

Fellow Referees,

The following question from the USAV Rules Exam A has been a topic of conversation between myself and my colleagues in the Official's Division:

Team R requests and is granted a time-out. During the time-out, Team S requests a substitution. At the end of the time-out, Team S requests another substitution. What actions should be taken by the second referee?

Select the one choice that best answers the question

A. The second referee should administer both substitutions at the conclusion of the time-out by following standard substitution procedures.

B. The second referee should administer the first substitution request at the end of the time-out, and the second request should be denied as an improper request.

C. The second referee should accept the first substitution and inform the scorer during the time-out with no formal substitution procedure being necessary. The second request should be administered using standard substitution procedure at the conclusion of the time-out.

D. The second referee should whistle and administer the first substitution during the time-out, and the second substitution request should be administered at the end of the time-out.

This question was designed to test the referee's knowledge of Rule 15.3.2, which states, "*However, a team is not authorized to make consecutive requests for player substitution during the same set interruption. Two or more players may be substituted during the same interruption.*", and Regulation USAV 15.3, which states, "*Rule 15.3.2 limits player(s) substitutions to one request during a set interruption. A subsequent request(s) by the same team during the same set interruption will result in an improper request.*"

The correct answer in the answer key is "B". By the strict letter of the rule, this is correct. Only one substitution request may be made by the coach during a time-out. However, after further thought on this subject, I have come to the conclusion that the strict application of this rule, as applied in this instance, is not a good application based on the intended spirit of the rule. The proper procedure should be as follows:

If a time-out is granted (ie., whistled and administered), any request for substitution by either coach should be delayed until the end of the time-out. If a coach makes a verbal request during the time-out, or a player enters the substitution zone for the obvious purpose of substitution, the coach/player should briefly be told that they can make that request at the conclusion of the time-out. As a practical matter, this should be thought of as though the "request" never took place. A referee well-practiced in the art of refereeing may be able to do this with just a glance and head-shake to the coach/player, along with a quick repeat of the time-out signal.

At the end of the time-out, there must be a proper request for substitution for the substitution to take place. Of course, multiple substitutions may be made at this time, as long as there is no delay between them. There might also be NO substitution, if the coach/player makes no request at the end of the time-out.

However, if a substitution by Team A is whistled, administration of the substitution is begun by the second referee, and then Team B requests a time-out, the second referee should finish administering the Team A substitution, and then administer the Team B time-out. If Team A then requests another substitution at the end of the time-out, this request should be denied as an improper request. Please – we must be masters of the aforementioned art of officiating and therefore not recognize (by blowing a whistle) the second sub request by Team A, as this could lead to a delay sanction! “Wave off” this subsequent (second) request by Team A, quickly explain why (no request for subsequent substitution during same dead ball), and move on with the set.

In answering this test question, if you answered "A", this will also be accepted as correct. If you did answer "A", and got the question wrong, I apologize for the confusion. This was not intended as a "trick" question. It was intended to test a specific area of rules knowledge. If you answered with "A" and rec'd a score of 88 and subsequently achieved a score of lower than 90 on Exam B, you will receive acknowledgement that you did indeed pass your USAV exam.

I have learned a great deal in discussing this with my colleagues in the Official's Division. In distributing this explanation, my goal is for all referees to follow the proper procedure in the spirit of the rule. Most of you are involved in training young (or not-so-young!) referees. When you get the chance, please pass this on to them as a lesson in how a referee can facilitate the flow of a match.

Thank you!

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