



To: State Referee Administrators  
State Youth Referee Administrators  
State Directors of Instruction  
State Directors of Assessment  
National Instructors  
National Assessors  
National Referees  
State Directors of Coaching

From: Alfred Kleinaitis  
Manager of Referee Development and Education

Subject: **Player-Coaches**

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Nothing in the Laws of the Game prevents a player from coaching or a coach from playing. Indeed, this combination of roles is not uncommon in teams below the national professional competitive level (both in this country and elsewhere) and particularly in senior amateur play. For purposes of these guidelines, the term “coach” will include any team official (coach, assistant coach or trainer, for example). The term “player” includes being a substitute or substituted player.

The most important requirement for this arrangement is that all members of the officiating team must be aware of it. Merely mentioning it to the referee is not sufficient. As a player, the name of the player-coach must be shown on the team roster in the section used to list players. As a coach, the name of the player-coach must also be shown on the team roster in the section used to list team officials. If the roster has no separate section for team officials, the name of the player-coach must include a separate written designation as “coach” (or “assistant coach” or “trainer”) next to the player’s name. Players not clearly designated as a team official may not act at any time as a team official.

The following guidelines apply to the referee’s authority as regards a designated player-coach:

- When off the field and intending to act as a team official, a player-coach must change out of or wear something which covers the team jersey. Continuing to wear and have visible other parts of the player uniform (e.g., socks, cleated shoes, shorts) is permissible. A player-coach may not act as a team official while visibly wearing a team jersey.

- At all times, whether playing, off the field as a substitute or substituted player, or acting as a team official, the player-coach is under the authority of the referee and may be cautioned or sent off (and the appropriate color card displayed) for misconduct in accordance with the Laws of the Game. As a practical example of this, a caution given to a player-coach while acting as a player which is followed by a caution given to the same player-coach who is now acting as a team official must be followed by a red card for having received two cautions in the same match, as prescribed in Law 12.
- While acting as a team official, the player-coach has the additional requirement to act in a responsible manner. However, actual dismissal from the field (if warranted) must be in accordance with Law 12 – a red card must be shown and the correct reason for the send-off must be given in the match report (with all necessary supporting details).
- If a player-coach is sent off the field for any reason, whether while acting as a coach or as a player, the required automatic mandatory one game suspension applies to both roles. In other words, a player-coach who has been red carded cannot be present at the team's next match in either a player or **any** team official capacity.
- The competition authority may extend the length of the suspension based on its review of the match reports and other evidence of the misconduct and may, at its discretion, apply additional penalties to either or both of the player or team official capacities.