

***SOCCEER-COACH-L***

Questions and answers  
on the  
Laws of the Game

**1998**

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© 1998 jointly in the following individuals: Jim Geissman, David Graham, Jim MacQueen, Connie Matthies, Jim Meinhold, Chris Mohr, Gary Rue, Ken Smith, Dave Teetz, Ron Tremper, who are together known pseudonymously as the SOCCER-COACH-L LOTG COLLECTIVE

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| 8.07 My older child sometimes used to play goalkeeper back in 1995, before I started coaching. Her coach instructed her that when the other team was kicking off and the kick-off was strong enough to make it to the goal line well before the other team could possibly arrive, then as long as it did not touch any of her teammates or bounce off the goalposts, she should let it go by without touching it (even if it appeared headed into the goal). Was this sound advice?  | 37        |
| 8.08 The rules require the ball to move "forward" on a kick-off, and the player taking the kick-off cannot touch it again before someone else does. So, how can we legally and effectively start by passing the ball backward to one of our players 10 or 15 yards to the rear of the center line, while allowing the defenders the least amount of time to react?   | 37        |
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| 9.13 The Red team is awarded a throw-in. Red player number 8 runs off the field and picks up the ball. Red player 9 runs toward Red 8 and calls, "Let me do the throw." Player 8 lobs the ball underhand to Red 9, while Red 9 is still on the field. Is this legal?   | 40        |
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| 11.06 Is there anything else which can help get offside across with younger players?  | 46        |
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| 11.13 In a recent game, an opponent was in an OSP, but his teammate kicked the ball too hard, and our keeper caught it easily. The player in the offside position did move towards the ball, but never really got near it. No flag went up, and some people on our side grumbled that we would have had better field position if the ball had come back | 48        |

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| upfield, rather than requiring our keeper to punt it. Was the AR right not to raise the flag?  | 48        |
| 11.14 I'm confused. In one game recently, there was a player who was in an OSP at the far post near the goal area, and another teammate shot the ball, which our keeper saved. There was no offside call. In this identical situation in a different game, offside was called when the player moved towards the ball, even though the keeper saved it. Which call is correct?  | 48        |
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| 12.6.08 I was letting the referee know how unhappy I was with him, and he came over and said he was warning me. I kept criticizing, so he said, "Okay, that's enough, you're gone!" -- and said I was "dismissed." He explained the sending-off was for a second caution, but I don't remember getting the first one. He hadn't shown a yellow card earlier, and he didn't show a red one when he sent me off. If I had known, I would have been more careful. | 69        |
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| 13.03. After a team fouled, a player on the fouling team stood in front of the ball to prevent the ball from being played in order to allow his team time to set up their wall. Why did the referee caution him without first telling him to back off the ball?  | 73        |
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| 13.05. On an IFK, the kicker strikes the ball on goal and the goalkeeper reaches up and tries to catch the ball but doesn't touch it before it goes in the goal. Is this a goal?   | 73        |
| 13.06. The goalkeeper handles in his goal area a ball deliberately passed to him by a teammate. The referee indicates the ball is to be placed on the 6 yard line. The defenders recover to the goal line. The attacking team quickly plays and a defender recovering from behind intercepts the first touch. The referee stops play and has the kick retaken. Why?  | 73        |
| 13.07. A player is called offside near a touch line at midfield. The kicking team quickly put the ball in play 20 yards to the side from the spot of the foul. The referee allowed play to continue. Later, the referee would not allow play to go on until the attacking moved the ball back a foot from the 18 after a tripping foul. Why is the referee so inconsistent?  | 73        |

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| 13.08. The referee called for an IFK inside the defending team's penalty area. The defending team lined up on the goal line. An attacker kicked the ball into the line of defenders. The ball deflected off a player and into the goal. Because it did not touch a second attacker, is this a goal?  | 73        |
| 13.09. The referee whistled a foul when a defender kicked at a ball that was near the attacker's head. The referee only pointed in the direction of the defender's goal. An attacker kicked the ball directly into the goal without touching another player. The referee did not allow the goal and gave the defending team a goal kick. Was this correct? | 73        |
| 13.10. The referee calls for an IFK near the defender's goal. The attacker takes a quick kick that deflects off the referee as he is trying to move out of the way. The ball goes directly into the goal. Because it touched the referee, does this goal count?  | 74        |
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| 17.05 What about all the pushing and shoving that goes on just before a corner kick? Why doesn't the referee stop it?  | 85        |
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| 18.02 One of our opponents was clearly offside as his team played the ball into our penalty area. The assistant referee had her flag up, but the referee just waved at her and didn't give us the free kick for offside. The AR told me she assumed that was because the ball had gone straight to our keeper -- does that seem right? | 87        |

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| 18.03 Our opponents had a throw-in near the half-line in front of our bench, and the referee let their player take it from a spot that wasn't all that close to where the ball went out, but later in the game he was really sticky about making one of my players take one from the exact spot where the ball went out in their end. Why did he let them have an advantage, but not us?   | 87        |
| 18.04 In stoppage time, our opponents had us pinned in our own penalty area for a couple of minutes. We were under a lot of pressure and kept wanting the ref to blow his whistle for the game to end. As soon as we cleared the ball out, he did blow for the end of the game, just when we might have had a counterattack!   | 87        |
| 18.05 We arrived at a field for a game at the start of the season and found that the grass had not been cut for some time and that the ground was wet and rutted in places. The two coaches consulted the players' parents, and everyone was in agreement for the game to go ahead, but the referee inspected the pitch and then said the match would have to be cancelled. That seems a bit extreme, to go against the coaches, the parents and the players! Who does the ref think he is? I heard he gets paid even if the match doesn't go ahead. | 87        |
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# Preface

## Background

The project was conceived, organized and coordinated by Chris Mohr. It was a collaborative effort by interested members of the SOCCER-COACH-L mailing list to make the Laws of the Game more accessible to coaches and to answer some frequently asked questions about the Laws. Many of the questions are ones, or resemble ones, that have been asked by members of the mailing list at one time or another. From November 1997 to January 1998, members of the LOTG Project drafted various sections of this FAQ. The drafts were circulated to all members, criticized and redrafted before being posted here.

If after you consult this FAQ you wish to reproduce any part of it, please read the notes on copyright and reproduction below. If you'd like to suggest a question for inclusion in the FAQ on one of the Laws, by all means send it to any member of the project team.

You'll find a current version of the project material, as well as mailing addresses for members of the project team, at the following URL: <http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~dgraham/lotg/>. SOCCER-COACH-L is an Internet mailing list for soccer (association football) coaches: you can visit the list's web page at <http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~dgraham/coach.html>.

## Contents

The material connected with the LOTG Project consists of the following parts:

1. a thumbnail sketch of each Law, a commentary for coaches about the implications and workings of the Law, and a FAQ connected with problems arising from the Law;
2. a set of supplementary documents which amplify certain parts of the FAQ or deal with material ancillary to the Laws but not actually contained in them, or distributed throughout them;
3. such other similar material as may be added from time to time by the authors.

## Purpose

This work is intended for the benefit of any of the following people:

1. Novice coaches, who want and need to acquire a solid, basic understanding of the LOTG;
2. Intermediate coaches who are familiar with the main provisions of the LOTG, but who may have many unresolved questions about significant details;
3. Coaches who consider themselves more advanced and know the LOTG fairly well, for whom this FAQ may provide a stimulating review of points from a fresh, practical perspective;
4. Anyone else -- parent, player, fan, administrator or official -- with an interest in soccer's Laws and a desire to find out more about how they work in practice.

**Licensed referees** who wander in may find this FAQ interesting and helpful for your own purposes, and you are more than welcome to stop in. Keep in mind, though, that this is written primarily as a practical field guide to the LOTG for coaches, and **not** as a referee certification review course. We don't promise that you'll find it told in here quite the way you learned it in referee school; instead, we've been watching y'all in the field and what you actually do, as much as what the letter of the LOTG says you should do, even while our descriptions of the rules remain faithful to the latter. So please don't write to us to say that your interpretation of Law such-and-such is different from anything found here -- we already know that referees interpret (and must interpret) the Laws in light of their own conception of the Spirit of the Game. That's why we added this disclaimer:

**Disclaimer:** the material contained in these pages is provided for the information of soccer (association football) coaches and other interested persons everywhere. Much of the information involves interpretation of the Laws of the Game, and there is no guarantee that the opinions given herein will invariably apply: one of the joys and frustrations of soccer is precisely that referees have a great deal of latitude in applying many of the provisions of the Laws.

**Note on copyright:** This work is a creation of the SOCCER-COACH-L LOTG collective, which is a pseudonym for a joint project among several individuals for explaining the laws of the game of soccer, for the benefit of all who love this wonderful game.

The copyright in this jointly created work is jointly held by the following individuals, who created and wrote this work:

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# Law 1 - The Field of Play

## **Thumbnail**

A soccer field (or "pitch") must be rectangular, with the longer boundaries forming the sides (or "touch lines") and the shorter boundaries forming the ends (or "goal lines" or "bye lines"), with an anchored goal centered on the goal line at each end. These boundary lines should be marked by lines on the ground and a flag in each of the four corners of the field. Other prominent markings on the field should include:

- a) a rectangular goal area and a larger rectangular penalty area, centered in front of each goal (see question #1.11),
- b) a halfway line parallel to and midway between the goal lines dividing the field into two even halves (see question #1.10),
- c) a penalty spot centered in front of each goal halfway between the goal area and penalty area (see question #1.11);
- d) two markings to indicate 10-yard clearances that should be observed for kick-offs and penalty shots, respectively a circle at the center of the field, and an arc just outside the top of the penalty area (the "penalty arc") marking 10 yards from the penalty spot (see question #1.09).

## **Commentary**

1. **Size of Fields:** The size of the field may vary within a wide range, so long as it is rectangular in shape. See question #1.11 for official FIFA regulation match requirements. In an important match, e.g. a tournament where teams from outside your league may be playing, it is important for a field to meet official size requirements. By agreement and accepted practice, fields used for younger players are frequently scaled down below FIFA-regulation size (see FAQ 1.08 and the supplement on modifications of the Laws for young players).
2. **Goals:** The most important requirements are that the goals be securely anchored to the ground, that the goals be formed at least of two vertical goalposts and a horizontal crossbar between them to form the top of the goal, and that the crossbar and goalposts remain intact and firmly secured in place so that they do not become displaced or broken during the match, or become dangerous to the players (see questions #1.03 and #1.04). See question #1.11 for official FIFA regulation dimensions. Like the field of play, goals for young players are usually scaled down below regulation size.
3. **Boundary Lines** are always in bounds, not out of bounds for the particular area they mark, whether they mark the sides (touch line), goal line (ball on the line is not a goal), or penalty area (foul on the line is in the penalty area).
4. **Essential Field Markings:** An official match field should always be laid out with all the regular markings in paint or chalk along the ground; for the proper dimensions of these various areas, see question #1.11. However, sometimes rain, snow or heavy use will obscure the markings, or someone will forget to bring corner flags, or whoever was supposed to maintain the markings before the games will fail to do their job, but everyone would still rather play than not. The one internal area of the field that must be visibly marked at all times during a match is the penalty area, because of the potentially dire game-altering consequences of fouls which result in penalty shots if committed within that area. Controversy can also arise if the goal line (especially between the goalposts) becomes obscured. This can usually be acceptably dealt with by properly positioned referees and linesman on critical plays. If the touch lines and goal lines are well marked, corner flags can be done without in a pinch. If these lines are obscured in any significant part, securely anchored corner flags are essential to be able to interpolate the position of the touch line and goal lines. Since flat cones are easily moved, they are not an acceptable substitute for field markings or corner flags in a match. They may be used for informal scrimmages.

## **Questions on Law 1**

### ***1.01: How can I be sure the field is safe?***

Good question! The first priority of every coach should be to ensure that the field is safe for the players. Coaches, like referees, should take a quick walk within the field before a match to ensure that there are no hazards such as rocks, debris, holes and ruts. If the field contains many rocks, line the players up on the halfway line equally spaced. Have them perform a sweep to the goal line, picking up the dangerous rocks that they find. Holes and ruts can often be filled in using soil from outside the boundaries of the field.

### ***1.02: What if it's snowing or raining?***

Snow and rain do not necessarily present safety hazards in themselves, but a frozen pitch should not be used, and very wet fields can be seriously damaged. Playing in the snow and rain is frequently unpleasant, so all concerned may prefer to reschedule the match if possible. Thunder and lightning are a very serious matter. If you play in an area where thunderstorms are at all common, you should be prepared to abandon your game at short notice and get your players under cover.

### ***1.03: Is it true that someone was actually killed recently when a goal fell over?***

Soccer goals present a serious safety hazard when they are not secured in the ground. This may allow the goal to tip, falling on a player: every year, young players are killed in this manner. Goals can be permanent or portable. Permanent goals are actually dug into the ground, whereas temporary goals are made of a light-weight material. A good test is to shake the uprights. If this method shows that the goal may fall, try to secure them as best you can. Portable goals are best secured with "U" brackets or stakes driven well into the ground to hold down the rear of the goal. They may also be held with sand bags. Continue to make adjustments to the goals until you are satisfied they will not fall.

### ***1.04: What if the cross bar becomes displaced or damaged?***

FIFA makes special mention of this in the LOTG. "If the cross bar becomes displaced or broken, play is stopped until it has been repaired or replaced in position. If a repair is not possible, the match is abandoned. The use of a rope to replace the crossbar is not permitted. If the crossbar is repaired, the match is restarted with a dropped ball at the place where the ball was located when the play was stopped."

Make every attempt to repair the crossbar. However, do not compromise player safety in making the repairs. Duct tape is wonderful stuff, but may not be able to hold the weight of the crossbar.

### ***1.05: There's no netting in the goals, or the netting isn't attached at the bottom or at the sides. Is this a problem?***

It isn't a problem from the point of view of the legality of the goals, because Law #1 states that nets MAY be attached to the goalposts. So there is no requirement that netting be present. It certainly is a problem from the point of view of keeping track of whether or not a shot has actually entered the goal, however, so do your best to make sure that nets are present. Also try to ensure that they are securely fastened to the posts, crossbar and ground. The referee and assistants should check this, but it's a good idea for coaches to check it too. If the nets are not properly attached, lots of bad things can happen: for example, if the nets are not attached to the posts, a shot that hits the outside of the side netting can still wind up in the goal! If the nets are not attached at the bottom, a well struck shot can pass right through the net, making it appear never to have entered the goal.

### ***1.06 : Since the Laws permit so much variation in field sizes, what are some approximately "normal" dimensions?***

The Laws say that a soccer pitch can be from 50 to 100 yards wide and 100 to 130 yards long, as long it is rectangular. In practice, however, field sizes vary a bit less than this: 80 by 120 yards would be considered a very generous-sized field by most people, while 75 x 110 might be considered a good size,

and 65 x 100 rather small for players above U13. American football fields are often used by high-school teams in the US, but they are extremely narrow in comparison to their length. "Real" soccer fields are usually drawn with a width to length ratio of about 2 to 3. Note that you can readily judge how wide a field is by checking the distance in yards between the touch line and the penalty area. Double this distance and add the result to 44 (the width of the penalty area) to obtain the width of the field in yards. For example, if you can see that the distance from touch line to penalty area is only about 10 feet (just over 3 yards), the field will be only about 50 yards wide -- very narrow indeed if it's regulation length!

***1.07: I saw a referee remove the corner flags from a field recently after she inspected it before the game. Why would she do this? Aren't the flags required?***

Law 1 does mandate the presence of corner flags by stating that "A flagpost (...) is placed at each corner." Corner flags are certainly desirable, especially if the markings are faint. But safety is always the paramount consideration. Flags must be at least 5 feet in height to minimize the likelihood that a player will be impaled on one. If one or more of the corner flags are unsafe, the referee may well decide to remove all of them. This referee was probably removing the flags because they were too short or because one was damaged and unsafe and could not be replaced.

***1.08: We play small sided soccer (6v6, 7v7, 8v8) with very young players (6-12 years old); what size should our field be?***

There is no one answer to this question. Each club, league, team or organization will define the dimensions of the field and the goals, which may vary from field to field even within a given organization.

The field may be smaller, but it must still be rectangular. The size of the goal area and penalty area should be reduced in proportion to the reduction in field size. It is suggested, however, that the center circle and the penalty arc retain their normal diameter of 10 yards. This is in accordance with the rules for free kicks, which stipulate that opponents are to be 10 yards away from the ball when a team is taking a free kick. This includes kick-offs (hence the center circle) and penalty kicks (hence the penalty arc).

***1.09: You mean the penalty arc is there just to make sure all players are a certain distance from the ball when a penalty is taken?***

Yes, that's its only purpose. All players except for the penalty-taker must be at least 10 yards from the ball when the kick is taken. The penalty arc allows the officials to make sure this minimum distance is respected. The arc is necessary because the top of the penalty area can be as close as 6 yards from the penalty spot.

***1.10: What's the purpose of the line dividing the field into two equal halves?***

The halfway line (or "half-line") serves two purposes. It allows the officials to ensure that all players are in their own half of the field when a kick-off is taken. It is also important for judging whether a player is in an off-side position [see the FAQ on Law 11 for a discussion of this topic].

***1.11: What are the regulation measurements of the areas marked out on the field?***

These are all described very clearly in Law 1, but briefly stated they are as follows (for metric equivalents, see the Laws). The goal measures 8 feet high by 8 yards wide. The goal area measures 6 yards out from the goal line by 20 yards wide (the 8 yards of the actual goal plus 6 yards on either side). The penalty area (sometimes called the "18") measures 18 yards out from the goal line by 44 yards wide (the 20 yards of the goal area plus another 12 yards on either side). The penalty spot must be placed 12 yards from the goal line. The corner arcs, within which the ball must be placed when a corner kick is taken, have a radius of 1 yard. You may also see small markings on the touch lines and the goal lines at a distance of 10 yards from the corner arc. These are used by the officials to ensure that opponents are at least 10 yards from the corner when a corner kick is taken.

***1.12: Snow has covered the field, how do we see the lines?***

If snow has obscured the lines, consult with the referee and opposing coach to determine what is going to be done. Probably the easiest way to remedy this problem is to do what is done in professional soccer - simply clear the snow away from the markings by running a shovel along the lines. This can be done quite quickly. Perhaps the parents from the home team could volunteer to go get some shovels. The referee should be willing to allow stoppages in play to allow the parent volunteers to clear the snow away. If the snow becomes too much of a problem, however, the game should probably be canceled.

***1.13: The field we are playing on is very hard (or soft), what shoes should the players wear?***

Athletic footwear has progressed tremendously in recent times. Soccer shoes, or boots come in a variety of styles that can be used on numerous surfaces: flats, turf shoes, molded cleats or screw-ins. Each shoe permits advantages for various field types. Molded cleats are by far the most popular with younger players. These cleats are sufficient for virtually any ground type.

As players become older they may want to invest in other boot types. On a very hard field, players may opt to wear flats or turf shoes, which will save "wear-and-tear" on the feet and legs. On a very wet field players may opt to wear screw-ins (often called "6-stud cleats"), in which the size of the cleat can be changed. [See Law 4 for questions about players' equipment]

## **Law 2 - The Ball**

### ***Thumbnail***

FIFA rules say the ball has to:

- a) be spherical (round, you guys!);
- b) be made of leather or other suitable material;
- c) be no more than 28 inches nor less than 27 inches around (which is the size of what we know as a Size 5 ball);
- d) weigh no more than 16 oz (one pound) nor less than 14 oz at the start of the match;
- e) be inflated to between 8.5 and 15.6 lbs per square inch...approx 1.1 atmospheres at sea level.

If anything happens to the ball during play, a new one must first be approved by the referee and the match is restarted by a drop ball, if it was in play, or by whatever restart would be appropriate if it was out of play. FIFA says a ball has to be approved by FIFA to be used in match play.

### ***Commentary***

There are balls of many sizes. There are small size 3 and size 4 balls for youth play, and even smaller "speed" balls for training. There are weighted balls for indoor play and keeper training. The most important thing is to know which size is appropriate for the use to which you are going to put it! Local rules usually specify which size will be used for given age groups. Materials also vary. So do methods of construction. It is generally accepted that hand-sewn leather balls with latex internal bladders provide the nicest feel during play, everything else being equal. Weather and skill can affect these things. A more skilled team will generally prefer a "hard" ball--one inflated to FIFA maximum. A team with a low degree of skill will usually prefer a "soft" ball...even one which is under-inflated by the rules standards. Cold weather can cause a ball which was properly inflated to become soft, and it can cause non-hand-stitched balls to feel "hard"...synthetic materials used to make molded balls becomes stiff when cold. In wet weather, a hand-sewn leather ball without a coating can soak up water and soon weigh a whole lot more than one pound...not fun to head! Fortunately, the very best balls are hand-sewn leather with a very thin plastic coating which keeps them from picking up water, but which does not get hard and stiff when cold.

Some people have claimed that the "FIFA Approved" stuff is nothing more than a fund-raiser for the sanctioning body. Manufacturers must meet specifications, but must also pay a fee, to use the approval. By forcing everyone to use "FIFA Inspected" balls, the organization is in effect taxing everyone who plays



in sanctioned matches. But it's a small price to pay. It probably doesn't make the balls better, but maybe it helps keep club fees down in the very, very, very long run.

### **Questions about the ball**

***2.01 Why do soccer balls have those multi-colored panels? Because picking up the spin is very important to good play.***

The multi-colored panels make it easier to see the spin, and they are allowed by the LOTG.

***2.02 How can I tell if my ball is properly inflated without a gauge?***

If you hold a ball head-high and drop it on firm ground, it should bounce back up waist high. Experienced coaches and referees can tell by squeezing a ball if its inflation is within standards. When pressed, the ball should give about the amount from the tip of the finger to the top of a clipped fingernail -- about 1/8 in -- and feel comfortable without feeling soft. Under-inflated balls also make a characteristic dull sound when kicked---sort of like smacking a piece of meat on a counter.

***2.03 How can I tell if my ball is round?***

Toss it into the air with spin on it. It should rotate evenly. If you detect a wobble, you've probably got an out of round ball.

***2.04 We were awarded a penalty in a recent game. When our player took the penalty kick, the ball burst, and even though the deflated ball went into the net, the referee made him retake the kick. He couldn't stop laughing and missed his second attempt, and we ended up losing the game. Was the ref right? It doesn't seem fair.***

Unfortunately for your team, the referee was quite right. If a ball becomes deflated or bursts during play, play is stopped and restarted with the new ball at the point where the ball first became defective, which means a goal cannot be scored with a burst ball, i.e., if a player kicks the ball with such force that it bursts but the remains go into the goal, the apparent goal will be disallowed and the game restarted with the new ball at the point where it was kicked. Presumably the referee thought that the ball was not actually in play when it burst, i.e. he thought the ball had not yet moved, because if a ball bursts while in play, the match is restarted with a drop ball.

***2.05 We don't have any FIFA approved balls; is it OK to use the ones we have?***

As long as your match is not a "FIFA Competition", you can use any ball which meets the specifications laid out in Law 2 (see the Thumbnail or the text of the law for details). In the interests of fairness and safety, you should definitely avoid using balls which are noticeably out of round, have missing or defective panels, are too large for your players or are over- or under-inflated, but other than that, you should feel free to use whatever you have on hand.

***2.06 Are there any types of balls that I should specifically avoid using?***

Any ball which could be deemed unsafe (see previous questions for examples) should be avoided. Many people try to avoid balls which are produced with the use of child labor by using balls from manufacturers who guarantee that their products are made by adults, but it is very hard to be absolutely sure of the origin of any soccer ball.

***2.07 Sometimes as coach, either I or the opposing coach have become dissatisfied with the game ball, either before or during the game. What rights, if any, do coaches or players have to get the game ball changed to a different ball?***

So long as the ball in use meets all the standards under the LOTG, none. The referee is the judge of all facts concerning the game, including whether the ball being used is sufficient. Often, local league

practice is that the home team provides the ball, which does offer some minor opportunity for gamesmanship as to the "feel" and inflation of the ball chosen. Nevertheless, all decisions as to which ball will be used are up to the referee, not the coaches. Coaches should never attempt to change game balls or change the inflation of the game ball without the referee's prior approval during the game! This could be considered sneaky misconduct which could get the coach expelled from the field if the referee is incensed enough.

Here's some constructive suggestions:

- a) When the referee asks "who has the game ball", even if you are the visiting team, have two or three suitable balls ready for use as game balls. Suggest to the referee that s/he pre-approve at least two different balls to be kept ready along each respective touch line so less time will be lost chasing balls gone down embankments, rolling across the next field, etc. Let some adult or kid spectator chase the old ball, and let the players play with a new ball. Most officials will in any case want a spare ball handy at the half-line on at least one side of the field in order to expedite restarts.
- b) Good referees will look over the proposed ball carefully, testing it by spinning it, bouncing it, and pinching in a bit with the thumb, and use their own pump to do a final adjustment on the ball for inflation. It will not hurt if possible under the circumstances, when the referee asks "who has the game ball", to send an assistant to politely observe the referee ball-testing process and ask to feel the ball for themselves. Most referees will not take offense to comments like "feels a bit hard / soft", and may adjust the air a bit, so long as no one makes a pest out of themselves (not worth it).
- c) If the ball is becoming heavy on a wet field, or the ball appears to be out of round and wobbling, referees are often receptive to a polite suggestion to change balls. Similarly, the referee will often be open to suggestions at half-time that the ball has become a bit flat and will test the ball and apply a few pumps of air if they agree it's needed.

## Law 3 - The Number of Players

Law 3 is a very important one from the coach's point of view, because it deals not only with the actual number of players permitted but with substitution procedure. You should look here to find answers to questions about how many players you should have on the field, how to get them on and off during play, and how to change goalkeepers if necessary. Coaches should note that many of the provisions of law 3 may be altered by local authorities.

The main provisions of law 3 are as follows:

- a) teams consist of 11 players plus a certain number of substitutes who are named in advance;
- b) each team must designate one player as goalkeeper;
- c) substitutions may be made only during a stoppage in play and with the permission of the referee.

### **Commentary**

- I. **Number of players.** The primary purpose of law 3 is to ensure that teams do not gain an unfair advantage by using more players than the allowable maximum. It goes much farther than that, however: for example, one of the appendices suggests that for 11-a-side soccer, teams should never have fewer than 7 players on the pitch, and that if the number of players for one team falls below 7, the match should be terminated by the referee.
- II. **Substitutions.** Law 3 also deals with the number of permitted substitutions (something which varies enormously, however, depending on local rules) and how these substitutions can be made. While substitution is often handled very casually in recreational soccer, it is still a good idea for players and coaches to know how substitutions should be properly made: the exact procedure can vary substantially, but in all cases substitutes should go to the halfway line, wait until the referee's attention has been secured and the player they are replacing has left the field, then enter the field themselves and take up their position.
  - A. One intention of the rules limiting the number of substitutions is to emphasize the importance of conditioning in soccer, as most players on the pitch at the start of the match should expect to play the full 90 minutes. Another is to ensure that teams do not needlessly waste time by making excessive numbers of substitutions, and referees' decisions may take this into account.
- III. **Local variations.** Because the provisions of Law 3 are so commonly altered from one league and from one tournament to another, it is critical for coaches to ensure that they have acquainted themselves fully with the provisions as they actually apply. For example, some tournaments permit teams to enter a roster of 18 players, while others may permit only 16 to be listed -- if you have arrived with 18, two of them may be bitterly disappointed at having to sit out for the whole tournament. Some youth leagues apply Law 3 strictly and allow only 3 substitutions, with no return to the field for players who have come off; if you substitute 3 players after five minutes and then try to put them back on ten minutes later, you'll look rather foolish!

### **Questions on Law 3**

***3.01 I wanted to send on a substitute while my players were preparing to take a corner-kick, but the referee said no. What's going on?***

Check your local rules: in all likelihood they do not permit substitution on corner kicks. Law 1 requires only that substitutions be made "during a stoppage in the match", but some local jurisdictions (including USSF amateur rules, but not US National Federation -- high-school -- rules) exclude corner kicks. You should always make sure that you know the details of the rules governing the competition in which your team is participating, paying special attention to places where they differ from the LOTG.

**3.02 *I just counted my players and realized we have one too few on the field. Play has already started -- what should I do?***

Tell the player you want to send on to go and wait at the halfway line. Get the attention of the assistant referee on your side of the field, and tell him or her that you want to send on a player to bring your numbers up to full strength. The assistant referee may want to count your players to make sure that you are not sending on one too many, but should then treat your player like a normal substitution, except that s/he will not have to wait for a player to come off before entering the field of play. This is also the procedure to use when an injured player has left the field for treatment and wishes to re-enter the match, although in some cases it may be easier to attract the referee's attention directly (for example, if the player has been taken off near a corner of the field at the end where the assistant referee is on the other side).

**3.03 *I just counted my players and realized we have one too many on the field. Play has already started -- what should I do?***

First of all, you should realize that the player who is going to come off will be cautioned (shown a yellow card). This may have some bearing on your choice of who should come off. Once you've made your decision, get the player's attention and have him come over and stand just inside the touch line (i.e. just on the playing surface) at the half-line. This will make it clear to all concerned (including the other coach) that you were not attempting to gain an advantage by having an extra player on the field. Get the assistant referee's attention and explain the problem; it will be up to him or her to notify the referee that your player is coming off, whereupon the referee will come over, find out what the problem is, and caution your player as required by this law. You should not unilaterally tell your player to come off the field, because s/he could conceivably then be given two yellow cards (one for being the extra player, one for leaving the field without permission), with more serious consequences.

**3.04 *My goalkeeper has been injured and has had to come out of the game (or has been sent off) -- how do I replace her?***

One player must always be the designated goalkeeper, so the referee will expect you to replace your keeper during the stoppage in question, and will not restart the match until you have a goalkeeper in place. If there is a chance that your regular keeper may come back on (for example, after treatment of an injury), or if you have used all your allowable substitutions (some jurisdictions may allow one extra 'goalkeeper substitution'), one of the players on the pitch may have to become the new keeper. In that case, s/he will have to put on a different jersey. **Note:** the player who is to become keeper must obtain the referee's permission first, or s/he will be shown a yellow card.

**3.05 *Can my goalkeeper switch places during the game with one of the other players?***

Yes, this is permitted under the laws, with two provisos: the referee has to be informed before the change is made (otherwise, both players will be shown the yellow card), and the change can be made only during a stoppage in play. As both players will have to change jerseys in any case, this makes a certain amount of sense!

**3.06 *How do I get the referee's permission to send on a substitute?***

Tell your substitute to go and wait at the half-line. Attract the attention of the assistant referee on your side (or the fourth official, in matches where there is one) and make it clear that you want to make a substitution (a good way to do this is simply to say or call out "Substitution, please."). It will then be up to the official, during a stoppage in play, to signal the referee, who will then give permission for your substitution to be made. You or the assistant referee (or the fourth official) will then first notify the player who is to come off; the substitute must wait until that player has left the field before entering it himself.

***3.07 We allow unlimited substitutions, and the other coach is making so many subs that I think he's trying to 'run out the clock' because it's late in the game and they're ahead by a goal. What can I do?***

Relay instructions to your captain to make sure (by pointing it out politely) that the referee is aware of this delaying tactic. The referee should include time taken for substitutions in time added on at the end of the match.

***3.08 We're ahead by a goal, and the other team must want to lose, because it looks as though they're deliberately trying to get players sent off so as to have the match terminated once they have fewer than 7 players on the field -- can I do anything? We have to win by at least two goals to have any hope of advancing.***

There's nothing you can do immediately beyond advising the assistant referee that you believe the other team is engaging in this tactic. Unfortunately, because of upsets, situations sometimes arise in tournaments where teams can guarantee themselves an "easier" second-round or final-round opponent by arranging to lose their last round-robin game. You may be able to protest the result, and it will be up to the referee to file a report if s/he thinks the other coach has been guilty of unsporting conduct (for example, by instructing his players to score on their own net, or to feign injury so as to be taken off). You may then be asked to appear before a disciplinary committee to testify, so you should keep careful note of anything which suggests that this behaviour is deliberate. Most associations take a very dim view of this sort of behaviour, and will punish it severely if it can be demonstrated to have occurred (one case which occurred in Canada in 1995, involving a U19 provincial championship tournament, resulted in lifetime suspensions to the coach and assistant coach for "bringing the game into disrepute").

***3.09 I was yelling some instructions to my team during a match and the assistant referee told me I could only give them "tactical instructions" and that I had to stay by the bench. Just how much coaching can I do during a game, anyway?***

It used to be that coaches were not allowed to issue any instructions at all to their players except at half-time. In recent years this has been considerably relaxed, but you should still stay near your own bench and refrain from shouting things like "Man on!" and "Pass the ball to Jimmy, then overlap!" You should also note that you are obliged to "behave in a responsible manner". If your behaviour is deemed sufficiently unsatisfactory, you may be required by the referee to leave the match (in some jurisdictions, coaches, like players, can be shown a yellow or red card by the referee, but this is not part of the LOTG) -- this is the equivalent of a red card, and you should expect to be called before a disciplinary hearing if this happens to you.

***3.10 I heard that a substitute can be sent off without ever getting on the field -- is that possible?***

Yes. Law 3 clearly states that substitutes, like players on the pitch, are subject to the referee's authority. You should make it clear to your substitutes that they must be careful to refrain from offences such as dissent (this can be a problem if they are warming up near the assistant referee and happen to disagree with a call). If one of your substitutes is sent off for any reason before getting into the game, you will not be able to replace him or her on the bench. **Note** that if this happens, you can still field your normal complement of players (in other words, you won't have to play short one player).

***3.11 The referee sent one of our players off during the half-time interval for spitting at an opponent, and he wouldn't let us replace that player even though the offense happened before the kick-off for the second half. What's going on?***

The referee was correct: no substitute may be sent on for a player who is sent off during the half-time interval, and the team must play the second half short one player. Sorry!

## LAW 4 - The Players' Equipment

### ***Thumbnail***

Law 4, equipment, is basically divided into two sections: items a player **may not** use or wear, and equipment which a player **must** wear. The primary consideration of this law is safety. After that, the Law ensures that players look like a soccer team, and that they do not gain an unfair advantage merely through superior equipment, such as a helmet to assist heading.

The Law says a player may not wear anything which may be harmful to himself or another player (and specifically bans all kinds of jewelry). It also specifies that a player must wear a jersey or shirt, shorts, stockings, shinguards and footwear (i.e., shoes). Goalkeepers must wear colors that distinguish them from other players and the officials.

### ***Commentary***

Generally, a referee or assistant referee will inspect players prior to a match, and obvious equipment problems will be pointed out and corrected at that time. However, just because the players have passed this initial inspection, they are not excused from complying with all the rules if the referee finds he has missed something, or if they change something after the inspection. One of the most frequent occurrences concerns shirts coming untucked during play, in which case the referee may require them to be tucked back in. Law 4 is enforceable throughout the match, and at all times while the referee is present. The punishment for violations after the match has started is that the referee will instruct the player to leave the field and correct the problem. He cannot return without the permission of the referee, and his team must therefore play short. If such a player reenters without permission, he must be cautioned (yellow carded).

Safety is the prime consideration. Nothing hard nor sharp will be permitted outside of the basic requirement for shinguards and shoes. Nothing sharp is permitted in any circumstances. In particular, jewelry must normally be removed: taping over is not sufficient. Medical I.D. bracelets or necklaces are normally the only possible exception, and are subject to the referee's decision on a case-by-case basis. The referee will make a thorough examination of non-required equipment such as caps and gloves, permitting or excluding these also on a case-by-case basis.

### ***Questions on Law 4***

#### ***4.01 What kind of shoes should my players wear?***

Law 4 only requires that shoes not be dangerous to the wearer or to other players, so many ordinary sneakers could pass minimum technical muster. Nevertheless, shoes are probably a player's most important equipment consideration. The point of specially designed soccer shoes is to give the player ideal traction and good feel for and control of the ball. Coaches should advise players to buy shoes made specifically for soccer. The shoes should have soft leather uppers giving good feel for the ball. Other materials designed to impart additional spin on the ball, etc., may be considered by advanced players. Shoes should be snug to enhance feel, but comfortable.

#### ***4.02 My son says he wants something called "6-stud cleats". What's he talking about? Should I let him have them?***

The selection of stud types and patterns depends on the field conditions. Most players prefer molded stud shoes which are very versatile and can be used on dry grass, wet grass and light mud. However, if the ground is very dry, indoor "flats" or turf shoes (with many small studs, designed for artificial surfaces) will work just as well as molded shoes and may be more comfortable, especially if the ground is also very hard. When the ground is very muddy and soft, molded studs or even "screw-ins" (shoes with six replaceable studs) may provide optimum traction (these are the "6-stud cleats" your son is talking about). The advantage of the 6-stud shoe in these conditions is that the mud does not pack up between the studs. If the ground is hard, however, players should **not** wear these cleats, which are likely to hurt their feet.

For indoor play, soccer shoes with flat soles are advisable; turf shoes may give too much traction and should be avoided. In truth, indoor soccer can be played with just about any type of "tennis" shoe or sneaker, even basketball shoes. For Futsal soccer on a basketball court, basketball shoes may even be preferable.

Players with wide feet may have trouble finding shoes that fit and are comfortable. You will find a tremendous amount of variation from one manufacturer to another: all players have their favorite shoes, and all the reputable manufacturers make shoes of good quality. In general, expect to get what you pay for, but shop around and don't buy top-of-the-line shoes just because your child wants them in order to look cool! Depending on the age of the child and the rate of growth, these shoes may only last a single season, so buy accordingly. Remember: Played barefoot for years!

#### ***4.03 Are there any kinds of shoes which should not be worn?***

The Law no longer makes any particular technical specifications such as material or stud size, so it is up to each individual referee to rule in each specific case whether a shoe may or may not be used. Generally, since safety is the issue, the question is whether or not the studs have sharp edges which might cut another player. For that reason, shoes designed for other sports, particularly baseball, are **not** acceptable because the studs have sharp corners and edges. Metal studs are fine as long as they are **not worn or sharpened** in any way that creates a sharp edge. Because sharp edges can be a problem, some recreational leagues do not allow metal studs at all.

#### ***4.04 What kind of uniforms should we buy?***

In choosing uniforms, coaches should first think about player comfort. What is the weather like where you play most of the time? Do you want long sleeves or short sleeves? Heavier material or light? Dark colors or light? Light colors reflect heat and are the first choice if your team plays lots of mid-day games in hot climates. Humidity is a factor. Shirts that breathe are very important if you play a lot in humid conditions. Long sleeves can be advantages indoors, or if you play outdoor night games in the fall.

#### ***4.05 The referee told our keeper that he had to change his jersey. We didn't understand why -- it's bright yellow, and we were wearing an all-blue strip.***

As you obviously know, goalkeepers are required to wear uniforms which distinguish them from their teammates. This is to enable the referee to distinguish the keeper -- who is the only player allowed to use his hands -- from the remainder of the players. But what colour were your opponents wearing? If they were in yellow, the referee would have had a lot of trouble distinguishing your keeper from them. This is almost certainly why he required the change.

Some referees may allow both keepers to wear the same jersey, as sometimes happens. Others may require one or both keepers to change, since it is possible for both keepers to be in the same area of the field simultaneously, especially late in the game if one team is behind by a goal and sends their keeper up to take part in a corner or free kick. In this case, you will just have to abide by the referee's decision, whatever it is. **Tip:** It's a good idea to have a couple of pinnies or t-shirts in different colours available for this eventuality.

#### ***4.06 Does Law 4 restrict our outfield players' choice of jerseys, shorts and so forth?***

Uniforms lend themselves to a number of tactical considerations which can spill over into gamesmanship, which in turn will be considered unsporting conduct by some referees. For example, it is easier for a player to spot a teammate by sock color than by shirt color, so coaches should consider selecting bright, easily seen socks in colors easy to pick out from a green background. But if you see an opponent trying to get away with wearing brightly colored socks different from his team, point him out to the referee... he's probably a striker or target player trying to make it easy for his teammates to find him! Although not strictly illegal under Law 4, interpretation and most local rules prohibit this kind of gamesmanship.

Similarly, it is usually best for goalkeepers to wear very bright colors and make themselves easily seen in order to encourage opponents to shoot directly at them. This extends to your other players: depending on your club colors, light, bright shirt colors that contrast with green and stand out from other teams in your league should be selected. Most local and tournament rules require that the home team be prepared to change colors if both teams have shirts too similar to one another. The most cost effective route to go here is to keep a full set of pinnies in an alternative color in the equipment shed at your home field, if you have one.

***4.07 I heard that the Laws do not actually require players' uniforms to be numbered -- is that right?***

Yes. Believe it or not, the FIFA LOTG do not require numbers on jerseys. However, it is unlikely you will ever encounter a referee who will permit play to begin without each player being numbered, or at the very least, some way to identify each individual player. Why? Because if someone misbehaves, the referee must have a way to identify and report this person to the disciplinarians. Presumably, FIFA considers that asking the player for his name is sufficient. In any event, rules about numbering are local rules, and they may differ from league to league and area to area.

