



AMERICAN YOUTH SOCCER ORGANIZATION

a nonprofit corporation dedicated to youth soccer

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Are sliding tackles permitted in AYSO games?

The very first line of the AYSO National Rules and Regulations states, “All AYSO games shall be conducted in accordance with the current FIFA Laws of the Game and decisions of the International Board...” The bulk of the remaining content of the Rules and Regulations clarifies the kind of specific exceptions which are permitted. In the beginning of the FIFA Laws of the Game under “Modifications” it states, “Subject to the agreement of the national association concerned and provided the principles of these Laws are maintained, the Laws may be modified in their application...” and then specifies the kinds of modifications that are permissible. These statements endeavor to make it clear how AYSO games should be played and who, how and to what extent the Laws may be modified.

Sliding tackles are one of the skills players use to play soccer. A sliding tackle is an attempt to dispossess the opponent from the ball while sliding to tackle the ball. Judging whether or not a slide tackle is legal or not involves the referee judging the manner in which the tackle was executed. A fair tackle which plays the ball and is not careless, reckless or done with excessive force should be allowed.

Sliding tackles are allowed according to the FIFA Laws of the Game with the AYSO modifications, the rules under which all AYSO games are played. Making a local rule prohibiting sliding tackles for some age groups is not consistent with our National Rules and Regulations and is problematic. There is nothing in any of the AYSO approved training curriculum that supports disallowing sliding tackles.

Although seemingly well intentioned on the surface, prohibiting sliding tackles, in the presumed interest of player safety, has no basis in fact or in logic. The same could be said for making a local rule that says players are not allowed to run into the goal posts or to fall and hurt themselves. Injuries occur in soccer and, if we tried to make a rule to prevent all of them, we would be overrun with rules that don't make sense. Running, jumping, kicking, heading, dribbling, tackling, shooting, and goalkeeper efforts to prevent goals all have potential to cause injury. Soccer is a contact sport and injuries are possible. It is impossible to avoid. Players and parents must recognize there is risk involved in playing contact sports. Reading the waiver carefully on the AYSO player registration form makes this point very clearly for parents who must sign it.

It is the job of coaches to teach players correct technique to help them avoid injury to themselves and to others. It is the job of referees to learn to recognize when skills are executed correctly and allow play to continue or to stop play and penalize players who



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are playing in an unsafe manner. Tackling and sliding tackles are a part of soccer, just like all the other skills that players should develop, coaches should teach and referees should learn to recognize. When a local rule is made that takes away one or more of the skills used in playing the game, this lessens the opportunities for players to learn to execute the skill correctly, coaches to teach the skill and referees to recognize the skill performed legally. An argument could be made that making such local rules actually may cause more injuries than they prevent because time is not spent teaching, learning and recognizing correct soccer playing techniques.