NCAA Soccer Rule 5.6.7; Injury and Signs of Concussion

by John Puglisi

Players with a bleeding injury, blood on the uniform or signs of a concussion shall be substituted for and may re-enter the game (after being beckoned by the referee) at any stoppage of play or at any of the allowable times for normal substitution, provided they have received clearance from the appropriate medical personnel. Neither the injured player nor the substitute shall be charged with a substitution. However, if the injured player replaces a player other than the original substitute, that player shall be charged with a substitution.

It is the referee's responsibility under Rule 5.6.7 to determine whether the injured player is leaving the field under Rule 5.6.7.1 (general injury) or Rule 5.6.7.2 (signs of concussion). The referee can and should consult with the onsite medical staff to assist in this determination. If the player is leaving under Rule 5.6.7.1 and is substituted, the player's re-entry is limited under Rule 3.5.3.3 (the player shall not re-enter the game in that period with the exception that the player is permitted one re-entry in the second period). Players leaving the field under Rule 5.6.7.2 are allowed to re-enter in that period subject to Rule 3.5.3.2. Recommended procedure when the game is stopped to evaluate an apparent head injury:

- Stop the game immediately and summon medical staff onto the field to attend to the injured player;
- Before restarting play, make sure the assistant referees (especially AR1), the Alternate Official (if present), the official scorekeeper and both coaches are informed of the player's re-entry eligibility. The Referee is encouraged to consult with the onsite medical staff before play is restarted to make a determination of whether the injury is general in nature or if the player presents signs of concussion.
- After the match, report the injury to the governing sports authority if the player presents signs of concussion or does not return to the match.

Emphasize the timing of making the determination before play is restarted because this is a potential player eligibility matter and may be subject to protest. The player's re-entry eligibility must be determined before play is restarted to eliminate the potential for protest.