

Micro Summary of FAQ on the Laws of Soccer for Coaches

General note

The Laws of the Game (LOTG) are intended to regulate official adult men's games played under the jurisdiction of FIFA, such as World Cup qualifiers. The law writers recognize that certain specific details are not appropriate for all players, and permit modifying the following aspects for youth, senior or women players (so be sure to check with the league or referee in your games):

- size of the field and its various marked areas, and size of the goals (Law 1)
- size of the ball (Law 2)
- duration of the game (Law 7)
- number of players and substitution procedures (Law 3)

USA high school (National Federation) and college (NCAA) write their own soccer rules, which, although similar to FIFA's, depart from the international standard in various ways. The rules of indoor soccer vary from one arena to the next.

Many leagues extend the scope of the laws by making "administrative" decisions in areas where LOTG give the referee "technical" jurisdiction. For example, LOTG prohibit dangerous jewelry (Law 4), but many leagues simply prohibit **all** jewelry. Such practices simplify the referees' job and add consistency to their decisions. The lawmakers specifically permit this with respect to the laws mentioned above, and informally approve it in other areas not related to real-time decisions during the game.

Law 1 -- The field of play

The **requirements** for a soccer field are as follows:

a) The field must be **rectangular**, laid out longer between the goal lines defining its ends than between the touch lines defining its sides. Official-sized match fields must be between 100 x 50 yards (minimum) and 130 x 100 (maximum). For younger players or smaller-sided games, smaller fields (e.g. 80 x 50 or less) are often specified.

b) An upright rectangular-mouthed **goal** must be centered on each of the two goal lines. The upright front posts should rest on the goal line, their back edges aligned with the back edges of the goal. Official-sized goals are 8ft high (to bottom of the crossbar) and 8yds wide between the inside edges of the front posts. Smaller, similarly proportioned goals are often used for younger players on smaller fields.

c) **The field and goals must be in safe condition.** This decision is in the referee's judgment whether to allow the match to proceed. The field must be free of dangerous holes, obstructions, and hazards (e.g. a protruding sprinkler head) or too much standing water, ice, or deep mud for a safely playable game. The goals must be anchored and in safe good repair, including the crossbar.

d) The field's **lines and markings** enable the referees and players to readily tell when a ball is in or out of play, whether a goal has scored, whether a foul occurred in or out of the penalty area, or whether a player is in the correct position at a restart of play. A properly marked soccer field includes the following:

- **goal lines** (end) and **touch lines** (side) bounding the field;
- **corner flags** at least 5 ft high (safety requirement) at each intersection of goal & touch lines, with a 1-yard corner arc inside each corner;
- **goal area**, the smaller rectangular box centered in front of the goal, extending 6 yards out from the goal line and 6 yards to either side of the inside of each goalpost;
- **penalty area**, the larger rectangular box centered in front of the goal, extending 18 yards out from the goal line and 18 yards to either side of the inside of each goalpost;
- **center spot** at the center of field, where kickoffs are taken, surrounded by a 10-yard radius **center circle**, and at each end a **penalty spot** centered 12 yards from the goal, surrounded by a 10-yard partial **penalty arc** outside the penalty area.
- **halfway line** across the center of the field dividing it in half.

ISSUES:

1.1 Lines are part of the areas they bound, which mean they are 3-dimensional extending upward indefinitely. This means, for example, that a ball is in bounds if any part of it is within the outside boundary of the line, whether touching the line or above it in the air (see LOTG 9). Not only are the lines part of the field, but so are the referee, assistant referee, goal and corner flags. If the ball hits any of these and stays in play, the game is not stopped.

1.2 A goal net is essential to determine when a goal is scored, especially if there is only one referee. The net should be without holes, tears, etc., and should be fastened securely to both the ground(!) and the goal. (However, LOTG do not require a net.)

1.3 Sometimes the markings are obscured or missing, and there is no timely practical way to supply the missing markings. The rules specify that all the markings mentioned above are to be present, but nevertheless often both teams would prefer to play anyway, and accept some irregularities in the markings. **The final decision is up to the referee whether the game may proceed**, but here are some practical guidelines for considering whether to go along willingly or under protest. You can get by without corner flags if the goal lines and touch lines are decently visible and intact. If these lines are obscured, properly placed corner flags and goal posts are essential to permit the linesmen and referee to visually extrapolate these boundaries, but both teams must be willing to live with more inexact judgments, including sometimes whether a goal has scored. You can get by without being able to see exactly where the goal area rectangle, corner arcs, center spot or center circle are; visual estimation is usually good enough for fairness. You can get by with an obscure halfway line, provided everyone is willing to accept some inexactness and inconsistency in judging offside near midfield. The penalty spot can be stepped off, as can 6 yards from the goal for a free kick, if need be. However, something you **cannot get by without** are sufficiently visi-

ble penalty area lines so their boundaries clear to everyone. (Cones are easily knocked out of place, and are unacceptable as markers).