As a humorous aside, our local rule used to state that "EVERY player must have a permanent number on his shirt and it must be different from all the other numbers on the team" We had an otherwise very good referee who tended to take rules to their extreme. So when he began carrying a marker pen so he could write a number on \$80 goalkeeper jerseys if they didn't have a number sewn or heat pressed, we had to change the rule. Now it says every player except the GK....! We figure we can identify the goalkeepers easily enough just by jersey color.

***4.08 Do either the LOTG themselves or local rules allow players to add any special clothing to their uniforms, such as long pants, when the weather is cold or bad?***

The most common other local rules deal with additional equipment which may be worn by goalkeepers and/or field players in bad weather. It is fairly common to allow GKs to wear long pants indoors or when a field is hard or rough. The goalkeeper for UConn in the 1997 NCAA women's final wore long pants, presumably because the field was frozen, and the wearing of long pants is increasingly common among professional keepers. FIFA rules permit sliders, compression shorts, bike pants, etc., to be worn under shorts so long as they are the same color as the shorts. Unfortunately, referees at the local level are not consistent about how they enforce this rule.

Many youth leagues, as a matter of common sense, permit kids to wear long pants or sweat pants under their shorts when it is cold or raining. They may also permit gloves and soft caps (stocking caps or knit ski caps, for instance). However, there often will be a rule that if one player wears them, everyone must wear them and they must all be the same, if the rule is actually part of the code. If you are playing in another jurisdiction, you should make a point of checking their local rules on players' equipment beforehand.

***4.09 One of my players was told by the referee to remove a hair band that the referee in the previous game had allowed her to wear. Why the inconsistency?***

In US high school soccer, the National Federation (NF) makes a distinction between items worn for function (sweat bands or head bands, for instance) and items worn for decorative purposes. Players are not allowed to wear decorative items. Girls' teams tend to push this rule to the limit with equipment to control hair, and it's pretty hard to tell where a hair control device in school colors stops being functional and starts being decorative. The bottom line is that referees have considerable latitude in deciding what is and is not permitted, and players simply have to accept the referee's decision, even if it seems idiosyncratic.

***4.10 One of my players has a cast on his arm. Can he play with it on, if it's well wrapped in foam and padding?***

Casts and braces are a difficult issue. FIFA does not mention them...they are entirely a local issue (although in the USA, the NF book goes into more detail). Basically, most leagues leave it entirely up to the referee to determine if they are safe or not, if they are padded enough or not, and during play, if they are



being used as a weapon or not. Some tournaments will allow players with casts to participate **providing the cast has been pre-approved by a tournament official**. In this case, they may want to photograph the cast so that the referee can see exactly what was approved and compare it with the cast's condition at game time.

Probably the most important thing for players and coaches to know about these items is that just because one referee allowed them does not mean the next referee must or will allow them...it will be game to game, and players and coaches must be mentally prepared for the times when those with casts or braces will not be allowed to play. Orthodontic braces pose some risk to the player wearing them as well, that their lips and mouth could get caught or cut by impacts with the ball, other players, or the ground, and require a trip to the emergency room for stitches. It might be a good idea for these players to invest in custom-fitted mouth guards from their dentist (about \$30-35 U.S.) for their own safety (cheaper store bought ones might do, but may not be nearly as comfortable to wear and breathe through).

***4.11 What's the situation with jewelry? Can players tape over it, or do they have to remove it altogether? Referees seem to have different standards about this.***

The very first section of Law 4 seems to include a flat prohibition of jewelry ("A player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewellery)"), and this is in fact the interpretation in many localities and by many referees. However, this is not necessarily the way Law 4 is regarded and enforced everywhere and by every referee. Once again, the bottom line is that the referee's word is law, even if it's not the same as what your last ref said. Some referees (not many) will allow neck chains; some will allow earring studs; some will allow studs if taped over; some will require every scrap of jewelry to be removed. It all depends how sensitive a ref is to the issue of player safety; some may err on the side of caution, while others may be more willing to allow players to play with some jewelry in place, as long as it does not appear to be dangerous.

***4.12 One of my players was told by the referee that his shinguards were not proper ones and that he had to replace them. It turned out that he had forgotten his shinguards and had put cardboard in his socks. Isn't that his own responsibility, though, and not the referee's?***

No, the referee was quite right. Shinguards must be worn, and they must be commercially available products designed to protect the shins, not some temporary item intended to comply with the letter, not the spirit, of the Law. In other words, they **must** consist of material sufficiently rigid and hard to provide reasonable protection against injury for the player's legs. Every year, players suffer serious lower leg injuries **despite** wearing proper shinguards; all the more reason to ensure that all players have good protective equipment. The referee would have been negligent if he had allowed your player on the field.

**Note 1:** there are some commercially available shin guards which meet the letter of the law, but which are unacceptable except in very young age groups. These are the so-called "sock guards": cloth leg and ankle wrappings which are filled with foam rubber. These offer no protection to older players, and no good referee will permit them.

**Note 2:** sometimes older players will come to a match wearing small shinguards clearly meant for much younger players. These also violate the provisions of Law 4, as they do not provide the required degree of reasonable protection, and the referee's should not permit players to wear them.

## Law 5 - The Referee

### ***Thumbnail***

The referee has full authority to make all decisions regarding all 17 Laws. On matters of fact, such as whether a goal was scored or a foul was committed, the referee's decisions are final and not subject to appeal. The referee's authority extends to the coaches and other spectators, if needed.

While ensuring the safety of the players is the referee's primary objective, he should permit the game to flow and not call trivial fouls, nor should he call fouls where stopping play for a free kick would be less beneficial to the fouled team than permitting play to continue.

An important tool for the referee is Law 18, Common Sense.

### ***Commentary***

Unlike American [gridiron] football, soccer is a fluid, non-stop game without built-in breaks in play to permit the players or coaches to choose whether to accept penalties. Instead, the referee has been given the authority both to identify fouls and to decide whether to call them, while the game continues. This exercise in real-time judgment is usually carried out more consistently when done by only one person.

When appraising a referee, a coach or other observer should watch at least one half of a game to try to understand the referee's sense of game flow, and not judge on the basis of one or two calls.

### ***Questions on Law 5***

#### ***5.01 What is the advantage rule?***

This rule says, don't stop play for a foul if the play continuing on the field is already working or expected to work to the benefit of the fouled team.

#### ***5.02 Okay, that's the technical definition. Can you give an example?***

Sure. Suppose a breakaway is starting, and three attackers, with the ball, have just crossed the halfway line and are confronted by two defenders. There's nothing else between them and the goal except about forty yards of field and the goalkeeper. One defender deliberately throws herself at the attacker, bringing down both the attacker and herself. The action is a clear foul, and probably deserves a caution as well. But... the ball squirts free and goes right to one of the other attackers, and suddenly a two-on-one breakaway has started.

Consider the referee's options. One option is to stop play, show a yellow card, and have the ball brought back to the spot of the foul for the free kick. While this is happening, the defenders will get organized, and the free kick will probably not lead to a breakaway. The other option is to let play continue, on the basis that a two-on-one breakaway is a major advantage for the attacking team, possibly even better than the original three-on-two. If the referee is going to show a yellow card, he can still do so the next time play stops. In either case, a genuine foul was observed. However, under the second option, although the referee called the foul, he didn't stop play for the free kick, and play continued because the play going on was more advantageous to the fouled team than a free kick would have been. (Advantage implies that the foul was called, i.e., recognized by the referee -- however, play was not stopped. In the American gridiron football sense, the referee judged that the fouled team would decline the penalty if given the choice.)

There's a similar case that is often confused with advantage, but is not. Suppose that the defender attempts a tackle and while doing so trips the attacker, but only causes her to stumble briefly, after which she continues on with the ball still under control. Some referees will blow the whistle, but to most referees, this situation is trifling and \*not a foul at all\* -- it's merely an "attempted foul." If the act isn't a foul, then the subsequent decision isn't advantage, rather the referee simply decided to ignore it.

To be a foul most actions need to have some effect on the play. In the words of Law 12, the act must be committed "in a manner...careless, reckless or using excessive force." Causing a momentary stumble may not be any of those.

The Laws formerly contained this beautiful paragraph, which still applies even though the words are no longer there:

"The Laws of the Game are intended to provide that games should be played with as little interference as possible, and in this view it is the duty of referees to penalise only deliberate breaches of the Law. Constant whistling for trifling and doubtful breaches produces bad feeling and loss of temper on the part of the players and spoils the pleasure of spectators."

***5.03 How do I know when advantage has been applied?***

The signal is for the referee to extend both arms forward. The referee may also say "Play on," and/or "Advantage." This means that the referee saw a foul, but elected not to stop play for a free kick. If it was a serious foul that will lead to a yellow or red card, the referee can still show the card the next time play stops. (If a red card is coming, the referee will almost always stop play immediately.)

***5.04 The referee said, "Play on, advantage," but then stopped play. Why?***

The referee first applied advantage, but then he realized that the play wasn't working out as well for the fouled team as he thought it would, so he changed his mind and awarded the free kick instead. This is perfectly acceptable, and the Law gives the referee a few seconds to change his mind.

***5.05 The referee uses advantage sometimes, but usually he just awards free kicks. How does he decide which way to do it?***

Usually, advantage is given to an attacking team in the opponents' half of the field when a good attacking opportunity is developing, although advantage is almost never given when the alternative is a penalty kick! Defenders in their own half are almost always given free kicks instead of advantage. Another consideration is that referees usually don't use advantage early in the game, before they have established a feeling for how the game is "flowing" -- if the game doesn't seem to "flow" at all, many referees will avoid advantage entirely.

***5.06 Some referees blow the whistle for every little thing, while others let some pretty physical play go. Why?***

The referee is supposed to let play continue unless fouls are creating injury, causing the team in possession to lose the ball, or leading to bad feelings on the part of the players that may result in retaliation. Some referees correctly sense that the players (and coaches and parents) are willing to tolerate physical play without becoming angry, and let play continue without interruption, which helps the players' enjoyment. Another referee may make the same judgment, but be in error, leading to the players retaliating for what they perceive to be uncalled fouls. On the other hand, a referee who calls too many trivial fouls also spoils the enjoyment of players and spectators.

The fouls that a referee chooses to call indicate his skill at recognizing fouls and his sense of how much control he needs to exercise in each particular game. If you, the coach, think the referee is drawing the line at the wrong point and trouble is brewing, you should share your opinion, in a way calculated to appeal to the referee.

At younger ages, referees are instructed to call more fouls, to help teach the players what is and isn't permitted.

***5.07 This referee is very slow to blow the whistle. Isn't that bad practice?***

This might just indicate prudence, not poor refereeing. Some referees tend to wait a little while after fouls to see what the effect of the foul is on the play. If there's no effect, or if there is advantage to the fouled team, they may not call anything.

***5.08 I asked the referee about a call he made, and in reply he mentioned some Laws that I can't find in the book. What's going on?***

The laws are meant to be very brief and simply define a legal soccer game. They do not include instructions on how to play or how to referee. To help referees apply the laws consistently, FIFA and USSF (the international and USA soccer federations, respectively) provide additional instructions and advice which carry the weight of law, even though they are not in the book. Furthermore, in 1997 the lawbook was rewritten and some of this extra material that was formerly included was removed to make the text shorter still. However, this material still applies. FIFA is preparing a book of instructions for referees, which should be out within a couple of years. In the USA, USSF is preparing a booklet, "USSF Guide to the Laws" covering many of these questions, which should be available in mid-1998.

The SOCCER-COACH-L web page includes links to several of these resources, including FIFA's Laws of the Game (as revised 1997), FIFA's Questions and Answers on the Laws of the Game (not yet updated to reflect the new laws), and United States Soccer Federation Memorandums explaining changes to the laws and recommended practices. Except for the Q&A, each of these is updated at least every year.

If you still have a copy of the Laws from before 1997, **be sure to keep it**. Even though the book was rewritten, only a few substantive changes were made. The major changes were: scoring permitted from kick-off and goal kick, ball does not have to move its circumference to be in play on a kick restart, keeper can't handle throw in from a teammate, and the keeper may move along the goal line at a penalty kick. Otherwise, excepting a few minor points that are mentioned in these web pages, the 1996 laws still apply, including some details that are not even in the current book.

The earlier editions contained the following sections of special importance:

- International Board decisions accompanying each Law;
- "Additional Instructions Regarding the Laws of the Game";
- diagrams illustrating offside;
- diagrams illustrating serious foul play;
- "Cooperation Between the Referee and Linesmen"; and
- illustrations of signals by the officials.

***5.09 Usually there's only one referee for our games, and he doesn't always see when the ball goes over a line. How can we help him?***

You can offer to provide two assistant referees or linesmen. They can raise a flag when the ball completely passes outside the field. If they are trained or even certified referees themselves, the referee may accept their inputs on other matters, such as offside or fouls.

***5.10 My son, who was lining our game, saw a foul and waved his flag. The referee saw him, but told him to put the flag down. Why did he ignore his assistant?***

There are two possible explanations. One is that the referee was treating your son as a "club linesman," and had asked him only to signal when the ball went out -- even though your son saw something the referee didn't. Club linesmen are officials who aren't certified referees, and/or aren't technically neutral, being affiliated with one of the teams. The other explanation is that the referee also saw the incident and decided either that it was not a foul at all, or that advantage should be applied.

***5.11 The other team's supporters became very angry and abusive, and the referee terminated the game. We were ahead at the time, but the referee wouldn't say that we won. Why not?***

The referee has the authority to manage the game, including terminating it if things get out of control. However, he doesn't have authority to assign a winner, except by reporting the number of goals that were scored. He will send a report on the game to the league, and the league will have to decide what to do.

***5.12 Why doesn't the referee explain his calls? An American football referee has an extensive repertoire of signals.***

Soccer referees use the whistle to stop play, and then an arm signal to indicate how play will restart -- not to explain why it was stopped. For instance, after a goal is scored the referee points to the center circle, because the next play will be a kick-off. If there's a foul, the players involved usually know what happened, and just want to know that a free kick has been awarded. Most referees will explain what the call was if asked, however they are not obliged to. But remember that the referee has a limited vocabulary to explain fouls -- there are only about a dozen fouls mentioned in Law 12, a very small set of terms to describe the multitude of unfair things that can happen on the field. If you ask the referee after the game, he may give you a fuller description of what he saw and how he made the judgment.

***5.13 The referee awarded my team a free kick. Then he saw the linesman's flag up, talked with him, and then awarded the other team a throw in. Can he do that?***

Yes, he can. If play hasn't already been restarted, the referee can correct his calls. In your case, apparently the ball went over the touch line without the referee realizing it, and then the foul occurred after the ball came back in. Because the ball was technically out of play, a free kick couldn't be awarded for the foul, although the referee could have shown a yellow or red card for misconduct -- whether the ball was in play or not.

***5.14 This referee never looks at his linesmen, so he's missing some important calls. What can I do?***

It's really up to the linesmen to do something to get themselves more involved. If you can say it nicely, you might mention the referee's poor mechanics to the referee assignor. This referee probably works most games by himself, and isn't accustomed to working with assistants.

***5.15 Why doesn't the referee always stop play when a player is injured?***

The law says the referee should stop for a "serious" injury, but let play continue until the ball goes out of play for minor injuries. The dividing line between serious and minor injuries is up to the referee, although referees are usually quicker to stop the game when younger children are involved. Another factor in the referee's decision is whether a strong attacking play is going on -- if the injured player's team is about to score he is more likely to let play continue. Some players know the protocol whereby the team in possession kicks the ball into touch when they see an injured player, and then other team throws the ball back to them on the restart, but it is rarely seen in American youth soccer, and the referee often has to intervene.

On other occasions, the referee may judge that the supposedly injured player is merely faking an injury in order to cause the referee to stop play, to nullify the opponents' advantage. This is a very tricky question, and the referee must make a fine judgment in a very few seconds.

***5.16 After some bad language between players, the referee stopped play, gave the players a talking-to, and restarted with an indirect free kick. That calmed the situation, and the game concluded normally. Later, I looked in the law book, and discovered the referee can't do that. Once he stops play like that, an indirect free kick is only the legal restart if he calls a foul like obstruction or cautions one of the players involved. Can or should I do anything?***

Obviously this referee didn't want to go overboard in dealing with the players, and no doubt he chose this solution to help with game control. In US High School rules, what the referee did was proper provided one team had clear possession. Under the FIFA rules, however, you are quite correct that a referee who did this would have committed a technical error which could lead to a successful protest by one of the teams. If the match in question was governed by FIFA and not NF rules, what the incident shows is that soccer referees have -- and exercise -- a great deal of latitude in interpretation. Sometimes referees will do things which are not in strict accordance with the rules because their sense of the "Spirit of the Game" overrides the letter of the Laws. In a case like this, given that creative law-bending can backfire if a legalistic protest is filed, many referees will avoid a drop ball by calling a foul -- no matter how trivial -- on

one of the players. This enables them to stop the game, speak to both players and restart the action smoothly.

***5.17 Two of our players got into a fight during pre-game warmups. The referee, who was on the field inspecting the other team, saw it, and wouldn't let them play in the game -- just as if he had shown them both a red card. Can he do that? The game hadn't even started.***

The referee's authority over the players and other aspects of a match begins when he enters the area of the field -- when he leaves the dressing room, if there is one -- and continues until he departs after the conclusion of the match. So yes, he was within his rights to forbid the two players from participating, just as if the incident had occurred during the game. If he followed accepted procedure, he would have done this without showing a red card, however -- cards are reserved for players and substitutes, while the game is going on. The referee can also issue a sending-off for a fight or other serious misconduct that occurs at half-time or after the conclusion of the match, such as when the teams are shaking hands. A referee is supposed to report such incidents to the league; most leagues treat them the same as send-offs during play as far as suspensions or other penalties are concerned.

**Note 1 :** even if these players were listed as starters, you should have been permitted to substitute other players for them -- in other words, you should not have had to play short-handed because of an incident which took place before the start of play.

**Note 2:** you should note that the referee's authority extends only to the immediate vicinity of the field. If your players had been seen by the referee fighting in the parking lot before the game, he would have reported the incident, but could not have prevented the players from taking part in the match.

Many referees make a point of departing immediately at the conclusion of match to avoid becoming involved in any trouble -- this may be especially true if the referee believes himself to be the likely target.

***5.18 Why aren't referees more consistent? Why don't they just follow the Laws of the Game?***

There are at least four major factors that contribute to what is perceived as inconsistent refereeing: differences from one referee to another, differences from one game to another, differences from one part of a game to another, and occasional inconsistencies between the letter of the law and what players and coaches perceive as fairness.

It's obvious that referees vary in personality, fitness, approach to game management, knowledge of the laws, and experience -- to name a few important factors. There's not much that can be done in any one game, although over the long run coaches can feed evaluations to referee assignors and administrators. Positive words about the better referees, and constructive criticism of weaker ones usually work best.

As far as the other sources of variation are concerned, the referee may be doing exactly the right thing by being inconsistent, as strange as that may seem. The referee is not just enforcing the Laws -- he is charged with managing the entire "spectacle" of the match, which requires flexibility. In general, a referee who likes to let the game flow always needs to monitor the attitudes of players and coaches and be ready to "tighten up" when the situation warrants.

Different games need to be handled differently. For example, high school boys varsity players usually expect and can tolerate more physical contact than young girls in a recreational league. Some high schools have very intense rivalries where every game is a war, with bad feelings even before the opening kick-off. Ethnic groups differ in playing style, expectations regarding physical contact, and tendencies to waste time or dive or fake fouls. The referee needs to consider all these issues in determining what needs to be called. The problems are magnified when the teams have conflicting expectations, or when a major title rides on the final score.

The referee's attitude to game control may change as the game goes along. In the first minute, the referee doesn't know whether a game is going to flow, but in the second half he probably does, although the mood can change abruptly. Games can change quickly. For instance, a game which starts out very intense and close may become a blowout if one team loses heart after one or two goals. In such a case, the losing team may feel insulted and try to get even by fouling, or may simply give up and offer token opposition, so

the referee cannot easily predict the mood of the losing team. Conversely, an underdog may be surprisingly competitive, leading their opponents to become intense and combative as they see their anticipated easy victory melt away.

Sometimes the referee seems to violate the Laws themselves in the interest of fairness. Suppose a team takes a quick free kick from the wrong location (wrong in their favor) just outside the opponents' penalty area, but shoots over the goal. According to the Laws, the restart was not conducted properly and the specified action is to retake it. Practically, however, the referee doesn't give a second chance, and awards a goal kick. (If they score, then the retake may be in order.) In an important sense, the referee is not bending the law in this case, but is just following the directive not to stop the game for "trifling and doubtful breaches." The offense is trifling in relation to the potential consequences of any intervention by the referee, so he is quite right to ignore it.

Another case of the referee paying attention to the overall situation rather than minor details arises when time expires as the ball is heading towards the goal in a tied game. Technically, time is up when it's up, but most players and coaches would prefer to let the game be settled then and there.

***5.19 You sound like referees are being noble when they depart from the letter of the law to be more "fair." But we have to adjust to a completely different style of interpretation almost every game. Talk about unfair! Even if they have reasons to bend the law sometimes, why can't they at least be the same as each other?***

Adjusting to referees is something coaches have to do -- there's no denying that. For example, you might decide to discontinue the offside trap if offside calls seem erratic. A case like offside will probably affect both teams equally, but at other times, a referee's idiosyncracies may end up benefiting one team, even though no bias is intended. If the ref awards a penalty kick for handling the ball in a case that almost all referees would have judged accidental and not a foul, you can lose the game, with no chance to get even because it only happened once. If that happens, you have to console yourself with the belief that had the same thing occurred to the other team, the same call would have been made -- which is usually the case. Sometimes the ref's style can systematically benefit one team which happens to have players whose play takes advantage -- for example by permitting the ball to be played by crossed arms on the chest. Start with the attitude of "that's how the laws are for this game," and take advantage of them or ignore them, as you wish -- but remember the referee is probably trying to be fair, he's just different.

At least in the USA, the number of soccer programs has grown so explosively in the past decade that the supply of referees and, more importantly, referee instructors hasn't kept up. We can only hope that as the sport matures, a higher and higher proportion of referees will attend clinics and come out with a more consistent view of their role and the laws.

***5.20 Why are the Laws changed so often? The referees are too inconsistent already and changing the Law just increases the amount of variation.***

"The spirit of the game," or the players' and fans' unwritten understanding of how a fair game of soccer works, is the key to the evolution of the Laws. Soccer was widely played before the first laws were written in the middle of the 19th century. The first unified rules were an attempt to find common ground among pre-existing codes that had slight differences to permit inter-regional play, rather than the creation of a new game. Still today, most of the world's soccer players and fans learn the game informally as children, and may never have formal exposure to the Laws of the Game. The game they learn is based on a fair chance for all players, not legal technicalities, and evolves only slowly. The current Laws should be understood as a codification of that widely-shared informal idea of fair soccer, not a new game defined from scratch. The codification may not match everybody's idea of what's fair, but that is the intention. As noted earlier, when referees occasionally depart from the letter of the law (assuming it's not a simple mistake) it's often in the belief their decision is more in this spirit.

Because playing to the Laws does not always lead to a result that is preceived to be fair, and because the style in which the game is played changes over time, occasional changes are required. When the International Board decides that goalkeepers should not be permitted to handle a throw-in from their teammates, for example, it is because they believe that too many teams have been using this tactic to take

the ball effectively out of play and deny the other team a fair chance to play. This may not be a problem in the games we coach, but the International Board is more concerned with matches such as the World Cup. So if you encounter some new wrinkle in the laws you think is unnecessary, like the "pass-back" law, remember it's in there to promote fair play, not just to annoy you.

**5.21 I am respectful toward referees and acknowledge they usually know more about the LOTG than I do, but there's no getting around the conclusion that this ref's a bozo. He's killing the enjoyment even when he's not killing our team (and sometimes our opponent) with bad judgment, bad calls from out of position, poor game management, and occasionally, ignorance or misinterpretation of the rules. What can I constructively do?**

Rule No. 1 is never argue with a bad referee, since you expose yourself to the real chance of getting tossed out for dissent and, even if you get away with arguing, you probably will just make the referee worse. Remember, newer refs who are already nervous will make even more mistakes when you yell, and stupid ones aren't going to bother to read the rules just because of your griping. Unless it's something as bad as allowing a retake of a PK because your goalkeeper moved along the line, it's probably not worth the risk to even politely challenge the referee's knowledge of the rules. About all that you can constructively do is to ask -- **politely** -- for clarification: "Sorry, ref, I wasn't watching; what was the call, please?" A bit more aggressive is something like "Sir, I am not dissenting from the call, but just asking, did you see the [insert alleged infraction here] and take it into consideration?". However, you'd better have a charming personality to pull this off, and not try it too often.

You can complain or appeal to league or tournament authorities **after** the game about referees who are truly awful and in over their heads at that level of play, but remember: the referee is final judge of facts, and you won't win arguments about factual interpretations, and your complaints will carry more weight if you are the **winning** team.

If the referee is making systematic errors, such as not knowing this year's law changes, you can factor that in to your team's tactics -- for instance avoid the offside trap if the referee or linesman doesn't seem to know the offside law.

You might look at the referee's badge and see if it is for the current year. But even if it is, not all referees attend clinics as part of their recertification, and they don't all read the lawbook. Remember too that there are refs who simply don't agree with some recent law changes or official interpretations and are reluctant to enforce them.

**5.22 Same question as 5.21, except that this time the referee's bad judgment and game management is literally killing your team - the game is getting unacceptably rough and out of hand, and you're afraid someone may get badly hurt. What can you constructively do?**

This is a very difficult issue. **First**, it helps if you haven't been whining all along to the ref about every instance where one of your players was charged or tackled, thereby demonstrating your palpable ignorance of the rules and SOTG about allowable physical contact in what is after all, a contact sport. **Second**, it will help if the opposing coach feels the same way; send an emissary (unless perhaps the rough stuff by the other team appears a deliberate strategy encouraged by their coach). **Third**, this is one time you may have a duty to speak up to the referee that you are concerned for the safety of the players on both teams (not: "That was a horrible no-call on that last tackle!"). **Fourth**, you can try having your team deliberately kick the ball out of play very often to simply try to slow the game down for awhile. **Fifth**, send someone to get the referee assignor or some league official over to observe what's going on, if possible. **Sixth**, if all else fails, you have a tough decision: is this bad enough that in good conscience, you really must pull your team off the field for their safety? If so, quickly poll your players' parents about what they want to do (get them on record as behind you), and know that this is a major decision, falling on your sword for the good of everyone involved. **NOTE:** There's probably a league rule suspending coaches who pull their teams out of games, and you should be aware that pulling your team off the field may have serious consequences for you personally.



***5.23 There's no all-girl league at the right age group for the upcoming indoor season, but my girls want to play. I'm thinking of entering the team in a boys' league that will also have some coed teams. Will the girls be safe?***

Mixed games are a problem, but the referee can create an environment that's safe for everyone. Boys may be larger, faster and more aggressive than girls, depending on the age, which can cause potential safety issues simply through the action of physics -- momentum equals mass times velocity. At ages roughly under 12, boys may not recognize potentially dangerous situations and take action to avoid them. To counter these forces, the referee will need to keep a relatively tight rein on things, and stop all forms of careless and reckless play. This is a challenge, but it can be done. However, if the girls are smaller and not used to the speed and level of aggressiveness, be prepared for them to get legitimately knocked around to some degree. You will need to keep a close watch on things, and tell the referee (in the right way) if your players are being endangered or intimidated, and possibly tell the league management if things seem to be out of hand. If the response is tough luck for entering a boys' league, you might consider withdrawing the team -- even withdrawing from the current game. Another suggestion is to sign up a couple of boys.

## Law 6 - The Assistant Referees

### Thumbnail

Assistant Referees (ARs), or linesmen, help the referee by drawing to his attention matters that they are better placed to see. The referee may grant them more or less authority, depending on their qualifications and degree of neutrality. Final authority remains with the center referee.

### Commentary

In a team of three qualified referees, the ARs are responsible for making the following calls: when the ball is out of play; what the restart should be (throw-in, goal kick, corner kick, or kick-off); and offside. An AR's primary focus should be on offside, which controls his positioning. On most ball out calls, the referee will also know the restart, and may make the call himself without looking at the AR. The referee team's operations depend on the qualifications of the ARs and the center referee's attitude towards teamwork.

### Questions on Law 6

**6.01 The ball went out off a Blue player, and the AR pointed his flag for a Red throw in. But the center referee didn't look at the flag and gave the throw to Blue; the AR just changed the direction he was pointing. Why didn't the AR try to correct the center ref to get the proper restart?**

A: It doesn't do a referee team any good to have public disagreements. The AR was just doing the right thing by going along with the referee's call. If the AR thinks the center ref gets too many calls wrong, he should tell him privately.

**6.02 Some fouls are occurring right in front of the AR, and he isn't calling them.**

A: The ARs may have been instructed by the referee not to call any fouls. This isn't good practice, but it happens -- remember, the ARs' duties are "subject to the decision of the referee." It may also be that the AR is quite properly concentrating on who is in offside position, which can require one's full attention at times, and he just doesn't see the fouls.

**6.03 I don't think this AR knows the offside law very well. I'm trying to help him by calling out "That's offside!" on subtle cases, and reminding him that offside position is determined when the ball is played not when it's received, but he just glares at me and refuses to raise his flag. I can even point out obvious things like, "That's a handball, ref!" and they still pay no attention.**

A: Constructively influencing the referee and ARs is a tricky question. It's especially frustrating in the case of offside and handling the ball, because these seem to be based on simple facts compared to fuzzier fouls like pushing or unfair charging -- one might think the referee would appreciate the information.

Consider the AR-offside case. You might be calling too soon. Even though a player is in offside position, it's not always clear who is "involved in active play" at the moment the ball is played -- the AR can be doing the right thing by waiting a few seconds (see the discussion of Law 11). Even after a short delay, it may still not be clear whether the offside player, or some other players, is involved or merely a spectator. Sometimes, the ball isn't played towards the offside player at all, and his involvement only becomes evident after he's run all the way across the field, which takes time. Experience helps an AR determine involvement more quickly, but there still may be legitimate delay.

Suppose the AR determines an offside infraction exists, but by that time you've shouted "Hey, that's offside!" several times -- and the grandstand is right behind you. Assume the AR doesn't realize it's offside position and therefore maybe an infraction -- he won't call it on the basis of your words. Or assume he does -- he still may be reluctant to call if it's not clear-cut, and his reluctance is reinforced by an unwillingness to let the crowd think he's following your instructions.

Referees and ARs think about about preserving their objective and impartial status, as well as getting the individual calls right. Ideally, a referee who is annoyed by your comments will warn and/or caution you, and ignore you in his calls. The AR is in a more difficult position, because he can't warn or caution a coach directly -- he must get the referee to do it, and he may not want to draw so much attention to himself.

Take the case of the possible handling that's not called. The referee (or AR) maybe (a) was screened or looking elsewhere and didn't see it, (b) saw something but wasn't be sure exactly what, (c) saw it perfectly, and judged it was not deliberate, or (d) saw it perfectly, and the ball and hand never made contact. Occasionally you may persuade a referee who's on the verge of a call, but a shout of "Ref, that's a handball! Don't you see anything?" usually serves merely to irritate and is counter-productive. This is especially true with inexperienced officials who can become rattled, leading to worse calls, not better.

Also remember that officials have to monitor action all over the field and are not always looking at the same things you are. An inexperienced referee is more likely to be watching the ball and miss fouls committed with the hands and body above the waist.

Some officials won't talk with coaches, period. Others are happy to discuss calls, and may be receptive to other viewpoints, but only if it's done quietly and in a manner that doesn't seem to compromise their position. Comments that explicitly acknowledge the referee's situation have a better chance of success -- "I know you want to see if there's any tripping, but I think you're missing some pushing up at shoulder level," or "We rely on the offside trap, so I don't mind if you have to miss some throw in calls because you're concentrating on the offside line instead."

***6.04 One of the scheduled linesmen scheduled for our match has not shown up, it's game time, and no other certified referees are available to substitute for the missing linesman. The referee has proposed that we recruit a "club" linesman to substitute for the missing linesman in this match. What effect would this have on the refereeing of the match under the LOTG, and what is the proper way to choose who is to serve as the club linesman in this situation?***

A "club" linesman is simply one who is not a certified referee, usually recruited shortly before the match from among the more knowledgeable soccer spectators on hand to serve when a certified (referee) linesman is not available. Properly, under the LOTG a club linesman is more limited with respect to the matters they may call to assist the referee than is a certified linesman. Specifically, they CAN call the ball in or out over the touchline or goal lines and signal the referee with a flag which team is entitled to possession of balls gone out of play over these lines (by indicating direction for throw-ins and goal kick v. corner kick for balls out over the goal line). However, they CANNOT signal for offside, nor signal for fouls committed outside the sight of the referee, unlike official linesmen.

If one of the linesman for a match is a certified (referee) linesman but the other is a club linesman, the proper result called for by the LOTG is to convert \*both\* of them into club linesman for that match. This obviously impacts the practical ability of the center referee to monitor offside situations, as well as to increase the possibility of being momentarily screened or turned away from offenses on the field, with no official backup assistance.

For this reason, often the referee and both teams will mutually agree before the game, if a suitably knowledgeable and impartial person to serve can be found, to waive these limitations and promote the club linesman to a full linesman. Or, sometimes instead the mutual agreement is to have an official linesman with full duties serving one half of the field and a club linesman with limited duties serving the other, with the idea that the effects of the imbalance will even out and be overall fair since each team will have the official linesman at their respective attacking end for one half of the game and the club linesman for the other half. Although either of these alternatives often turn out satisfactory in practice, be aware that they are technically improper under the LOTG and accordingly, neither can be forced on an unwilling team or an unwilling center referee. While in lesser games than international competition and serious tournament championships the relevant authorities may be perfectly happy to turn a blind eye to this particular irregularity and accept the results of the match, provided everyone willingly agrees to the nonstandard

arrangement beforehand, it is doubtful the result of the match can stand against the protest of a losing team who either failed to agree to it, or was kept in the dark about it.

Another important issue is the choice of person(s) to serve as club linesman, which can if done unwisely sour what could otherwise be a mutually acceptable irregularity in expanding their role as linesman. Although parents of players are often pressed into service as regular club linesmen, you should nominate someone who is as knowledgeable and free from the appearance or reality of partisanship as is possible wherever nonstandard variations in the role of linesman are being contemplated, and disclose the nature of their affiliation with your team, if any, to the referee and to the opponent, and make sure they are agreeable to this person.

## Law 7 - Timekeeping and Duration of the Game

### *Thumbnail*

**Leave your expectations from other sports behind: soccer timekeeping is different.**

- I. **Game structure:** A soccer game consists of two halves that must be of equal length in their prescribed duration, with a required timeout for halftime in between. In adult soccer, the prescribed duration is 45 minutes. Local organizations can prescribe shorter, though still equal-length halves (and therefore, games) for youth and adult recreational games.
- II. **Center referee as official timekeeper:** The center referee acts as official timekeeper, and has flexible discretion that is perhaps unique in team sports to determine and extend the amount of official time remaining in the game, as will be explored in more detail below.
- III. **Continuous, nonstop clock:** The official clock starts at 0:00 and runs upward continuously except at halftime, starting in the second half where it left off at the end of the first, stopping again only at the end of the game. The following important rules are outgrowths from the nonstop nature of the clock:
  - A. **No rule exists allowing clock to be stopped:** The rules give no authorization for the referee to ever stop the official clock from running, except for halftime.
  - B. **No timeouts (none!):** Neither players nor coaches have any right to call a timeout, nor is the referee authorized to recognize or call timeout on his or her own initiative.
  - C. **Fouls or ball out of play:** The clock does not stop for any stoppage in active play, whether it be for a player foul or to retrieve and place a ball that has gone out back into play.
- IV. **Referee's discretion to add time to game:** Instead of stopping the clock, the referee is authorized to add extra time to each half to compensate for time lost through:
  - A. attending to injuries on the field;
  - B. completing player substitutions;
  - C. delays in putting the ball back into active play after it goes out, whether through deliberate time-wasting tactics, or accidental causes like having to retrieve the game ball when it goes out and rolls down a slope into dense brush;
  - D. any other cause for interruption to active play the referee deems sufficient.
  1. The amount, if any, of time to add is at the discretion of the referee, as s/he deems appropriate. The exact language of LOTG 7 would seem to indicate that it is mandatory for the referee to extend this discretion for appropriate causes, but in practice the referee's decision to not extend, or very restrictively extend time is not truly subject to challenge except maybe in rare instances (perhaps, such as adding no time when a severe injury stops play for 30 minutes). Most referees do not add time for ordinary momentary delays, such as a few efficiently accomplished substitutions or a few stray balls that must be chased, but rather only when one particular delay or the cumulative effect of several delays becomes substantial. Although the **prescribed** length of the halves must be equal (and must be played out to at least this length), each half (and the game) may run longer than the prescribed amount due to this discretionary power to add time.
- V. **No one but the ref really knows what time it is:** In practice the only official clock is usually the stopwatch in the referee's hand or a digital watch on their wrist (called "keeping time on the field"), and there is no particular requirement that the referee inform teams how much time remains. Even if a publicly visible scoreboard clock is available, this at best only tracks official

time elapsed, and **not** official time remaining, because of the discretionary power of the referee to add time to compensate for time lost through delays.

- VI. **Game's only over when the ref says it is:** Remarkably, the rules do not require the referee to inform **anyone**, not even the assistant referees, how much, if any time s/he intends to add to the end of the game, and no one but the referee knows when time will run out and s/he will end of the game with the distinctive triple signature of the whistle, tweet-tweet-tweeeeeet!
- VII. **Halftime break is mandatory:** The players have a mandatory right to a halftime break, which neither the referee nor coaches may waive, of not longer than 15 minutes. The preset rules of the particular competition can stipulate a shorter halftime break, which can only be altered with the consent of the referee.
- VIII. **Shortening the game:** Provided both teams and the referee mutually agree before the game starts, both halves may be shortened by equal (never uneven) stipulated amounts. This might be done, e.g. if an afternoon game without lights might extend at full length until after dark.
- IX. **Effect of prematurely ending the game:** A game which is terminated prematurely by the referee for any reason, such as a persistent thunderstorm, the field becoming waterlogged by rain, or excessive spectator interference, is considered abandoned and is a nullity unless the preset rules for that particular competition provide that the score at the time of stoppage stands. Otherwise, a game ended prematurely must be replayed in its entirety, regardless of what was the score or the cause for its premature end.
- X. **Temporarily suspending game:** The referee may temporarily suspend a game instead of terminating it. A game that is temporarily stopped e.g. to try to wait out a passing storm is not necessarily abandoned after any specific amount of time, but rather becomes so by the referee's surrender of the possibility of waiting it out.
- XI. **If the first two halves end in a tie:** Soccer games are allowed to end with a tie score. However, the preset rules for a particular competition may provide that ties be resolved through using either of the following, or even both ( (a), followed by (b) if the tie still persists):
  - A. a mini-game of two overtime periods of equal prescribed length (usually stipulated much shorter than regular halves) is played in its entirety, and not as sudden death;
  - B. a contest of alternating penalty kicks is held (see FAQ supplement)
  - C. in some competitions, sudden victory ("golden goal") overtime is played. **NOTE:** this means of breaking ties has been tried on an experimental basis in FIFA competitions, but is not yet officially sanctioned by the Laws.
- XII. **If time expires before penalty shot can be taken:** If a referee calls a foul before time expires for which the referee must award a penalty shot (and not merely a free kick) and the time remaining in the (half or) game then expires before the penalty shot can be taken, the (half or) game cannot end until the penalty shot has been taken and completed. In such time-expired penalty kicks, the attacking team only gets the one touch of the penalty kick itself, even if the shot rebounds off the goalkeeper back into the field, so only the kicker and the goalkeeper participate. The (half or) game is over when either the ball goes out of play or its momentum is spent, having either scored a goal or not.

### **Commentary: Coaching Points**

- 1. **Track time mainly with your own stopwatch, not by asking the referee:** Coaches should have a stopwatch to independently track passage of time during a game, and should only infrequently ask the referee about time, mainly to check that they are reasonably in sync with the referee. Occasional requests about time remaining from players and on-top of it coaches are expected by refs, but too-frequent requests can become pestering and make the coach appear to refs as ill prepared and disorganized. Asking once in the middle of the half and once with about two or three minutes to go is about right.
- 2. **Referee's response to "how much time" may be approximate and cryptic:** Soccer referees are often inclined to give only approximate answers to questions about how much time is remaining,

so 'three minutes' may mean + or - to the nearest 30 seconds. Also, such a question may be answered not with how much time remains, but rather with how much time has elapsed. This reflects that referees are accustomed to discretionary latitude in deciding when the exact appropriate moment has arrived to end a half or game and how much extra time will be extended for delays, and these types of answers tend to help preserve that discretion.

