



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

From: U.S. Soccer Referee Education Resource Center

Subject: **Providing Hydration During A Match**

Date: April 4, 2011

As the summer months again approach, questions have been raised regarding the manner in which hydration (“water breaks”) may be provided to players. It was recently suggested, for example, that the FIFA Referee Committee had decided to permit, at the referee’s discretion, a formal hydration break. This is incorrect, no such decision was taken.

While player health and safety is a paramount concerns the Laws of the Game do not authorize or allow any stoppage called expressly for the purpose of providing hydration.

Given the demonstrated importance of proper hydration during a match and the need for water (or other appropriate liquids) to be available to the players, the following common sense guidelines are provided. Although the term “water” is used below, the guidelines apply to all liquids that may be provided for player hydration in the immediate area of the field.

- Players may drink water during play or during any stoppage provided for by the Laws of the Game, but only by going to a touch line or goal line.
- While drinking water, players may not leave the field nor may they carry water containers onto the field. The players should stand at the touch line or goal line while drinking water. However, goalkeepers may keep a water container near the goal provided that the container’s location will not interfere with play.
- Water containers may not be held in readiness where they will interfere with the movement of the assistant referees. After water containers are used, they must be removed so as not to interfere with the movement of the assistant referees.

- Under no circumstances may water containers of any sort (regardless of material, size, or construction) be thrown onto the field, from the field, or back and forth among players, even during stoppages of play.
- In youth matches, a local competition authority might include a rule exception in which a water break is mandated. In such cases, a referee who agrees to accept the assignment is expected to implement the rule.