

## **MEMORANDUM ON USING EYE-BLACK FOR SUBURBAN FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE GAMES**

Last season it came to the attention of the Suburban Friendship League (SFL) that a club was not allowing players to wear eye-black, and threatening the team with forfeiture of the game if the players due not remove it.

The SFL has no rule either approving or disapproving the application of eye-black. We have reached out to a certified referee assigner, and two VYSA Referee instructors and asked them the following questions:

- Do you know of any guidance published by organizations, such as VYSA and US Soccer, that would prevent a player from using eye black when it is not used to convey racist or threatening symbols? If yes, please provide a reference.
- Should the SFL propose a rule change to the clubs that prohibits the use of eye black as a formal policy much like it did when it required all teams to have a paper copy of the SFL Team Roster for the game official and another paper copy of the opposing team?

The answer from the certified referee assigner was:

- “I have never heard of or seen any rule, policy, or guidance relating to the use of eye black by players.”

The answer from the VYSA Referee instructor was:

- “In short, the answer to both your questions is a resounding “No!” I have never seen such guidance from FIFA, USSF, US Club, or any of the clubs I assign for. Nor do I think it should be. It is a

safety issue for the player (reducing Sun glare)and should be permitted.”

Within the rules and regulations of the SFL, the Commissioner of the SFL has made the following decision. The SFL will allow eye-black, provided that it is not presented as a racist or offensive display. The eye-black can be no more than ½ inch wide and 1 inch long.

In the interim club referee assignors are reminded of the Metro DC-Virginia State Referee program document “Local Rule Exceptions,” that can be found at [vadcsoccerref.com/local-rule-exceptions](http://vadcsoccerref.com/local-rule-exceptions).

Clubs that due not follow this ruling will cause their home team to be charged with a forfeit and the clubs possible suspension from participating in the SFL for subsequent seasons. The club will be charged with ‘Conduct Detrimental to the League.’

John Paladino  
SFL Commissioner