3. **Determining how much "additional" time the referee intends to allow:** Referees are often inclined to play their cards close to the chest about letting anyone know just how much additional time past the proscribed time they intend to allow. This tends to discourage a team that is ahead in a close game from being falsely encouraged, by any seeming commitment by the ref to end the game at a certain time, to incrementally step up delaying tactics. There is no requirement in the rules that referees disclose or commit their intentions to coaches, players or anyone about discretionary additional time, so this matter cannot be forced upon a recalcitrant referee. See questions 7.04 and 7.05, suggesting productive ways and moments to ask referees about their intentions for adding extra time.
4. **Ref may be under practical constraints against extending time; have extra game balls approved:** If your game is part of a succession of consecutive games scheduled on a particular field on a particular day, the practical ability of the referee to add discretionary time may be constrained, particularly if there are only short breaks scheduled between games or they are running behind schedule. You can minimize a significant source of time leakage by seeking the referee's approval, before the game, for multiple (specific) game balls to be used, so that a new ball may be readily substituted rather than having a player chase the old one down an embankment, across an adjacent road, or into the woods. Most referees who are receptive to this will likely be agreeable to having one or preferably both teams designate one or more non-players to both have the extra balls immediately ready and to act as ball-chasers for long strays. To the extent this works out, referees are more likely to take the initiative to discourage players from running off after strayed balls and delaying the game, accidentally or deliberately.
5. **Make sure your ref knows how long halves last for your age group before the game starts:** This sounds at first silly, but referees may often do successive games for different age groups and be mixed-up about exactly which particular age group is on the field or what the proper time length is for that age group. So, politely ask your ref before the game to make sure what length halves s/he is contemplating, and gently suggest a correction if you get the wrong answer. This prevents surprises by way of unintentionally abbreviated or extended halves when you and your players expect something different.

## Questions on Law 7

**7.01 Isn't this much discretion by the referee to extend the game arbitrary and unfair? Why hasn't this part of the rules changed more in line with other sports?**

The referee timekeeping practices are deeply seated traditions in soccer that many traditionalist aficionados of the game actually love, cherishing the heightened suspense it engenders in close games. Others detest them as arbitrary, unfair relics badly in need of rules changes. Fortunately, most soccer referees enjoy deserved respect for fair timekeeping and exercise of this discretion. In practice usually the 'additional time' usually involves no more than two or three extra minutes, or less.

**7.02 I have been to some college and high-school soccer games where they kept time on an official scoreboard clock, and stopped it for time-outs or when players were injured, and the game ended right on the 90th minute with the scoreboard horn, not the referee's whistle. Doesn't this contradict what you've told me about soccer timekeeping?**

The rules described herein are based on FIFA rules, which are used in most international, amateur, and youth soccer competitions, other than NCAA, various high school associations, and a few anomalous local amateur soccer leagues. The rules of these other bodies track FIFA rules in a majority of respects, but may differ on details like timekeeping. There is nothing anomalous to FIFA rules by using a scoreboard

clock rather than a handheld stopwatch, so long as the clock runs continuously and it is the referee who decides how much discretionary time to add and when it is the appropriate time to end the game. It's possible that there may be a long-term trend favoring eventual rules changes toward using officially stoppable public scoreboard clock but, even if so, the economics of youth and amateur soccer in most places may help provide strong inertia for existing, traditional timekeeping rules for quite awhile.

***7.03 Despite what you said about the clock never stopping in soccer, I saw the referee in my last game discreetly turning off and on their stopwatch whenever the ball rolled out down a slope into a patch of woods at the field, and again when they stopped play for an injured player. Doesn't this contradict how they are supposed to do it?***

Purists will cringe but many referees for amateur soccer in fact choose to do this in preference to formally 'adding' time in the manner the rules contemplate, figuring the net effect to be the same as adding additional time to a running clock, and easier to keep up with. This is not something to worry much about, and more likely reflects conscientiousness than ignorance on the part of the referee. The only problem is that if they stop their watch too often too early for too small causes in retrospect, they may be stuck with the dilemma of whether to call the game a bit 'early' by their watch.

***7.04 How might a coach most productively probe the referee's thinking about whether they may intend to extend additional time past the prescribed length of the game?***

You can sometimes get good information simply by asking, but it may be best to pick your moments well:

- a) Wait for some sort of clear break to the normal flow of the game, most optimally at least midway along in the second half, such as a goalkeeper change by the other team or the third time a ball has rolled down an embankment and has to be chased. Simply ask: 'ref, are you considering adding time for this ?' Unless the referee's answer hints a willingness to tell more, it might be wise to refrain from adding 'how much?'
- b) When there are perhaps two or three minutes left in the prescribed length of the game (according to the coach's stopwatch), that is a good time to to ask politely: 'ref, please how much time is left and will you be adding any?' They'll tell you what they'll tell you ;=), and accept what you get (or don't) gracefully. The last thing you want to do is to inadvertently irritate the ref while attempting to relieve your suspense.

***7.05 The other team appears to be deliberately wasting time putting the ball back into play, and we're behind one goal in the last few minutes of the game. What can I do to help insure that the referee more likely recognizes responds to what's going on by adding time?***

Your best counter-tactic is choose some appropriate opportunity when your opponent is actively engaging in obvious delay in putting the ball back in play is to politely ask the referee whether time is being added. A common throw-in delay tactic you will likely encounter which can present you a good opportunity to do so goes as follows. A first player unspeedily retries the ball and then holds it for several seconds along the touch line, as if contemplating a suitable target to throw it in to. Following this, the first player then hands the ball to a second player who has slowly trotted over to the touch line, to then actually make the throw. Most refs have seen this ploy before and recognize it for what it is, so the moment when the first player hands the ball to the second player is a good one to politely ask: 'ref, would you consider adding extra time?' It's unwise to encumber your polite request with extraneous barbs toward the opposing players such as the tempting but poisonous 'they should get a yellow card for that'. Many refs do not react well either to barbs against opposing players by coaches or to their requests to give opposing players yellow cards, even if the rules seemingly call for a card. Remember that you are pleading for the ref to use their discretion to intervene for you in the interest of fairness under the rules. Referees frequently adopt a shell of seeming superficially unresponsive as a defense mechanism against being ruffled by criticism or lobbying from the sidelines, even when sympathetic to your request. It's imperative to not alienate the referee, so stay polite even if you feel ready to explode inside.



**7.06 We're behind one goal in the last few minutes of the game. The other team is deliberately burning time with the following tactics; which of these constitute the types of delay for which it is appropriate for the referee to add discretionary time under the rules?**

- a) **deliberately kicking balls out of touch with great force**, necessitating lengthy retrieval of the only readily available game ball;
- b) **shielding the ball near a touch line or corner** with their body and making no attempt to advance the ball from such position;
- c) **kicking long clears** to empty space;
- d) **playing keep-away** with no attempt to score.

Only (a) above truly constitutes the type of time loss through delay which the rules authorize the referee to compensate for with additional time. The rest are considered legitimate forms of active play, in the course of which the pursuing team could, with skill and effort, regain possession. However, for (b) (shielding) to be legitimate, the player must keep the ball within playing distance (about two or three steps) while shielding, or else this would constitute illegal obstruction (impeding) for which the other team should be awarded an indirect free kick.

**7.07 A late afternoon game was begun under the assumption that daylight would last long enough to complete a normal-length game. The first half lasted a normal, prescribed length, but during halftime thick clouds moved in.**

**7.07.01: We are behind 3-0 and the referee wants us to be agreeable to playing a shortened second half. Can s/he make us agree to this?**

No, because the rules require the halves to be of equal prescribed length. Before too joyously contemplating the referee terminating (abandoning) the game and rendering it a nullity that must be replayed entirely from 0-0, you had better check your league's or tournament's rules for letting partial results stand or when games can be merely suspended and later resumed (e.g. tomorrow morning).

**7.07.02 We are ahead 3-0 midway through the second half and the referee calls the game fifteen minutes early on account of darkness and the threat of lightening approaching the area. Do we win anyway?**

Although the default rule is that any game prematurely terminated is an abandoned nullity (you don't get the official win), you should check your league's or tournament's preexisting rules for when the results of a partial game officially stand, since these can modify the default rule on the consequences of abandoned games.

**7.08 The referee blew the halftime whistle mistakenly at the wrong time, under an incorrect assumption about how long the proscribed length of halves should be for our age group teams.**

**7.08.1 The first half was supposed to last 35 minutes for U-13s, but the referee ended it after only 30 minutes. Now the ref wants to make it up by making the second half 40 minutes long. Is this proper?**

Not really, s/he should really bring the teams back on the field to finish the half rather than illegally unbalance the halves and risk subjecting players to needless late second-half fatigue. However, it's not worth making much of a stink if the referee insists on doing this the wrong way, unless there's some truly large disadvantage to your team in doing so. Even then, the referee can effectively accomplish the same thing by adding discretionary time. It may only be in uncommon situations that you may be able to persuade league or tournament authorities you were prejudiced enough by such a first-half timekeeping error to overturn the outcome of your game because the first half was a bit short, even though it was improper. And, the ref may be irked with you the second half.

***7.08.2 The first half was supposed to last 35 minutes for U-13s, but the referee ended it after 40 minutes, and now proposes to end the second half after only 30 minutes (or does so anyway) to make up for the mistakenly long length of the first half. Is this proper?***

NO! This is highly improper, and you have legitimate reason to appeal to league or tournament authorities if you're behind by one goal in a game that matters. Remember that you will win nothing on the field by persisting in arguing with a stubborn referee who refuses to change his or her mind, and they may warn or throw you out for dissent. So, your first priority is to politely win an admission that they ended the game after only a 30 minute second-half, so you are not arguing against the referee as a judge of fact (e.g. they claim it was 35 when you know it was 30), because you can't win the latter argument.

***7.09 What happens if a player kicks a shot before time expires, but the ball goes across the goal line for a goal only after time expires? Does the goal count?***

Soccer is unlike basketball, where a shot that leaves the shooter's hand before time expires is considered good even if it goes in after time expires. In soccer the ball is dead the moment time expires (except for penalty shots), no matter that it was on its way toward an inevitable goal from the shot but had not yet traveled across the goal line when the referee blew the final whistle. However, in practice this rarely happens, in part because very few referees (especially the good ones) will blow the final whistle while an imminent scoring opportunity is underway. They can always find justification in some earlier delay to add discretionary time. Instead they will wait until just after the opportunity dissipates with no goal to blow the final whistle. If a goal is made on the play, most referees will wait until after the ensuing kick-off and at least several more seconds have gone by to blow the final whistle ending the game. Referees tend to show a natural preference for waiting for a suitable moment of inconclusive, non-goal threatening play to end a game to avoid any unnecessary appearance of unfairness in when they choose to blow the final whistle. Note, however by contrast that in NCAA play, which authorizes using an official, stoppable clock in lieu of time extension, time may in fact run out in mid-shot.

***7.10 With but a few seconds remaining in the first half, my player was fouled hard just outside the penalty area in our attacking half of the field, and awarded a direct free kick. Does my team get to take the free kick because of the hard foul, even if time would normally expire before they can take it?***

No, time is not automatically extended in a half or for the game just because of a hard foul or to take a direct free kick. However, in practice if the foul is egregious and occurs close enough to the opponent's goal that the resulting free kick constitutes a good scoring opportunity for the team awarded the kick, many referees may use their discretion to add enough time for at least the kick itself, and perhaps some brief follow-up attack. Regardless of whether they decide to extend time for the offended team to take the free kick, the referee may still decide to give the offending player a yellow card if that is appropriate.

## LAW 8 - The Start and Restart of Play

### **Thumbnail**

Law 8 is concerned with filling in any details about how to start or restart the game after a stoppage in play that is not defined elsewhere in the rules.

In particular:

1. A pre-game protocol is defined for determining which end of the field each respective team will attack and which they will defend, and which team will start the game by kicking off. A coin is flipped, and the winner chooses ends for the first half while the loser kicks off.
2. The rules for the kick-off restart are defined. A kick-off is used for starting each half of the game and for restarting the game after a goal. In a kick-off, each team must be in their respective defending half of the field and the team opposing the kick-off must also have no players closer than 10 yards from the center spot on the field where the ball is placed for kick-off (hence, the center circle). The ball is in play as soon as it is kicked and moves forward at all; even stepping on it and causing it to bobble forward slightly is enough.
3. A residual (catch-all) restart, the drop ball, is defined to cover any situation where the game gets stopped and the rules do not specify a specific other restart (such as a free kick or throw-in). In a drop ball, the referee literally holds and then drops the ball onto the field. The ball is not in play and may not be touched by players until after it touches the ground. Then, it immediately becomes like an ordinary loose bouncing ball on the field, which both teams may contest for control (but see the discussion in the next section).
4. For indirect free kicks awarded to attackers inside the defender's goal area, special alterations are defined for specifying where the kick is to be taken from. The proper spot for the kick is the point on the goal area line (i.e. 6 yards out and parallel to the goal line), closest to the spot where the infraction occurred within the goal area. Defenders are allowed to stand on the goal line, even though this is less than 10 yards away.

As a supplement to this FAQ, there is included a comprehensive table of the proper restarts for situations covered under every LOTG 1-17, and not just LOTG 8.

### **Commentary and Coaching Points**

- I. **Pre-game procedure for determining who gets which end and who kicks off:** Before the game, a representative from each team meet together with the referee for a coin toss. The winner of the coin toss must choose which ends of the field their team will respectively attack and defend the first half. The other team automatically gets designated to kick off the ball to start the game. The team winning the coin toss cannot elect to kick off instead of choosing ends, as they could under the rules before July 1997. In the second half, the teams switch ends, and the team that won the pre-game coin toss kicks off to start the second half.
- II. **Rules for kick-offs:** A kick-off is simply a direct free kick (DFK, see LOTG 13) taken from the center spot on the field, with only a few special conditions attached.
- III. Just like any other DFK:
  - a) the ball must be stationary before it is kicked; - the kicker cannot touch the ball a second time before it has touched another player,
  - b) the opposing team must stay at least 10 yards from the ball until the kick is made; and
  - c) the ball is in play as soon as it is touched and moves.
- B. The following additional conditions are attached to a kick-off:
  1. The ball must move forward from the kick and not just in any direction. This means that some contrivance between two attacking players must be used to effect a rearward pass to

teammates from the kick-off, though this in practice poses no insurmountable problem. The former "ball circumference" movement distance rule is no longer in effect; simply stepping on the ball, causing it to bobble forward, is enough.

2. All players from each team must be in their own respective half of the field.
3. There is no option for the kicking team to elect a quick restart rather than wait for the opponents to be 10 yards away or in their own half of the field. A kick-off can only be properly taken after the referee's signal indicating s/he's ready and everyone is properly in place.

C. If the above rules for a kick-off are infringed by either team:

1. If the kicker touched the ball a second time before anyone else touched it, the opposing team gets an indirect free kick from the spot where the second touch occurred. However, note that the ball must have been validly put into play (by kicking it forward, with all players in their proper half of the field, etc) for the second touch rule to apply.
2. For any other infringement, the ball never has been validly put into play, and the kick gets retaken. If a player persistently infringes the kick-off rules thus requiring repeated restarts, it is possible the referee may decide to caution that player with a yellow card.

IV. **After a goal scores; kick-off restart:** The appropriate restart after either team scores a valid goal is a kick-off by the other team, identical to the rules for kicking off at the start of a half. That is why the referee's signal for a goal is to point to the center spot, to indicate the restart. Some referees add a bit to this ceremony, borrowing a quick hands-up signal from American (gridiron) football as a clearer gesture before pointing to center circle. This possibly makes traditionalist shudder, but to some is a more satisfying gesture to others than just a wan point.

V. **Drop Ball Restarts:** A drop ball is the residual (catch-all) restart for any situation where the game is stopped and the rules do not specify that a different method (such as a free kick or throw-in) should apply to put ball back into play. In some situations, the rules do specifically call for a drop ball restart, e.g. where the referee has to halt the game while the ball is in play to attend to an injury.

A. The rules for a drop ball are as follows:

1. The referee drops the ball at the place where it was when play was stopped.
2. The ball is in play and may be touched by the players only after it hits the ground.
3. If a player touches the ball before it hits the ground, or if the ball hits the ground and goes off the field without being touched, then the drop ball is retaken at the original spot.
4. If play is stopped while the ball is inside the goal area of either team and a drop ball is the appropriate restart, the drop spot is relocated to a point on the goal area boundary line that is parallel to and 6 yards out from the goal line, located nearest to where play was stopped.

B. There is NO rule specifying that there must be two, and only two players from each team facing off basketball or hockey-style to initially contest for the drop ball, although that is the way it is usually done in practice. This loophole is exploited by some referees to achieve an equitable restart in certain situations, see questions 8.5 and 8.6 below.

VI. **Indirect Free Kicks awarded inside the defender's goal area:**

1. The spot for the kick is relocated to a point on the goal area boundary line that is parallel to and 6 yards out from the goal line, located nearest to where the infraction occurred.
2. As many defenders may deploy along the goal line itself as they wish, even though this is less than 10 yards away from the spot for the kick. Except for along the goal line itself, defenders must, however, otherwise yield a 10-yard distance from the kick.

**IMPORTANT:** The attackers ordinarily have a right to elect to take an immediate restart if it is to their advantage when the referee stops play for the IFK call, rather than wait for

defenders to clear away either 10 yards or to the goal line. The defenders do NOT necessarily have a right to sufficient time to set up their defense along the goal line! So, hurry defenders!

### Questions on Law 8

#### ***8.01 What are the considerations I as coach should take into account in instructing my captains which end of the field we want to defend or attack if we win the coin toss?***

Conventional wisdom from experienced coaches says the following about choosing ends (with the caveat that your mileage may vary, so judge each situation for yourself):

- a) Choose the wind at your back the first half so it favors you; it may die down or change completely by second half.
- b) Anticipate the sun's movements to avoid having the sun low in the sky in your goalkeeper's face as much as possible during the game. In the afternoon, take the side facing the sun in the first half while it is relatively higher, and let your opponents face it when it is relatively lower in the second half. Do the opposite during the morning.
- c) If there's a huge puddle or muddy or soft spot in the field that is unlikely to go away, ground conditions will likely only get worse as the game proceeds. It may be better to take the risk of having the problem at your defensive end the first half, and let the other team deal with it when it's likely worse in the second half. On the other hand, if it's likely to improve (e.g. a warm, dry sun just came out), you may want to do the opposite.

#### ***8.02 I am a relatively new coach. What exactly goes on at the coin toss meeting so I don't have to guess or bluff my way through telling them if my players ask me what to do?***

The exact procedure for the coin toss meeting varies from place to place and referee to referee, but in outline, it is usually something like this. When both sets of captains and the referee are assembled near the center of the field, if either team sent more than one "captain", the referee will ask which one is the "speaking captain", i.e. is authorized to make binding decisions at the meeting. The referee notes the numbers (and possibly, names) of the respective captains for the game record, and then chooses one team's speaking captain (it really doesn't matter which) to call the coin toss. The selection may be arbitrary, or there may be a local convention such as "home" tosses and "away" calls. The referee may possibly, though not necessarily, instruct the players beforehand what the options are for the winner of the coin toss (choice of ends only) and the result for the loser (kick-off). You should make sure they understand this beforehand to avoid possible embarrassment of trying to elect kick-off if they win the toss (you should prefer to choose ends anyway). After the toss, the referee asks the speaking captain that won the toss which end they want to attack and defend, and then makes sure everyone present is straight about which end they will attack and defend respectively to start the game. They then instruct the team that lost the coin toss that they will kick off, and the meeting is over. Some referees will also try to give any special instructions about the way the game will be officiated to the captains, for them to pass along to their coach and teammates. While this is far better done other ways, this is how some referees do it, so ask your players about this when they return.

#### ***8.03 Should I send just one player as captain, or if I send several, must I pick one to be the real authorized decision-maker? Does the captain have any function beyond this?***

The rules don't really specify how many captains a team may send to the coin toss, but your local league rules may. In any case it's bad form to send a crowd; limit it preferably to just 2. You should always designate beforehand who the speaking captain is and make sure they understand which ends to choose if they win the coin toss, rather than leave this open for possible disagreement. The main function of a captain, other than the coin toss, is to be the authorized intermediary to ask questions of the referee during the game. However, this status gives them no special rights to dissent or have the game stopped for a clarification. Captain status is not that practically important (except for honorary purposes) anymore once the game gets underway, except occasionally, a referee or coach will attempt to use this person as a diplomatic intermediary when it seems better to not speak to the other directly.

**8.04 A ball went out over the touch line, and both the referee and the linesman were unfortunately blocked off from view of the critical play, and couldn't see who the ball last touched before it went out. Therefore, the referee decided to restart with a drop ball as the fairest way to restart the game, rather than arbitrarily award the throw-in. Was this a correct procedure?**

Emphatically, NO! If a situation is of a type for which the rules specifically provide a restart other than a drop ball, the referee is not authorized to instead call for a drop ball restart merely because s/he has factual uncertainty or incomplete evidence on which to base a decision. The situation of a ball going out off a player over the touch line is comprehensively covered by LOTG 15, which specifies that a throw-in is the proper restart for such situations without making any exceptions. The proper response would be to make their best guess based on whatever they do know, perhaps using some rule-of-thumb (awarding doubtful cases to the team who is at their defensive end of the field is one commonly used R.O.T.). Understand, however, that this situation is very different from when the referee refrains from calling that the ball went momentarily out over the touch line while the referee and the linesman temporarily had their view blocked, or from refraining from calling offenses they did not actually see. The proper analogy is between the ball having definitely gone out and the referee having definitely stopped the game to call an offense, and not to a decision whether either these things occurred. Thus, the referee has no choice but to designate the proper restart, and if it's not a drop ball, then also who to award the ball to. That said, USA high-school rules specifically permit a drop ball, 5 yards from the touch line, if the referee can't determine which team should be awarded a throw-in.

&nbsp;

**8.05 The referee stopped play immediately after my goalkeeper made a great save near the goal line, because they were obviously injured on the play, although they were able to hold onto the ball. What is the proper restart once the goalkeeper recovers or is replaced?**

The proper restart is a drop ball from where play was stopped, moved to the 6-yard line if this was inside the goal area. This can seem to be an unfair result, but unless the attacking players truly committed some sort of offense, it would be equally unfair to try to solve the situation at their expense. There are two possible solutions referees attempt in such cases:

1. If the goalkeeper appears momentarily able, the referee may direct them to kick or throw the ball as far away from the goal as possible and then call for a stoppage immediately as the ball comes down, before it can be further played (thus moving the restart location). But this may not be reasonable or possible, depending on the goalkeeper's condition.
2. The referee will use a drop ball, but will make absolutely **sure** the goalkeeper wins the drop by bouncing it straight to them, having first instructed all other players in no uncertain terms that the goalkeeper **will** win this ball. The unspoken threat is a yellow card for unsporting conduct. This actually is not bending the drop ball rule, because it contains NO provision for the number of players that must participate, or that each team must have equal opportunity to participate, though fairness demands the referee allow this in most circumstances. The choice to use this approach is completely a matter of the referee's discretion (and creativity). Note, however, that in USA high school rules, the restart would be an IFK to your team if the keeper had clear possession when play was stopped.

**8.06 A defender is injured near the goal in the process of successfully playing the ball to a teammate, also located near the goal, but who would, if play were allowed to continue, have an uncontested opportunity to soon clear the ball away from the goal. However, the referee decides to stop the game immediately due to immediate risk to the injured player if the game was to continue any longer. (Perhaps there is active play around the helpless and possibly badly injured player.) Must the referee restart with a drop ball where it was near the goal where it was when play was stopped?**

Good referees will try to avoid this situation by letting play continue until the ball is cleared, and then call a stoppage for the injury. However, sometimes this is inconsistent with good judgment of risk to the injured player, and the referee cannot in good conscience wait to stop play. Yet, they may feel that the attackers would get an undeserved break under the particular circumstances by a drop ball near the goal. The solution some referees may use is identical to the second one posed in question 8.02 above, a drop ball

straight to the goalkeeper. Recognize that the equitable resolution the majority of times may indeed be a drop ball in front of the goal, because the referee does not regard the advantage to the attackers to be unfair in the particular circumstances. The referee's judgment of whether to creatively give the defenders a break is entirely a matter for the referee's discretion.

***8.07 My older child sometimes used to play goalkeeper back in 1995, before I started coaching. Her coach instructed her that when the other team was kicking off and the kick-off was strong enough to make it to the goal line well before the other team could possibly arrive, then as long as it did not touch any of her teammates or bounce off the goalposts, she should let it go by without touching it (even if it appeared headed into the goal). Was this sound advice?***

No, this is not sound advice at all anymore, because a kick-off is now (since July 1997 rules changes) a direct free kick from which a goal may be scored immediately from the kick-off itself. Before July 1997, a kick-off was an indirect free kick, and this might have been better advice (because her team would get a goal kick if the ball went in the goal, and the goal would not have counted). But now, the goal would instead count!

***8.08 The rules require the ball to move "forward" on a kick-off, and the player taking the kick-off cannot touch it again before someone else does. So, how can we legally and effectively start by passing the ball backward to one of our players 10 or 15 yards to the rear of the center line, while allowing the defenders the least amount of time to react?***

To start, you must have two players next to each other adjacent to the ball. The player designated to take the kick-off starts slightly behind and to one side of the ball. There are three key movements: First, the player quickly steps on top of the ball with their forward foot just enough so that it bobbles ever so slightly forward, putting it in play. Second, the player who kicked off continues forward and to the side to immediately clear out of the way of the second player. Finally, the second player quickly steps over to the ball and quickly either turns to make an inside the foot pass, or perhaps instead uses a back-of-the heel pass, to send the ball rearward to a third target player. The idea is for the players kicking off, plus perhaps the wing forwards or midfielders to then run forward toward the attacking half, and for the designated rearward player who received the ball to look to play a ball forward to one of these players, if they can get open. If not, they can at least hang onto possession of the ball while seeking for a better way to move it up field. The advantage of this play is that in exchange for sending the ball initially in a negative direction, this buys time before defensive pressure can arrive, while at the same time threatening immediate attacking pressure from the possibility of a pass forward to any of the forward-positioned attackers left uncovered. It should be noted that referees tend to not be very fussy about the "forward" part, except to not allow the ball to be passed backward directly by the player taking the kick-off. For those of you having first or prior exposure to indoor soccer, it is important to realize that the rule there is different (direct pass-back from kick-off is legal), and not get indoor and outdoor practices or rules confused.

## Law 9 - The Ball In and Out of Play

### **Thumbnail**

The ball is **in play** when one of the prescribed means of (re)starting play has been properly executed. These include the kick-off, throw-in, goal kick, corner kick, free kick, penalty kick and drop ball. (see the comprehensive table of restarts.) The ball is **out of play** "when it has wholly crossed the goal line or touch-line... [or] when the game has been stopped by the referee." This is a simple (and elegant) concept.

### **Commentary**

Unlike basketball or American football, the position of the player or the player's feet is irrelevant. Only the position of the ball matters. The soccer field (pitch) may be imagined as a three dimensional box with invisible vertical planes rising from the outside of the two touch-lines and the outside of the two goal-lines. As long as the ball is within those invisible planes or is in contact with one of those planes, it is not out. It must entirely leave the box to be out. This is a very simple concept, but, particularly for those accustomed to basketball or American football, there are times where the ball appears to be out of play when it is not. For example, a ball rolling along outside the touch line remains in play as long as part of the ball is over the touch line. A player may run outside the touch line to play it.

It is the job of the referee (aided by the assistant referees) to determine when the ball leaves the field.

### **Questions on Law 9**

***9.01 Can a player step out of bounds and still legally play a ball on the touch line or goal line, without first coming back in bounds?***

Yes. Only the position of the ball is relevant. A player may leave the field and re-enter it as long as this occurs during the normal course of play. The referee watches the position of the ball, not the player's feet.

***9.02 Can a ball go out of bounds in the air and still be in bounds if it curves back in before it hits the ground, or gets deflected by a player who has not touched the ground out-of-bounds (e.g. like basketball)?***

No. If the ball goes out of bounds in the air and curves back in, it was out and play should be halted, most likely by the AR, who is stationed on the touch line (or on the goal line, in the case of corner kicks) to observe exactly this type of situation.

***9.03 Is a ball touching the line in or out? What if it no longer touches the line, but the edge of the ball is still vertically over the line even though the rest of it is out?***

In both these cases, the ball is still in. In order to be out, the ball must completely leave the field; if part of the ball is vertically over the line, then the entire ball has not left the 3-dimensional field.

***9.04 The ball appears to have gone out of bounds, but the referee hasn't blown the whistle or done anything yet. Is the ball in or out of play?***

The final decision is in the hands of the referee. When in doubt, players should continue playing and listen for the referee's whistle.



***9.05 Sometime after the game has started, while the ball is in play, an obvious foul occurs but the referee hasn't blown the whistle yet. Is the ball dead from the moment of the foul, or only from the moment the referee blows the whistle or otherwise clearly indicates for play to stop?***

If the foul is called, the ball is dead from the time of the foul. (If the foul is not called or the referee uses the advantage clause to allow play to continue, then there is no dead ball.)

***9.06 On which restarts does a player have to wait for the referee's signal to put the ball into play?***

Kickoffs (at the beginning of a half or after a goal) and penalty kicks require the referee to signal before the restart. Referees almost always make this signal with their whistle. No other restarts require a referee's signal and players may immediately restart play on their own initiative. However, a referee has the discretion to delay a restart (e.g. to allow substitutions, to caution a player, to enforce the 10 yard restriction of a free kick). In those cases where the referee delays the restart, he/she will usually indicate the restart with a hand signal.

Players should be coached to quickly restart the game when it is to their advantage. A scoring opportunity may be created by an alert player who quickly puts the ball back into play with the appropriate throw-in or free kick. Some referee clinics teach referees to be alert for these possibilities and to allow them to proceed if the situation warrants. **Note:** when a defensive wall is being set up before a free kick, the referee may tap his whistle or point to it: in this case, players must wait for a whistle before executing the free kick.

***9.07 The ball hit the frame of the goal and rebounded onto the field of play. My players didn't know what to do -- was the ball still in play?***

The ball most likely did not leave the field of play. (Occasionally a ball will even roll along the crossbar of the goal and then fall back into the field.) Players should realize that the ball is not out in this situation and should be ready to play the ball.

***9.08 What if the game is being played on a field that doubles as an American football field, where the goalposts for the football field also serve as the frame of the soccer goal with double horizontal crossbars, the lower one serving as the crossbar for soccer, and the upper one being the crossbar for football, and the ball strikes the upper crossbar?***

A soccer goal should not have two crossbars. If it does, the coach should discuss the effect of the higher crossbar with the referee before the game. The league or field probably has some ground rules, written or unwritten, which say a ball striking the higher crossbar is out! Barring some type of ground rule, the laws of the game would suggest that as long as the ball did not completely leave the field of play, it is still in play. Similarly, any other unusual structure on the field (a tree, an overhanging branch) may lead to some type of local ground rules which should be discussed with the referee before the game begins.

***9.09 What happens if the ball hits the referee, and rebounds out of play or into the goal? What if the ball inadvertently hits the assistant referee? Does it make any difference whether the assistant referee is standing on the line or just outside the line?***

The referee, like the corner flag, or a rock in the field, is merely part of the field of play. If the ball strikes the referee, play should continue just as if the ball bounced off a rock. And if the ball bounces into the goal, it is a goal! (This is one reason referees try to stay out of the goal area if they can!)

Similarly, if the ball hits the assistant referee, it should still be played (as if it hit a rather unusual blade of grass!) If the ball passed completely out of the field, it is out; if it did not completely leave the field of play, it is still in. The ball's contact with the referee or assistant referee is irrelevant.

**9.10 Since players may run outside the touchline to play the ball, how far from the field should players, fans and coaches be?**

Players, coaches and fans should be at least a yard from the field in order to allow room for players to play the ball on the touchline and to allow assistant referees to judge whether the ball is in or out of play.

**9.11 A ball is heading out of bounds. Just after it crosses the touch line, but before the ball has left the field of play it is (a) picked up by a player on the field, (b) picked up by a teammate who is not one of the players, (c) picked up by the mother of one of the players, (d) hits a lawn chair and bounces into the field, (e) hits the assistant referee and bounces into the field. Should the game be stopped? if so, what's the restart?**

- a) This is "handling" by a player. It is a penal foul and the opposing team should be awarded a direct free kick from the spot where the ball was handled.
- b) This is outside interference while the ball is in play (see Law 8). Play restarts with a drop ball. The referee may caution (give a yellow card to) the team member who interfered with the ball (the caution would be for unsporting conduct).
- c) This is outside interference while the ball is in play. Play restarts with a drop ball. In most leagues the referee is not allowed to caution (give a yellow card to) a fan, but the referee will likely take steps to assure such interference does not re-occur.
- d) As for 'c'.
- e) Since the ball did not leave the field of play then play has not stopped! Keep playing!

**9.12 A player restarting the game with a throw-in throws the ball down the touchline and it lands out of play. Sometimes the referee lets the player retake the throw-in; other times he awards a throw-in to the other team. Why?**

If, in the opinion of the referee, the ball entered the field (that is, at least some part of the ball crossed over the outside edge of the touch line), then the ball was properly thrown into play and then subsequently curved out of bounds. Thus the ball left the field and was last touched by the thrower and a throw-in is now awarded to the opposite team.

However, if, in the opinion of the referee, the ball did not enter the field, a throw-in did not occur. The ball is returned to the thrower so that he/she may restart the game.

**9.13 The Red team is awarded a throw-in. Red player number 8 runs off the field and picks up the ball. Red player 9 runs toward Red 8 and calls, "Let me do the throw." Player 8 lobs the ball underhand to Red 9, while Red 9 is still on the field. Is this legal?**

Most referees would recognize that Red 8 is not attempting a throw-in and would then wait for Red 9 to step off the field and make the throw-in. However, since Red 8 had the ball out of bounds and, by tossing it to player 9, put the ball into the field, it is possible that the referee will consider this an attempted throw-in. If the referee believes Red 8 was attempting a throw in, he might call an illegal throw-in on the Red team or, worse yet, call a foul on Red 9 for handling the ball. For this reason, Red 8 should place the ball on the ground outside the touch line and thus leave it for Red 9 and not risk an inadvertent turnover.

**9.14 On a corner kick the ball strikes the near goal post and rebounds into the field of play. However, the assistant referee raises his flag and rules the ball was out of play. Why?**

It is possible that the ball, when kicked from the corner flag, curved over the goal line, completely leaving the field of play, and then curved back into the field where it then hit the goal post. The ball is out of play, not because it struck the goal post, but because it completely left the field after it was kicked. (The restart should be a goal kick.)

# Law 10: The Method of Scoring

## **Thumbnail**

Three things have to happen for a goal to be awarded:

1. The whole ball has to cross over the goal line.
2. The ball has to pass through the goal.
3. No foul by the attacking team occurred before the ball went over the goal line and through the goal.

The winning team is simply the team that scores more goals. Ties (draws) will be covered in the FAQs.

## **Commentary**

Goals are glorious to the goal scorer and the team. Since the scoring of a goal, or goals, is the determining factor in a game, it is essential that this topic be covered in its own Law. The official Law is very brief, which leads to many questions. For this reason, the FAQs will attempt to cover many of the questions that are associated with this Law.

## **Questions on Law 10**

### ***10.01 Why does the whole ball have to go over the goal line?***

Law 1, The Field of Play, dictates that the lines are part of the field of play. Therefore, the ball is not out of play until it crosses the line entirely. The same is true for the goal line, in the case of scoring a goal.

### ***10.02 What if the goal keeper is holding the ball and he/she crosses over the goal line? In most sports this is considered out of bounds, or in this case a goal.***

Unless the **ball** crosses the line, no goal is scored. The goal keeper can stand anywhere inside the goal mouth, as long as the ball is not over the goal line. Knowing this, please keep in mind that many youth games use a single referee who is often not in position to make the determination that the keeper's feet were in the goal, while the ball was still on the goal line. The referee makes the call, from his/her point-of-view, meaning you're likely not going to get too far trying to argue this call.

### ***10.03 The weather has caused the goal line to disappear. How does the referee or assistant referee know that the ball crossed the line?***

The goal line is supposed to be the width of the goalposts. Because of this, the referee or assistant referee can judge where the line should be by looking at, and past, the nearest goalpost. If the referee or assistant referee sees the ball go past the goal upright, then a goal is awarded.

### ***10.04 The ball hit the referee and went into the goal. Does this goal count?***

Yes. The referee is part of the field of play, therefore any time the ball hits referee or an assistant referee who is within the limits of the field of play, the ball is considered in play.

### ***10.05 The assistant referee was holding up the flag when the ball went near the goal. Can the AR decide when a goal has been scored?***

Absolutely. The referee should be looking for this assistance. **Note:** however, the assistant referee's "call" is subject to the decision of the referee, who may or may not agree. See below for the relevant portion of Law 6:

Two assistant referees are appointed, whose duties, subject to the decision of the referee, are to indicate:

- when the whole of the ball has passed out of the field of play
- which side is entitled to a corner kick, goal kick or throw-in
- when a player may be penalised for being in an offside position
- when a substitution is requested
- when misconduct or any other incident has occurred out of the view of the referee.

***10.06 If the assistant referee sees a goal that the referee missed, how long does the referee have to call the goal good?***

The AR sees the goal, puts up his/her flag and the referee doesn't see the flag or the goal. The AR should keep the flag raised until the referee sees the flag, or until play has been stopped, then restarted. Coaches/Captains should bring the raised flag to the attention of the center referee. If play stops, then is restarted, the goal can't be awarded. More information pertaining to the decisions and responsibilities can be found in Law 5.

***10.07 From my angle, the ball seemed to go through a gaping hole in the net, but the referee called the goal good. What should I do?***

You shouldn't have missed the hole before the game. The nets should be checked before each game to ensure that they are attached to the goalposts and that there are no gaping holes. The holes should be fixed and the nets should be attached to the posts.

***10.08 The game ended in a tie. How are ties settled?***

This varies widely according to the league, division or organization that sponsors the game or tournament. There is no one correct answer. In league play, ties are common and will typically remain a tie. In tournaments, the directors of the tournament will typically outline the resolution should a game end in a tie. Sometimes the qualifying games are permitted to end in a tie. However, the final game must determine a winner, so specifications are set as to how to break the tie.

Tie-breakers can be in the form of overtime periods and/or penalty shots. Typically, two equal halves will be played in the OT. These halves can range from five minutes to 15 minutes in length. If the game is not decided after these periods, penalty shots can be taken. Some use alternating shots, where one team shoots, followed by the other team. If one scores and not the other, than the game is decided. Other formats call for five players to shoot, with the winner being decided by the most made out of the five shots. [See the FAQ on "Kicks from the penalty mark"]

The best advice is to review your local regulations or the regulations of the tournament that you are attending to direct your questions to the appropriate members of local or tournament committees.

***10.09 A dog walked onto the field and was hit by a shot from one of my players. The ball didn't make it into the goal because of the dog. Shouldn't the goal count?***

No, sorry. The referee and assistant referees should monitor the field for obstacles during the game. If a dog, cat, child, etc. enters the field, play should be suspended until the obstacle is cleared. Play should be restarted with a drop ball. In point of fact, there are no circumstances under which a referee can award a goal without the ball actually crossing wholly over the goal line, between the goalposts.

# LAW 11 - Offside

## *Thumbnail*

The offside rule generally provides that a pass cannot legally be made to an off-ball attacker who is ahead of the ball and in the attacking half unless there are at least two defenders (one of whom may be the goalkeeper) between him and the goal when the ball is passed to him by a teammate.

Specifically, under the offside rule, an off-ball attacker who is in his opponent's half of the field must stay even with or behind the ball or, if he goes ahead of the ball, he must stay even with or behind the second-to-last-defender (2LD) until the ball is played or touched by one of his teammates. Normally, the 2LD is the last field player. However, the 2LD term is used instead of "last field player" to provide for situations where the keeper comes out of the box and the last two defenders may be field players, or the keeper may become the 2LD.

If the off-ball attacker is ahead of the ball and closer to the opponent's goal than the 2LD, then he will be called for an offside infraction IF the referee decides that he interfered with play, or interfered with an opponent, or gained an advantage from being in an offside position. It is not necessary that the player in an offside position (OSP) actually participate in play to be called for offside (technically, if an attacker is lying unconscious in front of the goal, and the keeper cannot get to the ball because of him, he will be called for an offside infraction even though he never participated in play at all). However, an infraction will not normally be called if a player in an OSP is passively standing on one side of the field while a teammate dribbles the ball up the opposite side and scores.

If an offside infraction is called, the opponent is awarded an IFK.

## *Commentary*

The basics of the offside rule are pretty easy. The attacker has to be in an offside position (OSP) **and** interfere with play, or an opponent, or gain an advantage from being in that position. While some occasional differences in opinion do occur from referee to referee on what "interfering" means, and on what "gaining an advantage" means, this is a normal by-product of making split-second decisions, and coaches should expect that variations will occur. Some of the common times when these difference arise will be discussed later.

