

Referees -

Concussion "helmets" and headbands are being worn with more frequency in the past couple of years. Here is a clarification about their use under USAV rules:

Soft (foam) helmets, headbands or headgear are LEGAL provided they pose no risk of injury to the player or other participants. Any hard, unyielding helmet or headgear is ILLEGAL. Basically, if it's not soft, it's not legal.

Incidentally, USAV neither endorses nor discourages the use of concussion helmets or headbands. There is currently little medical evidence or research to verify that they prevent a concussion from occurring. The fact of the matter is - they're being worn because the player has had a previous head injury or concussion. There is no guarantee that equipment will reduce the risk of further injury or concussion. As referees, we are not in the business of offering any advice or recommendation about their use. We only rule on their legality, and if they aren't soft, they aren't legal.

If you encounter such headgear, remind the coach that the headgear must be made of soft material. If it is a hard material, the player may not participate in warm-ups or the match while wearing it. DO NOT tell a player that it has to be removed! Simply tell them they can't participate while wearing it. The decision to remove or not remove the headgear is theirs, and if they choose to not remove it, they may not participate in the match.

Incidentally, NCAA rules require concussion helmets to be approved, and they have not approved any such requests during the last two seasons, whether they're soft material or otherwise.

Brian Hemelgarn
OVR Referees' Chair