Excessive Celebration

We have a great game. It is educationally based. It is the classroom of the grass. Keep this in mind this fall.

Excessive celebration (EC) usually occurs after a goal, but may also occur after a great save or other outstanding play, including the winning of a penalty.

Let’s look at the rule. NF 12.8.1(f)(12) “Any player, coach or bench personnel shall be cautioned (yellow card) for: any delayed, excessive or prolonged act(s) by which a player(s) attempts to focus attention upon himself/herself and/or prohibits a timely restart of the game.”

Whatever is done, must be excessive or prolonged + focus attention on the player(s) and/or prohibit a timely restart.

Be careful, as EC can easily be accompanied by the nefarious twins of evil ancestry: taunting, NF 12.8.2(b), or insulting, offensive or abusive language or gesture, NF 12.8.2(f). If either of the twins are present, they take precedence, and the offending player(s) must see a straight red. Your Game Report should reflect either taunting or insulting, offensive or abusive language or gesture as the reason for the ejection, along with the fact that it occurred during EC.

Where there is EC only, the acts must be excessive or prolonged with the intent to focus attention upon the player(s) and/or prohibit a timely restart. Realize that there can be permissibly expressible joy for a goal or other “big play.” Use your wise discretion to punish only the truly excessive celebration. After most goals, it takes about 25 seconds to be ready for kickoff. If there are substitutions or injuries, understand that this permissible delay, coinciding with a celebration, may prevent the celebration from unduly delaying a timely restart, thereby relieving you from issuing a caution. In other words, do not just react. Talk with the players, be preventive and proactive.

Teammates’ celebration, without taunting or insulting, offensive or abusive language or gesture, is not misconduct unless it delays the restart. EC, via orchestrated celebration can result from a post-goal celebration such as team dancing. What if the scorer retrieves the ball and, in a bowling motion, rolls it toward teammates who are arranged like bowling pins, and they all fall down? Dangerous territory here, to be sure.

EC can also occur after the save of a penalty, a save on a breakaway or the winning of a penalty.

Individual EC can occur via removal of an article of clothing, i.e., normally the jersey, or by pulling the jersey over the head. Running to the stands to receive accolades is also EC.

Use sound judgment to enforce responsible behavior in this education-based atmosphere without “Grinching” the joy from our game.

If you want to get deeper into this topic, please see below, which includes PowerPoint slides re jersey removal.

Going Deeper into Excessive Celebration

2011 NF Soccer Guide—Misconduct Changes Made: In Rule 12 (Fouls and Misconduct), the rules committee changed the penalty for excessive goal celebration by a player from
disqualification (yellow and red cards displayed simultaneously) to a caution (yellow card) (see PlayPic A), and added two other examples of unsporting conduct in Rule 12-8-1f.

Unsporting conduct now will include a player who displays reckless play (see PlayPic B) and an illegally equipped player, as well as excessive goal celebration, which is defined as “any delayed, excessive or prolonged act(s) by which a player(s) attempts to focus attention upon himself/herself and/or prohibits a timely restart of the game.”

“The committee agreed that disqualifying a player for excessive goal celebration is too severe,” said Mark Koski, NFHS assistant director and staff liaison to the Soccer Rules Committee. “Actions that would constitute taunting and/or offensive language or gestures, however, are still punishable by disqualification.”

Those changes do not alter the way the referee whistles the game or makes a decision to caution a player. They are simply additional examples of unsporting conduct, expanding the list from nine examples to 12.

The committee hopes that reducing the harsh penalty for excessive celebration will allow referees to punish instances where players or teams do celebrate and prevent the game from a timely restart.

**Play 1:** After scoring the go-ahead goal with three minutes remaining, A8 and six teammates go to the corner flag, drop to the ground, hug and remain there for approximately 15 seconds. **Ruling 1:** A8 (and others, if the referee feels it is justified) should be shown the yellow card, once standing, asked to depart the playing field and Team A may either replace A8 with A12 or play short. The restart is a kickoff—the caution to A8 does not change the restart.

**Play 2:** After scoring the go-ahead goal with three minutes remaining, B10 celebrates with several teammates. As a part of the celebration, B10 is heard to utter several insulting phrases while standing directly in front of Team A’s bench. **Ruling 2:** While B10 may be guilty of excessive goal celebration, B10 has also committed two other more serious offenses—taunting and using insulting, offensive or abusive language or gestures. Both are punishable by a red card, B10 is disqualified and sent off the field and Team B must play short. When filling out the
game report, the referee should choose a single reason for the disqualification, but should report both infractions, as well as any excessive goal celebration that may have occurred. Restart with a Team A kickoff.