### **A. What is an offside position?**

Five things must occur before an attacker can be in an OSP:

- I. He must be across the halfway line, in his opponents' half of the field (i.e., in the half of the field with the goal which his team is attacking).
  - A. He cannot be in an OSP in his own defending half, even if ahead of all of the opponent's defenders. So, if the opponent's defenders decide to push up over the midline, an attacker can station himself behind them as long as he stays in his own defending half.
- II. He is closer to his opponents' goal line than the second-last defender (**note:** if he is even with the second-last defender, he is **onside**).
  - A. He is onside as long as there are two or more defenders between him and the goal (i.e., even with him or ahead of him).
- III. He is ahead of the ball.
  - A. The ball is always considered to be onside, so an attacker can play a ball laterally (called a "square pass") or hook it back to another incoming attacker who is even with the ball when it is passed, even if they both are ahead of all the defenders - even the keeper. This occurs often in games, especially at the older age groups when keepers become more daring.
- IV. He is **not** receiving the ball directly from a goal kick, a corner kick or a throw-in.

- A. An attacker can be ahead of everyone on the field on a throw-in, a goal kick or a corner kick, and legally receive the ball and score.
- V. His team has possession of the ball, so that the ball is being played or touched by one of his teammates.
  - A. Normally, you cannot be called for offside if the ball is in the possession of, and being played by, the opposing team. However, where the ball simply ricochets off the keeper or the 2LD, they are not considered to have played the ball, so an attacker can be called for offside if he receives the ball from such a ricochet.

**B. When is OSP determined?**

Offside position is determined at the moment that the ball was last played by one of the other attackers. It is **not** determined at the time that the ball is received. It often happens in a game that a speedy attacker will be well ahead of the 2LD by the time that the ball comes down. However, as long as he was even with the 2LD or behind him (i.e., closer to his own goal than the 2LD), then he was not in an OSP and he should not be called for an offside infraction.

Even if a player is standing in an OSP, this does not automatically mean that offside will be called. An offside infraction occurs only if the attacking team gained an advantage from the fact that he was in an OSP, or where the OSP player interfered with play or an opponent.

**C. Once the player is in an OSP, what makes this an infraction?**

The player should only be called for an offside infraction if he interferes with play, or interferes with an opponent, or gains an advantage for his team by being in that position.

**I. What is "interfering with play"?**

A. "Interfering with play" typically means playing or attempting to play the ball. The most common offside infraction is the situation where the ball is served to the off-ball attacker who is in an OSP, and this player immediately collects the ball and goes towards goal. To avoid delay, however, the foul is usually called as soon as the player in an OSP makes a step towards the ball, rather than waiting for him to play it. Some referees don't even wait for the step, and call the foul immediately (even though the player technically may still be just in an OSP). While this may not be in full accord with the Laws, the referee has such broad authority to determine offside that there is no point in arguing. It is much smarter and more productive to instruct the players to watch how the referee interprets the rule, and to be sure to always stay onside if you get a strict constructionist.

**II. What is "interfering with an opponent"?**

A. "Interfering with an opponent" typically means getting in the way of an opponent, or otherwise distracting him so that he is less able to play the ball. A common example would be where an attacker in an OSP steps in the way of a defender, and interferes with the defender's path towards the on-ball attacker. Another common example would be where an attacker in an OSP near the far post shouts loudly for the ball, distracting the keeper.

**III. What is "gaining an advantage"?**

A. This is the term which allows the referee to call an offside infraction when, for instance, an unconscious attacker in the box still gains an advantage for his team by getting in the way of the keeper. Arguably, he is also interfering with an opponent. However, this broader language makes it clear that he doesn't actually have to be moving, or involved in the play, to be called for an offside infraction.

**D. How can I tell that an offside infraction has been called?**

Offside is signaled by the Assistant Referee (AR), if ARs are being used, by snapping the flag so that it is held straight up. When the Center Referee (CR) looks over, the AR then shows where the ball needs to be placed (pointing the flag high means far side; straight out means middle of field; low means near side).

**E. What is the penalty for offside?**

The Laws specify an indirect free kick IFK, to be taken from the place where the player in an OSP was standing at the time when the ball was last touched by another attacker (assuming that he immediately interfered with play or an opponent). However, because it can take a few seconds for the AR to decide that an offside infraction has occurred, and another few seconds for the CR to notice the offside flag, the OSP player often will have moved a considerable distance by the time that the whistle is blown. As a result, the IFK may be ordered to be taken some distance away from the spot where he ended up when the whistle was blown.

**Questions on Law 11*****11.01 Can the offside rule be used as a tactical weapon?***

Absolutely. By taking advantage of Law 11, defenders can pull the off-ball attackers up and away from their own goal, since the attackers have to stay even with the defenders to avoid being called for an offside offense. However, by pushing up, the defenders run the risk that a speedy attacker will be able to outrun them if a ball is played into the spaces behind the defenders for the off-ball attacker to run onto. Coaches constantly strive to strike a balance between pushing up too far, and not pushing up far enough, and the offside rule is an important part of their decision-making process.

***11.02 I have heard of an offside trap. What is this tactic?***

The offside trap is a tactic in which the defenders wait until the last possible moment, then take a large step upfield in order to throw their opponents into an OSP. It must be carefully timed, so that the step forward is made before the ball is played. It also relies heavily upon having an alert AR who will be looking at the 2LD, and not looking upfield, when the ball is played. Especially at the younger age levels where less-experienced ARs are likely to be found, this tactic is unlikely to work well. In addition, younger players rarely have the observation skills to be able to time the move properly.

***11.03 Can you suggest some tactical considerations for an attacking team to use in coping with an offside trap by the defenders?***

The key to beating an offside trap is for attackers to either patiently wait for the precise moment the ball is kicked before they begin their run into the area behind the defenders, or to time their runs carefully so they don't pass the defenders until immediately after the ball is kicked. Diagonal runs instead of straight, upfield runs work much better for purposes of flexibly adjusting to the uncertain timing of the kick, since the angle of the run can be easily altered to delay getting past the 2LD. There is also a tactic which upper-level teams employ which actually turns the offside trap against overly-smug defenders. These teams have a decoy attacker who deliberately steps offside or runs into an offside position before the ball is played. In the meantime, the ball is actually played to another attacker who is making a run down the opposite side of the field. Seeing the attacker in an offside position, defenders often will hesitate (expecting an offside flag). Instead, the decoy goes passive while the opposing attacker takes the ball in. Obviously for this to work, the play must be timed perfectly - and the attackers must have referees (and especially an AR) who will not raise an offside flag unless the decoy actually appears to be trying to get involved in the play, since the ploy won't work if the AR tends to flag anyone who steps into an offside position.

***11.04 The AR signaled offside, so our players stopped playing and the other team scored. The CR let the goal stand, which seems unfair. Can he do this?***

It is **very** important to train your players to "Play the whistle and not the flag" - ie., ignore the offside flag and keep playing until the CR agrees and accepts the call. Inexperienced ARs may raise flags for someone who is just in an OSP (just being in an OSP is often called "passive offside", meaning that the attacker did not interfere with play or gain advantage from his position - for example, he was on the other side of the field when another attacker dribbled the ball in and scored, so he never participated in the play). As a result, the CR often will overrule such calls. Your players will gain a huge advantage if they know to keep playing until the whistle blows. It is better to assume that the flag was raised in error, and keep playing, than to assume that CR will accept the call. This is true at all ages, but especially true at younger age levels where the ARs are likely to be less experienced and more likely to be overruled.

***11.05 Our club starts using the offside rule at U9 and above. This rule seems way too complicated for kids who are just 8 years old. What should I tell them to make it simple?***

SOS (simple offside) requires that you be able to:

1. Identify the ball. If you're behind it, you can't be offside.
2. Know one half of the field from another. If you're in your own half, you can't be offside, and
3. Be able to count to two. If you can count two defenders between you and the goal, you can't be offside.

***11.06 Is there anything else which can help get offside across with younger players?***

It generally helps young players to go out on the field and physically show them when an attacker is offside, by moving an attacker around a defender so that he is ahead of him, behind him or even with him. You also will want to explain to your defenders that they don't want to let any attackers get behind them if they push up over the midline, because the attackers don't have to worry about offside in their half where their goalie is. Then, show them that once the other team steps over the "magic boundary" (the midline) into their half, your defenders have the power to decide how close to let the opponent get to their goal by pushing up to the boundary line. Younger children get the idea more quickly about where they should be for attacks than on where they should be for defense, as it worries them to leave an attacker in an OSP. Relax. Almost all of them will know enough to apply the rule by U10 or U11.

Realize that younger players usually do not have the mental ability to extrapolate, or to convert mirror images. So, if you show them something which happens on one side of the field, they will not make the mental leap to correlate this to the same thing happening on the other side. In fact, it is not uncommon that the players on one side will tune the coach out if she is showing something on the other side of the field, as they will assume that this explanation is just for the people on the other side of the field.

***11.07 The AR in our last U10 game kept on missing offside calls, and we lost by a big margin. This really made all of us angry, and it didn't get any better when we yelled at this stupid AR. Why don't the clubs get better referees?***

New referees typically start as ARs, and that they often will miss offside calls while they are learning. This cannot be helped, as they have to work in game situations to become competent, and they usually get assigned to the recreational games at the younger levels (U12 and below) to learn. It takes most beginning referees about 20-30 games to get proficient at calling offside. While this can be very frustrating, it does no good to yell at these new refs. Not only is this against club rules, but you are increasing the chance that they will quit just when they had started to get more proficient, which means that your team likely will get somebody even worse and less experienced the next time. Besides, remember that teams switch places at the half. This rule was designed so that, if an AR was horrid, both teams got an equal shot at having bad calls. By yelling, you actually may have caused the CR to hang back a bit when your opponent got this new AR in the second half, so that your yelling actually may have insured that your opponent didn't get the same bad calls which your team did!



***11.08 Okay, if yelling doesn't work, what should our team do if we get an inexperienced AR who always makes bogus offside calls by calling offside when our guys were in an OSP or even onside?***

If the AR "over-calls" offside, so that players who are just in an OSP still get called for the infraction, your attackers will need to play back a bit more to insure that they don't get caught in an OSP. It can be helpful to ask them to just put a hand out to keep track of where their defender is. More experienced attackers actually can watch their man, and just listen for the ball (this is also what experienced ARs do), but it takes a bit of time to develop this knack. If you have a real speedster on the wings who usually gets the jump on his defender, you also may want to have him count to 1 or 2 before taking off, to give the AR time to see that he was onside. New ARs will watch the play, then turn their heads to recheck on players who are in an OSP, and often will call offside if the attacker is ahead of the defender at the time that they turn back to check. If the players are right next to the AR, this really makes for a tough angle for the AR to watch the game and these two players, so another adjustment is to put your attacker farther over into the middle of the field, which may make the job easier for the new AR.

***11.09 What if we get a poor AR who doesn't call offside, even when the opponent is 10 feet or more ahead of our last defender - or a CR who has no ARs and is working the game alone?***

The answer is so obvious that it is amazing how many folks refuse to see it - and then blame the referees for their coach's failure to adjust to this common situation. When you have a poor AR, or no AR, it is lunacy to try to use offside as a defensive weapon. You simply have to mark every attacker, even if this means letting them within inches of your own goal. This is far more effective than complaining - since you will have the benefit of this same situation on your own end in the second half and your team may want to take full advantage of the sloppy calls (or, if you are more sporting, at least push the envelope a bit). Sometimes, of course, you will not get this poor AR until the second half, so a smart coach will watch how both ARs are calling the match, and make any needed adjustments at half-time.

***11.10 In our last game, we had a player who was standing in an offside position at the far post. Another one of our players shot the ball; it bounced off of one of the defenders; and this player shot the ball into the net. The goal was disallowed. Was this the right call?***

It sure was. Your player was in an OSP and gained an advantage, right? After all, he scored a goal. The ball is considered to be last played by one of his teammates, because the defender is not considered to have played the ball when it merely ricocheted off of him to your player.

***11.11 What happens if the ball ricochets off an attacker in an offside position into the net? Is he considered to have played the ball?***

It is not necessary to be playing the ball to be called for an offside infraction. Remember, he could be lying unconscious and still get called for the infraction if his team gained an advantage from his position. Since your team gained an advantage, and the ball was last played by one of your teammates, and your attacker was in an OSP, your team should be called for offside.

***11.12 We had a situation recently where an opponent was in an OSP, realized this after the ball was played, and got back onside by the time that the ball reached him. The AR raised his flag, but our team got the ball back immediately and cleared it. The CR waved down the flag. Was this the correct call?***

The player technically committed an offside infraction (he was in an OSP, and arguably interfered with play when he managed to play the ball briefly). However, the CR always has the option to "play the advantage", which means that the CR can decide to ignore a foul if a whistle would just disrupt the game and awarding a free kick would give no advantage (or would actually be a disadvantage) to the team which otherwise would get the call. In other words, he can use common-sense in applying the rules. In this situation, many CRs would wave down the flag - but many others would blow the whistle. This is a recognized gray area of the Rules, so don't be surprised if you get different calls from both ARs and CRs in an identical situation. In fact, some experienced ARs will not raise the flag if no real advantage was gained from the offside infraction, in order to avoid gripes when the flag should obviously be waved off.

***11.13 In a recent game, an opponent was in an OSP, but his teammate kicked the ball too hard, and our keeper caught it easily. The player in the offside position did move towards the ball, but never really got near it. No flag went up, and some people on our side grumbled that we would have had better field position if the ball had come back upfield, rather than requiring our keeper to punt it. Was the AR right not to raise the flag?***

This is another recognized gray area. Some referees will argue that an attacker cannot have interfered with play (and surely got no advantage) when he was miles away from the ball when it was controlled by a defender. These referees will not make the call if a CR or raise the flag if an AR, preferring to let play continue uninterrupted unless a clear advantage materialized. Other referees will argue just as strongly that situations come up where the keeper feels rushed by the incoming attacker (even if he really did have ample time), and it is wrong to reward the attacker in an OSP if the harried keeper misclears the ball. These referees will always call offside in this situation, just to be on the safe side (and also to penalize the attacking player to teach him to be more observant of his positioning). Because the laws give broad discretion to the referee, the coach will simply have to adjust to the style of different referees, and expect differing calls in these types of situations.

***11.14 I'm confused. In one game recently, there was a player who was in an OSP at the far post near the goal area, and another teammate shot the ball, which our keeper saved. There was no offside call. In this identical situation in a different game, offside was called when the player moved towards the ball, even though the keeper saved it. Which call is correct?***

Strange as it may seem, both calls may have been correct! This is true because the referees have to make a split-second decision about whether attacking team gained an advantage by the acts of the attacker in an OSP. The laws give the referees wide latitude to make this decision, so different referees may have different opinions (even in the same fact setting) about whether an advantage was gained in this situation. For example, if the player in an OSP did something (called for the ball, perhaps) which distracted the keeper, this would be enough for many referees. Others look for a concrete advantage to the attacking team, and will wait for the player to actually play the ball or get in the way of an opponent, before they will make the call. While this can be frustrating at first, more experienced coaches learn to "read the referee" and will adjust their game to the calls being made. In general, the safest course is to train your players (and especially your keeper) to assume that all attackers are onside until they hear the whistle.

***11.15 Once a player is in an OSP, how does he clear this status and get to be considered onside again?***

This is a very tricky area of the rule, and an area where you will get lots of variation among referees. As you will recall, the off-ball attacker must be in an OSP at the moment that the ball is played by a teammate, and commits an offside infraction if he interferes with play, etc. Technically, if the player in an OSP was deemed passive at the instant that the ball was played to his teammate, he should no longer be considered to be in an offside position once his own movement, or that of other players or the ball, has put him back onside. As a practical matter, however, most referees will flag offside if the offside player quickly returns to play without a few seconds of obvious passivity (since the player in an OSP was ahead of everyone else, he usually will have gotten enough of a headstart that he will be considered to have gained an advantage by being in an OSP if he rejoins play before enough time has elapsed for that advantage to have been cancelled out). Expect differences between referees on when the offside status will be treated as having been cleared. The safest course is to tell your players that, if they realize that they are in an OSP, they should start heading back towards an onside position (or, if they will get in the way of play, start towards the touch line). This will signal to the AR that they have taken themselves out of play, so the AR is more likely to "reactivate" them as soon as they get back onside (since the AR usually will stop paying close attention to them once they have clearly taken themselves out of the play).

***11.16 Is it ever possible for an on-ball attacker to get in a position where he could be called for offside?***

No. An on-ball attacker technically could get into OSP (for example, after taking the ball to the endline and cutting back sharply, he could be closer to the endline than both the ball and all of his opponents). However, he cannot be called for offside, because the rule requires that he is OSP when the ball is played to him by a teammate. So, if he was onside when he got the ball, he should be safe from any

offside call as long as he retains possession. Of course, once he passes the ball to someone else (or the ball is stolen by a defender), he becomes just another off-ball attacker.

**11.17** *We have a very speedy forward, who likes to station himself right at the midline and then run onto long balls served over the top. Recently, he was standing with one foot on the line and the other in our defending half, but was bent over in a typical runners stance (so part of his body was over the line). When he took off, the AR immediately raised the offside flag - and stated that he was offside because a part of his toe and part of his body were in the attacking half. He has never gotten any flag for this before. Was this the right call?*

The lines are considered to be a part of the area which they enclose, but the midfield line encloses both halves. Therefore, a person who is standing right on the line technically could be considered to be in his own half - or in the opposing half. As a result, you are going to find occasional differences between referees on these types of calls. While the majority probably will not call an offside infraction where a player has both feet on or behind the line (after all, it is still about 50-60 yards to the goal, so an inch or so likely won't matter), you will find some who will consider a player to be "in the attacking half" if any part of his body touches or encroaches over the midline. When this happens, you simply will have to tell your player to back up about 5-6 inches - as arguing will not get you anywhere.

**11.18** *In a recent game, one of the opposing team's attackers was clearly offside, but was trying to get back onside when the ball was played in his direction. By the time that the ball reached him, several defenders were between him and the goal. The AR still called offside, even though it didn't look like our player had gained any advantage from being offside. Besides, it sure looked like the other defenders had made our attacker onside again when they got nearer to the goal than our attacker was. Why can't our club get better ARs?*

Actually, it sounds like you have some pretty good ones already. This was clearly the correct call (and one often missed by beginners, so this AR likely had some solid experience). This player was clearly in an OSP, right? At the time that the ball was played to him by a teammate, he was ahead of the ball and apparently ahead of all of the defenders except the keeper. Furthermore, he then participated in play by trying to play the ball, right? When he did this, he is considered to have interfered with play, so it was entirely proper to make an offside call in this case. Remember that OSP is judged when the ball is played - not when it is received - so it does not make any difference that the defenders were between him and the goal when he received the ball. He was still OSP when it was played, and he then interfered with play, so he did commit the offside infraction and properly was called for that infraction. Of course, there still may be times when an experienced referee will choose to ignore the infraction because it was considered trivial or because the call would penalize the wrong team (for example, the ball is mis-kicked and goes directly to a defender, who quickly clears it upfield for a breakaway, so it would be a penalty to the defenders to bring the ball back). However, in most cases, experienced referees will make the same call which was made here.

**11.19** *I took a look at the Offside law at the FIFA website, and it says that an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team for an offside infraction, which is to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred. However, I am hopelessly confused. In our club, the ball usually is placed even with the AR, even if the offside attacker was standing several yards past the last defender. Sometimes, with really lazy attackers (or tired ones, late in the game), they can be considerably behind the last defender, so there are times when the placement of the ball seems like it could make a difference. So, can you tell me what the "official" rule is on where the ball should be placed?*

It sounds like the referees in your club follows the standard rule-of-thumb on placement of the ball. In most cases, putting the ball even with the last defender (which is where the AR usually is stationed) is a workable guideline to give to newer referees - since most attackers normally are trying to stay onside and are fairly close to the last defender. However, as you point out, there are times when there is considerable distance between the OSP attacker and the last defender. Technically, since OSP (and offside) is judged "at the moment the ball is played", the infraction occurs at the place where the OSP

player was standing when the ball was last touched by his teammate. Thus, in your example, the ball probably should have been brought back to where the tired attacker was standing. However, as a practical matter, the placement of the ball is rarely something which any team will choose to gripe about as long as their side is getting the ball back and getting the IFK. Besides, if the worst mistake made by the CR or AR on your game is to miss the placement of an IFK by a few yards, your team has been pretty lucky to get such good officials.

***11.20 Okay, if an attacker is OSP just across the midline, and then comes back into the defending half to get the ball, does this mean that the IFK should be awarded from an point in the attacking half where he was standing OSP when the ball was played?***

Yes. This would be the correct placement of the ball. However, don't be surprised to see the ball placed where the AR is standing at the time the flag is raised (which likely will be somewhere right around the midline). Also, since the ball is still in the defending half, the CR is likely to be looking closely on whether to simply let play continue (considering the offense to have been trifling), so there is a higher chance of the offside infraction being ignored than would be the case if the attackers were closer to their opponent's goal.

***11.21 I would like to know more about the offside law than is contained in this summary and FAQ, and look at some diagrams to be sure that I fully understand the rules. What resources do you suggest?***

The FIFA website at <http://www.fifa.com> includes a full copy of the laws (as well as diagrams). Copies of the laws also may be ordered from your national federation. In the USA, the USSF (United States Soccer Federation) is located at 1801-11 S. Prairie Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60616. Phone: 312- 808-1300. There are several companies which produce summaries of the Laws which may be suitable to give to parents and players. One inexpensive pamphlet which many of the members have found helpful is "The Rules of Soccer: Simplified" by Soccer Learning Systems. However, no exhaustive search has been made of these resources (the writers of this FAQ have all been referees for several years), and there may be other publications equally as good and inexpensive.

# Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct

## *Offenses punishable by Direct Free Kick*

### **1. Tripping, pushing, jumping, striking, kicking, charging**

#### **Thumbnail**

The initial section of Law 12, "direct free kick", lists a set of six offences which, if committed against an opponent in a manner that the referee judges to be "careless, reckless or with excessive force", result in a DFK to the non-offending team. The offences are kicking or attempting to kick, tripping or attempting to trip, jumping at, charging, striking or attempting to strike, and pushing.

Law 12 further provides that, if a player commits any of these six offenses inside his own penalty area (PA), the opposing team will be awarded a penalty kick (PK). While the offence must occur within the PA, the ball does not have to be in the PA for a PK to be awarded.

#### **Commentary**

So the word is out. Even in the "gentlemanly" game of soccer, people sometimes lose control and do things that are not exactly appropriate. To be a foul, the first six of these, listed above, must not only occur, but must be committed in a manner "considered by the referee to be careless, reckless, or using excessive force".

First off, what's "careless or reckless?" Synonyms for these words are rash, negligent, wild, unconcerned, neglectful, improvident and a few others, but you get the idea. While excessive force is harder to define, let's just agree that it's a bit more violent than the norm since the referee makes the decision on the field anyway (and what's an "excessive" push in a U-8 game might not even be noticed in a professional match).

So there we have it. Three things that you get in trouble for even trying to do (kicking, tripping, striking) and a couple that you have to actually accomplish in order to create a foul (jump at, push). And by the way, possession of or proximity to the ball isn't even involved in any of them. If A trips B while the ball is 60 meters away, it can still be a foul. However, all of these do require that the action be directed at an opponent. Therefore, if a keeper decides to strike her own defender for an especially poor play, **this** section of the law is **not** applicable. However, it's quite likely that the referee will decide that this is violent conduct under a later section of law 12 and act accordingly.

Right from the git go, be aware that if a player stands there and sticks her foot out and clearly trips an opponent on the way past or runs up to another player and kicks her, the referee will judge this to be either careless, reckless or with excessive force and call a foul. It seems to get a little murkier, however, when the non-offending player has the ball, as either the trip or kick might possibly be an unintended consequence of trying to get the ball. But have no fear, intent has nothing to do with this one. If a player tries to steal the ball and, through carelessness or recklessness, misses and takes the attacker to the ground, the referee will call a trip. In fact, even if she "gets ball" prior to the opponent hitting the deck, the referee might judge the "getting ball" to be just an unintended consequence of the takedown and call a foul.

Now, with all of that said, be aware that any of these offences, if committed violently enough, can land the perpetrator on the bad side of a yellow or even red card for serious foul play or violent conduct.

## **Questions on tripping, jumping, pushing, striking and kicking**

***12.1.01 My player was dribbling down the field and an opponent tripped her but the referee didn't call it. How come?***

Several possibilities. Remember that advantage applies to most everything in soccer so the referee might have thought that he'd be giving an advantage to the other team by calling the trip. Also, maybe the defender "had the ball" and your player tripped over that.

***12.1.02. If a foul, of the type for which a direct free kick is awarded, occurs right on the penalty area line but not inside it, is the result a direct free kick or a penalty kick?***

Remember that "on it is inside it" (or "the lines are part of the area they define") so a PK will be awarded.

***12.1.03. Many parents, and some coaches and players, frequently complain the other team is getting away with "pushing", and this is listed as a penalizable offense in the rules. What exactly do the rules mean is illegal pushing, and what is not illegal?***

Specifically, they mean that if the pushing is careless, reckless or done with excessive force in the opinion of the referee, the foul will be called. If a player pushes another to the ground with two hands in the back, it's clearly a foul. If a player pushes off another while both jumping for a ball, it's likely marginal depending on the force of the push. As mentioned earlier, the level of pushing allowed varies greatly from game to game depending on the nationality of the teams involved, level of play, experience and mood of the referee, the position of the moon, etc.

***12.1.04. An attacker in possession of the ball has broken ahead of everyone, and will soon have a shot opportunity on goal 1-vs-1 against the goalkeeper. The attacker is tripped up by a defender, who deliberately tackles from behind before the attacker reaches the penalty area, to prevent the breakaway, figuring the attackers will get a direct free kick, not a goal or penalty shot and the worst that will likely happen is a yellow card. Apart from sportsmanship considerations, to what extent has the defender miscalculated the severity of the potential consequences, and to what extent (if any) is the defender correct in his / her Machiavellian calculations?***

If the referee judges that the attacker had an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (more detail later in this law), the defender will have plenty of time to contemplate his act from the sidelines after he receives a red card. In that case, this is actually counted both as a) a trip and b) committing a foul punishable by a free kick to prevent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity.

***12.1.05. Another player jumped at me (I think)! How can I know for sure?***

Any player whose feet leave the ground and who does not jump straight up may be called for "jumping at" if he or she makes contact with an opponent. You should be careful not to confuse "jumping at" with a fair (shoulder) charge, in which a player may legitimately use his or her shoulder to push an opponent off the ball, as long as contact is made with the opponent's shoulder. But if a player jumps at an opponent, the offence will be called no matter what parts of the body actually make contact -- "jumping at" can also involve the cleats.

***12.1.06. I thought striking or kicking an opponent was serious foul play or violent conduct and would get a player sent off?***

Well, they can be but not necessarily. A good example here is "spitting". If you spit at an opponent (dealt with later in this law), you're off. Gone. Period. No question of severity, amount, referee's judgement, whatever. In opposition to that approach, all of the fouls dealt with in this section **can** earn a red card if the referee decides that they're done in such either violently or carelessly enough to merit same. So there you are shielding the ball with the opponent bumping you from behind and you swing your arm back to "clear some space". Maybe a free kick for striking, but not likely a red. If, in the same instance, you turn and

punch the opponent in the head, bingo. Red and gone. In another example, an opponent falls on the ground with the ball at his feet and you go up and kick at the ball and hit him at the same time. Maybe a free kick for kicking an opponent. In the same circumstance, you go up and kick him in the stomach to teach him not to lie on or about the ball and you're gone. So in this section it's not necessarily **whether** a player pushes or kicks or strikes that determines whether it's just a free kick or a red card (and sending off) but **how** it's done. .

**12.1.07. What's the difference between 'pushing' and 'striking'?**

Well, I'm sure that any of your U-6's would be able to tell you whether they got "pushed" or "hit" better than I but here goes. Try to picture "striking" as using your hand or elbow or the ball (more on this in a minute) to simply pop the opponent in the nose. For pushing, see yourself placing your hands gently on the opponent's back and shoving him 10M into the cheap seats. There's your difference. With regard to striking with the ball, be aware that it's a foul penalized by a penalty kick if the keeper, in his own penalty area, strikes an opponent by throwing the ball at him while the ball is in play, **regardless of where the opponent is located**.

**12.1.08. A player swung his arm as part of his windup for a shot on goal, and in the process accidentally hit and knocked out a player from the other team who was approaching from behind. The other team was screaming for my player to be sent off, but the referee restarted with a drop ball -- what do you think about this?**

A GREAT backswing and likely a good non-call based on the "accidentally" and "from behind" wording. Now if the defender was approaching from the FRONT, a send-off would have been more likely.

**12.1.09. A player on the other team decided to try a bicycle kick in midfield, and in the process broke the jaw of one of my players who was coming to challenge the ball. The referee awarded a DFK to us -- would this have been for kicking an opponent?**

That's the likely choice since the other best possibility, dangerous play, is an IFK offence.

**2. Holding, Spitting, and Handling the Ball (Strictly Enforced DFK Offenses)**

**Thumbnail**

The second section of Law 12 provides for the award of a direct free kick to the non-offending team for the commission of the following four offenses:

- a) holding an opponent;
- b) spitting at an opponent;
- c) handling the ball deliberately (other than by goalkeepers in their own penalty area);
- d) tackling an opponent to gain possession of the ball, but making physical contact with the opponent before contact with the ball. Tackling and the closely related subject of physically charging opponents are important subjects which will be treated in a separate subtopic of their own, and we will mainly cover only holding, spitting, and handling in this subtopic.

This section of Law 12 further provides that, if this offense is committed by a player within his own defensive penalty area (PA), the opponent is awarded a penalty kick (PK). While the offense must occur in the PA, the ball does not have to be in the PA for a PK to be awarded, unless the offense is for handling the ball.

**Commentary and Coaching Points**

In contrast to the six types of actions listed in the first section of Law 12, there is no requirement that the referee first consider any of the four types of actions listed in the second section of Law 12 to have been committed by a player carelessly, recklessly, or using excessive force before calling them as an offense. This second section of Law 12 reflects an intent for referees to be stricter and allow less leeway to

regard these four types of actions as acceptably accidental, unintentional, or incidental side effects of otherwise fair play. The six actions listed in the first section of Law 12 mostly represent unacceptably overboard or improperly motivated extensions to types of activities whose nature would otherwise be consistent with the law and spirit of the game, or else be realistically unavoidable incidentals to a contact sport like soccer. By comparison, the first three types of actions listed in the second section of Law 12 have far less consistency with any fair objective of the game, and hence are tolerable only when they are wholly unintentional and accidental in the course of otherwise fair play. Tackling an opponent to win possession of the ball is a special case of a deliberate type of activity that of itself is entirely consistent with the spirit and law of the game, but unavoidably risks creating rough and even dangerous play. The compromise is to license the player to make the attempt, but add by way of caveat that the player better contact the ball first or else strongly risk being charged with an offense (plus a card, if the referee regards the attempt as reckless or excessively forceful).

1. **Holding an opponent:** A player is not allowed to deliberately use their hands to grab an opponent's body or jersey or to use the arms (or legs) to hook the opponent, for the purpose of restraining the opponent or to force them off-balance. Holding can also include extending the arms outward physically against another player to form a barrier to their progress, although this particular action likewise could be characterized as illegal obstruction, if the referee so chooses. A player caught deliberately pulling an opponent's jersey also is at particularly strong risk from many referees of receiving a yellow card.
2. **Spitting at an opponent:** This offense is primarily about an unacceptably inflammatory show of disrespect to an opponent, and only secondarily (if at all) about health risks. Even if a player is standing near one touch line while exchanging hard stares with an opponent who is standing across the field near the other touch line, if the player spits at the opponent, the referee can call the player for an offense. So long as the referee judges the player to have hurled an insult by spitting in an opponent's direction, it does not matter that the force of the spitting is limited or whether the player stays at a distance that poses no risk of the spit actually reaching the opponent. A player called for the offense of spitting will very likely also be ejected from the game with a red card, since spitting is specifically listed in the last section of Law 12 as an offense that merits sending off the guilty player.
3. **Handling the ball deliberately:** Few rules in soccer are so simple, yet so often misunderstood as the one making deliberate handling of the ball an offense. The language police may seem insufferable to fuss at people for calling it a "handball", but this time they have a point: this terminology is not a harmlessly incorrect informality like calling offside instead "offsides", but instead subtly misleads toward incorrect understanding of the rule itself. It is a rule against deliberately playing the ball with the hands or arms, i.e. "handling" it, and not a rule against the ball striking the hand and arms during play, i.e. a "handball". Law 12 establishes two requirements before handling the ball is considered a foul:
  - i. The handling must be deliberate (not accidental) - in other words, there must be an intent to play the ball with the hand or arm.
  - ii. The hand/arm must actually come into contact with the ball (i.e., it is not an offense to swing and miss - although some referees might consider this to be unsporting behavior which would warrant a caution).

Understanding what the rule actually means by requiring that handling be "deliberate" and fully appreciating the spirit-of-the-game rationale behind the rule are fundamental to gaining a practical, accurate grasp of when it does or does not likely apply. The very essence of soccer is that the hands and arms are NOT to be deliberately used to play the ball, either directly to deflect it or indirectly to block or control the possible paths along which others may direct the ball. Soccer would be essentially the same sport, with a bit more scoring, if the goalkeeper position were eliminated, but a quite different one if every player had the same right as the goalkeeper to use hands or arms. Philosophically, the handling rule is the most important rule in the game, defining the most distinguishing characteristic of the sport. On the other hand, there is nothing much lost to the game, either essentially or practically, from accidental contact that truly does not result from any deliberate attempt to play the ball with the hand or arm.



Deliberately attempting to "play" the ball includes, as expected, any attempt to intentionally deflect an imminently anticipated or already incoming ball using the hand or arms. However, deliberately attempting to "play" the ball also includes deliberately extending the hands and arms into the potential paths available to any ball that might come into the player's vicinity, even if the ball is not imminently expected or even nearby at the moment the hand or arm is extended. Without this inclusion to what constitutes "deliberate" handling, players would be able implicitly "guard" an area of the field with their arms and hands, so long as they extended them before an incoming ball was imminently anticipated or nearby. Their arsenal of tools available for playing the ball would expand to include the hands and arms. This is why a player running down the field with the arms held out in front or extended out from the side of the body is inviting a handling call if struck by the ball.

So, with such a liberal interpretation of what is "deliberate" handling, how could ball-to-hand or arm contacts ever avoid being "deliberate"?

**First**, leeway is usually given for players to extend their arms momentarily to keep from losing balance, but this leeway may be lost or quickly exhausted if a player seems to be contriving to abuse this tolerance.

**Second**, anatomically there is no way humans can ever totally keep their hands and arms out of harms way. Some leeway is usually given players for this fact without requiring them to be contortionists, so long as the player seems to be making a fair attempt to avoid using the hands and arms to play the ball. However, it is important to realize that a player, even one who has hands and arms tucked as tightly straight down against their side as possible, who deliberately turns sideways into the ball so the arm and hand are exposed to the incoming ball, will often be regarded by the referee as having attempted to play the ball and therefore having committed a deliberate handling offense. This is especially true if the player makes any gesture to angle that side of the body to influence the deflection.

**Third**, many refs will often allow some leeway for truly unexpected bounces into the player's hand or arm when the player is clearly reasonably expecting to be able to play the ball cleanly without difficulty by only using the feet and is in fact trying to do so. However, this leeway is extended more inconsistently and less often than the other two types, and applies mainly when hands and arms appear to be extended only to a position the player reasonably expected to be well out of the way of potential play on the incoming ball.

It should now be clear why each of the following common, persistent assumptions is **false**.

- I. an assumption that any hand or arm-to ball contact is a handling offense (a Hand-Ball :=);
- II. an assumption that an instance of handling cannot be deliberate, because either:
  - A. the player extended their hand or arm before the ball was in their vicinity, or else before they knew the ball would be kicked in their particular direction; or
  - B. the player may have known that the ball was in their vicinity, but the ball was kicked unexpectedly soon or hard, so the player did not have time to move out of the way of the ball before it struck them.

## Questions on holding, spitting and handling

### *12.2.01 What is the difference between holding and obstruction, and what practical difference does it make which characterization the referee gives to the situation?*

Obstruction requires no physical contact with an opponent to be an offense, but instead focuses on a player's improper attempt, while they are not within playing distance of the ball, to shade an opponent from the ball (see the more complete discussion in the obstruction section of this FAQ). To the extent physical contact may be involved, it could consist entirely of conduct that would be entirely permissible if the player was legitimately playing for the ball or to fairly gain a position to receive it. Holding OTOH requires physical contact, concerns a player seeking to restrain an opponent by improperly extending the hands, arms, or (less commonly) legs to restrain or even hook the opponent, and can be committed even by a player immediately in possession of the ball. Another important difference is that even if a player commits an obstruction offense within their own defensive penalty area, the opponents are only awarded an

indirect free kick. By contrast, a holding offense would result in a penalty kick for the opponents if committed within that location (and a direct free kick if committed elsewhere). Thus, whether obstruction or holding is called will have practical consequences roughly in direct proportion to how close to the opponent's goal the action occurred. The next question explores the issue of sorting out illegal physical contact by holding from legal contact that nonetheless is being used to obstruct an opponent.

***12.2.02 What if a player is improperly obstructs an opponent, in part by fending them off with a partly outstretched arm. Which offense, holding or obstruction, will the referee probably call?***

If the arm is held out far enough or used aggressively enough to restrain the opponent as to clearly be holding even apart from the obstruction, then LOTG 5 directs the referee to call the more serious of any two simultaneous offenses, which in this case is holding. However, there is no bright-line demarcation between using the arms in a way that is clearly holding even independent of whether obstruction is involved, and action that is clearly designed to obstruct, but where the deployment of the arms would be legal or at least tolerably incidental in another context. In part, this comes down to the need for the rules to accommodate human anatomy realistically during dynamic movement and play: players simply aren't expected to play with their arms held rigidly tight against their sides. They are allowed some freedom of action to moderately extend the arm outward for balance and natural running action, and even to take some deliberate incidental advantage of this leeway to occupy and preserve their playing space; just not overly much.

A good, informal test is this: assume a vertical standing position, with arms held loosely against the sides. Now, take one modest leaping step forward, allowing the arms to swing forward a bit for natural balance, without attempting to throw them outward. When you land, the elbows will still be pointing nearly, but not quite vertically downward, but perhaps 4 or a tad more inches out from the body (of course, varying somewhat with your height, etc). You're probably safe at least out to here, unless you are actively jabbing your opponent with your elbow, piston-style. You are allowed a bit more leeway when cutting or turning, so long as the elbow is held predominately down. However, the more your elbow comes out at an angle from this, the more risk the contact will be viewed as holding, rather than fairly incidental to your right to occupy space and keep balance, including taking into account contact from your opponent. Also, so far, we've only taken into account mainly the action of the **upper** arm and elbow. Actively using or extending the lower arm or hand at any angle other than in a mostly vertical or straight forward plane is suspect, and greatly increases the chances the you will be regarded as holding or pushing, rather than fairly taking incidental advantage of your right to occupy space and keep balance against your opponent's contact.

Other situational factors may also enter the referee's judgment of whether to call holding or obstruction (or maybe nothing) in this gray zone, such as the age and level of competition involved (higher == more physical play tolerated) and whether the consequences of the call seem disproportionate to the particular nature of the action involved. This may especially be true where the action occurs in the guilty player's defensive penalty area, and the referee feels that a penalty kick is unfairly disproportionate in the particular circumstances. However, this logic is not available to bail out a defender who has regained possession of the ball right in front of their own goal and is madly trying to fend off an attacker long enough to turn and safely clear the ball, but is getting over-aggressive with their arms. Obstruction within playing distance of the ball is perfectly legal, whereas holding is not, leaving the referee with an all-or-nothing decision whether to call a penalty kick offense in the particular circumstances.

***12.2.03 How far is a player allowed to extend their arms out during contact with an opponent before it will be called holding rather than a fair incident of maintaining balance of occupying playing space?***

This question is entirely answered in the previous question 12.2.02, especially the second paragraph of that answer, which applies to other situations as well.

