



# West Michigan Youth Soccer Association



September 22, 2011

Dear WMYSA Coaches, Team Officials, Players, and Parents:

A recent trend has emerged regarding articles in a player's hair where a rooster feather or artificial/synthetic feather is inserted or attached to a person's hair for the purpose of style or fashion. This has been observed by referees working games in both WMYSA and other competitions (for example, high school, etc.). Our local referee associations have been in contact with the United States Soccer Federation's Alfred Kleinaitis, the Manager of Referee Development and Education, regarding whether this is permitted under the Laws of the Game.

Soccer's Laws of the Game forbid the wearing of jewelry or any other articles that might be dangerous to the player themselves or to other players on the field. Traditionally that has included items such as bandanas, "friendship" string bracelets, rubber or leather band (example: the yellow Lance Armstrong "Live Strong" band), beads woven into a player's hair – there are many such examples that would be considered "adornment" or unnecessary to play soccer.

In keeping with the Position Paper issued by USSF on June 8, 2009 (see <http://www.ussoccer.com/Referees/Laws-of-the-Game/~media/13FC189966F54DEAA1988797B8787F02.ashx>), our local referee associations [West Michigan Youth Soccer Association – (WMSRA) and Southwest Michigan Youth Soccer Association – (SWMSRA)] want to remind team officials and parents that referees who are members in their referee associations, working USSF matches for WMYSA, have been instructed to not allow a player to participate in a match who refuses to remove a hair feather or any other unnecessary article.

This message is being sent from WMYSA to prevent or minimize any surprises or confusion that might occur during team check-ins with players who may currently have a "feather" in their hair or any other prohibited item (see excerpt from position paper below). If a player has a hair "feather", they may (1) remove the item and participate in the game (2) leave the hair "feather" in and NOT participate in the game – it is the player's choice.



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The following is an excerpt from USSF Position Paper 090608\_ Law 4 and Hair Control Devices:

“Although ultimately it is the responsibility of the referee to decide if an item of equipment or clothing presents a danger, an increasing number of hair control devices are being seen which should not be allowed on the field. Referees should take note of the following guidelines when evaluating such devices:

- Hair control devices which are elastic, flexible, and soft should be allowed.
- Devices which are made of hard, sharp, edged, or breakable materials are not safe and may not be worn.
- Beads or other similar decorative devices woven into or affixed on the hair are inherently dangerous and are not allowed.”

Please take the time to discuss the ramifications with any player who currently has a “feather” in their hair prior to your next game in case the player decides that they will not remove the “feather”. Lastly, as with jewelry such as earrings, taping, concealing, or otherwise hiding any prohibited item is not permitted. The referee assigned to the match is the sole judge whether something is dangerous or not.

Regards,

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