



NorCal Premier Soccer

Press Release: Head Injury Prevention and Protocol

The issue of head injury prevention and protocol in youth soccer has been in the headlines around the country and many of you are aware of the lawsuit that has been in process over the last year. While NorCal Premier has recognized for some time that there needs to be action on the issue of head injuries in soccer, we have been waiting for clear direction from US Soccer and US Club Soccer before making changes to our rules, competitions, and requirements. That being said, we have reached a point where we can no longer wait for further details from our national organizations and plan to move forward with putting practices in place that protect our players and coaches.

In December of 2015, US Soccer released information about their [Recognize to Recover Campaign](#). In that initial information, US Soccer's [Concussion Initiative Guidelines](#) outlined guidelines for soccer organizations as well as describing what the US Soccer Developmental Academy would be doing with regards to head injuries. While there are still several details to work out, such as the specific role of the referee and coaches, as well as the requirements for healthcare professionals on the sidelines, NorCal clubs can plan on these plans being implemented in NorCal events for the spring of 2016.

For our 2016 Spring events, NorCal will be implementing:

- a no heading policy for all U11 and younger age groups
- a change to the substitution rules in the NPL
- a "no re-entry" policy for players who are removed from a game due to a head injury.

NorCal Premier strongly encourages all clubs to read the US Soccer Guidelines and take action to protect players. Coaches and clubs will bear the liability for the safety of their players and need to have clear policies and protocols in place for the handling of head injuries. Below we have provided resources for clubs to ensure that coaches are properly trained in how to recognize the signs of a concussion as well as execute a return to play procedure that will ensure that players are ready to return to competition.

In the coming weeks, NorCal Premier will be communicating clear policies with regards to head injuries in NorCal competitions as well as player safety procedures at NorCal events. We request that each club pass this communication directly to parents to help educate everyone on the serious issue that we face.