

The Microsoft Word document appended here discusses many issues concerning player equipment [five compulsory items], dangerous items that are not equipment, eyeglasses, equipment issues (sleeves), and other non-compulsory equipment (e.g. kneepads, etc.). If you have any questions do not hesitate to call me. Jim Miller

Please consider these main points [Coaches and Referees]:

- Only 5 items listed as compulsory equipment
- According to Law 4 **all** items of jewelry are to be deemed dangerous.

”In addition, FIFA included in the 2002/2003 edition of the Laws of the Game a section on ‘Additional Instructions for Referees, Assistant Referees and Fourth Officials’ in which this requirement is further emphasized: ‘Referees are reminded that, in accordance with Law 4, players may not wear any kind of jewelry.’ ”

- No action needs to be taken on shirt sleeves (my emphases) :

“Referees are directed not to include in their game reports any information regarding the presence, absence, or altered status of jersey sleeves unless required to do so by the rules of competition under which a particular game is being played.[

- Look to the applicable rules of the competition authority-i.e. league, club, etc. [Eyeglasses and non-compulsory equipment]. If none, then allow it, e.g. sweatbands, eyeglasses (safety strap required by some leagues)
- Referee has final word on whether equipment is dangerous [Law 5]. Also the referee HAS NO SUCH OPTION on jewelry.

Below are excerpts from **Ask a Soccer Referee*** by
Jim Allen, National Instructor Staff/National Assessor

If you have a question about the Laws of the Game, simply mail it to allenj@drix.net. Or visit
his web site at :

<http://www.drix.net/jim/>

*As of February 23, 2000, all replies to technical questions posted in this column will have been coordinated with and approved by the U. S. Soccer Federation's
National Program for Referee Development.

[Note: I have placed statements of particular interest in red. JRM]

We have more and more situations in which the players are wearing "wooden beads" either tightly against the head or as part of a braided hairstyle. We are trying to get the message across that these would be considered "adornment" and thus jewelry and not allowed because of the dangerous nature of these beads to the player or their opponent.

Is there an official wording or some advice you can give me on how to approach this?

USSF answer (February 13, 2004):

Beads and other decorative items are not part of the required equipment for players and cannot be sanctioned for wear in competitive play. Law 4 - Player Equipment - tells us: The basic compulsory equipment of a player is:

- a jersey or shirt,
- shorts -- if thermal undershorts are worn, they are of the same main color as the shorts
- stockings
- shinguards
- footwear

The referee must enforce the Laws of the Game, particularly as they apply to the safety of players. Law 4 tells us that players must not wear jewelry of any kind. There is only one permissible exception to the ban on jewelry: medical alert jewelry that can guide emergency medical personnel in treating injured players and certain religious items that are not dangerous and not likely to provide the player with an unfair advantage. **Beads, as decorative items, must be considered as jewelry.** They can also be dangerous, particularly at the end of braids. **For these reasons, they are not permitted.**

If questioned by players, you simply refer them to Law 4. If they do not wish to remove their beads to conform with the Law, inform them that the only alternative to removing the beads or jewelry (or other unauthorized equipment) is not to play at all.

NOTE: For further information on the requirements of the Law for player safety, see the USSF National Program for Referee Development's position papers of 7 March 2003 on "Player's Equipment" and 17 March 2003 on "Player Equipment (Jewelry)." [\[See accompanying memoranda\]](#)

http://www.ussoccer.com/templates/includes/services/referees/pdfs/position_papers/player equip.pdf

http://www.ussoccer.com/templates/includes/services/referees/pdfs/position_papers/Law4_Jewelry.PDF

JEWELRY -- PLEASE READ AND REMEMBER!

Your question:

What is the interpretation of the words in Law 4: "including any kind of jewelry"?

I am a State Emeritus Referee and work various levels of competition. In adult competition, players frequently want to wear their smooth wedding bands. Some women want to wear small earrings. I generally disallow all jewelry and quote Law 4. The players say only dangerous jewelry is prohibited, and they often talk about the jewelry professional players seem to get away with wearing. The players ask whether they may play if the jewelry is taped over.