Law 2 -- The ball

The standard ball for adults and players older than about 12 is the "size 5." Younger divisions often use sizes 4 (approx. ages 8-11) or 3. The ball should be a perfect sphere with no irregularities (no wobble when spinning), and should be relatively firm -- it should yield only about 1/4" to 1/2" even when pressed pretty hard with the thumb -- unfortunately, it is very common for the ball to be softer than that in youth games. There should be 2 or 3 in good condition available in case the first one is lost, won't hold air, etc. If balls tend to roll forever at one end of the field, a spare or two can be left behind that goal.

Any standard brand is probably okay, although some of the more expensive balls are livelier. Balls with latex rubber bladders are livelier, but need to be topped up every week; butyl bladders may hold air for several weeks. Have a pump and needle available. If the grass is wet, try to use a ball with an intact skin so it will not take up water and become heavy.

Law 3 -- Number of players and substitutes

A regular soccer team is eleven players on the field plus a few substitutes (how many varies from one league to another). One of the players must be designated the goalkeeper, who may play the ball with her hands within her own penalty area. A game may be started or continued with fewer than eleven, although if either team falls below seven players the game ends. Teams lose players when one is sent off [shown a red card] -- he may not be replaced and the team plays short. Many youth leagues play "small-sided" games where the upper and lower limits of 11 and 7 are reduced (sometimes down to 3 vs. 3), and sometimes they do not use goalkeepers.

Some competitions require a brief sit-out after a caution [yellow card or blue card in indoor soccer], during which time the team has to play short-handed.

Youth leagues commonly use free substitution, where players may leave and re-enter the game (like basketball), although LOTG say officially that once a player leaves, he cannot re-enter (like baseball). Ask the referee when substitutions may be made: your team's throw-ins, all goal kicks, etc. In AYSO, the game is divided into quarters, with subs permitted only at quarter breaks and for injury. However it is done, substitutions can only be made when play is stopped and with the permission of the referee. You must also wait for a stoppage and inform the referee before changing the designated goalkeeper. (The one wearing the keeper jersey is the official keeper, even if the referee was not informed -- but they can both be cautioned if two players switch without permission.)

The player(s) going in needs to be at the halfway line, ready to enter, and (after receiving permission from the referee) should call to the player(s) they are replacing to leave; they should wait until the first player has left before entering the field.

If you find you have too many players on the field, call the surplus one(s) over to the touch line (staying on the field, however), and inform the referee. Be prepared for the extra player to receive a caution [yellow card]. If you have too few, get the new one ready to enter at the touch line near midfield, and ask the referee for permission.

In some situations, the distinction between "players" (currently in the game) and "substitutes" (eligible, but currently on the bench) is important. Either group can receive cautions [yellow cards] and be sent off [red cards], but only players can commit fouls that are restarted by free kicks. A foul-like offense committed by a substitute might result in a card, but play would restart on a drop ball.

Law 4 -- Players' equipment

Required equipment is shoes (they don't need to be special soccer shoes -- sneakers are fine), shin guards and a uniform. A uniform includes a tucked-in shirt, shorts and socks. Goalkeepers should wear uniforms or bibs that are distinct from all other players. A player may not wear anything dangerous either to him/herself or others. This includes bracelets, wristwatches, hard hair holders, almost all earrings and almost all chains around the neck. Most youth leagues, and most referees, simply forbid all jewelry, period, and don't argue, because it's all up to the referee, despite what the book may seem to say. Dangerous equipment includes baseball shoes or other shoes with sharp metal cleats or any cleats at the toe. Some leagues and referees will permit light, well-padded casts, some won't.

FIFA policy (not law) is that players whose shoes become untied must leave the field to tie them, while their team plays short. This is rarely enforced at youth level.

Law 5 -- The referee

Under standard soccer rules, there is **one** center referee with full authority to make all decisions about matters of fact, and how the rules of soccer apply to them. The referee's authority extends beyond the players to the coaches and spectators, if needed. On matters of fact, such as whether a goal scored or a foul was committed, the referee's decisions are final and not subject to appeal. The center referee may be aided by two assistant referees (or linesmen), described in Law 6, to whom the center referee will typically defer on certain matters (offside, or whether the ball is in or out and off whom). Nevertheless, the center referee always has the power to overrule them on any matter.

Soccer is by nature both a physical contact sport and a fluid, non-stop game that is meant to flow. These aspects strongly impact the way soccer referees manage it.

1) Referees have leeway in judging the degree of contact that constitutes a foul in a particular game. A referee tries not to unnecessarily limit the physical contact nature of the game, yet he will guard the players' safety, taking into account factors such as the skill and age of the players.

