



March 28, 2016

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To: Ohio North League Presidents and Members

Re: **Ohio North Update to Heading Ban for Players Age 10 Years Old and Younger**
U.S. Soccer Recognize to Recover (R2R) Program

Dear Ohio North League Presidents & Members:

As you may know, a resolution was reached in concussion litigation (filed in August of 2014) against U.S. Soccer Federation, US Youth Soccer, AYSO, US Club Soccer and California Youth Soccer Association.

In brief, and as part of the settlement, U.S. Soccer and the member defendants agreed to work towards specific initiatives with respect to concussions including recommendations on:

- Modifying substitution rules to allow players who may have suffered a concussion during games to be evaluated without penalty.
- Eliminating heading for all players age 10 years old and younger, regardless of what age group program they are playing in.
- Limiting the amount of heading in practice for all players in U12 and U13 age groups, with no limit on heading in games.
- U.S. Soccer also recommends Health Care Professionals (HCP) be on site for major tournaments.

[Read U.S. Soccer's FAQs.](#)

On March 22, 2016, the Ohio North Board of Directors updated the heading ban for players age 10 and younger. Effective immediately, in accordance with the recent U.S. Soccer recommendations on concussion risk management, the Ohio North Youth Soccer Association has eliminated heading in matches for players age 10-years-old and younger (U11, per the new calendar year registration guidelines). If a parent/guardian places a player age 10-years-old or under onto an older age group where heading is permitted, he/she does so at his/her own discretion. Heading will not be permitted in U11 and younger age groups.

Intentionally heading the ball in these matches shall result in an indirect free kick awarded to the opponent at the spot of the infraction – or from the top of the goal area for infractions inside the goal area.

This US Soccer recommendation has been adopted by Ohio North for all affiliate activities, including but not limited to, league play, practices and tournaments.



Ohio North's current Concussion Protocol remains in effect.

[Read here](#)

Note: The Ohio North Youth Soccer Association will post and disseminate any additional changes to rules, policies, guidelines, etc., when determined, and in as timely a manner as possible.

For reference, US Soccer's Recognize to Recover (R2R) program describes the specific initiatives and provides guidelines, resources and information on a variety of other player safety and health related issues.

[Read more about Recognize to Recover](#)

The initial areas of focus for U.S. Soccer's R2R Program include:

- Improving concussion awareness and education among youth coaches, referees, parents and players.
- Uniform concussion management and return to play protocols for youth players.
- Modifying substitution rules to allow players who may have suffered a concussion during games to be evaluated without penalty.
- Recommends that players aged U11 and younger programs and younger not engage in heading, either in practices or games.
- Recommends for players in U12 and U13 programs, that heading training be limited to a maximum of 30 minutes per week with no more than 15-20 headers per player, per week.
- Recommends that all coaches be instructed to teach and emphasize the importance of proper techniques for heading the ball.
- Recommends an adequate number of Health Care Professionals (HCP) be present at all tournaments with 64 or more teams at U11 and older age groups. Health Care Professionals are considered licensed professionals such as an Athletic Trainer Certified (ATC) or Physician (MD/DO), with skills in emergency care, sports medicine injuries and experience related to concussion evaluation and management.
- Recommends where a Health Care Professional (HCP) is present at games, any player who sustains a significant blow to the head or body, who complains about or is exhibiting symptoms consistent with having suffered a concussion or is otherwise suspected of having sustained a concussion, must be evaluated on the sideline by an onsite HCP. This professional will perform applicable testing-SCAT3 (Standardized Concussion Assessment Tool) or Child SCAT3 and modified BESS (Balance Error Scoring System) to evaluate players on the field/sideline. Any player suspected of suffering a concussion will not be allowed to return to play until he/she is cleared by the Health Care Professional. Coaches, parents/guardians or players may not overrule the Health Care Professional. If a coach seeks to allow a player to re-enter the game who had been removed from a game for a concussion assessment and who has not been cleared to return to play by the on-site HCP, the referee shall issue a warning to the coach. If a coach persists in seeking to allow such player to re-enter the game after having been issued a warning, the referee is entitled to take other disciplinary measures against the coach as are permitted.

- Recommends where no Health Care Professional (HCP) is present at a game or practice that any player who sustains a significant blow to the head or body, who complains about or is exhibiting symptoms consistent with having suffered a concussion or is otherwise suspected of having sustained a concussion, must be evaluated by an HCP before the player will be allowed to return to practice or play. No coach shall permit a player who has been removed from a game for a concussion assessment to return to play until cleared to do so by an HCP. If a coach seeks to allow a player who had been removed from a game for a concussion assessment to re-enter the game, the referee shall allow the player to return to the field but shall immediately stop play, direct the player to leave the field of play and direct the coach to remove the player and select a substitute. If a coach seeks to allow a player to re-enter who had been removed from a game for a concussion assessment, the referee shall issue a warning to the coach. If a coach persists in seeking to allow such player to re-enter the game after having been issued a warning, the referee is entitled to take such other disciplinary measures as are permitted. Unless an HCP determines that the player has not suffered a concussion, and clears the player to return to play, the player will not be permitted to return to practice or play until the player has successfully completed the return to play protocol and has been cleared to return to play by a Physician.

[Read more on U.S. Soccer Concussion Guidelines](#)

Should you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ohio North State Office.