***12.2.04 What is the difference between holding, pushing, and tripping, and what practical difference does it make which characterization the referee gives to the situation?***

The consequences for each are the same (direct free kick, except penalty kick when committed in the player's own defensive penalty area), and the referee need not articulate which occurred to signal an

offense. All the referee need signal is any stoppage in play necessitated thereby and the appropriate restart. Therefore it matters little which characterization the referee chooses, although the referee may be somewhat quicker to call something that looks like holding rather than let it go as an incidental effect of otherwise fair play. It is important to remember that these characterizations are not tightly defined criminal statutory offenses in soccer, but rather serve as convenient labels for various improper uses by a player of their hands, arms, and legs. The distinction between pushing and holding is mostly arbitrary, except that hooking or grabbing an opponent with the hands or arms is unlikely to be a part of any fair play, and more likely characterized as holding (and likely more quickly called). Otherwise, informally, holding seeks to restrain whereas pushing seeks to positively force an opponent in an undesired direction (for them). A player extending their legs to block an opponent will be more likely characterized as tripping or attempting to trip their opponent than as holding them, except possibly when the player raises their leg higher up against their opponent's leg to hook and restrain them far more than possibly to upset their balance, the action may be recognized as holding. Again, however, the distinction is somewhat arbitrary.

***12.2.05 I recently watched a game in which players from the two teams repeatedly contended for high balls, with one player typically stationed behind the other. On one occasion, the referee called a foul on the front player, and awarded his opponent an indirect free kick. Later, a couple of times a direct free kick was given against the back player, and other times nothing was called. Why are the calls so different? Is the referee merely being inconsistent or not calling some of these plays correctly?***

When the player in front was called for the IFK foul, it was for illegal obstruction, because the referee felt that the front player was not primarily trying to play the ball himself but rather was trying to prevent his opponent from being able to play it by blocking him off the ball. When the back player was called for the foul, the referee in all likelihood thought the front player was making a legitimate attempt to play the incoming air ball himself, and that the back player was trying to use pressure from his hands and body to improperly to go over the back of the front player. In this case, the referee would call a holding or pushing foul. Especially in higher-level competition, the referee may want to "let 'em play" and may therefore decide to allow a fair degree of physical contact. Some incidents of such contact may not be called fouls at all so long as the shoving doesn't get out of hand or become truly unfair.

***12.2.06 Sometimes when two players from opposite teams are positioned one just in front of the other on an incoming ball from the air, I will see the player in back place his hands on the upper back of the player in front of them. A foul is not always called on this, even when the referee has a good view of what's going on. I thought this should clearly be holding or pushing. Is the referee properly refraining from calling anything, or merely being inattentive or inconsistent?***

So long as the back player doesn't actually push with the hands, some referees will tolerate this up to a point in order for the back player to protect his chin from the head, shoulders, and arms of the front player when they both jump up for the ball. Obviously, even a referee who is favorably disposed to tolerate this technique will usually recognize limits beyond which the back player is abusing this tolerance, in order to push the front player, or is holding the front player for an unfair advantage. In those cases, a foul will be called.

***12.2.07 One of my players is in the habit of sometimes casually spitting on the ground in front of him at moments when play is paused, even sometimes when there's an opponent standing nearby to mark him. I'm sure he means nothing by it, but could this habit be serious trouble?***

He is doing nothing illegal merely by spitting on the field, even when an opponent is nearby, so long as it is clear in the context to both the referee and the opponent that nothing is meant by it. However, because of the potentially very serious consequences if the opponent (and the referee, perhaps influenced by the opponent's upset reaction) misinterprets his action, you would be wise to make sure he knows the seriousness of what is at stake. This could include not only a direct free kick or penalty kick, but his expulsion from the game with a red card, which in most leagues and tournaments requires at least his being barred from the next game as well (possibly more). He should be instructed to always keep this in mind, and spit only when no one else is closely around, and in a direction away from anyone. Substitute him out

of the game if he is getting careless about this, or you may be doing without him anyway (and be forced to lay the rest of the game with only 10 players on the field if he is expelled with a red card).

***12.2.08 What if players react instinctively to throw their arms and hands up to protect themselves against a sudden, hard ball that seems to be coming directly at them? Will this be called as handling?***

The vast majority of the time, yes! There is **no** general right to handle the ball to protect oneself! The proper response is to try to duck out of the way instead. This is another situation where the risk of inadvertently legalizing use of the hands and arms would be an unacceptable consequence, if players were able to justify redirecting any ball that comes in hard at them as self-defense. What may be tolerated sometimes by some referees is to for a player to place their arms and hands tightly against their body and face, straight up, so long as no attempt is made to use the arms to affect the angle or strength of the ball's deflection, or move unnecessarily to meet the ball. Otherwise, such will be regarded as an attempt to play the ball. However, be aware that this practice will tend to be only inconsistently and occasionally tolerated, more so the younger and less experienced the player and less so the higher level competitive, older, or more experienced the player. An attitude prevalent among referees is that players should usually be expected to duck instead of parry the ball with the arms in self-defense, even as described. Young players are not really being extended a favor by permitting them over-laxity about handling calls, since this will only reinforce bad habits that will not be tolerated later on, or by all referees even for their age players.

***12.2.09 I thought men and women are allowed to protect sensitive areas when they stand as part of the wall in front of the goal on free kicks for the opponent. Can't men protect their crotch and women their breasts?***

Yes, provided that the arms and hands are held tightly against the body to protect the affected area, and provided they do not abuse this privilege by trying to use it for any collateral purpose to affect the ball other than as truly required for self-protection. In particular, they must not play the ball by seeking to control its deflection in any conscious or predetermined way (i.e. they should face forward, into the music). For men, this means arms held straight down tightly against their chest, and hands crossed against their crotches, facing straight forward into the ball to the extent possible in the circumstances. For women, this means arms held tightly against their chest, with elbows pointing more or less straight down, and forearms crossed in front of their breasts, held tightly against them, again facing straight into the ball to the extent possible in the circumstances.

***12.2.10 Same question as 12.2.09, except that the players are protecting themselves from an incoming ball during regular play, not in a set piece like the wall. Does the same exemption from the handling rule apply for both sexes?***

The application of these exemptions become much less consistent and reliable other than in wall situations. Women (including any players old enough to have developed breasts) have traditionally been extended some leeway by many referees to use the crossed-arms-against-chest protection described in question 12.2.09, and men to use the hands covering the crotch protection also described in that same question. However, many referees feel that just as with protecting the head, the proper response is to duck or move, rather than to needlessly tolerate an opening for players to play the ball by parrying it under the guise of flinching while protecting themselves. The higher the level competition, the older the player, the less leeway will be extended except in wall situations on free kicks, and the more skilled play or effort to avoid the ball will be expected of the player instead.

***12.2.11 I coach a younger girls' team, and when the ball comes in the air toward them, some of them tend to involuntary react with a shriek of "EEK!" and lean back and perhaps to the side, with their hands and arms extended out in front of them. How much tolerance is extended for this natural reaction, and what can I do to help cure it?***

No tolerance whatsoever is usually extended to them, nor should be for this understandable, but unacceptable reaction. Your mileage may vary with your local soft-hearted ref of the day. However, young players are not really being extended a favor to permit over-laxity on handling calls which will only ingrain

bad habits that will not be tolerated later on, or even with many other referees calling games for their age group. So, what to do? The quick fix is to instruct players to grab their shorts whenever the ball comes at them. This both tends to negate for the referee any impression that the player intends to try to improperly play the ball or extend their arms, and promotes the proper response by the player as well, which is to try to duck out of the way. At your team's practices, you should conduct exercises designed to accustom players in small steps to having to the ball coming directly at them other than on the ground. A good way to start is by having someone stand very near them and toss the ball gently into their chests for them to play, and then progress from there. Some gentle heading practice helps, even though you may not want to emphasize this technique as a formal real skill to acquire until players get older. Make sure that they understand, even in practice, that arm or hand-to-ball contact is a serious no-no, and not simply an accident to giggle about their own haplessness.

***12.2.12 One of my players reacted (seemingly instinctively) to a ball coming at them not by extending their arms out, but by turning to the side, with their arms and hands held tightly against their side. However, when the ball struck their arm, the referee called handling against them. Was this a proper call?***

If a player uses their arm to deliberately play the ball at all, even if held tightly against their side, this is considered impermissible handling. Some referees will allow some leeway for this reaction of turning to the side as a sometimes-permissible form of instinctive self-protection against a sudden, hard ball coming at a player at about stomach to shoulder level where the player, so long as the player does not seem make any effort to control its redirection, whereas other referees will almost never allow this without calling the player for a handling offense. Players should, in general, be discouraged from using this turn-to-the-side reaction, even though it is perhaps not as egregious as sticking the arms out extended in front. The grace extended to this practice by referees is at best, inconsistent and unreliable. If a player seems dip their shoulder or body to in any way consciously control the redirection of the ball, a handling call is near certain even from the most generous of referees. The predominate attitude among many referees is that players should either learn to play the ball properly, or learn to duck out of the way.

***12.2.13 Where in the shoulder area is the line drawn between permissible use of the body to play the ball and punishable use of the arm?***

In general, the side of the shoulder is viewed as part of the arm. The front of the shoulder is viewed as part of the body, so long as the player does not try to dip the shoulder forward or out of the plane of the torso. The top and front of the shoulder above and inside the armpit is considered part of the body, whereas outside of the armpit, the shoulder tends to be viewed as part of the arm. The back of the shoulder is also usually viewed as part of the body rather than the arm. A player who turns their back on the ball (and not just to the side) with their arms held in is less likely to be called for handling if the ball strikes the shoulder, because this is rarely consistent with an attempt to truly play the ball with the arms (little or no eye-arm coordination is possible in this situation, for one thing). This brings the issue into its proper focus: the real concern is when the shoulder is used as if part of the arm rather than as an integral part of the torso to consciously attempt to control the manner in which the ball deflects from it, with the caveat that the side of the shoulder is presumptively considered as part of the arm in most cases. A player is allowed to play the ball with the torso, but not with the arm.

***12.2.14 I saw a player who had her arms held out somewhat try to receive what appeared to be an easy roller and dribble forward with it, but she inadvertently misplayed it off her foot, and it hopped up into her arm but the referee called nothing. On another occasion in the game, handling was called on a seemingly similar play. Did the referee simply miss the correct call in one of these instances?***

We'll assume that the referee had a clear view of both plays and appears to be competent. In the first instance, where handling **was not** called against the player, the most likely possibility is he or she thought that the player reasonably expected to be able to play this ball cleanly and without difficulty using only the feet. In other words, under the particular circumstances, the nature of the incoming ball made it unlikely that the player could reasonably have recognized that her arm was truly in the potential playing

area for the ball. A second reason to extend leeway to the player would be if the arm appeared to the referee to have been momentarily extended reflexively for balance, rather than heedlessly held out.

In the second instance, where handling **was** called against the player, perhaps the referee did not think the player had any right under those particular circumstances to believe her arms were not potentially in the playing space on the ball, nor did the referee believe the arm was justifiably reflexively extended for balance. Finally, referee tolerance for unexpected bad hops into the arm is always going to be something of an ad hoc snap judgment, and therefore will always be an inconsistently extended grace from situation to situation and referee to referee.

### **3. Tackling and Charging Offenses**

#### **Thumbnail**

There is probably no more tricky segment for the referee in applying Law 12 dealing with fouls and misconduct than judging fair challenges for the ball. A challenge here is defined as one player making an attempt to take the ball away from an opponent who has possession. This is accomplished by one of two challenges defined by the LOTG as "tackling" (an action in which the player tries to physically take the ball from the opponent) or "charging" (an act in which the player attempts physically to move the opponent away from the ball). Purists will note that in the strictest sense, charging is any act of running at an opponent and making contact, so there can indeed be charging away from the point of play--such charging is almost always a foul.

As has already been noted, the LOTG defines unfair play as being careless, reckless or using excessive force **IN THE OPINION OF THE REFEREE**. Specifically, when these standards are applied to tackling, the LOTG further specify that it is unfair when the player "tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball, making contact with the opponent **BEFORE** touching the ball." Of course, this is where it gets tricky. Most experienced referees believe it is virtually impossible to make a fair challenge from behind, i.e., it is practically impossible to touch the ball before the opponent unless the challenger is at least shoulder level. However, it can be done, and the referee must make the final judgment. One sees this particularly in tackles where a player comes from behind between the opponents legs, or in cases where the tackler makes a sliding challenge and manages to get a leg around the player with the ball to make contact with the ball. Additional instructions in the older version of the LOTG specifically forbid the referee from calling a foul when a player makes a successful tackle with an outstretched leg over which the player losing the ball then falls. This instruction has been removed from the new version and it remains to be seen if referees will continue to apply the old interpretation. Finally, if it is difficult to tackle fairly from behind, it is just as hard to tackle unfairly from the front. If the players are facing one another, it takes a pretty reckless swing and a miss to commit a tackling foul, though sliding with the studs up or taking the dribbler's legs just after he has pushed the ball to one side are common, usually because of clumsiness or inexperience, not because of any intention to do harm. Generally, when players are facing one another, the most reckless tackles are those where the tackler comes from above and steps down towards the ball (and lower leg) of the opponent...what the South Americans call "la plancha" or "the flat iron".

Charging is essentially rushing at another player, resulting in body contact. Without the essential contact, the foul may be jumping at the opponent, but it cannot be charging. The difficulty for the referee is that there are "fair" charges and fouls. A fair charge is a shoulder-to-shoulder attempt to knock an opponent off the ball which is performed with at least one foot on the ground, with the arms in close to the body, and with the ball close enough to both that it can be played by either...what we call "playing distance". Clearly, a fair charge meeting these criteria can result in one of the players falling down--the "big kid, little kid" problem--but if the charge is truly fair, this doesn't matter and no foul should be called. Players with the ball can also be charged from behind so long as the charge is not reckless or involve excessive force...the player with the ball is permitted to "shield" so the player trying to win the ball is permitted a certain amount of physical contact in an effort to get possession away from the attacker. When young players are involved, a challenge from behind is more likely to be deemed a foul by the referee; as players get older, play is more physical, and more bumping is usually permitted. Again, the use of hands and/or arms will change this action from a charge to what will probably be judged to be an illegal push.

## Commentary

From a coaching standpoint, the acts of tackling and charging are what modern high pressure soccer is all about. Getting players to apply as much pressure as possible **without fouling** and training them to hold the ball and maintain possession under pressure are at the heart of the modern North American style of the game.

There truly are very few tactics involved in teaching tackling and charging...they are fundamental soccer skills which are learned in 1v1 and 2v1 exercises, and through playing the game. Making sure players know the proper fundamentals for tackling (going in on balance, timing the tackle, making sure when you are chasing an opponent down from behind that you have completely caught up to him before trying to tackle) and charging (who may be charged and when, one foot on the ground, arms kept in, etc.) will help them successfully challenge for the ball and avoid being called for fouls.

But in the final analysis, more than any other LOTG, these are the fouls the experienced referee will use to control the game. The coach must understand that the referee is not going to whistle for every act of reckless tackling or charging, particularly if the fouled player maintains possession. The good referee will make broad use of the advantage clause, and only punish those actions which grossly affect the outcome of a play, or which are necessary to maintain control.

## Questions about tackling and charging

***12.3.01 Their goalkeeper held the ball and my player tried to challenge for it. The referee whistled and gave the GK a free kick. Why?***

Most local rules prohibit charging the goalkeeper in his goal area. It also is specifically against the LOTG to try to "prevent the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands".

***12.3.02 I frequently see players using a bit of arm and elbow extension when side-to-side to try to fend one another off, even to the point sometimes of light back-of-hand contact with the other player, with many refs letting this go up to a point that varies with each ref. Is this properly considered legal because it's part and parcel of shoulder tackling, or essential for maintaining balance?***

Depends. Mostly it depends on the degree to which both players are doing it and the amount of control the referee feels he needs to exert. Smart coaches will teach their players to "make themselves bigger" by using their hands and arms for balance. Not only does it help their balance, but it "increases their wheelbase" and makes it more difficult for an opponent to touch the ball without using excessive force. As long as two players are more or less hand checking or arm checking one another, referees will usually let it go on unless it looks like it will become violent--for one thing, it's often hard to tell how did what to who first!

***12.3.03 I heard the referee say something to one of my players about "going in with his studs up". What does this mean? The referee was obviously warning him about it.***

It is very important for players not to let their feet rise above the level of the ball when tackling, especially when sliding. Raised feet at the end of extended legs offer no mercy to an opponent's lower leg, and many very serious lower-leg injuries (including fractures so bad they put an immediate end to a player's career) have been caused by this practice. Obviously the referee thought your player had not had his studs up intentionally when tackling, or he would have given him an immediate caution at least. This is something you should ensure all your players are aware of.

***12.3.04 One of my players keeps getting called for "going in sideways" or "backing in". What's the basis for this call?***

When tackling, a player should normally make sure he is facing his opponent. The hockey 'hip check' is definitely not acceptable in soccer! Referees will normally immediately call any tackling attempt when contact is made with the opponent before the ball, and players who come at their opponents side-on

normally do make contact with the other player before the ball, so it is hard for them not to be called for this.

"Backing in" is a little different, because it not normally so much a tackling offence as a kind of illegal charge. Imagine two players, one behind the other, waiting near midfield to receive a goal kick. If the length of the kick is slightly too much for the player nearer to the ball, he will be tempted to back up into his opponent, thereby fouling him if in so doing he disrupts his opponent's attempt to play the ball.

***12.3.05 One of my players was slide-tackled by an opponent, went over the ball, fell heavily and broke his collarbone. The referee stopped play right away, but he eventually restarted with a drop ball and didn't even give us a free kick -- why not? surely there must have been a foul for this injury to occur.***

You're probably not going to like this answer, but it sounds from your description as though the referee was right. If the opponent blocked the ball, causing your player to trip over it, no foul was committed, and the drop ball was the correct restart after the injury. Had the opponent made contact with your player before blocking the ball, you would have a point, but apparently the referee was sure that no foul had been committed.

**Tip:** Coaches can teach their players how to avoid injury from an impending tackle of this kind by leaping the sliding opponent. If the ball is pushed under or past the opponent's legs just before the tackle, it is often fairly easy for the player to hurdle the opponent and continue towards goal unimpeded. You can practice this technique with any low obstacle which allows a ball to be pushed under and the player to jump over, but it's safest to use something like a light bamboo or plastic rod between two vertical poles, arranged so that it will fall if the player bumps into it.

***12.3.06 I think I must be doing something wrong in coaching my players on how to execute a fair charge, because we keep getting called for infractions when I can't see anything wrong with what my players are doing. What are some of the things that could be going wrong?***

There are several things to watch out for in this situation, which is especially problematic when two players are both pursuing the ball to try to get into position to play it, yet are still clearly outside what could be considered "playing distance", and perhaps still well outside. They are typically jostling one shoulder to shoulder to win or maintain the most direct path to the ball, which may still be 20 or 30 feet away. As long as the initial contact is made at a reasonably shallow angle to the most direct path to the ball, there really should be no foul here, no matter who "initiated" the contact, since both players are really trying to play the ball and have equal rights to pursue it.

What turns this into a foul is if, either in the course of approaching to make the initial contact, or in later jockeying after the players are mutually engaged in a shoulder-to-shoulder race for the ball, one player changes her momentum deliberately to a sharp angle from a path to the ball in order to try to knock or shove the other player out of the play. This is a foul if one player is running clearly more at an angle toward the opponent rather than taking the shortest path to the ball and only diverts toward a direct path to the ball after having bumped the opponent out of the way. If in the same circumstances, one of the players suddenly starts using arms or elbows to unfairly win the race for position, just about every official will whistle. The same analysis can be applied where two players are jockeying not directly for the ball, but perhaps for a favorable position on the field, and they're in a close contest coming toward that spot from roughly the same side. Neither really "owns" the spot or most favorable line in such contests, at least not until one of them gets there first, having fairly won the position.

***12.3.07 Someone told me that when two players are going shoulder to shoulder, it's a foul if one of them draws away from the other and then bumps him with his shoulder to try to push him off the ball. I thought that was a fair charge. Who's right?***

Once again, it will probably depend to some extent at least on how old your players are and how physical the referee is prepared to allow the game to get. As has already been said, a player who extends his arm to push another player out of his way is likely to be called immediately for pushing. And anything which is construed by the referee as "playing the other player, not the ball" is likely to be called as well. So anything resembling an NHL body check (however legal it might be on the ice) is pretty well certain to be



deemed a charging foul. So if your player appears to have as his primary goal pushing or steering the other player deliberately off to the side rather than going first and foremost straight to the ball, the referee is probably going to find fault with that approach.

**12.3.08 My stopper is quite aggressive and is frequently called for fouls when he is marking an opposing forward who is playing with his back to our goal. Obviously we give up a lot of free kicks in dangerous positions because of this. What could he be doing wrong (we are a U15 team)?**

Again, the use of hands and/or arms will change this action from a charge to what will probably be judged to be an illegal push. If you listen during a high-level game involving older players, you may hear the referee say fairly frequently near the beginning of the game, as they and the players are establishing the limits within which the match will be played, "Blue, get your hands off his back!" or "Keep your arms down, Red!" It's important to remember that it is **not** illegal in itself to charge from behind a player with the ball, as long as the charge is not reckless and does not involve excessive force. This is the case because the player with the ball is permitted to "shield" it -- if no charge were possible, the defender could never hope to win the ball. This is a good example of how soccer can simultaneously be a very physical and a very sporting contest. It will be important for your player to learn to put pressure on his opponents without pushing them.

**12.3.09 I've heard some coaches discussing whether "riding" a player off the ball is a foul or not. What were they talking about, and is it or isn't it an infraction?**

By "riding someone off the ball", most soccer folks mean continuous contact shoulder to shoulder with the object being to dislodge the player from possession of the ball. Once again, if hands or arms are involved, this can be considered holding or pushing. Many refs miss fouls here, by assuming it's a normal "fair" play -- whereas the player committing the foul is actually playing the man, not the ball. Of course the other requirements of having an effect on the game and/or careless-reckless-excessive force also apply, but in a fair charge, even the staccato shoulder bump is supposed to be an integral part of an attempt to get the ball, not simply to move the opponent away. That's one reason why it's always a foul for attempting to charge the goalkeeper when he's holding the ball -- the action in isolation might be "fair", but how can one realistically expect shoulder contact to lead to possession of a ball held in the keeper's hands, unless it's done with excessive force?

### **Offenses punishable by Indirect Free Kick**

#### **Obstruction**

"An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player, in the opinion of the referee ... impedes the progress of an opponent...."

#### **Thumbnail**

##### **A player is supposed to play the ball.**

Blocking or screening a player from a route to the ball is not allowed. However, a player who has the ball within playing distance may shield the ball from an opponent.

This is not a common foul and enforcement of it varies considerably from referee to referee.

**NOTE:** The foul of "impeding" is commonly called "obstruction", but in recent years, FIFA has increasingly recommended that referees use the term "obstruction" to describe situations where a player may legally prevent an opponent from reaching the ball, and "impeding" to describe this foul.

#### **Questions on obstruction**

**12.4.01. How do I know if obstruction occurs?**

If the player is not playing the ball but is preventing someone else from moving toward the ball, he is impeding the other player. Referees expect collision and jostling to occur among players moving

**toward** the ball. However, if a player is, moving **across** the path to the ball, he may be more likely to be called for obstruction. Players are generally expected to look at the ball and react to the ball. A player who seems to be instead watching his opponent or moving in reaction to his opponent's run, is more likely to be called for obstruction.

***12.4.02. Can a player "play the ball" without touching it?***

Yes. However, to be "playing the ball", one should be close enough to touch it if one wished.

***12.4.03. A player on my team kicked the ball toward our opponent's goal line. One of our forwards tried to get to it before it went over the goal line but a back on the other team ran along in front of him, blocking him from the ball. The back never played the ball but just let it cross the goal line and then the referee awarded a goal kick. Why wasn't the back whistled for obstruction?***

Presumably, in the opinion of the referee, the back was within playing distance of the ball and was therefore shielding a playable ball. This is not a foul.

***12.4.04. Does contact need to be made for obstruction to occur?***

No. A player (who is not playing the ball) may commit this foul simply by forcing an opponent to slow down or change her path to the ball.

***12.4.05. How does obstruction differ from shielding the ball?***

A player shielding the ball must have the ball within playing distance and presumably is paying some attention to the position of the ball. Obstruction occurs when the player is not playing the ball, that is, either the ball is too far away to be played or the player's attention is focused on an opponent and not the ball.

***12.4.06. Is it legal to set an attacker in front of the goalkeeper to block him on corner kicks or other set plays?***

It is illegal to impede the progress of the goalkeeper toward the ball. If the attacker blocks the keeper from the ball, without trying to play the ball himself, then this is a foul. However, there is nothing wrong with an attacker standing near the keeper, if when the ball is kicked, the attacker moves to play the ball, not the keeper.

***12.4.07. The opposing team is preparing a corner kick or a free kick just outside our penalty area. The attackers attempt to form a wall around my goalkeeper. Can they do that? What can I, as coach, do about it?***

The attacking players may position themselves anywhere on the field. However, when play starts, they may not impede the keeper's progress toward the ball. If the referee is aware of the "wall" forming around the goalkeeper, he will watch for obstruction when the kick is taken. In order to defend against the tactic of obstructing the goalkeeper, you should try to bring this to the attention of the referee. One might do this by simply having the keeper move around quite a bit before the kick; players trying to obstruct the keeper will then have to move with the keeper and this off-the-ball action may draw the referee's attention.

***12.4.08. A player on our team received what appeared to be a shoulder charge after passing the ball to a team mate. The referee blew his whistle and signaled an indirect free kick for us. Why?***

The 1996 laws explicitly listed as a foul, "charging fairly ... when the ball is not within playing distance". The 1997/98 laws do not explicitly mention this foul but most referees would consider it a form of obstruction

### **Dangerous play**

"An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player, in the opinion of the referee.... plays in a dangerous manner."

#### **Thumbnail**

There are few guidelines here. "Dangerous play" is completely in the opinion of the referee. The USSF interpretation is that dangerous play occurs when, in the opinion of the referee, the play is dangerous to the opponent or oneself and the action denies an opponent the fair opportunity to play.

#### **Questions on Dangerous Play**

##### ***12.5.01 What do referees look for in making the "dangerous play" call?***

Dangerous play is completely within the opinion of the referee; calls may differ from game to game and from referee to referee. However, a typical example of dangerous play involves a player kicking near the face or torso of an opponent. The foul might not be the fault of the player kicking the ball; if a player is lying on the ground next to the ball, s/he may be guilty of creating the "dangerous play"; similarly, a player attempting to head a ball which is near the ground may be guilty of dangerous play if another player is kicking at the ball (or \*would\* kick at the ball if the other player were not there.)

When dangerous play occurs, the referee is going to give the benefit of the doubt to the player who was making the most natural play of the ball. If the ball is on the ground, one expects a player to kick at it; someone who is trying to head the ball when it is near the ground will be blamed for creating the dangerous play situation. On the other hand, if the ball is high in the air, the one heading the ball will be given the benefit and someone else kicking at the high ball may receive the whistle.

##### ***12.5.02 Is it a foul to kick the ball while lying on the ground?***

No, kicking the ball while lying on the ground is not in itself a foul. However, if a player, by lying on the ground, is putting himself in danger, he may be penalized for dangerous play.

##### ***12.5.03 Is it a foul to do a "high kick", where the player's foot is neck or head high?***

No, such kicks are not, in themselves, fouls. The bicycle kick is an example of a legal (and beautiful) play, unless it puts another player in danger.

##### ***12.5.04 Does the foul of "dangerous play" require contact between the players?***

No. Contact is not necessary for a call of "dangerous play". Indeed, if contact occurs during dangerous play, a more serious foul (kicking, tripping, illegal charging) will probably be called. These more serious fouls lead to a \*direct\* free kick. A soccer cleat in another player's face will usually be considered dangerous play if no contact occurred; it is the foul of kicking another player if there is contact. Similarly a studs-up tackle may be whistled for dangerous play if the player does not hit anyone but may be an illegal tackle, trip or kick if contact is made. (N.B.: the fouls of "kicking or attempting to kick", "tripping or attempting to trip", "jumping at an opponent", or "striking or attempting to strike" do not require contact either. Those fouls lead to a direct free kick.)

##### ***12.5.05 Can dangerous play be called when all the players involved are on the same team?***

Referees do not agree as to whether dangerous play can be called only when the action affects an opponent, or whether the call may be made when opponents are not involved. One could argue that a foul requires an opponent; for a team to benefit from a free kick, they must have been fouled. Thus a common interpretation of the laws of the game would argue that "dangerous play" should not be called unless an opponent is involved. (See the USSF interpretation in the introduction to this section.)

However, referees of youth games feel an obligation to keep the players safe and to provide some instruction to the players. For this reason one might see a "dangerous play" foul called when one player engages in a tactic which could harm himself or a teammate, even if no opponents are nearby.

***12.5.06 A player collided with the goalkeeper before he had the ball. The ball bounced away but the goalkeeper stayed on the ground and the referee blew his whistle and called an IFK for the defending team. Was this "dangerous play"? If so, what is dangerous about it?***

If the call is truly an \*indirect\* free kick then the referee is probably calling dangerous play for the manner in which the player collided with the goalkeeper. Since the goalkeeper is often dangerously exposed to collisions and kicks, many referees attempt to especially protect the goalkeeper and are more likely to penalize an attacker for dangerous play when the collision involves the keeper.

***12.5.07 Can a player be cautioned (receive a yellow card) for dangerous play?***

No. However, one who plays in an uncontrolled and dangerous manner may receive a yellow card for "unsporting conduct". A player who repeatedly fouls opponents may, after engaging in dangerous play, receive a yellow card for "persistent infringement" of the laws. Therefore a player might be whistled for a "dangerous play" foul and \*then\* immediately after that be cautioned for one of these more serious violations.

## **Misconduct**

### **Thumbnail (misconduct)**

Misconduct covers serious offenses against the spirit of the game. Yellow and red cards are the referee's strongest weapons against unsporting and potentially violent behavior. Many leagues penalize misconduct with fines and suspensions.

### **Commentary**

One way to understand misconduct is to compare it with "standard" fouls.

The direct free kick fouls mentioned in Law 12 are, with the exception of handling the ball, unfair actions committed against an opponent, and all -- with the exception of spitting -- will normally occur only while the ball is in play. They result in the other team being awarded a free kick or penalty kick, if appropriate. In general, fouls are similar to acts of normal play, which become fouls when they are executed carelessly, recklessly or with excessive force. (Handling is different because it is committed against the ball and against the other team in general, but not against a specific opponent.)

Misconduct, by contrast, covers actions of deliberate poor sportsmanship contrary to the concept of fair play itself, rather than just "normal play carried to excess." The act can be committed against anyone, including a teammate, spectator or the referee, as well as against an opponent. It can occur off the field, or while the ball is out of play. The consequence of misconduct is a personal punishment to the player committing the act, which the referee signifies by showing a yellow or red card. If an act of misconduct is also a foul, such as handling the ball to prevent it from entering the goal, the foul is called and the free kick or penalty kick is awarded along with the card.

Although the LOTG specify yellow or red cards for certain acts, some referees will "go up the ladder" by first talking to players and coaches, then warning, and only showing a card if these steps do not cause the unsporting play to cease. Other referees will issue a caution much more quickly. Referees seem to show the most variation in their reaction to dissent -- from near-total deafness to rabbit ears.

Cautions were originally intended as severe warnings of a potential sending-off. In a game with no substitution, as soccer used to be, this was a serious threat. Still today, two cautions in a game lead to a sending-off, and that team plays short. However, the substitution rules that often apply today -- the relatively free substitution found in most youth soccer, for example -- have changed the dynamics of

cautions. Instead of simply warning of a potential sending-off, cautions are of interest in themselves, and leagues may have rules disqualifying teams or players who accumulate a certain number over a season; cards are used as a tie-breaker in tournaments. This makes it essential that players and coaches recognize and avoid acts that can lead to cautions, and that players and coaches understand the referee's decision-making processes. In recent years FIFA has tried to add consistency to the decision by adding more specific acts to the list of misconduct offenses, but most red and yellow cards are still largely up to the referee.

## Questions on Misconduct

### ***12.6.01 What's the difference between the yellow and red card offenses?***

Yellow card offenses generally cover acts that demonstrate poor sportsmanship and disrupt the game, but don't directly affect the score or cause injury. "Persistent infringement" is a good example -- it's usually called for a succession of "ordinary" fouls, despite a warning from the referee. "Unsporting behaviour" covers almost any action that shows disregard for fair play but is not extremely violent, such as an overly aggressive tackle, or verbally calling an opponent off the ball. Three cautionable offenses give the referee specific weapons to maintain his authority: dissent, and entering and leaving the field without permission.

Red card offenses are acts completely against the spirit of the game (serious foul play), behavior that should never occur on a soccer field regardless of how the game is going (violent conduct; spitting; offensive, insulting or abusive language), and repeated yellow card offenses.

### ***12.6.02 Some refs go "up the ladder" and pressure players to stop potential misconduct before showing cards, others show cards quickly and without warning, and still others completely ignore a lot of stuff that looks like misconduct to me. How can I predict what a particular referee will do?***

This varies among leagues, among referee associations, and from one referee to another. Part of it is the referee's personality, which you just have to size up. Directives from above can also play a role, so pay attention when the referee administrator speaks about his objectives for the season. There may also be local rules about cautions, such as a mandatory caution for a sliding tackle in an over-50's tournament.

Some referees treat cards as simply a letter-of-the-law issue, rather than as flexible tools for game control. In recent years, the lists of yellow and red card offenses have become longer and more specific. Delaying the game and failing to retreat 10 yards on a free kick were always considered unsporting behavior (yellow), but have only been specifically listed since 1997. Denying a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity through a deliberate foul was always a form of serious foul play (red), but these variations were only listed recently. The hope of the law writers is that having specific offenses singled out should cause referees to call them more often -- this is their battle against the "professional foul" seen in high-level games. Some over-zealous referees have responded by looking for reasons to caution and send off players even in recreational youth games, rather than looking for ways to keep all the players on the field and the game flowing.

### ***12.6.03 My defender committed a deliberate foul to try to stop an attack, but the referee called out, "Advantage" and didn't stop play. The game continued and it was almost a minute later before the ball went out of bounds. Then the referee showed the defender a yellow card -- for the foul that had occurred earlier. Can he wait that long? If he's going to caution, doesn't he have to do it when the foul occurs?***

What the referee did was legal, and often happens when a cautionable offense and advantage occur together -- the referee waits for the ball to go out of play. There is a slight danger for the referee in this, because a second act of misconduct might occur in the interim, and it's not good to have too many yellow cards "queued up". And if the offense leads to a red card, referees almost always stop play immediately.

The referee also had another option. He could have waited for the original advantage situation to finish, stopped play with his whistle, shown the yellow card, and then restarted with an indirect free kick for the other team. In this case the stoppage is not for the foul itself, but merely to create a break in play for issuing the caution.

***12.6.04 We are in a tournament where the teams are more "competitive" than we have experienced. My players aren't accustomed to the physical play, and I'm afraid they might get hurt -- or retaliate, leading to cards, even though they're very mild-mannered in their own league. I can't afford to have players disqualified from tomorrow's games. Help!***

This is a common problem. Different teams, leagues, ethnic groups, geographical regions and referees have different expectations of how much physical play is "normal." At World Cup level, Scotland vs. Norway, for instance, would be a very physical game without player complaints, whereas South American teams might expect the referee to call more fouls. Another possibility is that the referee is simply missing fouls he should be calling, which makes this issue more ticklish -- he may interpret your comments or questions as dissent.

Initially, tell your players to play harder than they're used to and to expect the same in return from the other team. Try to talk with the referee and present your analysis. If he responds by being firm in his view that the game is going okay, and it's you who are acting like a crybaby, then that's that -- tell your players to put up with it and not retaliate. On the other hand, your information may open his eyes somewhat. In either case, retaliation is not called for. Once you raise an issue like this with the referee and if you and your team then remain calm, the ref may give your team the benefit of the doubt. If you start complaining, then he may label you a trouble-maker and go from there.

***12.6.05 I'm a "good guy" regarding sportsmanship. I don't complain to the ref, I don't micro-manage or complain about my team's play, and I encourage the parents to share these attitudes. The opposing coaches and parents are violating all these rules leading to a poisonous atmosphere -- yet the referee doesn't do anything.***

Referees differ in their expectations. They usually don't do anything about excessive coaching from the side, but some clamp down quickly on dissent and negativity, while others act quite deaf. Let's hope this referee will learn from other refs or assessors, and start acting to improve the atmosphere.

***12.6.06 What's the difference between serious foul play and violent conduct? Why is some very violent play considered SFP and some other VC?***

SFP covers actions that, although blatantly unfair, are part of the game and usually involve some attempt to play the ball. VC is simply fighting. If a player violently jumps cleats-first into an opponent who has the ball, it would probably be considered a form of tackle and be treated as SFP; if his target doesn't have the ball, it's probably VC. If a spectator is attacked, it's certainly VC, not SFP. Leagues commonly impose longer suspensions for VC than SFP, so it matters what the referee writes in the report.

***12.6.07 The Law says it's a red card to "deny an obvious goal-scoring opportunity" (OGSO) through a deliberate foul. It's also a red card to "deny a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball." What's the difference between those two?***

Denying a goal refers to situations where the ball would, without the handling foul, enter the goal for a score. This means a defender other than the goalkeeper using his hands to stop a ball that's definitely on its way in. It might also mean the goalkeeper handling a shot outside his penalty area, although the farther away from the goal, the harder for the referee to be sure the ball would have gone in.

An obvious goal-scoring \*opportunity\* occurs before the actual shot on goal. According to FIFA/USSF guidelines, there are four conditions that have to be met to have an OGSO:

- a) attacker moving directly towards the goal
- b) only one or no defenders between the attacker and the goal
- c) ball in proximity to the attacker, who can play it without much extra effort
- d) attacker with a reasonable shooting opportunity

So for example, it's an OGSO if an attacker near the outer edge of the penalty area feints, dribbles past the last fullback, and heads for the goal with only the keeper to beat. It's also an OGSO if the keeper comes out and the attacker then dribbles past him so there's nobody defending ahead. In either of these

cases, if the beaten defender grabs the attacker and pulls him down before he can take a shot, an OGSO has been denied by a deliberate foul and the LOTG say send off the defender.

Remember that all four conditions have to be met. If the situation is exactly the same except the attacker is a nine year-old girl and she's pulled down 35 yards from the goal, then it may not be an OGSO -- that's probably too far out to consider it a reasonable shooting opportunity. Or take the case where the defender successfully turns the attacker so he is heading across the field, and then pulls him down. That's not denying an OGSO, either -- not heading directly towards the goal.

Another potential OGSO denial is where there's an open attacker at the penalty spot with no defender ahead of him except the keeper, the ball is passed, and a defender handles the ball to prevent it from reaching him. That call depends on the referee's judgment of whether the pass was controllable, and how wide-open the attacker would have been if he had received it.

Any kind of foul can be considered. Players have been sent off for obstruction, which only leads to an indirect free kick by itself -- because the obstruction denied an OGSO.

If a goal or an OGSO is denied, the Law says the offender must be sent off, whatever happens afterwards. So if a defender in the goal mouth deliberately handles the ball to keep it out, but the ball rebounds to another attacker who then scores before the referee has had a chance to blow the whistle, technically the defender should still be sent off -- the first goal was denied, and the score was the result of a different play. However, some referees feel this is excessive, and will instead show a yellow card or no card at all, believing that (a) the goal was not in fact denied, and/or (b) the goal scored was sufficient punishment.

*12.6.08 I was letting the referee know how unhappy I was with him, and he came over and said he was warning me. I kept criticizing, so he said, "Okay, that's enough, you're gone!" -- and said I was "dismissed." He explained the sending-off was for a second caution, but I don't remember getting the first one. He hadn't shown a yellow card earlier, and he didn't show a red one when he sent me off. If I had known, I would have been more careful.*

The purpose of the cards is to make it perfectly clear to everyone when a caution or sending-off has occurred. However, the exact words of the law limit showing cards to players (those currently in the game), although a year or so ago a new interpretation extended it to substitutes on the bench. Because of their proximity to the referee, plus the cards, players almost always know when they're cautioned, although if the referee shows a yellow card to a group, they should ask exactly which player or players it applies to.

Coaches and others on the touchline are also under the referee's authority, and he may caution or send them off, although he shouldn't show cards. There are some important differences in technique for non-players. First, the referee can't really send off non-players, but he can suspend and/or terminate a game. When he does send somebody off, he will usually say something like, "The game is suspended, and it will restart only after so-and-so has left; if he hasn't left within two minutes, the game will be terminated." Second, the referee may just say he's **warning** you that you might be **dismissed**, or simply that he's warning you, as did the referee you asked about. (The terms warning and dismissal are commonly used instead of caution and sending-off, when applied to non-players.) Third, many referees don't note these warnings in their book, so you won't have the added clue of seeing him writing it down. This is partly because it's not a normal caution, and partly to avoid drawing attention to the dispute with the coach.

There are differences from place to place in the scope of these rules. Some leagues explicitly bring coaches under the referee's misconduct authority, and/or require the referee to show cards to anyone warned/cautioned or sent off. In USA high school (National Federation) and NCAA, red and yellow cards are shown to players, coaches and other bench personnel. In high school, a red card is called a disqualification; in NCAA, it's an ejection.

