

BUBBLE SOCCER SAFETY

Game play safety. To ensure proper safety, there are rules which must be instituted during play (and enforced with the players).

-Playing the Ball on the Ground: playing the ball from the ground is not allowed. There is a risk of a player's leg being stepped on, or from another player falling on a player's leg.

-Contact on the Ground: no contact is allowed with a player who is already on the ground. There is an increased risk of injury as players try to stand to regain their balance and are contacted while trying to stand.

-No Contact off of the Ball: There will be incidental contact during play as players move toward the ball, however forceful and purposeful contact with another player who is not near the ball can increase injury risk as players will not expect the contact to occur.

-No "launching:" Players are not allowed to leave the ground or "launch" into another player (jump up into the air). This increases the risk of players being pushed upwards and coming down from a height to contact the ground.

In addition to a few guidelines above, operators are encouraged to employ additional rules in regards to environmental safety.

When outdoors, such rules include keeping spectators, or people not in a Bubble Ball, off of the field of play. There is a risk of injury when a spectator, not in a suit, is contacted on the sidelines by a player in a bubble soccer suit.

When playing indoors, **the field of play must be marked with cones or other markers away from walls, bleachers or other obstructions. This is critical.** A player's body is safe within a bubble soccer suit, however if a player is contacted and flips upside down in rolling forward, their legs and feet are exposed to injury by contact with a wall or other obstruction. Additionally, if a player is contacted forcefully from behind, and makes contact with a wall, there is a risk for back injury as the immovable object drives their body backwards in equal force to the contact a player makes with a wall.

Given above, referees and operators supervising indoor play need to institute strict rules when enforcing field boundaries. One popular rule is enforcing no contact near or beyond the cones marking play. The first player to the ball when headed out-of-bounds is given a free play to put the ball back inbounds "untouched" by an opposing player. Opposing players are required to stand inside the cones and field of play as the ball is played back inbounds. This rule is to be strictly enforced through the use of a "two-minute" penalty, similar to a hockey penalty box for players who violate it. Ejection of players with multiple violations is necessary for the overall safety of game play.

In conclusion, the sport of bubble soccer is safe. As opposed to other popular sports, bubble soccer players do not face one of the greatest risks in sports of direct body-on-body collisions during play.