

FHSAA Adopts the Double Dual System of Control

The Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) sanctioned the sport of soccer thirty years ago. Since its inception, soccer has grown in popularity with participation now by over 400 member schools in both boys and girls classifications. The total number of student-athletes participating in soccer ranked second among girls sports (11,969) and fifth among boys sports (12,464) in 2005-06.

Along with the growth in popularity, soccer has produced the largest number of Unsporting Conduct Reports to the FHSAA Office over the years. Currently, boys winter soccer represents the largest number of ejections in any sport and girls soccer places sixth among student-athletes. Overall, soccer produces more than 43% of the Gross Unsporting penalties. A gross unsporting infraction is not represented by a “professional foul” of a sport, but is the result of a malicious act including, but not limited to, cursing, striking, physical contact beyond the normal scope of a contest, spitting on another person, verbal insults related to gender, race or ethnicity, and any other act deemed as unacceptable conduct either by the principal of the member school the athlete attends or the FHSAA. A heavy influence of non-school based coaches and outside organizations has caused the FHSAA to struggle in maintaining the balance of sport as an educational extension of the classroom.

In 1973, Joseph Bonchonsky introduced an idea for soccer officiating that called for shared authority and the reduction of “off-the-ball” fouls by allowing three referees on the field with whistles. This system of officiating was created to give the officials more of a presence on the field. With the athletes of today, their speed, agility, and strength are better than ever and in high school soccer this has caused a lot of concern in regard to good sporting conduct and the ability of some referees to “keep up” with the game.

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) has made provisions for the use of the Double Dual System of Control (DDS/Three Whistle System) for many years. After several years of research and experimentation, the FHSAA Board of Directors in March of 2007 decided it was time to try the Double Dual System of Control in Florida. Starting in the fall of 2007, all officials in Florida will officiate soccer with a whistle. Games will be officiated utilizing the Dual System (2 officials) or Double Dual System (3 officials), will all officials assigned areas of responsibility on the field.

The National Intercollegiate Soccer Officials Association’s (NISOA) publication *The Double Dual System of Control* states there are indicators that the DDS implementation provides several advantages when used properly:

1. Greater Officiating Resources—More officials are involved in the enforcement of rules;
2. Increased Surveillance—The system gains strength from increased observance and control of play and players by three referees, rather than a single referee;

3. Close Proximity to Play—Brings decision-making referees physically closer to play, players and occurrences that need to be observed and controlled in view of the flexibility of movement within the system;
4. Spontaneous Decisions—Shortens reaction time to violations by eliminating the need for one official to signal a decision-making official for action;
5. Behind Play Fouls Better Controlled—Helps reduce unpenalized violations behind an officials back by having decision-making referees at each end of play as well as in the middle;
6. Distributes Game Demands—Burden of making critical decisions becomes a responsibility of all three referees instead of one. Thus the psychological and emotional stresses generated by coaches, players and spectators are diffused.

We look forward to the use of the DDS in Florida high school soccer and encourage all coaches and administrators to work with their local officials association to become more familiar with the system, for all FHSAA state series events will be conducted with this system.