If you're in one of those leagues, you'll know if you've been cautioned or sent off. Otherwise, be sure to check, to avoid an unpleasant surprise.

## ***The Goalkeeper***

### **Thumbnail**

Law 12 lists five offenses which are specific to goalkeepers in their own penalty areas, all of which are punishable by an indirect free kick (IFK). The keeper **may not** do any of the following:

1. take more than four steps while controlling the ball with his hands, before releasing it from his possession;
2. touch the ball again with his hands after it has been released from his possession and has not touched any other player;
3. touch the ball with his hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a team-mate;
4. touch the ball with his hands after he has received it directly from a throw-in taken by a team-mate;
5. waste time.

Other than these offenses the keeper is mostly just like another field player, and is subject to the same sanctions for the same offenses. Because special situations involving the keeper can occur under so many of the laws, however, all questions concerning goalkeepers -- including those dealing with these five offenses -- are grouped together in a special supplement on the Goalkeeper and the Laws.



## Law 13 - Free Kicks

**Tweeeet!!** The referee has seen a foul-now what do I do? Which direction is the kick? Where is the spot of the kick? Do I have to wait for the referee? Can I kick it directly at goal? Oops! It's the other team's kick. How far away do I have to be from the ball? When can I go after the ball?

Where do I go, what do I do, when can I do it - these are all decisions players on both sides of the ball must make when the referee gives a free kick. Different things can happen based on the position of the ball, the type of foul, the position of the opponents and teammates and sometimes the involvement of the referee. Players must be coached to understand and react appropriately in each situation.

### ***Thumbnail***

When the referee blows the whistle to indicate an offense, the first thing that must be established by every player on the field is which team takes the kick (attacking team) and which team is defending. Generally the referee indicates this by pointing with an extended arm towards the goal of the team that just committed the foul (now the defending team). However, some fouls are just obvious as to who committed them. The referee is not required to make a signal.

Probably the most important thing to know when there is a free kick is if the ball can be kicked directly-i.e., without being touched by another player-into the defending goal. If it can't, this is called an **indirect** free kick (IFK) and the referee is required to put one arm straight up in the air and hold it there until the ball touches a player other than the kicker or goes out of play. This is the only hand signal a referee is required by the law to make. All players should be coached to recognize and understand this signal. If the arm is not up, then it is a **direct** free kick (DFK) and the initial kicker can score a goal.

The ball must be played from the point where the infringement occurred, unless it occurs within one of the goal areas. If the spot is inside the kicking team's goal area, the ball may be placed anywhere inside the goal area. However, if it is inside the defenders' goal area, the ball is placed on the six yard line (running parallel to the goal line) at the point closest to the infraction. This is actually beneficial to the attacking team, as they get more room to work.

The ball must be stationary before it can be kicked. As with any other restart of play, the kicker cannot touch the ball again until it has touched another player or goes out of play.

The ball is in play when it has been kicked and it moves (even if it just a little bit). The exception to this is if the ball is being played from within the attacking team's penalty area, where the ball must wholly cross outside of the boundary line marking the penalty area.

Prior to the 1997 laws, the ball had to move its circumference (about 27" for a #5 ball). Defenders (illegally) would start moving as soon as the ball was touched, giving the defense an advantage. Now teams can design plays, such as a player just stepping on the ball as he runs over it, to put the ball into play; this would allow the next player to kick the ball directly at goal, or even start dribbling the ball.

Interestingly, there are no goals awarded if a free kick of either type is kicked directly into the kicking team's own goal. If this happens, it would be treated just as if the ball was kicked over the goal line giving the defending team a corner kick. Here again, if the ball is being played from within the attacking team's penalty area, the ball is not in play until it wholly crosses the boundary line (other than the goal line).

There is a reason these kicks are called **free**. The attackers can kick the ball into play whenever they want (within a reasonable time period), without being pressured by the defending team. The defending team must be at least 10 yards from the ball in all directions (including behind the ball). If the ball is placed inside the kicking team's penalty area, the defenders must be outside the penalty area and at least 10 yards from the ball. If the ball is placed inside the defensive team's penalty area, the defenders must be at least 10 yards from the ball or standing on the goal line between the goalposts.

If defender is closer than these requirements when the kick is taken, the referee may decide to retake the kick and possibly caution the player for either failing to respect the required distance of a free kick. It should be noted that it is the defending team's responsibility to retire the appropriate distance

immediately after the offense was signaled. The referee is there to help facilitate this separation, but would be within his legal right to sanction any player that does anything to delay or harass the kick.

### **Commentary**

In the past, one of the most abused laws was waiting for the ball to roll its circumference before it was considered in play. Now, the ball is in play immediately after it has been kicked and moves (and is outside of the kicking team's penalty area). The referee and the defender(s) must judge when the kicker actually kicks the ball into play. Was it a ball positioning adjustment touch or is it a subtle ploy to throw off the defense's reaction timing? Any movement of the ball after it has been kicked is to be considered valid. Attackers need to be concerned that their positioning touches (and cute little fakes) will accidentally release the defenders from their restraining lines with the referee's permission. Positioning or bringing the ball to a stop with the hand(s) may be the best way the attacking team can ensure it does not get called for putting the ball into play too soon.

When the referee signals for a free kick, the fouling team does not have to be allowed time to recover before the attacking team can put the ball back into play. The fouling team essentially has no rights at this time and should have none. When asked (and sometimes on his own), the referee may stop play to set up the defense a proper distance from the ball. In general, once the offense is signaled, the attacking team can put the ball back into play as soon as they want, even if the defenders are not the required distance. The laws are written to encourage a continuous game flow with a minimal length of stoppage time.

### **Coaching Opportunities**

The free kick is one of the few times coaches (in practice) and players can put some specific structure into a very dynamic game. Free kick "set pieces" should be practiced based upon the area in which they can occur. For example, a coach may want to encourage distance on a free kick from within the kicking team's penalty area, a quickly taken short pass within the defensive third, a long diagonal cross from the middle third, and go with a practiced set piece in the attacking third. Often, first touch kicks are sent on goal when possible, but set pieces that utilize a second touch for IFKs should be practiced.

Defensively, the players need to know how and when to set walls; how far to retreat; whether to mark man to man or to defend zonally. Players should also be instructed in the ramifications of delaying tactics.

The team must know how to set a wall, if a coach prefers that tactic. Normally walls are set within shooting distance of the goal and the goalkeeper indicates how many players he wants in the wall. The key thing about a wall is the anchor player that is in line with the ball and the near post. The anchor needs to be aligned. This job often falls upon the goalkeeper to signal the player to move in a direction. Unfortunately, this takes the goalkeeper out of his prime defending area and he must worry about a quick kick while he is out of position. Perhaps a trailing player should align the anchor from behind the ball.

### **Questions on Law 13**

***13.01. A player on the kicking team touches the ball as she runs by. Can my wall players close on the ball?***

Yes, assuming the referee felt the first touch was a deliberate effort to put the ball into play, allowing the other team to move within the 10-yard limitation. Touching the ball by stepping on it should have caused some ball movement.

***13.02. In setting up a free kick, a player moved the ball with his foot to position the ball on a tuft of grass. The defending team ran in and kicked the ball away and the referee allowed play to continue. Why didn't he stop play?***

Apparently, the referee felt the attacking player was trying to fake out the defending team by pretending to reset the ball. The attacking player should consider positioning the ball with his hands.

**13.03. After a team fouled, a player on the fouling team stood in front of the ball to prevent the ball from being played in order to allow his team time to set up their wall. Why did the referee caution him without first telling him to back off the ball?**

The fouling team has a responsibility to retreat the appropriate distance without being told. The referee recognized the delaying tactic and booked him for this.

**13.04. As a defending team was setting up their wall with their goalkeeper positioning them, the attacking team shot on goal. Didn't the referee have to restart play?**

Only if the referee temporarily stopped play to move the defense back 10 yards would there have to be a formal start. If a team wants to use their goalkeeper to set their wall, then it's their problem if the keeper is not in position for the shot on goal.

**13.05. On an IFK, the kicker strikes the ball on goal and the goalkeeper reaches up and tries to catch the ball but doesn't touch it before it goes in the goal. Is this a goal?**

No goal, since a second player did not touch the ball.

**13.06. The goalkeeper handles in his goal area a ball deliberately passed to him by a teammate. The referee indicates the ball is to be placed on the 6 yard line. The defenders recover to the goal line. The attacking team quickly plays and a defender recovering from behind intercepts the first touch. The referee stops play and has the kick retaken. Why?**

An attacking team can play before the other team retreats the required distance if they feel they can gain an advantage. Generally, a referee will not require a kick to be retaken if the advantage does not materialize and the defenders are not in a blatant delaying posture and are making some attempt to move back the proper distance. However, a player that comes from behind is not making an attempt to be the proper distance away. The attackers are probably not aware of this player and should be allowed to retake the kick. The defender in this case should probably be cautioned.

**13.07. A player is called offside near a touch line at midfield. The kicking team quickly put the ball in play 20 yards to the side from the spot of the foul. The referee allowed play to continue. Later, the referee would not allow play to go on until the attacking moved the ball back a foot from the 18 after a tripping foul. Why is the referee so inconsistent?**

In the first case, the placement of the ball did not give the kicking team a great advantage. It was more important to get the ball back into play. In the latter scenario, the exact placement of the ball is very critical, since a direct challenge on goal is possible.

**13.08. The referee called for an IFK inside the defending team's penalty area. The defending team lined up on the goal line. An attacker kicked the ball into the line of defenders. The ball deflected off a player and into the goal. Because it did not touch a second attacker, is this a goal?**

Yes. A goal may be scored on an IFK if a second player, regardless of team, touches the ball.

**13.09. The referee whistled a foul when a defender kicked at a ball that was near the attacker's head. The referee only pointed in the direction of the defender's goal. An attacker kicked the ball directly into the goal without touching another player. The referee did not allow the goal and gave the defending team a goal kick. Was this correct?**

If the referee did not raise his hand over his head, he is not providing the attacking team enough information. Unfortunately, there is little the kicking team can do about it, but accept the decision and ask the referee the type of kick on all subsequent free kicks.

***13.10. The referee calls for an IFK near the defender's goal. The attacker takes a quick kick that deflects off the referee as he is trying to move out of the way. The ball goes directly into the goal. Because it touched the referee, does this goal count?***

No. On an IFK the ball must touch a second player. The referee is not a player.

***13.11. A player on Team A is called for pushing in Team B's goal area. Team B places the ball to the opposite side of the goal area from where the foul was committed. Can they do this?***

When the spot of the foul is inside the fouled team's goal area, the ball can be placed anywhere within the goal area.

***13.12. A goalkeeper weakly kicked a free kick in his penalty area. Before the ball left the penalty area, the goalkeeper ran up and kicked it again. The referee had the ball replaced at the original spot and the kick was retaken. Since the goalkeeper touched it twice in succession, why doesn't the other team get a free kick?***

The referee's call was correct. Since the ball never left the penalty area, the ball was never in play.

# Law 14 - The Penalty Kick

## ***Thumbnail***

A penalty kick is simply a direct free kick taken from the penalty mark, with a few important additional rules. There is nothing especially complicated about the procedure for taking a penalty kick, but because a penalty, whether successfully converted or not, can have such a decisive effect on the outcome of a match, it is vital for coaches to ensure that they and their players are aware of and have practised the procedure for taking penalties.

## ***Commentary***

Penalty kicks are one of the most dramatic events in soccer. They are also one of the most nerve-wracking. Important considerations include the following differences between a PK and a normal direct free kick:

- a) the defending players are not allowed to form a wall;
- b) all players except the penalty taker (and the defending goalkeeper) must be outside the penalty area and behind the ball, and must remain there until the ball is kicked;
- c) the ball must be kicked forward;
- d) the defending keeper must remain on his goal line until the ball is kicked.

Special considerations apply when a penalty must be taken when time has already expired at the end of either half or when penalties are used to decide the outcome of a match (for the latter case, see the special section of the FAQ devoted to it, some of whose provisions override the general considerations of Law 14).

## ***Questions on Law 14***

### ***14.01 Who should take the penalty?***

A player who wants to take it and who is likely to be successful. No player should be forced to take a penalty if s/he does not want to. Nervousness is a primary cause of poor penalties, and you should avoid making your players look bad if at all possible. Players who are good under pressure, good at 'self-paced' activities, and have an accurate shot make the best penalty takers. A good time to experiment is after a friendly match with another team. That's a good time to hold a penalty contest and let everyone on both teams shoot. Many coaches designate a player to take penalties during a match, so that the captain will know who is to take the penalty if one is given. This avoids the potential for arguments on the pitch.

### ***14.02 Exactly how much movement can my goalkeeper get away with?***

Law 14 says that the keeper "must remain on his line until the ball has been kicked". S/he may move anywhere on the line from side to side, however -- many keepers will move slightly to one side to encourage the shooter to shoot to the other side, and then dive to that side just as s/he kicks the ball.

### ***14.03 I heard that kickers are not allowed to stop their run once they have started forward, and that even hesitations may cause a successful penalty to be called back. Is that true?***

Law 14 does not address this question directly. It does stipulate, however, that if the penalty taker infringes the LOTG before the ball is in play, the penalty must be retaken if the ball enters the goal. This might occur in the case you describe if the referee thought the penalty taker's hesitation was a deliberate attempt to put the keeper off-balance before taking the kick; this could be called unsporting behaviour, in which case the player concerned would also be cautioned (shown the yellow card).

***14.04 What about infringements of the Laws by other players before the ball is kicked?***

Generally speaking, infringements are punished the same way regardless of who commits them. If a player from the defending team infringes, an unsuccessful penalty will be retaken and a successful one will stand. If a player from the attacking team is at fault, the reverse applies. If players from both teams infringe the laws simultaneously (for example, if a player from each team enters the penalty area before the kick is taken), the kick is retaken regardless of its outcome.

***14.05 Does the penalty taker have to wait for the referee's signal, or can he shoot whenever he's ready?***

The penalty taker must wait for the referee's signal. This will not be given until the referee has clearly identified the penalty taker to the goalkeeper, is satisfied that all players are properly in position for the penalty kick to be taken and the ball is properly placed on the penalty spot.

***14.06 Can the penalty taker move the ball so it's partly off the spot (for example, to get it out of a rut)?***

Law 14 requires the ball to be placed "on the penalty mark". Referees will normally interpret this to mean that the bottom of the ball must be fully in contact with the mark itself, which is a circle 9" in diameter as specified in Law 1. Some movement will be possible, but the referee's word is law.

***14.07 But what if there's a big puddle right where the penalty spot is?***

The Laws make no explicit provision permitting the referee or the kicker to move the ball elsewhere than the prescribed spot, to wit: 12 yards out from the goal line, centered in front of the goal. In fact, the International Football Association Board (associated with FIFA, soccer's rules body) ruled in response to a closely similar question that even though the penalty spot was "waterlogged", the player was not allowed to place the ball elsewhere. There exist quite a few refs with a by-the-book inclination who may require the kicker to take the shot from the puddle, even if they have never heard of this particular ruling (it's not in the rulebook itself). If so, the player has no other choice than to do his or her best with the shot, or else try to kick out a short, slightly forward lateral pass for a teammate to charge onto for a shot hopefully before any defenders can get there.

However, a great many referees (perhaps a majority) will reject this course of action entirely, because it contradicts their sense of the proper spirit of the game (SOTG). Therefore, don't be surprised if a ref takes one of the following alternative approaches:

- a) since the penalty mark itself has likely been obscured, the referee as the judge of facts determines where the mark in fact is (it may look off-center or a little farther from the goal or than you might expect);
- b) s/he may require the kicker to take the kick from some other spot 12 or more yards from the goal that is dry (chosen by the ref or the player), and the other players must stay outside the penalty area and at least 10 yards from that alternate spot, etc.;
- c) s/he may declare the match abandoned at that point, on the grounds that the field is too wet to continue.

Even if you are convinced one of these approaches (including taking the shot from the puddle) is the correct one and the others are incorrect under the LOTG, be prepared to live gracefully with the ref's decision. You won't get far with most refs trying to prove them wrong. Perhaps if you're ahead and the ref wants to abandon the match, you might want to state how gladly your team will take the shot from the puddle.

***14.08 What if the penalty spot hasn't been marked or has been erased?***

The referee will identify the center of the goal as best s/he can and will pace off a distance equal to 12 yards perpendicular from it toward the halfway line. The ball will then be placed at that spot.

***14.09 What happens if the goalkeeper parries the penalty but the ball squirts loose, or the ball hits the crossbar or the upright and stays in play? Is the ball dead?***

No, the ball is in play (but see question 14.10 for a possible exception to this rule). For this reason, it is always a good idea to train some of your players to enter the penalty area at speed when your team takes a penalty in order to take advantage of rebounds of this sort, which are often difficult to clear. If you are defending, your players should be trained to clear such rebounds immediately.

***14.10 What if a penalty has to be taken just as time runs out?***

Law 14 provides for the extension of the half by just enough time to permit the taking of a penalty in these circumstances. The primary difference is that the half ends as soon as the penalty has been taken: in other words, once it is clear that either the ball has properly entered the net or that it is not going to enter the net as a direct result of the penalty, the referee will signal the end of the half. Prior to 1997, the Laws stipulated that in these circumstances the ball would be deemed dead as soon as it rebounded from the crossbar or either upright or the goalkeeper. This is no longer the case, so that (for example) a penalty kick taken during extended time which rebounds off the crossbar and then strikes the goalkeeper in the back before entering the goal will be ruled a goal. Some modified versions of the laws still apply the former ruling, however, so coaches should ensure that they know which version applies in their own matches.

***14.11 Don't they use penalties to settle ties in soccer?***

Penalties are not normally used to settle ties except in competitions when the match must have a definite outcome other than a draw (for example, in tournaments or other knock-out competitions). This is a special case with its own section of the laws, and its own FAQ.

***14.12 Can the penalty taker pass rather than shoot?***

Yes, of course. The Laws require only that the ball be played forward and that the penalty taker not touch the ball a second time until it has been touched by another player. In some cases a pass may actually be the penalty taker's best option (for surprise value, or when the penalty mark is under water or very badly chewed up and a shot would most likely be very weak or inaccurate as a result). This needs to be carefully rehearsed before it is tried, however.

## Law 15 - The Throw-In

### **Thumbnail**

A throw-in is a method of restarting play used when the ball passes entirely over the touch line. When properly executed, the ball is thrown from the point where it crossed the touch line, by any player of the team that did not touch it last.

### **Commentary**

A throw-in is awarded **when the whole of the ball passes over the touch line, either on the ground or in the air.**

If the ball goes over the line in the air and is blown back in before touching the ground, it is still out at the point where it crossed the line. If in doubt, **play on**. This is subject to some interpretation and is discussed in more detail below. In general, referees are not too insistent on a player finding the actual blade of grass at which the ball passed over the line but are satisfied with an honest attempt at estimating the spot. While the ball technically goes to the opponent of the player who last touched it, the determination of "who touched it last" can be difficult, if not impossible, for the referee to make in all instances. If your player feels that the ball went off of the opponent, he should immediately retrieve the ball and take the throw in as this can "help" the referee make the choice. In general, a referee who is unsure will normally give the throw to the defenders.

### **Mechanics**

At the moment of delivering the ball, the thrower:

- a) faces the field of play (and normally also faces the direction in which he is going to throw the ball);
- b) has part of each foot either on the touch line or on the ground outside the touch line (that is, the thrower's feet may not be entirely inside the touch line);
- c) uses both hands (many referees interpret this to mean "with equal force")
- d) delivers the ball from behind and over his head.

### **Questions on Law 15**

***15.01 To what extent, if any, can a player taking a throw-in face one way with their head and / or body, and throw it another, so long as the throw is made two-handed, over their head?***

In general, referees will call any throw that does not pass from the back of the head to the front of the head. Therefore, in most instances, looking one way and throwing the other will result in a throw-in for the opposition. Remember also that the body must be facing the field of play at the time of the throw.

***15.02 How close to the spot where the ball actually crossed the touch line does the thrower have to be?***

It all depends on the referee and the ARs. In general, referees will allow players to be approximately 1m from the spot where the ball went out of play in any direction. That is, in most cases a player can stand 1-2 m BACK from the touch line and 1m moving parallel to the touch line from the point where the ball went out. However, if there is an AR who is right on the spot, players should throw the ball from the spot indicated. In general, however, all involved generally operate on a "feel" for the correct place especially in cases where the ball is kicked to touch high and wide.

***15.03 Is it illegal for the thrower to impart sidespin to the ball on a throw-in?***

This once again depends on the judgement of the referee team. The law states that the ball must be thrown with two hands. There are referees who assume that this means "with equal pressure from each of two hands" and blow up all balls coming in with any spin at all while others are more lenient. In general,



we recommend that players refrain from trying to put "spin" on the ball as at best it just makes it harder for their teammate to control while at worst it results in a throw-in to the opposition.

***15.04 A player attempts to direct a throw-in "down the line". How does the referee judge when it's in play?***

Assuming that there is no foul play, delay of game, etc. involved in the throw:

- If the ball **doesn't** reach or cross the touchline in the air from the throw, the throw is retaken by the same team from the same spot no matter who plays it, how they play it, or where they play it.
- If the ball **does** reach the touchline in the air, it's then in play no matter what happens to it after that and no matter where it lands.
- If the ball hits first directly **on** the line, then it is also in play as soon as it hits.

Once the ball is in play, the normal guidelines for determining who should take any subsequent throw-ins apply.

***15.05 Are there any requirements or potential rules pitfalls in one player retrieving the ball and then turning the ball over to a teammate to make the throw-in instead?***

There are some potential problems here. If, for example, an attacking right striker picks up the ball on the opponents 1 M line to throw in and then decides to wait for his left fullback to make their way across the field to take the throw the referee might consider this to be wasting time and issue a yellow card. In addition, it is always best to be sure that the person coming to take the throw steps off of the field before the retrieving player tosses the ball to them to avoid any possibility of being called for an illegal throw. With that said, however, most referees make a differentiation between a player obviously attempting a throw-in and a player simply turning the ball over to another for them to take the throw.

***15.06 Are flip (somersault) throw-ins legal?***

Once again, it depends on the specific league and the opinion of the referee. At the technical level, there should be no problem as long as the throw meets the basic criteria for a legal throw in (e.g. correct spot, over the head with two hands while facing the field of play, feet in the right position, etc.). Flip throws cannot be ruled "dangerous play", as the ball is not in play. The most common reasons for such throws to be ruled illegal are that both the player's feet were not in contact with the ground or that the player's buttocks were in contact with the ground when the ball was released (in the latter case, the throw is deemed to have been taken from seated position, which is illegal).

***15.07 Can the thrower throw the ball directly to their goalie?***

The thrower can throw the ball anywhere they want on the field, including directly to the goalie. However, the goalie can no longer play the ball with their hands if receiving it directly from a throw in. The thrower can also throw the ball directly into either goal without having it touch another player but, since no goal can be scored directly from a throw in, the result would be either a corner kick (for into their own goal) or a goal kick (for into the opponents).

***15.08 Can the thrower play the ball again before it touches anyone else?***

No. Note, however, that the ball does not have to be played by someone else prior to the thrower playing it, just touched. The thrower could, conceivably bounce the throw off of either an opponent or teammate who wasn't paying close attention and then play it again. However, since the object in a throw in is for the throwing team to retain possession, coaches would be better advised to have throwers look for open teammates and to have the non-throwing players work to get open for a legitimate throw.

***15.09 Can the team defending against a throw-in post a player near the thrower to distract or block them? Are there any tactics that are legal?***

Yes, up to a point. A defender may stand as close to the thrower as they want, keeping in mind that the ball hurts when it hits you in the face. The defender cannot, however, follow the thrower if he moves his permitted one meter, or jump up and down waving hands and arms, as this will be construed as unfairly distracting the thrower and may lead to a caution.

***15.10 What are some suggestions for coaching new or younger players in a throw-in technique that minimizes the chances for illegal throws?***

First of all make it absolutely clear that no matter HOW FAR they throw the ball it comes right back for a throw to their opponent if they don't do it correctly. A way to minimize errors in foot placement is to have players stand about 1 foot beyond the line of touch with their feet parallel (e.g. next to each other as opposed to with one foot forward). They are unlikely to either step over the line or lift a foot from this position. Have them hold the ball behind their heads with both hands and tell them to throw it straight over their heads. Emphasise proper form first and then move to working on distance.

***15.11 What should I do if I see the ref/ linesman letting the other team aggressively get away with fudging on where they make throw-ins (assuming otherwise proper technique)?***

A: Instruct your players that THIS referee is allowing players some latitude in where they take their throw-ins from. In general, arguing with the referee is bad form and can come to no good.

***15.12 The referee told players from both teams that it is a foul throw if they step on the line while taking a throw-in. What do I do as a coach?***

First off, having read the first part of this synopsis, you know that the laws say that it is a legal throw as long as all or part of both feet are on or behind the line at the time the throw is taken. With that said, the referee IS the law in this particular game and, as noted above, arguing with the referee is bad form. Simply tell your players to be sure to stay about 1 foot back from the line of touch when taking throw-ins and to be sure NOT to get close to the line.

After the game, you might want to approach the referee in a calm, rational manner and discuss his/her interpretation.

***15.13 The players on the other team are clearly lifting their back foot up off the ground while throwing the ball in but the referee isn't calling it. How come?***

A close reading of the laws reveals that the mechanics of the throw in (two hands, feet on ground, etc.) are applicable while the throw is being taken. It is likely in the case cited that the referee is making the judgement that the foot is being raised AFTER the ball is released and, therefore, after the throw has been taken.

## Law 16 - The Goal Kick

### **Thumbnail**

A goal kick is the way that play is restarted when the ball, having last touched a player of the attacking team, passes over the goal line and a goal is not scored according to Law 10. The kick is taken by the defending team at any point within their own goal area.

### **Commentary**

A goal kick is awarded:

1. when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, except when a goal is scored. If the ball goes over the line in the air and is blown back in before touching the ground, it is **still** out at the point where it crossed the line and a goal kick is awarded. If in doubt, PLAY ON.
2. to the defending team. Note that if it is last touched by an attacker, we have a corner kick instead (Law 17). If you are on defence and your players are not sure who last touched the ball, they should proceed as if it is a goal kick and allow the referee to correct them if his interpretation differs.

### **Mechanics:**

1. The ball may be kicked by any player from the defending team from any point within the goal area. At higher levels, most teams allow the keeper to take the kick although this might be a dangerous approach for the younger levels.
2. The ball is not in play until it leaves the penalty area. This means that once the ball is kicked, no player of either team may play it until it leaves the penalty area. If someone DOES play it in the area, the kick is simply retaken as the ball was never in play. Note that if one team continually plays the ball before it leaves the area, the referee might rule that this is wasting time and penalize accordingly. If the ball stops rolling or rolls back over the end line before it makes it outside of the penalty area, it is re-kicked.
3. The opponents must remain outside of the penalty area until the ball is in play. That is, the attackers are not only prohibited from playing the ball while it is in the area but are actually prohibited from entering the area at all. On the other hand, defenders can take up any position that they want either inside or outside of the area.
4. The kicker must not play the ball a second time until it is touched by another player. This is similar to the ruling on all restarts except a drop ball. The kicker can not play the ball again until it has a) cleared the area and b) touched another player of either team. If the second touch takes place in the area, the ball is kicked again. If it takes place outside the area, it's an indirect free kick to the opponents at the point of the second touch.

A goal may be scored directly from a goal kick but only against the opposing team. This means that if the ball is kicked high into the hurricane force wind which blows it back into the kicker's goal before it gets beyond the penalty area, it is re-kicked. If by any chance the ball **does** leave the penalty before being blown back into the goal, the correct restart will be a corner kick, as you may not score on your own goal directly from a goal kick.

## **Questions on Law 16**

***16.01 Does a team awarded a goal-kick have to place the ball on the side of the goal the ball went out on, or can they place it anywhere they choose within the goal area?***

It's true that the laws used to require that the kick be taken on the side of goal on which the ball went out. However, this changed several years ago and players can place the ball anywhere inside the goal area (i.e. the "little box".. Typically, kickers will place the ball in either front corner of the box as this gets the ball a) as far forward and b) as far away from the center of the goal as possible.

***16.02 What happens if the initial kick attempt fails to make it out of the penalty box?***

As noted above, the ball is therefore never in play and the kick must be retaken.

***16.03 What if a player on the defending or attacking team rushes in to play the ball after the kick, but before it clears the penalty area?***

Good questions. First of all, let's look at the defender. Defenders can be anywhere on the field at the time of the kick so they can certainly rush into the penalty area to play the ball if they want~as long as they don't actually touch it until it leaves the area. If they DO touch it, the kick is retaken. Looking at the attackers, they are in violation of the law as soon as they enter the area, which earns an immediate retake whether they touch the ball or not. Note that if either the attackers or defenders continually play the ball in the area, or if the attackers continually enter the area, the referee might apply sanctions for wasting time, misconduct, or impeding the restart of play.

***16.04 What if the ball makes it just to the penalty area line and stops?***

As we learned in Law 1, the lines are part of the area that the define which makes the penalty area line a part of the area itself. This means that a ball sitting on the line is actually still sitting in the area, which calls for the kick to be retaken.

***16.05 What if the ball fails to clear the penalty area and the kicker kicks it again before it leaves? What if the keeper decides to help out and picks up the ball in the area? What if the kicker or a helpful teammate picks the ball up in the area (handling ?)***

Different questions, same answer. As long as the ball has not left the area, it is simply not in play and players can pick it up, stuff it under their shirt, balance it on their head, whatever, with the only penalty being a retake , subject to the repeated infringement/wasting time/misconduct deal in 4 above.

***16.06 When can the kicking team's goalkeeper safely pick up a ball following a a goal kick by his own team?***

First, let's consider the case where the keeper is the kicker. Once the ball has first passed completely out of the penalty area and has then been played back in by another player of either team, the keeper may safely pick it up, subject of course to the usual restriction that he may not handle a ball which has been intentionally kicked to him by a teammate. If a player other than the keeper takes the goalkick, the keeper may safely handle the ball as soon it has first passed out of the penalty area and then re-entered it (subject of course to the same restriction). For example, if a player other than the keeper takes a goal kick which is then blown back into the penalty area by the wind, or which hits the referee and bounces back in, the keeper may safely pick up the ball.

***16.07 How far can we kick the ball?***

In general, as far as you want. However, most tournaments that play 6 v . 6, as well as most indoor venues, require that the ball either touch the ground or another player before crossing the midfield line.

***16.08 The linesman signaled for a goal kick but the referee awarded a corner kick. What's the deal?***

As you know, the actions of the linesman are subject to the decision of the referee. Regardless of who was technically "correct", a corner kick it'll be.

# Law 17 - The Corner Kick

## Thumbnail

A corner kick is essentially a direct free kick taken by the attacking team from the corner of the field in the attacking end.

## Commentary

Because of the similarity between corner kicks and direct free kicks, much of the Q&A on Law 13 applies here, too. The only "special" feature in the law is that a player receiving a CK cannot be offside, but considering where the ball is placed, offside would be unlikely anyway. There is frequently jostling for position among attackers, defenders and the goalkeeper, which can be a concern for the referee. Defenders have to be 10 yards from the ball until it is kicked, just as with free kicks.

## Questions on Law 17

***17.01 The law says a corner kick is awarded when a defender last touches the ball before it goes out over his own goal line. That's easy -- but it also mentions some other circumstances. What are those?***

The situations referred to are when a team puts the ball in its own goal directly from one of the restarts where you can't score against yourself. (Directly means without anyone touching the ball along the way.) These cases are treated just as if the ball had missed the goal.

On a throw in you can't score directly against either team. On a free kick, corner kick or goal kick, you can't score directly against yourself (although you can score against the opponents, with the exception of the indirect free kick). If you put any of these into your own goal directly, the restart is a corner kick for the other team.

***17.02 What was the change regarding ball position for corner kicks in this year's Laws?***

In 1997 the law was changed to be almost consistent with all the others. Now, a ball is within the corner arc if part of it is, and that includes being partly outside but hanging over one of the lines as long as the bottom of the ball touches the line. Before the change, the ball was supposed to be completely inside the outer edge of the lines, although many referees didn't bother about it in detail.

***17.03 When we have a corner kick, I would like locate some players so as to make it harder for the goalkeeper to reach it. Is there something we can do legally to make it harder for him to reach the ball?***

Players are entitled to stand anywhere that they want to on the field. With that said, if the attackers station several players around the goalkeeper and the referee determines that their sole purpose is to obstruct the keeper rather than play the ball, he will likely award a free kick to the defenders. Be aware that in most of these instances, the benefit of the doubt is given to the keeper. A player doesn't have to "do" anything to obstruct; he merely has to "be" in a position (deliberately, in most cases) where his only effect on play is to impede an opponent.

If the goalmouth becomes very congested, the likelihood of fouling is increased, while at the same time the referee's ability to see exactly what is happening is lessened. Many referees tend to err on the side of protecting the defense and goalkeeper and award free kicks going out when there seems to be excessive contact but it's unclear just what's going on. This is usually easier to "sell" than having to call back a goal after a slow whistle.

***17.04 The other team is stationing two or three attackers right in front of our goalkeeper, and they are making it hard for him to get to high balls just a few yards off the goal line. Is this legal?***

This is the other side of the previous question. If the attackers are starting right in front of the keeper, but move and participate in the play when the kick is made, then they're okay, and the keeper will

just have to thread his way through them. Locating some extra defenders in this position, who leave when the ball is kicked, is a way of legally denying the attackers this space.

***17.05 What about all the pushing and shoving that goes on just before a corner kick? Why doesn't the referee stop it?***

When the ball is being placed for a corner kick and the players are taking up their positions, the ball is out of play. That means that the referee can't call a foul; he can only call misconduct (yellow or red card). Usually this pushing and shoving isn't serious enough for a card, although if it continues nonstop for the whole match, a referee may give a caution to get the players' attention. Another approach is for the referee to warn the players to stop, and then station himself ostentatiously near the goal, and maybe rattle his whistle as a further reminder of his presence. You will usually be able to tell if he senses possible fouls and is watching the players especially closely.

If the pushing-shoving-obstruction is being done mostly by the attackers, and persists after the actual kick, many referees will immediately award a free kick -- the ball is now in play and a foul can be called. If the pushing and shoving is being done mostly by the defense, the referee will be more inclined to let it go, in the knowledge he can award a penalty or IFK for obstruction or charging without the ball being within playing distance if it gets out of hand -- so the defenders should not infer from the referee's lack of response that he doesn't see and doesn't care.

If a particular opponent is consistently holding and concealing his action, the players should draw this to the referee's attention. The referee might act like he doesn't appreciate the advice, but he will usually look a little harder, at least for the next few minutes. Check the referee's position. If he takes a new position on the next corner kick, then he may be responding to the tip. If he always takes the same position on every corner kick, this may suggest he doesn't sense that anything is going on, and it's easier to conceal fouls from him.

***17.06 We played a short corner kick, and then passed the ball right back to the original kicker, but the linesman called offside. I thought you couldn't be offside on a corner kick.***

The first recipient of a corner kick can't be called for offside. However, at the moment the second attacker touches it, the corner kick is over, "normal play" resumes, and offside position is judged again. Because the CK kicker will be very near the goal line, offside is common in this situation if the defense pulls out just a short distance.

***17.07 The corner arc is too small, so the flag is in the way. What can we do?***

Whether the arc is the right size or not, you can't remove the corner flag, and you can't hold it out of the way when kicking. That's just the way it is. If you do move the flag, the corner kick is not properly taken, and the referee should require you to retake it. He may also give you a tongue-lashing, or even a yellow card.

The arc is supposed to give you enough room to place the ball out of the way of the flagpost, although it's quite common for it to be too small, and/or to be drawn as a triangle. If this is the case, point it out to the referee or linesman, and he may permit you to place the ball a little outside the line. If he doesn't then your ref is a stickler for minor details, so beware.

# "Law 18"

## *Common Sense, or Spirit of the Game*

### **Thumbnail**

There is no "Law 18", of course, but just the same you'll sometimes hear referees refer to it as the most important of all the Laws, because it overrides all the others. It's simply the application of common sense in interpreting and applying the Laws so as to ensure that a referee's decisions don't go against the spirit of the game (SOTG). "Law 18" provides that common sense and SOTG are always more important than the letter of the law, and if you're lucky, you'll have referees who apply Law 18 conscientiously.

### **Commentary**

So what **is** this "spirit of the game" that's so important it can override the written Laws? It's something which all referees have to judge for themselves based on their experience and their conception of what sort of sport soccer is, but for most referees a number of factors are important:

- I. natural justice;
  - A. • it's important not to penalize players unfairly by applying the letter of law when that would contravene the spirit or the intention of the law;
- II. flow of the game;
  - A. • a good referee lets the players play with the minimum number of interruptions but without losing control of the match
- III. letting the players determine the outcome of the match.

Two factors in particular need to be stressed, because they help to distinguish soccer from other common team sports, and because they can lead to decisions by officials which are mystifying for spectators who are unaware of the basic differences between soccer and other sports which they are used to.

#### **I. Tradition:**

- A. Much of soccer is based on letting the game be played as it evolved, and the LOTG simply are intended to give referees a basis on which to mediate disputes. A basic difference between soccer and other sports is that the referee is a "judge" who interprets the LOTG and applies them as needed to settle disputes between players and teams, not a policeman who applies every LOTG exactly as written to every single case where the law is violated.

#### **II. Intent of the Law:**

- A. Many soccer laws are intended to control certain things (time wasting, for instance) but could be mis-applied to other things. It is important for every coach, player and referee to understand the history and intent of each law in order to understand the true SOTG.

What this means in practice is that in the service of SOTG, referees are frequently called on to temper their judgements with simple common sense. For example, if a referee blew his whistle every time an offence of any kind was committed, most games would be nothing more than a protracted and frustrating series of restarts. This occurs at all levels: very young players sometimes commit minor fouls inadvertently through clumsiness or lack of skill, and older players use gamesmanship to see how much they can get away with. All referees will let some offenses go: just how many they will allow before stopping play, and just how serious an offence it takes to stop play, is something players and coaches must learn to adjust to as early as possible in the match.

Such situations arise more frequently than the casual spectator might think, and it is the hallmark of the best referees that they are able to maintain complete control of a match while allowing the players plenty of leeway to keep the game flowing.



### Questions on "Law 18"

**NOTE:** Most of these questions appear in one form or another somewhere in the FAQs on individual laws. They are reproduced here simply to serve as examples of how referees typically resolve conflicts between the letter of Laws and the dictates of reason.

***18.01 I saw the referee speaking to one of our opponents as they were jogging up the field. I didn't hear what he was saying, but it looked as though he was lecturing him about something. If the player had done something wrong, why didn't the referee just stop the game and punish him?***

Good referees will often have what they call a "quiet word" with a player who has committed several minor 'niggling' fouls, just to tell him that any more similar behaviour will bring a caution. In this way, they try to keep the game moving while letting the offender know that they are aware of what he's doing.

***18.02 One of our opponents was clearly offside as his team played the ball into our penalty area. The assistant referee had her flag up, but the referee just waved at her and didn't give us the free kick for offside. The AR told me she assumed that was because the ball had gone straight to our keeper -- does that seem right?***

Yes. If your keeper already had possession of the ball near where the opponent would have been called for the offside infraction, there was little to be gained by giving a free kick. Common sense requires that the goalkeeper should simply be allowed to punt the ball back upfield or distribute as he chooses in order to restart the game with the minimum of delay.

***18.03 Our opponents had a throw-in near the half-line in front of our bench, and the referee let their player take it from a spot that wasn't all that close to where the ball went out, but later in the game he was really sticky about making one of my players take one from the exact spot where the ball went out in their end. Why did he let them have an advantage, but not us?***

Most referees allow some latitude on throw-ins when the ball is not near enough to either goal for a goal to be scored as an immediate result of the throw-in, especially if it helps to get the ball back in play quickly. When a throw-in has the potential to affect the outcome of a game, however, you will usually find that referees are much more vigilant about making players observe the letter of the law.

Similarly, you will often find that referees are much stricter about the direction of a throw-in if a scoring opportunity is likely to result. At mid-field, they may be less interested in the rights and wrongs of a close call than in getting the game restarted, and players can demonstrate good sportsmanship by not arguing over these calls, which normally have little if any effect on the match.

***18.04 In stoppage time, our opponents had us pinned in our own penalty area for a couple of minutes. We were under a lot of pressure and kept wanting the ref to blow his whistle for the game to end. As soon as we cleared the ball out, he did blow for the end of the game, just when we might have had a counterattack!***

Most referees prefer to wait if at all possible for the ball to be in a relatively neutral area of the field before blowing the final whistle, so as not to deprive a team of a clear goal-scoring opportunity. Once they have decided that time added on for stoppages in play has expired, however, they will usually blow their whistle as soon as the ball reaches midfield, so you should not count on being able to launch a counterattack in these circumstances. Similarly, very few referees (except those in jurisdictions where a time clock supersedes their authority) will ever blow the final whistle while the ball is in the air on its way toward the net!

