

Legal advice on the inspection of footwear and jewellery

There has been a high level of reporting in the national press over the safety of footwear. Some articles have focused on particular styles of studs, bars or blades.

As Referees we have to concern ourselves with a "duty of care" and try to ensure the playing conditions are safe for everybody involved.

We must not get involved in the argument as to whether blades are more hazardous than studs. Our concern must be to ensure that whatever the players are wearing constitutes no danger to themselves or others.

We have received from The Football Associations legal department advice to pass on to our Referees, for their protection as well as the protection of the players.

The only way that you can be sure that equipment is safe is to inspect footwear and jewellery before each and every match.

With the above legal advice John Baker Head of Refereeing has issued the following advice.

Players Equipment – Safety

Match Officials are reminded that Law 4 states " A player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player including any kind of jewellery.

- **All jewellery, with the exception of a plain wedding ring, must be removed.** Wedding rings must be rendered safe by taping to the satisfaction of the referee. The referees decision is final and players in contravention of this law must not be allowed to enter the field of play.
- Match Officials are also to incorporate a footwear inspection into the pre-match safety check of players equipment. This will take place before entry to the field of play immediately prior to the game.

Boot manufactures have recently been experimenting with designs and some give cause for concern. The use of blades on the sole of the boot is an example of such concern. Similarly worn studs can also constitute a danger.

These burrs are very sharp and have been the cause of lacerations on opponents. **If match officials are concerned over the condition of the blades or studs, they should refuse to sanction their use until they have been made safe.**

If evidence emerges during the game e.g torn stockings, lacerations, the referee may wish to follow up the inspection with the player(s) concerned during a stoppage.

Referees are to report to the competition any instances where the kick-off has been delayed, as a result of the footwear inspection.

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN SENT BY ESSEX F.A TO ALL REFEREES.

AUGUST 2004.