

# Ask a Soccer Referee

Answers to Laws of the Game  
and Practical Refereeing Questions:  
**Jim Allen, National Instructor Staff/National Assessor**

As of 2/23/2000, 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

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**NO JEWELRY!!!**

Your question:

I have been in soccer for many years, first as a player later as a team coach and finally as a referee, in all these years I make the same question to any buddy who know about soccer rules.

The law book (Law 4) read: "A player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player (Including any kind of Jewelry" However I see that many players in the big ligs (MLS, Mexican, Europe etc.) wear jewelry and taping earrings during the games, my question is, the referees that work these games belong to a different FIFA group? why these referees allowed these players play with jewelry? As you may know, the job of the referees is very difficult, and for those of us at the amateur level it is very hard to explain to the young players why they cannot wear jewelry when the FIFA referees in these games continue to permit the players to do so.

I hope that in the future FIFA, USSF and the other federations take a good look at this situation and enforce the rule at all levels.

USSF answer (April 9, 2003):

The U. S. Soccer Federation has made its position clear to all referees, from those at the top of the ladder to those just starting out: **NO JEWELRY!**

Here is an answer to a similar question, provided on April 2, 2003:

QUOTE

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: medicalert 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."

END OF QUOTE

In addition, all referees affiliated with U. S. Soccer must follow the guidance of the Federation, published in March of this year, regarding player equipment/jewelry:

QUOTE

Memorandum

To: Referees Officiating Professional Matches

All Affiliate Members

National Referee Instructors and Trainers

National Assessors

From: Alfred Kleinaitis  
Manager of Referee Development and Education  
Subject: Law 4, Players' Equipment (Jewelry)  
Date: March 17, 2003

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Law 4 (The Players' Equipment) states very clearly that "A player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewelry)." 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." Referees officiating in professional matches must ensure that this clear restriction is properly enforced.

USSF reaffirms its advice to referees that jewelry worn solely for medical purposes may be permitted but only if, in the opinion of the referee, the item is not dangerous. Such items can often be worn safely if appropriately taped. Additionally, for married players, a wedding ring may also be permitted if it does not include any dangerous projections. An item of jewelry permitted by the referee under these provisions must have been carefully inspected prior to the commencement of the match.

The match must not be permitted to start with any player wearing illegal equipment or apparel, including jewelry. Players who insist on retaining such items will not be permitted to participate in the match. Any player who, having been instructed to correct illegal equipment, nevertheless attempts to participate in play without having made the correction is subject to being cautioned for dissent.

The referee, assistant referees, and the fourth official all share in the responsibility to enforce the clear requirements of Law 4 related to jewelry and are advised to discuss in their pregame meeting specific measures each will take to ensure compliance prior to as well as throughout the match.

Cc: Chair, State Referee Committee, State Directors of Instruction, State Directors of Assessment, State Referee Administrators, State Youth Referee Administrators  
END OF QUOTE

It doesn't get any clearer than that.