

TO: GHSA MEMBER SCHOOLS  
FROM: RALPH SWEARNGIN  
DATE: MARCH 28, 2007  
RE: SOCCER ISSUES

The number of problems at GHSA soccer matches has risen dramatically this year. To this date, 300 players and 12 coaches have been ejected from soccer matches around the state. An even bigger problem involves fan behavior at these matches.

It is my hope that the GHSA Sportsmanship Statement is being read before every athletic contest at your school. If that is not being done, please begin to do so immediately. Obviously, fan behavior must be monitored – reading a statement is not enough.

Expressing disagreement with officiating calls in normal is all sports to some degree. When crowd comments are directed personally toward the officials and/or they include vulgar or profane language, those comments have become inappropriate. Additionally, similar comments directed toward players and coaches of the opposing team are equally inappropriate.

Therefore, the GHSA is directing soccer officials to utilize the following course of action for the remainder of this soccer season:

1. When the crowd behavior sets a tone that is inappropriate for a high school athletic event, the official shall stop the match to meet with the Game Manager so the problem can be solved. The Game Manager is expected to take steps to try to resolve the problem. The match will continue as the Game Manager works to resolve the problem.
2. After a reasonable amount of time, if the initial work of the Game Manager does not solve the problem, then the official will stop the match and direct the Game Manager to have the following statement read over the public address system: “If the principle of the GHSA Sportsmanship Statement are not followed immediately, the spectators will be cleared from the stadium before the game will be continued.” The match will continue as the statement is read.
3. After a reasonable amount of time, if the crowd behavior does not improve sufficiently, the match will be stopped until the spectators vacate the stadium.

The GHSA does not want to have to clear the stands or stop the matches, but proper behavior must be restored at these events!