



GSOA Middle School Games: Rules Guidelines

Many of the middle school games for which we provide officials are not part of a formal “league” and don’t have a formalized structure, or even a specific set of rules. On the other hand, a small number of our middle schools do have a league, and have rules specific to their middle school league. Because of the number of middle schools we officiate, we can provide only broad guidance on how to manage these contests.

In order to provide a consistent experience to all of our middle school customers, please adhere to the following guidelines.

1. For the length of the halves, ask the coaches prior to the game. Some are 25 minutes and some are 30 minutes. In no case should the length of each half be more than 30 minutes. Both **coaches should agree on the length of the half. If they don’t agree,** let them know that you cannot start the game until they do.
2. For most other rules, NFHS and GHSA rules apply. This means the GHSA mercy rule applies as written. The exceptions to NFHS/GHSA rules are listed next.
3. No overtime. Games that are a draw at full time, end in a draw. There are two exceptions:
 - a. Playoff games for leagues that have a playoff at the end of the season (the referee crew will know they are on a playoff game).
 - b. Douglas County Middle School League goes straight to penalty kicks to determine a winner.
4. NFHS uniform rules do not apply; the home team need not wear white.
5. Referees should NOT wear a badge, unless the game is between two schools that are members of GICAA (bearing in mind that most referees do not have a GICAA badge). Middle school games are not sanctioned by GHSA, so a GHSA badge should never be worn.

Referees assigned to middle school games should understand that the level of play and even understanding of the game varies quite widely from league to league and even from school to school. There is a league of mostly private middle schools in the north metro area where the level of



play is reasonably good, but for many other schools, the players will need instruction on how to properly execute a goal kick.

Referees assigned to middle school games should foster a spirit of participation and friendliness throughout the contest. For many middle schools, soccer is a recreational activity, not a competitive sport. So, while we expect to enforce the playing rules, we may have to show some flexibility on administrative issues like jersey colors, quality of game balls, field markings, and the like.

Of course, goals should always be anchored securely, no matter the level of the game.