



Memorandum

To: Chair, State Referee Committee
State Referee Administrators
State Directors of Instruction
National Referees
National Assessors

From: Alfred Kleinaitis
Manager of Referee Development and Education

Subject: Misconduct and Display of Cards

Date: August 26, 2002

Questions have been raised recently regarding the use of yellow and red cards before, during, and after play and regarding misconduct committed by various people in or around the field. Although the answers to these questions can generally be obtained from the **Laws of the Game**, prior USSF Memoranda, and **Advice to Referees on the Laws of the Game**, this memo is intended to summarize in a single place the correct referee action in these different situations. A substantially similar memorandum was issued on June 8, 2000.

Yellow and red cards, which are now mandatory indications of cautions and send-offs, may be shown only for misconduct committed by **players, named substitutes, or substituted players** during a match. "During a match" includes:

- any periods in which play is temporarily stopped,
- half time or similar breaks in play,
- required overtime periods,
- kicks from the penalty mark if this procedure is used in case a winner must be determined,
- *the period of time immediately prior to a match during which players and substitutes are physically on the field warming up, stretching, or otherwise preparing for the match, and*
- *the period of time immediately following a match during which the players and substitutes are physically on the field but in the process of exiting.*

The items above in italics are highlighted because they are recent additions to Advice 3.14 in the 2001 edition of **Advice to Referees**.

If misconduct occurs prior to the match but not on the field or in advance of players in uniform performing warm-up exercises, no card should be shown and the referee's action does not affect the

accumulation of cautions during the match (it must still be included in the referee's report of match incidents).

"Players, named substitutes, or substituted players" means any person listed on a team's roster given to the referee prior to the start of play. If a roster is not normally provided or if it has not yet been given to the referee, it means any person in the vicinity of the field wearing an identifiable team uniform who is subject to being called to participate in the match. Named substitutes are included even if they are never called on to play. Players who have been substituted and, under Law 3, are not permitted to return to the field remain under the authority of the referee as long as they stay in the vicinity of the field. It does **not** include anyone sent from the field for misconduct (red card) since the maximum penalty has already been applied.

Yellow and red cards are not normally displayed prior to a match or after the match is over. However, as noted above in the definition of "during a match," USSF guidance follows international practice in recognizing the need to enforce misconduct sanctions for certain periods of time **immediately prior to and after the match as though the misconduct had occurred during the match itself**. In other words, a player who is on the field warming up before the match may be cautioned and shown the yellow card for misconduct (e.g., dissent). If this player then receives another caution during the match, he must be sent off under Law 12 for the second caution. A player shown a red card and sent from the field for misconduct prior to the match may be replaced from the substitute list and the team can field eleven players, but the roster cannot otherwise be changed (i.e., no new substitute name may be added to the roster) and this replacement is not counted against the team's substitution limit under Law 3.

All misconduct must be included in the referee's report of the match, even if no card is shown. If misconduct is committed before or after a match, the referee must describe the incident in accordance with the language of Law 12 just as though the incident had occurred during the match. In particular, **referees in professional league games are expected to use the prescribed misconduct codes and point values**. This will assist the competition authority in determining the correct action to take.

Persons who are not players, named substitutes, or substituted players cannot commit misconduct within the meaning of Law 12 and therefore cannot be shown yellow or red cards nor will their behavior be described in match reports as misconduct. Law 5 is very clear that "team officials" (coaches, trainers, etc.) must behave responsibly and, if they fail to do so, the referee has two primary courses of action. First, the referee may warn the team official that the irresponsible behavior puts him or her at risk. Second, the referee may expel the team official from the field and its immediate area. It is not necessary for a warning to be given in cases of extreme provocation.

As with a player or named substitute who fails to depart the field if sent off, the referee has the power under Law 5 to suspend or terminate a match if an expelled team official refuses to leave. Disciplinary action against a team official must also be included in the referee's match report.