**Play 3:** Keeper A1 makes a diving save from B8’s penalty kick, tipping the ball just wide of the post to preserve a one-goal lead. Overjoyed A4 runs to A1, pushes A1 to the ground, jumps on and hugs A1 for 30 or more seconds. **Ruling 3:** While the typical excessive celebration comes after a goal, there are other emotional events, such as A1’s save, that might be the cause of an excessive celebration. Yellow card A4, ask A4 to depart the field and restart with a Team B corner kick.

**Play 4:** Similar to Play 1, A8 is guilty of excessive celebration after scoring the go-ahead goal with little time remaining. However, A8 had previously been shown a yellow card for a reckless foul in the 30th minute. **Ruling 4:** A8 will be disqualified. In past years, it would have been solely for the excessive celebration, but now A8 will be shown the yellow card for the excessive celebration and will be disqualified because of a subsequent caution (12-8-2) and Team A may NOT bring a player off the bench to replace A8. Inform Team B’s coach and restart with a kickoff.

2013 NF Rules Test Part II, #16: A9 scores a goal to make the score 1-0 with 1:30 left in the game. He runs toward the portion of the spectators dominated by his school’s supporters, removes his shirt and waves it above his head. A. A9 is guilty of an excessive act that focuses attention on himself. The referee should caution A9. B. A9 is guilty of an excessive act that focuses attention on himself. The referee should disqualify A9. C. A9 is guilty of taunting. The referee should disqualify A9. D. A9 is not guilty of an offense. Play should restart with a Team B kickoff. **RULING:** A.

12.8.1 Situation B (2011): During the match, (a) A1 commits a foul in a reckless manner, (b) A1 is the second player from Team A observed with illegal equipment and (c) after scoring a goal, A1 celebrates excessively. **RULING:** (a), (b) and (c), caution A1 for unsporting conduct.

2012 NF Rules Test Part II, #79: For any delayed, excessive or prolonged act(s) by which a player(s) attempts to focus attention upon himself/herself and/or prohibits a timely restart of the game: (a) The player shall be cautioned. (b) The referee shall take no action. (c) The player shall be disqualified (red card). (d) The player shall be warned. **Ruling:** (a)

2004 Comments on the Rules—12.8.2(b): The term “excessive celebration” has been replaced with a description of acts that would be considered inappropriate. Prolonged attention away from the game should be penalized.

2004 NF Soccer Guide—Definitions Move to Rule 12: The definitions of taunting, excessive celebration and serious foul play have moved from rule 18 (Definitions) into rule 12. The definitions are unchanged. The committee felt that game participants were better served by having the exact words in the rule, right next to the action that must be judged. That was a part of an action that will lead to a more comprehensive overhaul of rule 18. That is an editorial change – there is no difference in the interpretations or the manner in which the referees should whistle an infraction.
2002 NF Transparency Script #11: Excessive celebration is an unsporting act and continues to be an area of extreme concern of the rules committee. The major concerns in this area center around delaying the game and drawing attention to oneself by performing for teammates, the spectators or the opponents. Teammates’ celebrating is not misconduct unless it delays the restart of the game.

Officials may communicate with players in an effort to educate them about the rules and warn them that a yellow card will be issued if the game is delayed by their conduct.

Some examples of actions that are excessive after a score include: removing one’s shirt, running up and down the field or bench area to draw attention from spectators, and observing team or members of the team dance in unison around the ball.

2000 Comments on the Rules 12.8.2(b): Following the scoring of a goal, excessive celebration shall not be permitted. This rule change is accompanied by a definition of excessive celebration found in [former] Rule 18.1.1(p).
2000 NF Soccer Transparency Script #15: SINGLE PLAYER: Actions by a player that are prolonged, excessive, and/or delay the restart of play are examples of excessive celebrations and are prohibited. Removing a jersey or any article of clothing would be excessive celebration. Running along the sidelines or to celebrate with fans is excessive celebration. Celebrating with players on the field may not be excessive celebration unless it prolongs the restart of play.

2000 NF Soccer Transparency Script #16: MULTIPLE PLAYERS: The NFHS Soccer Rules Committee believes that orchestrated celebration or the use of derogatory gestures by more than one player are examples of excessive celebration. Players must show respect for themselves and their opponents.

Orchestrated dancing, running up and down the field, or any act that delays the restart of play is excessive celebration. If individual players cannot be identified the coach shall be cautioned and the incident shall be reported to the school administration and to the state association. Every attempt must be made by the officials to identify individual players involved in the acts of excessive celebration.

2004 NF Rules Test Part II, #70: After a goal, a player from Team A leaves the field of play and goes into the spectator area where he “high-fives” with the spectators. The player should be shown a yellow card. True.