***18.05 We arrived at a field for a game at the start of the season and found that the grass had not been cut for some time and that the ground was wet and rutted in places. The two coaches consulted the players' parents, and everyone was in agreement for the game to go ahead, but the referee inspected the pitch and then said the match would have to be cancelled. That seems a bit extreme, to go against the***

***coaches, the parents and the players! Who does the ref think he is? I heard he gets paid even if the match doesn't go ahead.***

By agreeing to allow the match to proceed, the referee would have been accepting responsibility for the local conditions, even if all those concerned said they were prepared to accept the consequences of any accident. It is his duty to check the condition of the pitch before the game and his paramount concern at all times must be the safety of those involved. If he is in any doubt about the safety of the pitch, he should not allow the match to proceed -- sorry!

***18.06 The Laws say the goalkeeper must release the ball into play after no more than four steps, but I clearly saw our opponents' keeper take 5 or 6 steps on a number of occasions. Why won't the referee penalize him for this?***

This is another of those cases where if referees were to call every violation of the letter of the law, the spirit of the game would be the real loser. The real point of this provision is to ensure that goalkeepers do not seek to gain an unfair advantage by running from near the goal line to the top of the penalty area before releasing the ball, or from one side of the area to the other. As long as the referee is satisfied that the goalkeeper is not seeking to gain an unfair advantage, he is unlikely to punish an extra step or two, especially if they are small.

# Kicks from the Penalty Mark

## **Thumbnail**

Particularly in tournament situations, it may be necessary to decide a result of a drawn match, for example if only one team is to go forward while the other is to be eliminated. While such results used to be decided by the toss of a coin, for a number of years now the usual way to decide the outcome is to have the two teams take a series of kicks from the penalty mark (often called a "shootout"). This situation, while not covered by any of the laws, is sufficiently important to warrant a special appendix to the laws which may be found immediately after Law 17.

## **Commentary**

The taking of kicks from the penalty marks has a highly ritualized feel to it, and like all rituals is governed by a rigid code which stipulates how the parties are to behave. These kicks differ from the normal taking of penalties in a number of crucial ways:

- a) in an initial round, each team takes five kicks, shooting alternately, unless a winner has been determined before the fifth kick (for example, if one team is ahead 3-0 after three kicks);
- b) the players must wait in the centre circle and come forward only when it is their turn to kick, except for the goalkeepers, who alternate between the goal and a spot just outside the penalty area;
- c) all kicks by both teams are taken at one end of the field, which is designated by the referee

There are a number of other important points for you to consider, which are dealt with in the FAQ.

## **Coaching points**

The referee may ask you to provide him or her with a list of your first five shooters in the order in which they will take their kicks. If the number of kicks goes beyond five, s/he will probably simply note down the number of each player who takes a kick in order to ensure that no player kicks twice before all players have taken at least one kick. Most coaches will have their first five shooters in mind well before the end of the match, but it is wise to ask all your players before the shootout to let you know if they do not wish to take part unless necessary. Players who are very nervous about taking penalties will usually not hesitate to say so, and should not be pressed to perform unless there is no option. Different coaches have different opinions about the qualities required for players shooting in each position: for example, many coaches will put their most dependable penalty takers in the first and fifth positions. The SOCCER-COACH-L archives contain a number of postings on this topic. Most keepers prefer to dive to the side of their dominant hand, so it may be wise to remind your players quietly which side that is.

## **Questions**

***KPM.01 The referee called for the captains before having the players take the kicks, and tossed a coin: our captain won, but the referee didn't give him the choice of kicking first or second. What's going on?***

Unlike the coin toss for the opening kickoff, no provision is made for allowing teams to pick and choose: the rule is that the team whose captain wins the toss must kick first. This may not be to the liking of either side, but at least it has the merit of being clear!

***KPM.02 The other team's captain won the toss, and the referee let them choose whether they wanted to kick first or second. Didn't they have to kick first?***

Perhaps the referee was simply in error; if so, however, you really have no choice but to accept his decision. It is also possible that some local modification of the laws gave the referee this option, in which case he should have made it clear to the captains before the toss.

***KPM.03 Our home field has bleachers at one end, but the referee decided to take the kicks at the opposite end from where all the parents were sitting. Why on earth would he do that?***

The referee has complete authority to choose the end at which the kicks will be taken, and it's hard without asking him or her to know why s/he made this decision. Here are some possible reasons:

- the sun may have been low enough in the sky to cause a serious problem for the keepers or the officials at one end;
- there might be an overwhelming majority of fans from one team in the stands, and the referee wanted the kicks to be taken as fairly as possible;
- the referee may have been trying to lessen the stress on the players by removing them from the area of the stands;
- the penalty area at that end may simply have been more "chewed up" than the one at the other end.

***KPM.04 The referee declared one team the winner even though the other team had not taken all its five kicks. Why would she do that?***

If one team has an insurmountable advantage during the taking of the first five kicks, there is no need for the remaining kicks to be taken, and the referee will stop the kicks at that point. This is similar to the 9th inning in baseball: if the home team is winning after the visiting team's last at-bats, there's no need to play the bottom half of the 9th.

***KPM.05 I have a substitute who is a brilliant penalty taker but a weak player defensively. I wanted to put her on to take a kick, but the referee wouldn't let me substitute her for one of my other players. Why not?***

Only the players who are on the field at the conclusion of play may take part in the taking of kicks from the penalty mark (but see KPM.06 for an important exception). In other words, you should have made your substitution before the referee signalled the conclusion of play. If you had used up all your allowable substitutions, your player would not have been able to come on in any case. Similarly, teams which have been reduced in number through having one or more players sent off may not replace them for the taking of kicks.

***KPM.06 The other team's goalkeeper had her nose badly broken by a shot from one of my players, and the referee allowed their substitute goalkeeper to come on in her place. How is this possible? I thought no substitutes were permitted during a shootout!***

This is the one exception to that rule: if a goalkeeper is injured and unable to continue, and if her team has not used all its substitutes, a substitute goalkeeper may be brought on for the remainder of the kicks.

***KPM.07 At the end of five kicks, we were all tied at 4 goals each. I wanted my best penalty taker to take the sixth kick, but the referee said I couldn't use him again until everyone on our team had taken at least one kick. Is that right?***

Yes. No player is allowed to take a second kick until all his or her eligible teammates have taken a kick. If one team has been reduced in number, the player who took the first kick for that team will thus become eligible to take a second kick before the first player from the other team.

***KPM.08 The other team's goalkeeper looked very weak on my team's first two shots, but then he changed places with one of their other players, who stoned us on our remaining shots. Is that allowed?***

Yes, provided that the second player was already on the field and eligible to take part. Any eligible player (in other words, one who was on the field at the conclusion of play and is thus allowed to take part in the shootout) may change places with the keeper at any time. If you decide to take advantage of

this provision, you should ensure that both players identify themselves to the referee before changing places, however.

***KPM.09 I wanted our keeper to come and sit with us in the centre circle between kicks, but the referee said she had to remain down by the penalty area, away from the team. That seems unfair to me.***

The main purpose of this requirement is to ensure that the kicks are taken as quickly and smoothly as possible by minimizing the distance that the keepers have to walk between kicks. It also has the effect of preventing coaches from providing additional coaching to their keepers between kicks. The keeper is also required to remain on the field of play, which ensures that s/he remains within sight of the officials.

***KPM.10 The other team took a kick which struck the crossbar and then hit my keeper in the back of the head and entered the net. The referee said it was a valid goal -- was he right?***

Yes, unless your match was being played under modified laws which do not conform to the normal FIFA Laws. The section on the taking of kicks from the penalty mark simply outlines the special rules which apply; in all other respects, the normal stipulations of Law 14 govern the outcome of the kicks, and they make it clear that in this case the goal is valid.

***KPM.11 Can I stay with my players during the shootout, or do I have to leave the field?***

Sorry, no team officials are allowed to be on the field during the taking of kicks. In the case of young players subjected to this very stressful experience, however, many referees will choose to disregard this stipulation and will allow a coach to remain with the players.

***KPM.12 During the kicks, the lights failed at our home field when we were ahead 3-2 on kicks and we could not get them to come one again. The referee tossed a coin to decide the winner, and the other team won. Can he do that?***

Yes. If the light (whether natural or artificial) fails badly during the kicks, the referee does have the power to decide the outcome in this way rather than proceeding in unsafe circumstances. This may be necessary in cases where the winning team has another match to play early the next day. If the teams were allowed to leave the pitch and then reassemble the next day to resume the contest, it would be virtually impossible for the officials to ensure that the same players were taking part.

***KPM.13 One player from the other team did not participate in the kicks, even though two of his teammates took a second kick. I thought this was not allowed.***

An injured player may be excused by the referee from taking a kick; no doubt this player had suffered an injury near the end of the match which would have made it difficult for him to take a kick.

# The Goalkeeper and The Laws

## *Thumbnail and Commentary*

The goalkeeper has a special function on a soccer team. He (gender non-specific) should be thought of as a regular field player with special capabilities only within his team's penalty area. That is, the goalkeeper is not restricted to stay in the penalty area. He may go anywhere. When the ball is outside of his penalty area, however, he is restricted to the same limitations as a field player. There are many provisions in the laws that are goalkeeper specific.

- I. The goalkeeper must wear a jersey that is of different color from his team, the opponents (including the other goalkeeper), the referee and the referee assistants. The goalkeeper may use gloves that are not considered dangerous to other players.
- II. Every team must designate and play with a goalkeeper. At no time shall a team be without a goalkeeper. The goalkeeper can switch positions with another field player at anytime, as long as the referee is informed and there is a stoppage in play. Play is considered stopped, at least momentarily, when the ball crosses a touchline or goalline or when the referee stops play.
- III. The goalkeeper can touch the ball with his hands and arms in his team's penalty area. Once the goalkeeper legally controls (gains possession of) the ball with his hands, the goalkeeper has four (4) steps in which to put the ball back into play (i.e., relinquish possession). The ball is considered back into play when the goalkeeper has thrown, kicked or rolled the ball away from him.
  - A. A deliberate deflection or parry of an opponent's shot is considered control. A referee may allow the keeper to pick up a parry with his hands if no advantage is gained and the ball is close to the goalkeepers original position. However, the referee may also consider this ball to have been put back into play, as well.
  - B. Once the ball is back into play, the goalkeeper may not touch it with his hands (or arms) until another player has touched the ball; however, he can play it at any time with his foot, etc.
- IV. The goalkeeper must not delay putting the ball into play after control is established. Referees are asked to ensure the ball is back into play within 5-6 seconds, else the goalkeeper will be caution for delaying the game.
- V. A goalkeeper may not touch a ball with his hands (or arms) while in his penalty area when the ball has been deliberately kicked (i.e., played with the foot) by a teammate. Nor may the goalkeeper touch a ball with his hands direct from a throw-in by teammate. These situations are commonly known collectively as the "pass back" law.
- VI. If the teammate plays the ball back to the goalkeeper with another part of the body, such as the knee, head, etc., the goalkeeper may legally handle this ball. Note, the shin, though technically not part of the foot, may be difficult for a referee or assistant referee to judge. The referee will also have to assess the deliberate nature of any ball that is played back to the goalkeeper, even though it is not directly to the goalkeeper.
- VII. During a penalty kick, the defending goalkeeper must be positioned on the goalline between the goalposts until the ball is kicked. The goalkeeper can now move along the goalline before the kick is taken. The referees are being asked to appropriately penalize any goalkeeper that moves forward off the line before the kick is taken. The goalkeeper can move off the line immediately after the ball is kicked.
- VIII. A goalkeeper is subject to the same fouls and offenses as any other field player. Any foul committed by the goalkeeper that is a direct free kick foul (except handling the ball within his penalty area) will result in a direct free kick or penalty kick (if offense was in the penalty area).
  - A. The opponents will receive an indirect free kick if the goalkeeper commits an infraction that is not against an opponent. This type of offense would include too many steps after gaining control of the ball, handling a teammate's direct pass back (kicked or thrown) or handling a ball that is play in the penalty area before another player touches.
  - B. As stated above, other than those offenses that are specifically related to the goalkeeper such as handling the ball in his area, the keeper is just like another field player and subject to the

same offenses in favor of and against. However, it would be unrealistic not to consider some prevailing practices by referees which tend to favor the goalkeeper in the way the rules are practically administered. For example, because the goalkeeper often must put himself into a dangerous situation to make a save, the referee will rarely cite the goalkeeper for playing dangerously.

C. Secondly, a few rules provisions specially favor goalkeepers. For example, a field player cannot prevent or disrupt the goalkeeper from putting the ball into play.

### **Questions on the Goalkeeper and the Laws**

The following questions have been divided into three areas (some of which overlap slightly):

1. The Goalkeeper and The Ball
2. The Goalkeeper and Teammates
3. The Goalkeeper and Opponents

### **The Goalkeeper And The Ball**

***GK.01 A ball is played wide of the penalty area. The goalkeeper ran out and dribbled the ball back into the penalty area. Can he pick it up?***

Yes, if the ball was not deliberately kicked or thrown-in by a teammate. If a teammate did deliberately play it, the goalkeeper cannot handle the ball. He can kick it, chest trap it, etc.

***GK.02 The goalkeeper intentionally deflects a long floating shot away from the goal with open hands to the ground and takes 4 steps before picking it up with his hands. Is this legal?***

Perhaps not. The referee may determine the ball has been put back into play with a controlled parry of the shot. An IFK from the spot where the goalkeeper handled the ball a second time (\*) would be given to the other team. However, intent is a judgment call based on the skill level of the goalkeeper and the referee may choose just to warn the goalkeeper the first time if the goalkeeper does not gain too much of an advantage from his parry.

***GK.03 Why are some goalkeepers allowed to take 5 and 6 steps before they punt the ball?***

A goalkeeper should not be allowed to take more than 4 steps. The referee may not be counting some initial steps after a pickup or he may choose to warn the goalkeeper on some initial violations before giving the opponents an indirect free kick at the spot of the fifth step. Realistically, most referees are not real picky on this, unless a goalkeeper is extremely blatant and consistent.

***GK.04 I see goalkeepers that will run several steps after they pick up a ball played on the ground before they come to a stop. Then they take four more steps to punt the ball away. When do referees start counting steps?***

Goalkeepers should be trained to run through the ball. Referees should allow some leeway on this. However, two or three steps should be ample enough follow through on a low pickup. If the goalkeeper seems to be gaining too much of an advantage, the referee may tell the goalkeeper he will start the step count a little sooner on the next pickup.

***GK.05 Should tiny steps by the goalkeeper be counted?***

The intention of the rule was to not allow the goalkeeper a free run out to the near the 18 to distribute the ball. If the tiny steps do not gain much distance or advantage, then they can and should be overlooked. However, some referees are "bean counters." If warned, the goalkeeper better heed the advice.

***GK.06 In a game, there was a foul just outside the penalty area. Just as the goalkeeper was preparing to play the free kick, the referee ruled the foul was against the goalkeeper's team. The goalkeeper would not give the ball to the other team, but tossed the ball toward the referee who was still 20 yards away. The referee cautioned the goalkeeper for delay of game. Was this fair?***

Just because the goalkeeper is out of position, there should not be any unnecessary delay to the fouled team from taking the free kick. The goalkeeper was trying to gain time to get back to his goal, therefore the caution was warranted. Note, if the referee initially indicated the wrong direction, it is hoped that he would allow the defending team a chance to recover.

***GK.07 I switched my goalkeepers at halftime. Do I have to notify the referee?***

There is a common misconception about this amongst coaches and referees. This law is written to address the situation of a player already on the field switching jerseys with the goalkeeper during play or a brief stoppage. It is important that the referee realizes this change is taking place for the same reason he has to be notified of any other substitution. A substitution from the halfway or at halftime should not require any extra notification. Having noted this misconception, however, it may be a good habit for a coach to always notify the referee of any goalkeeper changes.

***GK.08 A team is awarded a corner kick. Can that team's goalkeeper take the kick?***

Yes. The goalkeeper has no restrictions as to where he can go. He may also take free kicks or penalty kicks. He can play forward. However, as the designate goalkeeper, he is the only one on his team that can handle the ball in his team's penalty area.

***GK.09 Would a goalkeeper throw or punt from his penalty area into the other team's goal count as a score?***

Yes.

***GK.10 The attacking team is awarded an indirect free kick on the defensive team's 6-yard line. Can the goalkeeper charge the ball when the attacking team plays it? Where does the goalkeeper have to stand?***

Yes, the goalkeeper can grab the ball immediately after it moves on a legally taken free kick. In fact, the goalkeeper is may be the best defender to charge the ball (assuming it is played short). As with any other defender, the goalkeeper must be at least 10 yards away from the ball or standing on the goalline between the posts.

***GK.11 I see goalkeepers punt (volley kick) the ball when they are outside of the penalty area. Isn't this a foul for handling the ball outside of the penalty area?***

It certainly would be if the goalkeepers hands were in contact with the ball when it was wholly across the penalty area boundary. However, the ball release from a running goalkeeper occurs much sooner than the point from where the ball is kicked. In other words, in many cases the ball is released from the hand(s) before it is past the line.

***GK.12 A goalkeeper deflects a hard shot (not a deliberate parry). Can the goalkeeper dribble the ball to near the top of the penalty area, pick it up, take 4 steps and punt the ball?***

Absolutely. The goalkeeper never was in totally control of the ball when the ball touched his hands. The goalkeeper could have dribble the ball anywhere including outside of the penalty area, back into the penalty area and then picked it up.



**GK.13 A goalkeeper catches the ball and injures himself when he falls down hard on the ball. The referee stops play to allow a trainer to administer to the goalkeeper. Assuming the goalkeeper stays in the game, can the goalkeeper punt the ball away?**

After the referee stopped play, the ball must be put back into play with a drop ball. If the referee does a drop ball with an opponent present, the goalkeeper can participate and handle the ball after the bounce if in the penalty area. Hopefully, the referee will do a drop ball with only the goalkeeper present, thus allowing play to continue as if it were not stopped. There law on drop balls does not mandate the drop ball be performed in the presence of both teams.

**GK.14 If a goalkeeper chest traps a long shot down to the ground and then dribbles around before picking it up. Isn't he delaying the game?**

He may be running time off the clock, but he is not necessarily guilty of delaying. The goalkeeper is only mandated to get the ball into play within a reasonable amount of time (5-6 seconds) when he has control of the ball. In this case, control will not be until he picks the ball up. It may be up to the opponents to force him to do that. Of course, it is within the referee's right to determine delay of the game at any time.

**GK.15 I saw a goalkeeper bounce the ball. Can he do that? Can an attacker take the ball from the goalkeeper when he bounces it?**

The goalkeeper can do just about anything he wants with the ball when in control, as long as he does not put it back into play. However, when the ball is temporarily out of the control of the goalkeeper (i.e., during a bounce or toss in the air), the ball is "up for grabs" by an opportunistic opponent. The referee may also determine the attacker is guilty of dangerous play or preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball into play as well.

**GK.16 The attacking team kicks an indirect free kick directly at goal. The ball grazes off the goalkeeper's glove and goes into the goal. Is this a goal? What if this situation was off of a throw-in?**

In both cases, the goalkeeper's touch was the touch by a second player that was needed to allow a goal to be scored; therefore, the goal counts and the defending team will kickoff.

**GK.17 Can the goalkeeper punch a high cross into the air, then go catch it 10 yards away before it hits the ground?**

This is acceptable as long as the referee does not consider this a controlled parry or deflection.

**GK.18 The goalkeeper was standing inside of the goal when he caught the ball. Is this a goal?**

It is only a goal if the whole ball was past the vertical line that runs up from the outside edge of the goalline. It does not matter where the goalkeeper stands, only the position of the ball matters.

**GK.19 After a save near the goalline, the goalkeeper started to throw the ball up field, as he swung the ball back, all of the ball crossed the goalline. Is this a goal, even though the goalkeeper maintained total control of the ball throughout the throw?**

Goal. The defenders must kick off.

**GK.20 As the goalkeeper started to throw the ball, it slipped out of his hands. He went and picked it up and punted it out instead. Should the goalkeeper be allowed to pick it up again?**

As the goalkeeper did not purposefully release the ball from his possession on the dropped throw and if it was near the goalkeeper, the referee may allow play to continue. However, if the dropped ball was half thrown or if the ball traveled a good distance after the drop, the referee may decide the ball was released into play and give an indirect free kick to the opponents where he picked it up a second time (see note).

***GK.21 On a breakaway save, the goalkeeper grabs the ball when it is barely within the boundaries of the penalty area; however, his slide takes the ball outside of the penalty area while the goalkeeper is still holding it. Is this a foul?***

The goalkeeper should be called for handling and a direct free kick be given to the opponents at the point where the ball left the penalty area. The goalkeeper may be booked for at least unsporting behavior if the referee feels his illegal play was deliberate.

### **The Goalkeeper And Teammates**

***GK.22 How do I train my goalkeeper to know when to handle a ball that is last touched by a teammate?***

It is difficult to know what is in a referee's mind. Many coaches explain to the goalkeeper that any ball that is played directly back to them with the foot is one that the goalkeeper should not touch with the hands or arms. However, if the goalkeeper definitely feels the ball was not deliberately passed to him, such as a mis-kick, then he should be able to handle it without referee retribution. For instance, if the teammate tried to clear a ball up field and it deflected off his foot back to the goalkeeper, this would certainly not be construed as a deliberate attempt at a pass back. When in doubt the goalkeeper should clear the ball without handling it. Of course, any throw-in from a teammate is off-limits.

***GK.23 The goalkeeper's teammate kicks a pass back and sends a high ball towards the goalmouth. What should the goalkeeper do?***

If the goalkeeper can't get to it with any other part of the body, then by all means he should grab it. It is better to give up an indirect free kick to the opponents at the point of the catch (\*), than to allow a goal.

***GK.24 A field player on the goalkeeper's team plays a free kick back to goalkeeper's feet outside of the penalty area. The goalkeeper dribbles back into his penalty and picks up the ball with his hands. Is this legal?***

No. The goalkeeper cannot handle a ball deliberately kicked to him without it touching another player or going out of play. It does not matter where on the field the goalkeeper receives the ball passed to him.

***GK.25 The goalkeeper's teammate deliberately kicked a ball to the goalkeeper, but the kick deflected unintentionally off a teammate's knee who was standing nearby. Can the goalkeeper pick it up?***

He probably shouldn't. Even though the ball touched another player, most referees will recognize the original pass as the being a deliberate play back to the goalkeeper and will not wave it off due to an accidental touch by a teammate.

***GK.26 The goalkeeper's teammate deliberately kicked a ball to the goalkeeper, but the kick deflected unintentionally off an opponent who was standing nearby. Can the goalkeeper pick it up?***

Yes. Since, an opponent touched the ball before the goalkeeper was able to handle it, this would be enough to nullify the deliberate pass back by a teammate.

***GK.27 A defender is running back to the goal after a bouncing ball. The ball caroms off the defender's shin back to the goalkeeper. Can the goalkeeper use his hands to pick up this ball since it was not kicked.***

If the goalkeeper can easily play the ball away, then that probably should be his choice. If there is a good chance the goalkeeper's clearing kick may bounce off another player (back into the goal), then the goalkeeper may be better off picking up the ball and hope the referee does not call a pass back infraction. The rules specifically state the ball must be kicked (i.e., played with the foot). However, some referees view the lower leg as part of the foot. In a situation such as this, the referee may not be able to see how the

ball was played. Also, he may not be able to determine the intent of the defender when the ball came off his leg. Lots of gray area here and either a called foul or a play on is possible.

***GK.28 The goalkeeper's teammate flips the ball into the air with his foot and another teammate heads the ball back to the goalkeeper. If the goalkeeper thinks his teammate is using trickery to bypass the pass back law, will his teammate escape a referee call if he does not play it with his hands?***

Maybe. The referee can whistle an offense anytime he considers a player is using trickery, regardless of the goalkeeper's actions. However, he may wait to see if the goalkeeper handles the ball before assessing a penalty. Rest assured that the teammate(s) who tried the trick probably will be watched closely by the referee for the rest of the game.

### **The Goalkeeper And Opponents**

***GK.29 It seems that the referee will call trifling fouls on other players that merely touch the goalkeeper, but the goalkeeper is allowed to commit fouls such as jumping on the backs of players or using the hands to push players out of the way. Is this legal?***

Often, the goalkeeper is allowed a little more freedom in his domain. For instance, the goalkeeper is allowed to put himself in certain dangerous situations (e.g., diving to the ball at the feet of an attacker) that field players would be called for fouling. In his penalty area, the goalkeeper probably is allowed to cause more contact in tight situations; however, every referee has his tolerance limit and goalkeepers are expected to abide by the law as well as field players. A goalkeeper foul usually means a PK, whereas a foul on the attacker is just a free kick from the defensive end. Therefore, the referee may not choose to call some fouls on the goalkeeper.

***GK.30 The goalkeeper screams "KEEPER!" as he goes to grab the ball, causing the attacking player to stop his run momentarily. Isn't this unsporting behavior when a field player distracts his opponents with a loud yell?***

This would be unsporting behavior if a field player distracted his opponent with a loud yell; however, it is often considered to be allowable communication if a goalkeeper does it. Now if the goalkeeper said "leave it" in an attempt to fake the attacker into thinking that comment came from a teammate, then that would be reason for a caution for unsporting behavior.

***GK.31 Is it legal to set an attacker in front of the goalkeeper near the goal to block him on corner kick plays?***

It is illegal to impede an opponent. If the attacker's only purpose is to block the goalkeeper from the ball, without trying to play the ball himself, then this is an offense.

***GK.32 On a penalty kick, can the goalkeeper move back and forth quickly to disrupt the kicker?***

The goalkeeper is now allowed to move along the goal line before the kick is taken. The goalkeeper still cannot come forward off the line until the ball is kicked. The referee may consider some disruptive acts to be unsporting behavior, and give the player a caution [yellow card].

***GK.33 On a breakaway diving save, the goalkeeper barely touches the ball just before the attacker trips over the goalkeepers outstretched arms. What's the call?***

As long as the goalkeeper did not grab at or reach up for the attacker after playing the ball the play should be allowed to continue. By playing the ball first, the goalkeeper made a legal play.

***GK.34 After being elbowed (unseen) by an attacker; the goalkeeper throws the ball from within the penalty area at the attacker as he is running up field. The attacker is outside of the penalty area. What's the call?***

The goalkeeper should be ejected and play should be restarted with a penalty kick, as the foul originated inside the penalty area. Even if the ball did not hit the attacker, it is considered an attempt to strike, which is a penal foul and violent conduct.

***GK.35 I have heard you can charge a goalkeeper when he is holding the ball in his goal area. Can you change him into the goal?***

Actually, with the new laws (1997), referees are specifically directed to penalize any attacker that changes a goalkeeper in a careless or reckless manner or with excessive force, regardless of the location of the goalkeeper or the presence of ball.

***GK.36 After every save, an attacking player that was rushing the goal would brush up against the goalkeeper, probably to let him know they were there if he dropped the ball. Is this good aggressive play?***

This is unsporting behavior on the attacker's part. The goalkeeper may need to hold his temper until the referee deals with the situation. If the referee continues to allow this to occur, the team captain may ask the referee to be more aware of the intimidation tactics of the other team.

***GK.37 A goalkeeper made a diving catch. As he hit the ground, the ball came loose slightly. An attacker kicked the ball as the goalkeeper was still trying to get control. The referee allowed the goal. Correct?***

As long as there is some part of the goalkeeper's body (hand, fingertip, chest, nose, etc.) is touching the ball, the ball can be considered to be in the possession of the goalkeeper. However, if the goalkeeper is not touching the ball, the ball is fair game for an opponent, assuming the opponent is not playing dangerously (e.g., a high kick near the goalkeeper).

***GK.38 On a hard shot that was being juggled by the goalkeeper, an attacker leaped up and volley kicked the ball near the goalkeeper's face. Since the goalkeeper is used to putting his head around the feet of field players, why did the referee call the field player for playing dangerously.***

Though goalkeepers are often in seemingly dangerous situation, they are usually trained in doing this in a manner that provides protection. Since the attacker was the one that generated the dangerous situation while the goalkeeper was vulnerable, he should be whistled for playing in a dangerous manner and an indirect free kick be given to the goalkeeper's team at the spot of the foul (see note below).

***GK.39 On a ball flighted into the penalty area, the goalkeeper jumped up and caught the ball above an attacker. The goalkeeper then lost the ball when he brought it down on top of the attacker's head. The referee called an offense on the attacker and gave the goalkeeper's team an indirect free kick. The attacker was just standing there. Why was this foul called?***

This is a tough call for the referee. The goalkeeper is responsible for maintaining possession. However, once the goalkeeper has possession of the ball, the attacker is not allowed to dislodge it. Often play will continue, however, if there is any action by the attacker once the ball is in the goalkeeper's possession, a foul will be called.

***GK.40 The goalkeeper made a diving save and the ball rebounded just out of reach. Right before the attacker kicked the free ball, the goalkeeper reached out and touched the top of the ball with one finger. Why did the referee disallow the attacker's shot?***

Because the goalkeeper is considered to be in possession if any part of his hand or arm is touching the ball. The attacker cannot kick the ball out of the goalkeeper's possession.

***GK.41 After the goalkeeper makes a save, an attacker runs up and stands in front of him. The goalkeeper moved to the side in order to put the ball back into play, but the attacker moves with him. The referee awards an indirect free kick to the goalkeeper's team. Why?***

A field player is not allowed to prevent the goalkeeper from putting the ball back into play.

***GK.42 As the goalkeeper prepares to catch a high ball, the attacker hooks his arm over the goalkeeper's arm. Should the referee award a direct free kick to the goalkeeper's team because the attacker was holding?***

Yes, this would be the correct call, even though this is often not called between two field players. This is a serious foul, because the goalkeeper must be able to use his hands and the attacker intentionally hooked the arm.

# Comprehensive Restart Chart

*To accompany the FAQ on Law 8*

**Note:** Though most of the stoppages and corresponding restarts listed below can be found defined directly in the specific text of the particular LOTG with which they are listed, some of them do not fit so neatly into any one particular LOTG, or else bridge two or more LOTG. Others are rooted in comments to the previous version (pre-July 1997) of the rules. These comments, where they do not conflict with changes in the new post-July 1997 version of the rules, are still regarded as authoritative in many respects. Therefore, with a few of these you'll have to bear with my categorization that the restart properly belongs with this LOTG rather than that one ;=)

| Reason  | Restart                         | From where                             |
|---|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Law 1</b>  |                                 |  |
| <b>Unsafe field condition (e.g. goal crossbar broken)</b>                       |                                 |  |
| 1. Defect cannot be fixed   | suspend or abandon game         |  |
| 2. Defect can be fixed  |                                 |  |
| a. play already stopped for another reason                                      | as appropriate for other reason | as appropriate for other reason        |
| b. play stopped for unsafe condition  | drop ball                       | ball location when play stopped        |
| <b>Required equipment missing (e.g. needed field lines obliterated by rain)</b> |                                 |  |
| 1. Defect cannot be fixed   | suspend or abandon game         |  |
| 2. Defect can be fixed  |                                 |  |
| a. play already stopped for another reason                                      | as appropriate for other reason | as appropriate for other reason        |
| b. play stopped for defect  | drop ball                       | ball location when play stopped        |
| <b>Law 2</b>  |                                 |  |
| <b>Ball becomes defective</b>   |                                 |  |
| 1. Realized during play   | drop ball                       | ball location when it became defective |
| 2. Realized during stoppage for other reason                                    | as appropriate for other reason | as appropriate for other reason        |
| <b>Law 3</b>  |                                 |  |
| <b>Substitute enters field without ref's permission (improper substitution)</b> | drop ball                       | ball location where play was stopped   |
| <b>Improper goalkeeper change</b>   |                                 |  |

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| Play does not stop until ball is next out of play  | as appropriate for other reason   | as appropriate for other reason  |
| <b>Play stopped to administer caution</b> (e.g. for too many players)  | indirect free kick  | ball location where play was stopped   |
| <b>Law 4</b>   |   |  |
| <b>Improper player equipment</b>   | Ref is not required to stop play; player with improper equipment is directed to leave field at next stoppage to correct equipment |  |
| <b>Play stopped to administer caution</b> (e.g. player with improper eqpt. required to leave field and returns without permission)       | indirect free kick  | ball location where play was stopped   |
| <b>Law 5</b>   |   |  |
| LOTG 5 does not independently specify restarts ( ! )   |   |  |
| <b>Law 6</b>   |   |  |
| LOTG 6 does not independently specify restarts ( ! )   |   |  |
| <b>Law 7</b>   |   |  |
| LOTG 7 does not control any restarts   |   |  |
| <b>Law 8</b>   |   |  |
| <b>Start of game</b>   | kickoff   | center spot  |
| <b>Start of each period (half, extra period) of play</b>   | kickoff   | center spot  |
| <b>After Goal is scored</b>  | kickoff   | center spot  |
| <b>Any situation causing stoppage in play, the restart for which is not specified elsewhere in the LOTG (residual rule)</b>              | drop ball   | ball location where play was stopped   |
| <b>Drop ball restart when stoppage occurred while ball was inside the goal area</b>  | drop ball   | on goal area line parallel to goal line, at point nearest where ball was when play stopped                                     |
| <b>Indirect Free Kick to defenders in their own goal area</b>  | indirect free kick  | anywhere within goal area  |
| <b>Indirect Free Kick against defenders in their own goal area</b>   | indirect free kick  | on goal area line parallel to goal line, at point nearest where offense occurred   |
| <b>Play is interfered with on field by outside agent (in situation no goal attempted or scored), and referee stops game to intervene</b> | drop ball   | if outside agent interfered with ball, then point where interference occurred; otherwise, where ball was when play was stopped |
| <b>Law 9</b>   |   |  |

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| <b>LOTG 9 does not control any restarts, but the following situations are noted:</b> |   |                                   |
| 1. Ball hits referee   | play continues as if ref is part of the field             |                                   |
| 2. Ball hits goalpost  | play continues (goalposts are in-bound part of the field) |                                   |
| <b>Law 10</b>  |   |                                   |
| <b>Outside agent deflects shot, preventing goal (deliberately or not)</b>            | drop ball   | place where interference occurred |
| <b>Outside agent attempts to prevent goal</b>  |   |                                   |
| 1. Goal scores without agent touching ball or interfering with play                  | kickoff (goal is allowed)                                 | center spot                       |
| 2. Goal scores but agent touches ball or interferes with play                        | drop ball (goal disallowed)                               | place where interference occurred |
| <b>Law 11</b>  |   |                                   |
| <b>Offside</b>   | indirect free kick  | place where offense occurred      |
| <b>Law 12</b>  |   |                                   |
| <b>Kicking opponent</b>  |   |                                   |
| 1. Outside defensive penalty area  | direct free kick  | place where offense occurred      |
| 2. Inside defensive penalty area   | penalty kick  | penalty spot                      |
| <b>Tripping opponent</b>   |   |                                   |
| 1. Outside defensive penalty area  | direct free kick  | place where offense occurred      |
| 2. Inside defensive penalty area   | penalty kick  | penalty spot                      |
| <b>Jumping at opponent</b>   |   |                                   |
| 1. Outside defensive penalty area  | direct free kick  | place where offense occurred      |
| 2. Inside defensive penalty area   | penalty kick  | penalty spot                      |
| <b>Unfairly charging opponent</b>  |   |                                   |
| 1. Outside defensive penalty area  | direct free kick  | place where offense occurred      |
| 2. Inside defensive penalty area   | penalty kick  | penalty spot                      |
| <b>Striking opponent</b>   |   |                                   |



|  |                    |                              |
|--|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Outside defensive penalty area  | direct free kick   | place where offense occurred |
| 2. Inside defensive penalty area   | penalty kick       | penalty spot                 |
| <b>Pushing opponent</b>  |                    |                              |
| 1. Outside defensive penalty area  | direct free kick   | place where offense occurred |
| 2. Inside defensive penalty area   | penalty kick       | penalty spot                 |
| <b>Tackling opponent for possession of ball, but making contact with opponent before ball</b>  |                    |                              |
| 1. Outside defensive penalty area  | direct free kick   | place where offense occurred |
| 2. Inside defensive penalty area   | penalty kick       | penalty spot                 |
| <b>Holding opponent</b>  |                    |                              |
| 1. Outside defensive penalty area  | direct free kick   | place where offense occurred |
| 2. Inside defensive penalty area   | penalty kick       | penalty spot                 |
| <b>Spitting at opponent</b>  |                    |                              |
| 1. Outside defensive penalty area  | direct free kick   | place where offense occurred |
| 2. Inside defensive penalty area   | penalty kick       | penalty spot                 |
| <b>Handling the ball deliberately</b>  |                    |                              |
| 1. Outside defensive penalty area  | direct free kick   | place where offense occurred |
| 2. Inside defensive penalty area   | penalty kick       | penalty spot                 |
| <b>Dangerous play</b>  | indirect free kick | place where offense occurred |
| <b>Illegally obstructing opponent</b>  | indirect free kick | place where offense occurred |
| <b>Preventing goalkeeper from releasing ball from his or her hands</b>   | indirect free kick | place where offense occurred |
| <b>Assorted offenses by goalkeeper committed within own defensive penalty area</b>   |                    |                              |
| These include:<br>•taking more than four steps before releasing ball from their possession<br>•touching ball a second time with their hands after releasing it from their possession, without intervening touch by | indirect free kick | place where offense occurred |

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| <p>another player</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•touching ball with hands after ball is deliberately kicked to goalkeeper by a teammate</li> <li>•wasting time</li> </ul>   |                    |   |
| <b>Play stopped to administer caution (yellow card) if play is not also being stopped for another reason</b>   |                    |   |
| <p>Reasons to stop for caution include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•unsporting behavior</li> <li>• dissent</li> <li>•persistent infringement of the LOTG</li> <li>•delays restart of play</li> <li>•deliberately leaves field without ref's permission</li> <li>•enters or re-enters field without ref's permission</li> <li>•fails to yield 10 yards promptly on opponent's free kicks or corner kicks</li> </ul> | indirect free kick | ball location where play was stopped                                    |
| <b>Play stopped to administer sending-off (red card) if play is not also being stopped for another reason</b>  |                    |   |
| <p>Reasons to stop for sending-off include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•serious foul play</li> <li>•violent conduct</li> <li>•spitting at an opponent</li> <li>•denying an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball</li> <li>•using offensive, insulting, or abusive language</li> <li>•receives second caution (yellow card) in the same match</li> </ul>                   | indirect free kick | ball location where play was stopped                                    |
| <b><i>Law 13</i></b>   |                    |   |
| <b>On free kick, kicker touches ball a second time before another player touches the ball</b>  | indirect free kick | place where offense occurred  |
| <b>Opponent is still closer than 10 yards from ball when a free kick is taken, and kicker had not elected to take an immediate restart from foul (i.e. without giving opponent a chance to move 10</b>   | kick retaken       | from whatever position(s) the original kick could legally be taken from |

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| yards away)  |   |   |
| <b>Free kick taken by player from inside their own defensive penalty area, and opponent fails to remain outside penalty area until ball is in play (i.e. ball clears penalty area)</b> | kick retaken                                    | from whatever position(s) the original kick could legally be taken from |
| <b>Free kick taken by player from inside their own defensive penalty area, and kick fails to clear the penalty area</b>  | kick retaken                                    | from whatever position(s) the original kick could legally be taken from |
| <b>Free kick awarded (direct or indirect) anywhere inside team's defensive goal area</b>   | direct or indirect free kick, as appropriate    | any point inside the goal area  |
| <b>Indirect Free Kick goes directly into opponent's goal</b>   | goal kick (to opponent)                         | any point inside the goal area  |
| <b>Direct or Indirect Free Kick goes directly into kicker's own goal</b>   | corner kick (to opponent)                       | corner arc on side closest to where ball went in the goal               |
| <b>Direct Free Kick goes directly into opponent's goal</b>   | kickoff (goal scored !)                         | center spot   |
| <b>If goalkeeper, after putting the ball into play, deliberately handles the ball before another player touches the ball</b>   |   |   |
| 1. Inside penalty area   | indirect free kick                              | place where offense occurred  |
| 2. Outside penalty area  | direct free kick                                | place where offense occurred  |
| <b>Law 14</b>  |   |   |
| <b>Situations arising during taking of a Penalty Kick</b>  |   |   |
| 1. Kicker makes goal, but before taking kick:  |   |   |
| player taking the PK fails to wait for ref's signal to take it, or commits other infringement  | ref allows kick to proceed, but kick is retaken | penalty spot  |
| goalkeeper moves off goal line too soon, or commits other infringement   | ref allows kick to proceed, and goal scores     | center spot   |
| kicker's teammate moves into penalty area, or within 10 yards of penalty spot, or in front of the penalty mark   | ref allows kick to proceed, but kick is retaken | penalty spot  |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| defender moves into penalty area, or within 10 yards of penalty spot, or in front of the penalty mark   | ref allows kick to proceed, and goal scores                      | center spot   |
| 2. Kicker misses goal, but before taking kick:  |  |   |
| player taking the PK fails to wait for ref's signal to take it, or commits other infringement   | play continues normally  |   |
| goalkeeper moves off goal line too soon, or commits other infringement  | ref allows kick to proceed, but kick is retaken                  | penalty spot  |
| kicker's teammate moves into penalty area, or within 10 yards of penalty spot, or in front of the penalty mark  | play continues normally  |   |
| defender moves into penalty area, or within 10 yards of penalty spot, or in front of the penalty mark   | ref allows kick to proceed, but kick is retaken                  | penalty spot  |
| 3. Kicker <b>either</b> makes or misses goal, but it doesn't matter in the following situations because they're determined the same regardless of outcome |  |   |
| before shot is taken, players from both teams commit a violation  | referee stops kick (if possible), and it is retried (or retaken) | penalty spot  |
| after shot is taken, kicker touches the ball (other than deliberate handling) a second time before another player does                                    | indirect free kick to defenders                                  | place where offense occurred                                      |
| after shot is taken, ball is touched by outside agent as it moves forward toward goal   | kick is retaken  | penalty spot  |
| after shot is taken, ball is touched by outside agent after the kick rebounds into the field of play from the goalkeeper, crossbars, or goalposts         | drop ball  | where ball touched outside agent                                  |
| <b>Law 15</b>   |  |   |
| <b>Ball goes out of play over the touch-line</b>  | throw-in   | along touch-line, within a yard of where ball went out            |
| <b>Player makes improper throw-in</b>   | throw-in to opponent   | (same spot)along touch-line, within a yard of where ball went out |

|   |                                 |  |
|---|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>The ball, following the throw:</b>   |                                 |  |
| 1. Never comes in-bounds  | re-throw                        | (same spot) along touch-line, within a yard of where ball went out |
| 2. Comes in-bounds but bounces out before touching anyone   | throw-in to opponent            | along touch-line, within a yard of where throw-in ball went out    |
| <b>After throw goes into play , thrower touches ball a second time before it touches anyone else</b>                | indirect free kick              | place where offense occurred                                       |
| <b>Goalkeeper picks throw-in from teammate up into hands directly from throw</b>                                    |                                 |  |
| 1. Inside penalty area  | indirect free kick              | place where offense occurred                                       |
| 2. Outside penalty area   | direct free kick                | place where offense occurred                                       |
| <b>Opponent unfairly distracts or impedes thrower; ref stops play to give opponent caution</b>                      |                                 |  |
| 1. Ref orders play stopped before throw goes into play  | throw-in resumed (retaken)      | (same spot) along touch-line, within a yard of where ball went out |
| 2. Ref orders play stopped but only after throw goes into play (e.g. advantage applied)                             | indirect free kick              | place where offense occurred                                       |
| <b>Law 16</b>   |                                 |  |
| <b>Ball goes out of play over attacking team's goal line, last touched by attackers</b>                             | goal kick to defending team     | anywhere inside goal area  |
| <b>Goal kick fails to clear the penalty area</b>  | kick is retaken                 | anywhere inside goal area  |
| <b>Kicker touches ball a second time before it touches another player</b>   |                                 |  |
| 1. Before it clears penalty area  | kick is retaken                 | anywhere inside goal area  |
| 2. After it clears penalty area   | indirect free kick to opponents | place where offense occurred                                       |
| <b>Members of opposing team from kicker encroach into penalty area before the goal kick clears the penalty area</b> | kick is retaken                 | anywhere inside goal area  |

| <b>Law 17</b>   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Ball goes out of play over attacking team's goal line, last touched by defenders</b>   | corner kick  | corner arc closest to point where ball went out |
| <b>Ball immediately goes out of play over goal line directly from the corner kick</b>   | goal kick to defenders (ball was immediately in play when kicked in corner arc and it moved) | anywhere inside goal area                       |
| <b>After kick, kicker touches ball again before ball is touched by another player</b>   | indirect free kick to opponents  | place where offense occurred                    |
| <b>Player taking kick bends corner flag out of way to facilitate kick</b>   |  |   |
| 1. Goal scores  | kick is retaken (goal disallowed)  | corner arc                                      |
| 2. Goal misses  | kick is retaken  | corner arc                                      |
| <b>BUT:</b> if defenders immediately gain possession and safely clear the ball, some refs will let play continue to avoid perversely rewarding the kicker, and warn them later. This is not what LOTG 17 says to do, but it's what some refs may do . |  |   |

# Modifications made to the LOTG for Youth Players

## ***Thumbnail***

Subject to the agreement of the association concerned and provided the principles of the Laws are maintained, the Laws may be modified in their application for matches for players of under 16 years of age. Any or all of the following modifications are permissible:

- Size of the field of play
- Size, weight and material of the ball
- Width between the goalposts and height of the crossbar from the ground
- The duration of the periods of play
- Number of substitutions

A table showing typical modifications by age group follows the Commentary / FAQ.

