

CP Appendix

Classification

Cerebral Palsy (CP) football is available to players who are ambulant and are within the CP classification spectrum of 5 – 8. Classes 5, 6, 7 and 8 are for standing athletes. This section of classes is not a continuum and each number denotes a particular style of impairment.

Class 5 athletes' impairment affects them from the waist down; both legs are affected but athletes compete in an upright position.

Class 6 is relevant when all four limbs are affected. Most commonly, but not exclusively, this class of athletes have uncontrolled movement.

Class 7 athletes also have half of their body affected. However, in this case it is one side (i.e. one arm and leg on the same side).

Class 8 is the minimal impairment standing class.

For a complete guide to classification consult the CP-ISRA Rules Manual on the international website www.cpisra.org.

Safety and impairment specific considerations

Cerebral palsy is not a disease or illness. It is a brain lesion, which is non-progressive and causes variable impairment of the co-ordination, tone and strength of muscle action, impacting on posture and movement.

The degree of impairment between individuals with cerebral palsy varies considerably according to the severity and site of the brain damage. It is irreversible but non-fatal, non-contagious and non-progressive. No two people with cerebral palsy are alike because the brain damage that causes the condition can evolve differently in each individual.

You may not be very familiar with this condition, so it may help to meet the player first before considering the particular safety issues of which you may need to be aware.

Players with cerebral palsy have a range of symptoms from severe (total inability to control movements) to very mild (some people may have a slight speech impairment). Some players may have difficulty in coordinating and integrating basic movement patterns. Players with cerebral palsy may be prone to accidents and injuries because they have problems with balance and coordination.

Individuals may also have more frequent dehydration, muscle cramps and exhaustion. Coaches may therefore need to take extra precautions in hot weather and during hard training sessions, by giving opportunities to rest and to take on liquids. Similarly,

if there is poor motor efficiency, players will be more prone to exhaustion after intense effort. As a coach you should be aware of this and monitor drills and training schedules accordingly.

When working with cerebral palsy players, you will have to consider the following:

- If the player requires assistance to attend coaching sessions. Is there an enabler (relative or friend) available who can offer support? Is the enabler fully aware of what is required and what is not required when supporting the player? What level of support is required?
- As a coach you may need to establish boundaries regarding responsibilities (i.e. the player's personal needs and how to assist during a coaching session if required).
- It is important to be aware that players with cerebral palsy may be more likely to have epilepsy than their non-disabled peers. If a player has epilepsy, it is useful to establish how they cope with seizures on a personal basis and what procedures you should follow if required. Some players may have a learning disability as well as a physical disability.

Communication and consideration

Players with cerebral palsy:

Individuals with cerebral palsy may have a speech impairment. This should not automatically be associated with the player having a learning disability. Individual players may have devised their own means of communication. It is useful to spend time getting to know the player in order to learn and understand these means of communication. Please contact Cerebral Palsy (CP) Sport for more detailed information.

- Establish mutually identifiable signs and gestures.
- Use written instruction if appropriate.

Rule adaptations

- There are two halves of 30 minutes each in duration.
- There are no offsides.
- There are seven players on each team.
- Pitch and goal sizes are different.
- Players are allowed to roll the ball into play as well as throw it in order to assist players with hemiplegia (paralysis of one side of the body).

Competition structure

The FA National Cerebral League represents the competitive structure for players in England.

International competitions for Cerebral Palsy football are based on a four-year cycle. The Paralympic Games are played in year one, the World Games in year two, the European Games in year three and the World Championships in year four.