The quoted phrase would seem to ban all jewelry--taped or not--which would certainly make my life easier. I would like to know if there has been any ruling or interpretation on this issue (besides the medical or religious medals issue, which is not on point). I would also like to pass along the information to our association so that there is uniformity in the application of the rule.

USSF answer **(April 30, 2003):**

This question was answered in the **May 2001 issue of Fair Play:**

QUOTE

Law 4 and Jewelry

Law 4 of FIFA's Laws of the Game states that "a player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewelry)."

The following items worn by players are considered dangerous and will not be allowed:

- a) jewelry (including watches) worn on the wrist
- b) rings with crowns or projections
- c) jewelry worn along the upper or lower arm
- d) earrings of any sort
- e) tongue studs
- f) any visible body piercing

The match referee remains the sole authority regarding the danger of anything worn by a player in a specific game. Referees must enforce these guidelines strictly.

END OF QUOTE

As to professional players wearing jewelry, please see the USSF position paper on "Law 4, Players' Equipment (Jewelry)," dated March 17, 2003, available for download on this and other sites.

The U. S. Soccer Federation cannot make new Laws or change the existing ones. We referees are expected to exercise common sense in enforcing the existing Laws. Referees have the guidelines: It is up to them to enforce them until we receive further guidance from FIFA.

Taping of earrings

USSF answer (April 2, 2003):

Law 4 - The Players' Equipment states very firmly in its very first paragraph: "A player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewelry)." **This means that all items of jewelry are normally considered dangerous.** There are only two permissible exceptions to the ban on jewelry: medical alert jewelry that can guide emergency medical personnel in treating injured players and certain religious items that are not dangerous and not likely to provide the player with an unfair advantage.

Taping earrings should not be permitted by any referee, as there is still the danger of injury to the player. Taping does not negate "must not . . . wear. . . any kind of jewelry."

SLEEVES ROLLED UP

Your question:

I have received conflicting information regarding the sleeves rolled up during play in women's matches. I was under the impression of sleeves worn unrolled was the position to take. A referee friend of mine who is much more experienced and usually a "go to " guy when I have questions stated that the sleeves could be worn rolled up. This is always a bone of contention and usually one of the first things I am asked when I show up for a match....so is it sleeves unrolled or can the players roll them up?

USSF answer (May 1, 2003):

While rolled-up shirt sleeves are not prohibited, they are certainly not professional in appearance. Despite the appearance, **the intelligent referee should not make a fuss about rolled -up sleeves** unless there is a local league/tournament rule on the subject (in which case it must be enforced) or if something that might be dangerous is used to hike the sleeve up. **[See accompanying memorandum]**

http://www.ussoccer.com/templates/includes/services/referees/pdfs/position_papers/JerseySleevesRuleSuspended.pdf

EYEGASSES

Your question:

I am a 16 year old female soccer player from [my state]. Due to an eye disease, I cannot wear contacts. I've tried to wear Rec Specs, but since they wrap-around, the light distortion severely throws off my depth-perception. For a year now I've been wearing PLASTIC frames with polycarbonate lens as well as a strap to keep them secure. Let me stress that the frames are not wire. I was told by a referee that next year all prescription eyewear would no longer be allowed. Is this true? If so, what can I do about it? There is no way for me to wear contacts. Thanks a lot for your time.

USSF answer (December 22, 2003):

One of the referee's duties is to be certain that the equipment of all players is safe and will not endanger either the player nor any other players. If, in the opinion of the referee, the glasses are safe for the wearer and all other players, then the player may wear them. The referee has neither duty nor power to act as a fashion coordinator or an optician.

