administrator](#) (Board Position)
- Referee Mentors, Instructors, and Assessors
- Referee Scheduler

RECRUIT

Become a Referee!

- No cost to you
 - Free training and mentorship
 - Free cool uniforms and gear
- Be a role model
 - Help keep our youth safe and having fun
 - Small fan club of kids who think you are really great
 - Youth referees inspire younger players
- The best seat in the house is on the pitch
- Self-assignment facilitates schedule flexibility
- Understand the game better
 - Connect with your kids
 - Help us get the calls right
 - Finally understand Law 11 (OFFSIDE)
- Physical fitness while having fun
- Make new friends

