

Law 4 – Guide re Players' Equipment

As a new referee sometimes there can be an issue with what constitutes dangerous equipment. As your instructor I have put together this document, which you can use as a reference guide for future games. Where the information is drawn from a resource, the reference will also be given.

This information is intended as a guide for games that an Entry Level Referee will likely officiate. Rules of Competition could be more restrictive e.g. CSA National Championships. As an official it is your responsibility to find this information out.

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Under Law 4 it states “A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous”

It is the referee's responsibility (with the help of Assistant Referees if appointed to the match) to make sure Law 4 is adhered to and to inspect all players for compulsory and non-compulsory equipment prior to the match commencing.

1. Jewelry

- No item of jewelry of any sort will be allowed on the field of play, even if it is taped or covered
- Game officials must set an example by removing all personal jewelry (including wedding bands), before entering the field of play (watches are obviously allowed for game officials)
- The rule of thumb should be ‘if it can be seen, it's a problem’.
- **Earrings:** no earrings of any kind are acceptable. The practice of taping is not acceptable.
- **Facial rings:** any kind of jewelry around the eyes, nose or any other part of the face, must be removed.
- **Bracelets:** all bracelets (including metal, rope, fabric, plastic) must be removed.
- **Medic Alert bracelets:** may be worn but must be covered or padded in order to be safe for all players.
- **Wrist sweatbands:** They are allowed, provided they meet the requirements of Law 4.
- **Necklaces:** all necklaces must be removed.
- **Body piercing:** any body piercing not visible to the referee is not of concern. However, should it become visible, the referee will ensure it is removed.
- **Watches/Fitbits etc.:** players are not allowed to wear any watches, Fitbit or similar style equipment.
- **Beaded Hair:** if a player is wearing hair beads, the hair must be tied in a hair bun or covered by a hair net. Loose beaded hair is not allowed.
- **Wedding rings:** must be removed. The sole exception is a smooth wedding band, which the referee is convinced cannot be removed, and which poses no danger to any player. If the referee is convinced it cannot be removed, it must be adequately taped or padded.

2. Headwear

- **Hats:** no hats are allowed on the field of play, except for goalkeepers using one as an eye shade. However, any hat/cap worn by a goalkeeper must meet the requirements of Law 4. Therefore, a baseball cap with a hard brim is not allowed. Players who require to wear headwear due to medical reasons, must have a signed authorization letter authorizing that from the league they are playing in.
- **Bandanas:** no bandanas are allowed.
- **Sweat bands:** Sweat bands are allowed, provided they are tight and there is no metal or anything else that could be dangerous. If they are loose and likely to end up around the neck and/or become a safety hazard, they must be removed.
- **Head protectors:** FIFA approved headwear (normally re concussion injuries) are allowed.
- **Pro Wrap:** is allowed.
- **Religious headwear:** Hijabs, turbans are allowed, provided they still meet the requirements of Law 4. Some competitions state they must be the same colour as the shirt.
- **Hairclips:** No hair clips are allowed, including bobby pins, snap clips etc.
- **Spectacles:** are allowed, provided they are prescription glasses or sports spectacles. Sunglasses must be prescription sunglasses.

3. Orthopedic Supports e.g. knee braces

- FIFA Circular 863 states that the vast majority of commercially manufactured supports are safe to use. These items pose less of a hazard than players accidentally banging heads, for instance.
- The major concern is not the 'hardness' of the equipment alone, rather it should be whether any part of it can cut or wound another player.
- Any support must be safe for all players and have a sleeve over the knee brace.

4. Casts

- **Hard casts:** are not allowed. Padding of hard casts is also prohibited.
- **Soft casts:** are allowed provided the cast does not present a danger to the individual or any other player.
- See ASA website under Referee Resources - Players Wearing Casts Policy (see below).

5. Insulin Pumps

- Can be worn, provided medical clearance has been obtained and provided to the Alberta Soccer Association (ASA), a signed release has been given to ASA and it meets the requirements of Law 4.
- If the pump is worn, it must be securely affixed and protected by soft, light weight, padded materials to protect the pump, player and opponents.
- See ASA website under Referee Resources - Policy on Insulin Pumps (see below).

6. Footwear

- Appropriate footwear such as, soccer cleats, running shoes, should be worn. Golf shoes cannot be worn.
- Referees should incorporate a footwear inspection into their pre-game safety check of players' equipment.
- Poorly maintained studs or blades on the sole of the boot can constitute a danger.
- Officials are to be alert to the possibility of the edge of the blades or studs developing rough areas on either the plastic or metal used in their construction.
- These burrs can become very sharp and have been the cause of lacerations to opponents.
- A referee who is concerned over the condition of blades or studs should refuse their use until such time as the unsafe condition has been removed.

7. Other Compulsory Equipment

- **Shin guards:** as stated in The Laws of the Game, must provide a reasonable degree of protection. The test for this is a light tap to the shins. The shin guards must be soccer style. Substitute material such as newspaper, cannot be worn.
- **Shirts/shorts:** must be different colours for each team. Most Rules of Competition have the home team changing, should there be a conflict. In adverse weather conditions players can wear under garments, if the Rules of Competition allow it. These garments must still meet the requirements of Law 4, for example a hoodie could be worn (in adverse weather conditions) but the hood needs to be tucked into the shirt, so it doesn't pose a danger. Undergarments being the same colour as per Law 4 in the LOTG, is only enforced, depending on the level of the game.
- **Pants:** cannot be worn by outfield players unless approval (a letter in writing from the league) has been obtained. In adverse conditions allow pants for community games.
- **Socks:** must be worn. Unless the Rules of Competition state otherwise, do not have to be matching.
- **Jerseys:** may not have the sleeves rolled up or be tied at the shoulder level.

8. Conclusion

- This information has been provided from various sources to give you a ready reference for situations with respect to Law 4, not specifically covered.
- Also see Resources under the Referee Tab on the toolbar on the ASA website at www.albertasoccer.com.
- If a letter is provided by the league that authorizes an exception to any of the above, then allow the player to play. The letter must be signed by the appropriate authority and must have the league's official letterhead. Make sure this letter is returned to the league with the game sheets.
- Also if a Referee In Chief or other appropriate authority allows an exception to any of the above, then allow the player to play. Make sure this is noted on the game sheet.