Referees should all be aware of USSF Memorandum 2001, which contains the following citation from FIFA Circular 750 and USSF advice to referees on the wearing of eyeglasses:

QUOTE Players Wearing Spectacles

Sympathy was expressed for players, especially young players, who need to wear spectacles. It was accepted that new technology had made sports spectacles much safer, both for the player himself and for other players.

While the referee has the final decision on the safety of players' equipment, the Board expects that they will take full account of modern technology and the improved safety features of spectacle design when making their decision.

USSF Advice to Referees: Referees must not interpret the above statement to mean either that "sports glasses" must automatically be considered safe **or that glasses which are not manufactured to be worn during sports are automatically to be considered unsafe.** The referee must make the final decision: the Board has simply recognized that new technology has made safer the wearing of glasses during play.
END OF QUOTE

This guidance from FIFA was updated in a circular this year, but there has been no change in either FIFA or USSF policy since the circular of 2001. **[See accompanying memorandum.]**

http://www.ussoccer.com/templates/includes/services/referees/pdfs/position_papers/non_compulsory equip.pdf

SAFETY OF PLAYER FOOTWEAR (AND OTHER EQUIPMENT) [LAW 4; LAW 18]

Your question:

I am a firm believer in safety on the pitch. I am looking for a definitive answer on footwear. I know the Laws of the Game only state that a player must wear shoes and I know it is up to the Referee to decide if they are safe or not. Well the local youth / adult soccer league here has been telling everyone that it is OK to wear baseball or football shoes as long as they cut off the toe cleat.

I think this a really bad practice because:

- 1- The other shoes tend to have several cleats that flair out from the sole and soccer cleats are recessed from the edges of the soles.
- 2- How much of the cleats need to be cut off? Answer well there is no answer, and should they expect the referee to be the pitch with a ruler and knife?

Personally I find these shoes to be dangerous and I don't allow them on the pitch for the matches that I Ref. Well this starts problems with the coaches, players, and parents. Fights have nearly broken out over this. Quotes like "The Ref last week allowed it" and "We can't find soccer shoes or they are too expensive". Well the truth is soccer shoes are among cheapest of all sports shoes and if you really care about your child, your or other player's safety, it is worth the money. I want to know if is possible or at least I wish USSF would put some kind of definitive answer on this matter at least but something in the "Advice to Referees". If you want to wear cleats on the pitch they should at least be designed for soccer.

USSF answer (October 23, 2003):

Common sense and traditional practice dictate that players wear shoes designed for soccer, not shoes designed for some other sport and then modified by the player to use on the soccer field.

All referees must remember that they are not responsible for personally correcting any issues involving the field, the ball, or player equipment. Referees are responsible for determining whether the requirements of the Law are met, not for personally attending to them. For example, the referee should absolutely refuse to pump up balls, but should have handy a gauge to determine whether a ball is illegal, and might carry a pump, but use it only for emergencies when someone else, such as the coach, for example, pump up the ball. It is not the referee's job to make a ball legal.

Neither should the referee carry net repair materials (tape or velcro strips) nor a lawnmower, a paint-stripping machine, bags of kitty litter, or a shovel for filling in holes.

Any referee dumb enough to carry a knife and willing to use it to cut off a cleat which he has determined to be dangerous deserves every lawsuit someone might file against him.

If you need further information, you will find what every referee in the United States is taught about equipment in this memorandum of March 7, 2003:

[See above]

HEADBANDS OR SWEATBANDS

Question:

What is your advice on how to handle those players that want to wear a sweatband on their head or sweatbands on their wrists. Their reasons are of course that they don't want sweat dripping into their eyes. I have never considered these items as necessary or part of standard equipment and I ask players to remove them.

Answer (September 12, 2003):

Sweatbands and headbands are generally accepted as supplementary player equipment throughout the world. The referee is the sole judge of the permissibility of these items, which must meet the requirement in Law 4 that they not be dangerous to any player. The referee's opinion would be guided by a recent FIFA circular and the USSF memorandum of March 7, 2003, on player equipment. Other guidance might come from local competition authority requirements.