2004 NF Rules Test Part I, #66: Any excessive or prolonged act by which a player delays the start of a game shall be penalized with a red card disqualification. False.

2000 SITUATION #23: Following the scoring of a goal, A) Player A does a body slide in front of the opponent’s bench; B) pulls her shirt up over her head; C) together with other teammates jumps up and down to celebrate the goal. RULING: Legal in C) as long as the celebration does not delay the restart of the game. Illegal in A) and B). The referee shall caution the player for excessive celebration. (12.8.2b)

2001 NF Rules Test Part II, #24: Player A1 scores a goal. As he runs back up field, he pulls his jersey off and waves it over his head. The referee shall caution the player but shall not disqualify him. True.

12.8.1 and 2 Situation A (2003) (formerly 12.8.1 and 2 Situation A (2000)): (a) Following the scoring of a goal, Player A runs off the field of play and uses inflammatory gestures toward the Team B bench; or (b) following the scoring of a goal, players from Team A line up in front of Team B’s spectators and use provocative and derogatory gestures in celebration of the goal; (c) following the scoring of a goal, players from Team A celebrate by jumping on each other; (d) player removes shirt; (e) following the scoring of a goal, player runs off the field of play and makes an obscene gesture toward the Team B bench. RULING: Illegal in (a), (b), (d) and (e). In (a), the referee shall disqualify Player A1 for taunting and the player may not be replaced (12.8.2b); in (b), the referee will caution the coach and report the incident to the appropriate authority and disqualify any offending player(s) who can be identified (12.8.3b and 12.8.2b); in (c), legal as long as the delay is not excessive; in (d), the referee shall caution the player for excessive celebration (12.8.1(f)(12)); in (e), the referee shall disqualify the player for offensive, insulting, abusive language (12.8.3f) and the team will play short.
Previous DISQUALIFICATION of a player for excessive celebration was considered too severe. PLEASE keep in mind, however, that actions that constitute taunting, and/or offensive language or gestures are still punishable by disqualification.

We now coincide with FIFA in showing only yellow for this. No red.

2011 NF Guide Play 1: After scoring the go-ahead goal with three minutes remaining, A8 and six teammates go to the corner flag, drop to the ground, hug and remain there for approximately 15 seconds. RULING 1: A8 (and others, if the referee feels it is justified) should be shown the yellow card, once standing, asked to depart the playing field and Team A may either replace A8 with A12 or play short. The restart is a kickoff—the caution to A8 does not change the restart.

2011 NF Guide Play 3: Keeper A1 makes a diving save from B8’s penalty kick, tipping the ball just wide of the post to preserve a one-goal lead. Overjoyed A4 runs to A1, pushes A1 to the ground, jumps on and hugs A1 for 30 or more seconds. RULING 3: While the typical excessive celebration comes after a goal, there are other emotional events, such as A1’s save, that might be cause of an excessive celebration. Yellow card A4, ask A4 to depart the field and restart with a Team B corner kick.

2011 NF Guide Play 2: After scoring the go-ahead goal with three minutes remaining, B10 celebrates with several teammates. As a part of the celebration, B10 is heard to utter several insulting phrases while standing directly in front of Team B’s bench. RULING 2: While B10 may be guilty of excessive goal celebration, B10 has also committed two other more serious offenses—taunting and using insulting, offensive or abusive language or gestures. Both are punishable by a red card, B10 is disqualified and sent off the field and Team B must play short. When filling out the game report, the referee should choose a single reason for the disqualification, but should report both infractions, as well as any excessive goal celebration that may have occurred. Restart with a Team A kickoff.
I am using a shorthand here, “excessive celebration,” rather than the full-blown “delayed, excessive or prolonged act(s) by which a player(s) attempts to focus attention upon himself/herself and/or prohibits a timely restart of the game.”

Though we use the shorthand of excessive celebration, please realize that this misconduct can be committed after a foul has been awarded or at times other than after the scoring of a goal.
Why misconduct here?
Because clearly the player has removed the jersey (again, remember that this includes pulling the jersey over the head, even if the removal is not complete).
Why? Because clearly the jerseys have been removed. As this example makes clear, it doesn’t make any difference that the player may have something else on under the jersey – even if that “something else” were a complete replica of the jersey that had been removed!

Why NOT misconduct here?
Because clearly the player has not taken the jersey off, nor even pulled it over his head. Note that the player may not be finished with his action and removal may follow. At this point, anyway, the player is not in violation of Rule 12. The intelligent referee may well find here an opportunity to advise the player that he should think carefully about what he does next.
EXCESSIVE CELEBRATION

Quick Quiz time!

Should this player be cautioned?

YES!

Notes
Why? Because the player has removed his jersey (even though he is also wearing an undershirt).