## ***Commentary / FAQ***

### **The Field Of Play/Number Of Players**

There has been a general move towards small-sided games for youngsters as many people have recognized that kids simply have more fun in smaller groups - primarily because they have more time on the ball.

Each club, league, team or organization will define the dimensions of the field and the goals. These can vary widely, not only from organization to organization, but even from field to field within a given organization. While a field may be smaller than the FIFA standard, it must still be rectangular. The size of the goal area and penalty area should be reduced in proportion to the reduction in field size. It is suggested, however, that the center circle and the penalty arc retain their normal diameter of 10 yards. This is in accordance with the laws for free kicks, which stipulate that opponents are to be 10 yards away from the ball.

Generally, as the field size is reduced, so is the number of players on the field. Fewer players accomplishes several things:

- Reduces the size of the "swarm"
- Creates more touches
- Does not allow players to "hide" or be excluded from the activity
- Presents realistic but simple soccer challenges
- Requires players to make simple but realistic soccer decisions

### ***YM.01 What is the minimum number of players a team must have to begin a game and what happens if a team starts with enough but drops below that number during the game due to injury?***

For U6/8, the coaches can decide how to deal with this. The choices are to play uneven sides, pull a player off the field from the other team to even the sides, or "borrow" a player from the other team to even the sides. For U8/U10, special club laws may apply, but generally speaking, coaches should do their best to ensure that some sort of game continues. You should consult your club's regulations to see what the local policy is. FIFA suggests that 11-a-side games be halted if a team is reduced to fewer than 7 players, but as much flexibility as possible is desirable with younger players.

### ***YM.02 How often can I change my keeper?***

In the younger age groups, playing everyone equally in terms of both playing time and positions is encouraged. Changing goalkeepers several times a game should be no problem.

## **Referees**

At the younger age levels, there are rarely formal referees. Either a coach or parent from either team does this. Often there can be young referees who much like young players, need to develop experience too. Youth games are a perfect referee training ground. It is not unusual for beginning referees (typically 12 -14 years old) to referee U6/8/10 games.

## **Start Of Play**

***YM.03 The opposing 9-year-old player started the game by kicking the ball forward a few feet, then ran forward and began dribbling toward our goal. Should that be allowed?***

No. The referee should simply stop the game and require that the kickoff be retaken properly. This is an excellent opportunity for a referee to take a moment to teach young players the proper way to start a game.

## **Fouls and Misconduct**

In the six to ten age group, could you ever finish a game if every foul was called by the book? It serves no purpose at this level to call fouls as they would be called at higher levels. Young players simply enjoy playing. They're almost always surprised by the whistle and would rather play to exhaustion than have the game stopped for something they really don't understand yet. Letting the game flow freely provides a better learning experience for the players. Up to the U-10 level, the idea of "keep it safe, keep it fair, keep it moving" generally applies.

***YM.04 What if a player sees a hard kick coming and instinctively throws up their hands to protect themselves?***

A: Most players are afraid of the ball and will protect themselves from being hit with their hands. Most handballs should not be called. A deliberate attempt to alter the course of the ball by use of the hands is easy to spot and is a foul that should be called.

***YM.05 Pushing seems to occur frequently at my daughters' games, by both teams, but does not seem to ever be called. Why?***

A: Pushing with the hands is part and parcel of the six to ten age group game. It occurs all over the field. The player wants the ball and there's always someone in the way. Half the time it's their own teammate! Rarely is it intentional or sustained as players at this level are more intent on getting the ball then trying to stop another player from moving into a position. Referees at this level should not call a foul as long as no clear advantage was gained. The referee will likely just ask the players to keep their hands down and stop pushing. A push to a player who just took the ball away as a frustration reaction is a more serious offense. In these hopefully rare instances, the referee should call the foul and use the opportunity to talk to all the players about needing to keep down their hands.

***YM.06 It's a breakaway from the U8 "herd" when the ball magically pops loose to a lone attacker. But wait, here comes a defender whose foot goes for the ball but misses. The exhausted attacker goes down like he's been shot. Is it a foul?***

Most likely not. Players at this level do not often have the coordination or skill to execute even the simplest type of maneuver correctly. Most of the time their legs just flail away. As long as the defender is making an honest attempt for the ball, it's generally "play on."

## **Table of typical modifications**

**NOTE:** The table that follows contains general modifications falling for the most part within the recommendations of the United States Youth Soccer Association (USYSA) and the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO).



It is extremely important to note, however, that these are to be viewed as generalized guidelines **only**. Modifications to the Laws are set locally, so the variations of how small-sided games are played from community to community are endless, and in some communities they are not played at all. If you do not live in the USA, modifications for young players, if any, may differ very considerably from those shown here.

|                     | U6      | U7      | U8      | U10     |
|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| # of Players        | 6 - 8   | 7 - 9   | 9 - 11  | 10 - 12 |
| Size of Field (yds) | 20 x 30 | 30 x 50 | 40 x 60 | 50 x 80 |
| Goal Size (ft)      | 4 x 6   | 5 x 10  | 6 x 12  | 7 x 20  |
| Penalty Area (yds)  | n/a     | n/a     | n/a     | 14 x 35 |
| Players on field    | 3 vs 3  | 5 vs 5  | 7 vs 7  | 8 vs 8  |
| Goalkeeper          | no      | no      | yes     | yes     |
| Size of Ball        | 3       | 3       | 3       | 4       |
| Coach on Field      | yes     | yes (d) | yes (d) | no      |
| Offside Rule        | no      | no      | no      | yes     |
| Direct Free Kick    | no      | no      | no      | yes     |
| Penalty Kick        | no      | no      | no      | yes     |

## Glossary of Soccer Terms

**50/50 ball:** A loose ball contested by a player from each team and which may be won by either one of them (a frequent cause of injury as players collide in attempting to be first to the ball).

**Abandon the game:** Occasionally the referee will stop the game with no chance of resuming it; in that case, the game is said to have been abandoned. Seriously inclement weather or bench-clearing brawls are typical reasons.

**Advantage:** A discretionary judgement which allows an official to permit play to continue rather than stopping play to administer a foul. This is because the foul did not put the offended team at a disadvantage, or the foul, should it have been called, may take away a favorable opportunity for the offended team. (Law 5)

**Assist:** One player passes the ball to a second player, who scores as a result of the pass.

**Assistant referee:** One of two assistants to the center referee. Their duties include: Calling the ball out of play, determining the team that is awarded a corner kick, goal kick or throw-in, calling offside, notifying the referee of a pending situation, monitoring for misconduct and any duty that the referee deems necessary. Formerly called "linesman". (Law 6)

**Association football:** The original name of soccer.

**Attacking half:** Generally considered the offensive half. The half of the field where one particular team is trying to score.

**Attacking third:** Some coaches prefer to divide the fields into thirds in setting tactical goals for their team. The attacking third is the third of the field where one particular team is trying to score. The other two thirds are called the defensive third and middle third.

**Away:** Instruction issued by a goal keeper to teammates to tell them to clear the ball without attempting to control it.

**Away strip:** See strip. (Law 4)

**AYSO:** American Youth Soccer Organization. A recreational youth soccer program whose motto is "Everyone plays".

**Back:** 1. Movement by players towards their own goal; 2. Communication to a teammate, who is carrying the ball, for a pass back; 3. Communication to a teammate letting him know that he has support behind him; 4. Another name for fullback.

**Back pass:** A pass made to a trailing player (one who is behind the ball carrier).

**Balance:** Used to describe the concurrent presence of coverage by a team in all important areas of the field of play. See shape.

**Ball side:** A player who is closer to the ball than to the opponent he is playing against is said to be "ball side" of the opponent. See goal side.

**Bench:** The physical structure or area for the substitutes and coaches.

**Bicycle kick:** A technique whereby a player kicks a ball while leaving his feet, and with his back to the intended target. Both feet are in the air, hence the reference to riding an imaginary bicycle. Also called a "scissors kick".

**Booking:** Terminology used to indicate that a player has had his name/number recorded, by the referee, for receiving a yellow or red card. The player is said to have been "booked". (Law 12)

**Boots:** See footwear. (Law 4)

**Box:** See penalty area.

**Breakaway:** An attacker who gets behind all field defenders, with possession of the ball, is said to have a breakaway.

**Captain:** One player who has been designated by the coach to be the one person who can communicate with the referee, while on the field. While FIFA doesn't give captains an official designation, youth soccer can utilize two or three captains. A captain is designated with a distinctive arm band.

**Caught in possession:** A player who neither moves forward with the ball nor passes to a teammate after receiving the ball, and who is then tackled by an opponent, is said to have been "caught in possession".

**Caught square:** When two or more defenders have been beaten by a through ball because they were positioned square to one another (in other words, in a line across the field parallel to the goal line) because one or more failed to drop off and provide support, they are said to have been "caught square".

**Caution:** When the referee shows a yellow card to a player and records that player's name because of misconduct, he is said to have "cautioned" the player. (Law 12)

**Center circle:** A circle of 10 yard (9.15 meter) radius, drawn with the center mark as its center. (Law 1)

**Center mark:** The mark that is placed on the half-line, designating the midway point on the line. (Law 1)

**Center:** Or "centering." See cross.

**Channel:** 1. An imaginary lane about 10 yards wide running the length of the field and located about ten yards in from the touch line; often exploited for diagonal runs by wing- and center-forwards, who look for a through ball to be played along it. 2. To 'channel' an opponent is to steer him or her into a more predictable, easily defended direction.

**Charging:** The initiation of contact with an opposing player. Not all charges are illegal. (Law 12)

**Check away:** To move away from a teammate who has the ball; frequently used before checking back to the ball in order to create space and confuse a defender.

**Check to:** An offensive player runs toward the ball carrier, usually to call for a pass; frequently used immediately after the player has checked away from the ball in order to create space and confuse the defenders.

**Check run:** See check to and check away.

**Chop:** A forceful redirection of the ball used to flee a defender. Similar to a cut, but a stronger action is required.

**Clear:** A term used by defenders to send the ball rapidly upfield. This term is yelled out by defenders to alert the defender with the ball that he has impending pressure.

**Clearance:** Usually a long, flighted ball used by defenders to clear the ball upfield.

**Cleats:** Specialty footwear worn by soccer players. So called for the studs or cleats on the soles of the shoes. These are frequently permanently molded as part of the sole but may also be removable. See also footwear. (Law 4)

**Close down:** The technique whereby a defender gets as close as possible to an attacker, usually the ball-carrier, without letting the attacker get past.

**Compress the field:** As defenders push out toward the ball, thereby reducing the area in which attacking forwards can move without being in an offside position, they are said to "compress the field".

**Corner arc:** The quarter-circle marking, with a radius of one yard, located at each of the four corners defining the field of play. (Law 1)

**Corner flag:** Flagposts positioned at each of the four corners defining the field of play. (Law 1)

**Corner kick:** A method of restart, awarded to the attacking team when the ball, having last been touched by the defending team, crosses the goal line without entering the goal. (Law 17)

**Cover:** 1. A defender who is supporting a teammate facing the attacking player on the ball is said to be providing cover; 2. A defender moving into such a position will call "Cover!" to let his or her teammate know of the presence of support.

**Cross:** The term used to describe a ball that has been kicked or thrown (from a throw-in) from near the touch line towards the goal.

**Crossbar:** The structure of the goal that connects the two upright goalposts. (Law 1)

**Cut:** A subtle adjustment made when carrying the ball. The ball carrier moves the ball in a different direction to avoid being tackled. Similar to a chop, but the action is not as forceful.

**D:** Abbreviation referring to the penalty arc. (Law 1)

**Dead ball situation:** Any situation when the ball is being put back into play by the attacking team, especially a direct or indirect free kick or a corner kick. (Laws 13, 17)

**Defensive third:** See attacking third.

**Deflection:** 1. An uncontrolled rebound off a player or the referee. 2. A save attempt by a goalkeeper (usually with the hands) where the ball rebounds away (see parry).

**DFK:** Abbreviation referring to a direct free kick. (Law 13)

**Diagonal:** Any action (pass, kick or run) that moves corner-to-corner with respect to the field of play. The player doesn't have to use all the space between the corners, which are simply a reference to a diagonal.

**Direct free kick:** A method of restarting play, where the player taking the kick may shoot the ball directly into the net. Indicated by the referee when he points in the direction of the kick. (Law 13)

**Direct play:** A tactical system in which a team attempts to play the ball forward into the attacking third as soon as possible after recovering possession, frequently by playing long balls over the top. Often contrasted with possession play. (Law 13)

**Dissent:** Expressing disagreement by word or action with any decision of the referee. (Law 12)

**Dive:** An exaggeration of the effect of contact, including falling to the ground, intended to influence the referee to award a free kick in favor of the player's team. This is considered unsporting behavior, possibly punishable by yellow card. Also a technique used by goal keepers in an attempt to stop a shot on goal.

**Dive in:** To attempt to tackle an opponent without first slowing one's own or the opponent's forward progress, thereby making it easy for the opponent to beat the defender with a dribbling move. See jockey.

**Draw:** Also called a tie. When both teams score an equal number of goals, including no goals scored by either team. (Law 10)

**Dribble :** The practice of controlling the ball with the feet while moving on the field of play.

**Drive:** Typically a low, hard shot on goal, taken with the instep.

**Drop ball:** A method of restart in which the referee 'drops' the ball to the ground. The players may not kick the ball until the ball touches the ground. (Law 8)

**Drop kick:** A punting method the goal keeper uses where he drops the ball to the ground, then punts the ball just after it hits the ground.

**Drop off:** To move farther away from one's mark. Issued as an instruction to a player, from the coach or another player.

**Drop pass:** A player passes the ball, behind himself, to a teammate or leaves the ball for a teammate. See heel.

**Dummy:** To pretend to be about to receive the ball, but allow the ball to travel past oneself, in order to deceive the opponent.

**Dummy run:** A run by a teammate of the player with the ball, intended to draw one or more defenders away from the area under attack.

**Encroachment:** Being within 10 yards of the ball when a free kick, corner kick, goal kick or penalty kick is being taken by an opponent. (Law 13)

**Fake:** The act of a ball carrier 'faking' an action, to elicit a response from a defender, then the ball carrier performs another move. Example- faking a shot, then passing the ball off to a teammate.

**Far post:** The goalpost that is farthest from the ball.

**Feint:** A maneuver performed by a ball carrier that is intended to get the defender to react, allowing the ball carrier to move the ball the other way. Any of the step-overs and moves created by famous players constitute feints.

**Field of play:** The rectangular playing area, defined by two longer touch lines and two shorter goal lines. Also called the "pitch". (Law 1)

**FIFA:** Fédération Internationale de Football Association: the world governing body of soccer.

**Fixture:** See match.

**Flagposts:** See corner flags. (Law 1)

**Flat back:** As in "flat back four". A defensive shape where the back three or four defenders move in tandem, maintaining a formation that is relatively straight across the field, as opposed to formations based on having at least one player stationed some distance behind the other defenders.

**Flats:** Footwear specially designed for training or indoor use. No cleats or studs are present. (Law 4)

**Flick:** 1. The ability of a player to use his foot to 'flick' the ball into space so that he may run onto the ball (commonly referred to as a heel flick); 2. passing a high ball on to a teammate with the top of the head, whether from a throw-in, a clearance or a high pass; 3. an instruction used to request a teammate to pass the ball on in this way.

**Follow:** Used as a coaching instruction to get players to follow the ball after a shot has been taken. This instruction is geared to preparing the players to get a second (or more) shot should a rebound occur.

**Football:** See association football."

**Footwear:** Any of the specialty shoes that are developed especially for soccer players. See cleats, flats, turf shoes, screw-ins. (Law 4)

**Formation:** Often used to describe the number of players positioned by a team in the different areas of the field of play. Normally, the keeper is not included; thus a 4-4-2 formation is one with four fullbacks, four midfielders and two forwards, while a 3-5-2 refers to playing with three backs, five mids and two forwards. See balance and system of play.

**Forward:** An offensive player, playing closest to the opponent's goal.

**Foul:** An offense against an opponent or against the spirit of the game that results in a free kick.

**Fourth official:** In FIFA-sponsored competitions, an official with responsibility for supervising substitutions, keeping order in the technical areas and so forth.

**Free kick:** A method of restarting play. Can be either direct or indirect. (Law 13)

**Front foot:** 1. The foot closest to the ball. 2. "Front [of the] foot" refers to the outside part of the foot near the shoe laces and just above the little toes.

**Fullback:** A defensive player, playing closest to one's own goal.

**Get turned:** See turn.

**Give-and-go:** A tactic used when one player passes to a teammate, the first player then sprints into an open area, then the second player returns the pass to the first. Also called a "wall pass."

**Gloves:** Handwear that is specifically designed for the goal keeper and field players. These differ in that the keeper's gloves provide padding and protection, the field player's gloves provide warmth and a rubber palm used to grip the ball for throw-ins. (Law 4)

**Goal:** 1. The structure defined by two upright goal posts and one crossbar that is set on the goal line, a n equidistant from each corner. 2. To score (Law 1)

**Goal area:** The box that is formed when a line is drawn six yards out from each goalpost, along the goal line. The lines extend six yards into the field of play and are connected by line that is parallel to the goal line. (Law 1)

**Goalkeeper:** The one player on the field who is permitted to use his hands while the ball is in the field of play. Though the goal keeper can only use his hands within his own penalty area. (Law 12)

**Goalkeeper strip:** See strip. (Law 4)

**Goal kick :** A method of restarting play, awarded to the defensive team, after the attacking team has put the ball over the defending team's goal line without scoring a goal. (Law 16)

**Goal line:** The two smaller boundary lines, forming the short ends of the rectangular field of play. (Law 1, Law 10)

**Goalposts:** The two vertical structures that support the crossbar. (Law 1)

**Goal side:** A player who is closer to the goal which he is defending than to the opponent he is playing against is said to be "goal side" of the opponent. See ball side.

**Goalie:** See goal keeper. (Law 12)

**Golden goal:** The goal in "sudden victory" overtime that wins and ends the game. These overtimes are sometimes given the unfortunate name "sudden death." (Law 7)

**Half-line:** See halfway line.: Law 1)

**Half-time interval:** The period of idle time between the two halves of the game. (Law 7)

**Half volley:** A technique where a player strikes a ball just after the ball has touched the ground.

**Halfway line:** Or "half line". The line that divides the field into two equal and mirror-image halves.

**Hand ball:** See handling. (Law 12)

**Handling:** Intentionally playing the ball with one's hand or any part of the arm. (Law 12)

**Head ball:** See header.

**Header:** Passing, clearing, controlling or shooting the ball with one's head.

**Heel:** Also called backheel. To pass the ball directly behind oneself by using either the heel or sole of the foot. The term can also be used by a player to indicate that he is ready to accept a back pass.

**Holding:** Intentionally closing one's hand on an opposing player or any part of his equipment in an attempt to interfere with his progress. (Law 12)

**Hole player:** See window player.

**Home strip:** See strip. (Law 4)

**IFK:** Abbreviation for "indirect free kick". (Law 13)

**Indirect free kick:** A method of restarting play, in which the ball must be touched by another player after it is kicked in order for a goal to be scored. Signaled by the referee holding one arm extended above his head until the ball has been touched by another player. (Law 13)

**Injury time:** See time lost. (Law 7)

**Inside:** 1. Refers to the part of the field closer to the mid-line, as opposed to the touchline. 2. Inside of the foot: the big toe side of the foot near the arch.

**Instep:** The top part of the foot corresponding to the lower part of the laces portion of the boot.

**Into touch:** When the ball goes into the area outside of the field of play, beyond the touch lines.

**Jersey:** The team uniform that distinguishes the teams as different. Also, the goal keeper must have a shirt that distinguishes himself different than his team and the opponent. (Law 4)

**Jockey:** 1. To delay the forward progress of an opponent with the ball by holding a position close to and goal side of the opponent so that he or she can be tackled once support arrives. 2. An instruction to a player to tell him or her not to tackle but to jockey an opponent.

**Juggling:** A training exercise in which the ball is kept in the air, using any legal part of the body, by one player.

**Jumping:** Intentionally jumping at an opponent. (Law 12)

**Keepaway:** A small-sided game in which the object is for one side to retain possession rather than to score goals.

**Keeper:** See goal keeper.

**Kicking:** Intentionally kicking or trying to kick an opponent. (Law 12)

**Kick-off:** A method of starting and restarting play. A game is started with a kick-off and a kick-off is performed following a goal that has been scored. The restart kick-off is performed by the team that did not score. (Law 8)

**Lay off:** To play the ball to one side for a teammate, normally when one has one's back to the opponents' goal.

**Libero:** Position name given to a player playing in one of the positions normally associated with a stopper, a defensive screen or sweeper. Unlike these players, however, the libero frequently comes forward to join the attack. .

**Linesman:** See assistant referee. (Law 6)

**Man on:** A term used for communicating that the ball carrier or the player about to receive the ball is going to be under pressure from a defender.

**Man-to-man defense:** A defensive system in which a player (usually a marking back) will be assigned responsibility to mark a specific individual opponent. Often used to neutralize a particularly dangerous and mobile attacking player; if the strategy is effective, the neutralized player is said to have been "marked out of the game". See zone defense.

**Mark:** 1. A defender who is guarding an opponent is said to be **marking** him or her; 2. A player guarded by another player (as in "Who's your mark?").

**Mark up:** Used to instruct players to guard an opponent so that all attacking players are marked.

**Marking back:** A fullback with primary responsibility for marking one of the opposing forwards.

**Match:** A game of soccer. In Britain, a regularly scheduled league meeting between two teams is frequently referred to as a "fixture", while a match in the context of a Cup competition is often called a "tie".

**Micro-soccer:** Any one of a number of small-sided formats (frequently 3, 4 or 5 players a side) used with very young players.

**Middle third:** See attacking third.

**Midfielder:** Player occupying a position between the forwards and fullbacks.

**Misconduct:** An offense that is a serious breach of the spirit of the game and results in either a caution or an ejection

**Movement:** 1. A player moving with the ball. 2. Players moving, who are not carrying the ball, in an attempt to move to an unoccupied area to bring defenders with them or create an area where they can receive a pass.

**Near post:** The goalpost that is nearest to the ball.

**Nets:** Netting that is attached to the goalposts, crossbar and the ground, to ensure (barring any gaping holes or loose fittings) that a goal has indeed gone through the opening created by the goalposts and crossbar. (Law 1)

**Nutmeg:** Describing the action of putting a ball through the space created when a defender has his legs spread. A player is said to have been "nutmegged" or "megged."

**Obstruction :** "Impeding a player's progress." Playing the player, not the ball. A player uses his body as an impediment or an obstruction merely to prevent a play on the ball. (Law 12)

**Offside:** See offside position and offside infraction. (Law 11)

**Offside infraction:** A player in an offside position while his team has the ball becomes involved in active play, such as by being the recipient of a pass. (Law 11)

**Offside position:** The situation where an attacking player, on the offensive half of the field, has put himself in a position where there are fewer than two opponents between him and the goal. This positioning does not constitute a foul, until he becomes involved in the play. (Law 11)

**Offside trap:** The act of the defenders moving forward in unison to place an opponent in an offside position, thereby creating an offside infraction. (Law 11)

**On goal:** A shot which will enter the goal if nothing stops it is said to be "on goal", "on frame" or "on target".

**One-touch play:** When a player redirects a moving ball with the first touch, either as a pass to another player or as a shot, without using the first touch to control the ball. See two-touch play.

**Onside:** Not being offside. (Law 11)

**Open up:** 1. To turn slightly away from the direction of an approaching ball which one is about to receive in order to improve one's vision of the field of play by having more of the field in view. 2. Issued as an instruction to a player to tell him or her to open up.

**Out:** Or "get out". See push.

**Over the top:** To play "over the top" is to send long high balls forward into the attacking third so that they drop behind the fullbacks, with the intention of creating attacking opportunities for strikers or wing forwards.

**Overlap:** A tactic used by the attacking team. One player will run past the ball carrier in order to put himself in a better position to receive the ball.

**Overtime:** If the score is tied after regulation and the rules call for more time to be played, then two periods of equal and predetermined time must be played, team changing ends after each period. Normally, the periods must be played in their entirety, regardless of the score. In some cases, provisions are made for a sudden death type overtime where the game is over once there is a score. See golden goal. (Law 7)

**Own goal:** A goal scored by a player into his own team's net. If a shot is taken and the ball deflects off a defender for a goal, the goal is considered to have been scored by the player taking the shot, and is not an own goal.

**Parry:** A controlled and deliberate deflection by the goalkeeper using the hands. The goalkeeper is considered to have been in possession of the ball at the time it touched the hands.

**Pass:** To transfer possession of the ball to a teammate.

**Penalty:** A synonym for penalty kick. Also for calling a foul that will result in a penalty kick.



**Penalty arc:** The arc that is present on the line, parallel to the goal line, that defines the penalty area. This arc has a 10 yard radius from the penalty mark. Also called "the D." (Law 1)

**Penalty area:** The box that is formed when a line is drawn 18 yards out from each goalpost, along the goal line. The lines extend 18 yards into the field of play and are connected with a line that is parallel to the goal line. (Law 1, Law 14)

**Penalty kick:** A direct kick, taken by a player, from the penalty mark as a result of a foul committed by the defensive team in their penalty area. All players except the goal keeper and the player taking the kick must be outside the penalty area and 10 yards from the ball. (Law 14)

**Penalty mark:** Also called the penalty spot. A circular mark 9" in diameter made 12 yards out from the center of the goal, where the ball is placed when a penalty kick is to be taken. (Law 1, Law 14)

**Pitch:** See field of play.

**PK:** See penalty kick. (Law 14)

**Play in:** To play a teammate in is to play a through ball for him to run on to.

**Player:** Each of the 11 (or fewer) members of a team who is legally on the field of play and taking part in the match. See substitute.

**Position:** 1. Any one of the names which describes where a player plays and what his or her role is; see goal keeper, fullback, sweeper, stopper, screen, wheel man, libero, midfielder, forward, wingback, striker, window player, hole player, wing. 2. Defensive position: placing oneself in a proper position to defend against attack.

**Possession:** Having control of the ball. For a goal keeper, control (possession) is having any part of the hand or arm touching the ball.

**Possession play:** An attacking system in which a team tries to retain possession of the ball while advancing toward the attacking third and while in the attacking third, with the object of trying to create scoring opportunities. Frequently contrasted with direct play.

**Pressure:** 1. A tactic used to attempt to dispossess an opponent of the ball. Generally refers to the close proximity of the defender. 2. Used as an instruction to tell a player to apply pressure to an opponent who has possession of the ball.

**Pull:** See push.

**Punt:** A method of kicking that goal keepers use to clear the ball upfield, wherein the ball is dropped from the hand and kicked before touching the ground or as a half-volley.

**Push:** A coaching instruction used to tell players to move forward, towards the opponents' goal, in order to put opponents in an offside position, as in "push up" or "push out." Also "out", "step", "step up" and "pull".

**Pushing:** Intentionally pushing an opposing player. (Law 12)

**Recovery:** The act of defenders to get back into a defensive position.

**Recreational:** Less competitive soccer where players have the chance to sign up to play the sport regardless of ability.

**Red Card:** Disciplinary action of sending a player, or players off the field of play. (Law 12)

**Referee:** The official who have been given full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match to which he has been appointed. FIFA matches will have one referee and two assistant referees. Other leagues may have two referees and no assistants. (Law 5)

**Restart:** The use of a kick, throw or dropped ball to restart play after play has been stopped because the ball goes out of the field of play or the referee stops play for any reason. (Law 8)

**Reverse field:** See switch field.

**Save:** An action that stops a shot on goal from scoring.

**SAY:** Soccer Association for Youth. A recreational soccer program.

**Schemer:** See window player.

**Scissors kick:** See bicycle kick.

**Screen:** 1. Position name (from 'windscreen wiper'); applied to a defensive midfielder playing in front of the fullbacks with responsibility for collecting loose balls across the width of the field and then distributing them; also called "defensive screen". 2. To block the keeper's view of the ball.

**Screw-ins:** Shoes with removable (and therefore replaceable) studs (as opposed to permanently fixed molded cleats) designed for use in wet conditions or soft ground. Often called "six-stud cleats" after the number of studs usually found on the sole of each boot. (Law 4)

**Select:** More competitive soccer where players are 'selected' to be on a team following tryouts or some other prearranged qualifying standard.

**Set piece:** See set play.

**Set play:** A rehearsed series of actions normally initiated in a dead ball situation to attempt to create or take advantage of a scoring opportunity. These involve misdirecting opponents, usually on free kicks, or taking advantage of positions of vulnerability, for example on corner kicks.

**Shape:** Refers to the characteristic placement of players in a given formation. If players wander a way from their assigned roles and are not replaced by teammates, a team may be said to have "lost its shape".

**Shielding:** The tactic of a ball carrier putting his body between the ball and the defender.

**Shinguards:** Protective equipment worn by players to aid in prevention of injuries to the shin. (Law 4)

**Shootout:** A tie-breaking device that pits one player against the goalkeeper in either penalty kicks or a breakaway type run from 35 yards away. In both cases, the winner is determined after a best of five chances alternating with each team. If tied after five, the contest continues with different players until one team scores and the other team doesn't. See "Kicks from the Penalty Mark" supplement.

**Shot:** An attempt to score into the opponents goal.

**Sideways-on:** The body position of a player, normally on defense, such that the player is turned so the hips face one touchline or the other more than either goalline. The purpose is to allow the player to react quicker in the direction of either goalline.

**Six-stud cleats:** See screw-ins. (Law 4)

**Sliding tackle:** Executing a baseball type slide in an attempt to dispossess the ball from a ball carrier.

**Small-sided game:** Any one of numerous types of exercise or competition in which the number of players involved is less than (usually much less than) the "normal" 11 a side. Many different small-sided games are frequently used as training exercises with older players and as the normal competition format with younger players. See micro-soccer.

**Space:** Used to define an area on the field that is free from opponents and pressure. The ball can be passed into space for a player to run on to. A player can run into space to get open for a pass or to bring defenders with him to rid the area under attack of defenders (see dummy run).

**Square:** 1. A player situated at any point on a line parallel to the goal line with respect to a teammate is said to be in a "square" position. 2. A term used to communicate to a player that a teammate is supporting him in a square position.

**Square ball:** A pass played "square", in other words parallel to the goal line or perpendicular to the touch line.

**Step:** Or "step up". See push.

**Stockings:** Socks that cover the shinguards. (Law 4)

**Stoppage time:** See time lost. (Law 7)

**Stopper:** Name of a position; usually applied to a single central defender playing in front of a sweeper.

**Striker:** A position name given to a player in a central attacking position.

**Striking:** Intentional or intent to strike an opponent. (Law 12)

**Strip:** The uniform worn by all team members, consisting of jersey, shorts and stockings. Professional teams, and many competitive teams, will have both a **home strip** in the club colors and a contrasting **away strip**. Professional teams often have a **third strip** for occasions when a visiting team's away strip is too close a match to their own home strip. The goalkeeper wears a distinctive uniform often referred to as a team **goalkeeper strip**. (Law 4)

**Studs:** See cleats. (Law 4)

**Substitute:** Any one of a team's idle players, on the bench, waiting to enter the field of play as players. (Law 3)

**Support:** A player on the ball is said to have support when he has one or more teammates in position and ready to receive a pass. A defending player, challenging the player on the ball, is said to have support when a teammate is ready to cover if he is beaten by the attacker.

**Sweeper:** Position name; usually applied to a central defender playing behind the stopper and wing fullbacks with responsibility for "sweeping up" loose through balls which are played in behind the other defenders.

**Switch:** 1. Word used to notify a player that another player has left his position, requiring that the open area needs to be filled. 2. Instruction to a player on the ball to switch the point of attack to another area of the field. 3. Instruction to a teammate to trade positions.

**Switch field:** The act of directing the ball from one side of the field to the other (in other words, from an area near one touch line to an area nearer the other touch line). Frequently used as a tactic to catch the defense which has been drawn to one side of the field and lost its shape.

**Switch off:** To trade marking assignments.

**System of play:** A term used to describe the specific manner in which a given formation is implemented. For example, a 4-4-2 (four fullbacks, four midfielders and two forwards) may be implemented with two center backs or with a sweeper-stopper combination. The system of play will impose a characteristic shape on a team.

**Tackle:** A defensive player's ability to dispossess the opponent of the ball while the ball is being dribbled.

**Tactics:** A description of 'when' and 'why' some action, or reaction, is occurring.

**Takeover:** A means of transferring possession of the ball whereby a teammate of the ball carrier runs toward and past him or her; as the teammate passes by, the ballcarrier leaves the ball for him or her to take.

**Technical area:** A defined area in proximity to a team's bench to which the substitutes and coaching staff are normally restricted.

**Technique:** 'How' an activity is done.

**Third strip:** See strip. (Law 4)

**Through ball:** Also "through pass". A pass played into the space behind the defenders for a teammate to run on to.

**Throw-in:** A method of restart which is awarded to the team that did not touch the ball last before it went over the touch line. (Law 15)

**Tie:** 1. See draw. 2. See match.

**Time:** An instruction to tell a player as he receives the ball that he has time to gain control of the ball.

**Time added on:** See time lost. (Law 7)

**Time lost:** The referee has the ability to add time at the end of either half for time lost because of treatment or removal of injured players, wasted time, substitutions or any other cause. (Law 7)

**Toe punch:** Or, "toe poke." Typically used for tackling, the player is able to touch the ball with his toe, attempting to dispossess the ball carrier.

**Touch:** 1. Developing a 'feel' for the ball. 2. Defines the number of times a ball is touched: One-touch, two-touch. 3. A call to a teammate who is about to receive the ball to pass the ball on with his or her first touch.

**Touch line:** The lines forming the long sides of the rectangular field of play. (Law 1)

**Transition:** Going from offensive to defensive play (sometimes called "negative transition") and vice versa (sometimes called "positive transition").

**Tripping:** Intentionally causing or attempting to cause an opponent to fall. (Law 12)

**Turf shoes:** Footwear with many small studs designed for use on artificial turf or very hard ground. (Law 4)

**Turn:** 1. To reverse direction while in possession of the ball, normally in order to go forward or to play a cross or a shot. 2. An instruction to tell a teammate about to receive the ball that he has time and space to turn. 3. To "get turned": for the ball carrier to put himself in a position facing the defender in order to try to beat him. 4. To "turn a defender": to cause him to overcommit to one side so as to dribble the ball behind him.

**Two-touch play:** When a player first controls a moving ball with one touch and with the next touch, passes to another player or shoots. See one-touch play.

**Up:** 1. Pass the ball forward, towards the opponents goal. 2. Movement of players towards the opponents goal.

**Upper V:** Also "upper 90". Refers to the intersection of the crossbar and goalpost.

**USSF:** United States Soccer Federation. The governing body of soccer in the United States.

**USYSA:** United States Youth Soccer Association. The youth division of the USSF.

**Volley:** A technique used by a player where he is able to strike the ball while it is in the air.

**Wall:** The players who stand between the ball and their own goal at the time a free kick is going to be taken. These players form a human barrier between the ball and their goal. (Law 13)

**Wall pass:** See give-and-go.

**Wheel man:** Central midfielder with primary responsibility for distributing the ball when team is on the attack.

**Wing:** Or "winger". As in "wing forward" or "wing midfielder". A player who normally plays near the touchline, often with an attacking responsibility.

**Wingback:** A fullback playing in a wide position with responsibility for making attacking overlapping runs down the flank.

**Window player:** Position name; applied to an attacking midfielder or to a forward who plays behind the striker(s) and takes advantage of balls laid off by them or played back to the top of the penalty area by the wing forwards; also receives penetrating balls from fullbacks or wing midfielders and distributes them. Also called "schemer".

**Yellow card:** A cautionary measure used by the referee to warn a player not to repeat an offense. A second yellow card in a match results in a red card. (Law 12)

**Vision:** The ability to see the happenings on the field of play. Players with excellent 'vision' have the ability to see and know where their teammates are located in relation to the defenders.

**Zone defense:** A defensive system in which players are assigned responsibility for particular areas of the defensive third rather than for individual opponents. See man-to-man defense.