2) When judging **when** to let play continue, or when to call a foul, referees try not to interrupt the flow of the game except where the foul has an effect on play and calling it is necessary to insure fairness to the fouled team. In particular:

- referees refrain from calling relatively trivial fouls or technicalities;
- even where the foul is nontrivial, referees may let play continue where that appears more advantageous to the team fouled than calling a foul to stop play and award them a free kick ("the advantage rule").

3) When play does stop, the referee's intervention usually limited to a quickly given signal: which team (direction) gets the ball, how the game is to be restarted (e.g., free kick or throw-in) and from where. In most situations, the team awarded the ball has the right to restart play immediately as soon as they can retrieve the ball to the appropriate spot, with no need to wait on the other team or on the referee.

4) Soccer referees often do not explain their calls. They 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 is 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 calls if asked, however they are not obliged to.

5) An important concept is "**advantage**." This rule says; do not 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.

Imagine a breakaway is starting, and three attackers, with the ball, have just crossed the halfway line and are confronted by two defenders. There is no one between them and the goal except the goalkeeper. One defender deliberately brings down both the attacker with the ball 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 for the free kick. While this is happening, the defenders will get organized, and the free kick will not lead to another breakaway. The other option is to let play continue, on the basis that the 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 did not 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 American gridiron football terms, the referee judged that the fouled team would decline the penalty if given the choice.

The signal for advantage is for the referee to extend both arms forward and say "Play on," and/or "Advantage." If a referee applies advantage, but then sees that the play is not working out as well for the fouled team as he thought, he can still change his mind and award the free kick instead, within a few seconds.

6) The fouls 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.

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. Soccer referees carry whistles in their hands, not their mouths to encourage them to wait a little while they see things to see what the effect of the foul is on the play. If there is no effect, or if there is advantage to the fouled team, they may not call anything.

7) A referee can change or correct a call if play has not been restarted. Sometimes the referee will receive information from a linesman regarding something he did not see that causes him to change a call.

8) **Play is not always stopped for injured players.** 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 decision is whether a strong attacking play is going on -- referees are more likely to let play continue, unless there is a seriously injured defender in the midst of things. (A referee must consider the possibility of feigned injuries to stop an opponents' attack.)

9) 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. This means that misconduct that occurs before or after a game, or during half-time, can be dealt with. For instance, players fighting before the game can be forbidden from playing, just as if they received a red card.

10) The referee has the authority to manage the game, including terminating it if things get out of control. However, he does not have authority to assign a winner, except by reporting the number of goals that were scored. Should a game be terminated, the referee sends a report on the game to the league, and the league has to decide what to do.

11) A solo referee without linesmen may have difficulty making accurate calls when the ball goes out of play. You can offer to provide two assistant referees or linesmen, called club linesmen if they are not certified. See Law 6 (Assistant Referees) for a discussion of what club linesmen can and cannot do.

12) **You have limited options if the referee is really dreadful.** 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. Newer referees who are already nervous will make even more mistakes when you yell, and stupid ones are not going to bother to read the rules just because of your griping. You might 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 had better have a charming personality to pull this off.

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 will not win arguments about factual interpretations. 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 does not seem to know the offside law. Even if the referee's badge is for the current year, not all referees attend clinics as part of their recertification, and they do not all read the law book. Remember too that some referees simply do not agree with some recent law changes or official interpretations and are reluctant to enforce them.

If things are so bad that your players are being injured, you might have to do more. This is a very difficult issue. First, it helps if you have not been whining all along to the ref about every instance of your players being charged or tackled -- soccer is 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. 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 a while. Fifth, send someone to get the referee assigned or a league official over to observe what is 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 is probably a league rule suspending coaches who pull their teams out of games, so be aware that pulling your team off the field may have serious consequences for you personally.

Law 6 -- The Assistant Referee (Linesman)

In an "official" three-official team, the center referee has two Assistant Refs, formerly known as Linesmen. The ARs are positioned on the touch lines and as such are usually better placed to call ball in or out of play, and offside. However, the center referee makes all calls (he has the only whistle) issues all yellow and red cards and can always overrule or ignore an AR's advice. The AR's power to make calls depends on the amount of deference the center referee gives. Referees typically delegate the following judgments to ARs:

a. when a player should be penalized for being offside;

b. when the ball has gone out of play over the touch (side) line or goal (end) line, which side gets the ball and whether the restart should be by throw-in, goal kick, or corner kick;

c. when a team requests and is properly entitled to substitute;

d. when a foul or misconduct has occurred out of the view of the center referee.

Issues:

1. An AR's top priority is to monitor offside. Offside judgments are the calls where center referees are most dependent on their ARs. This is why ARs stay positioned with the next to last defender rather than with play around the ball; it is entirely proper for linesmen to turn away from and maybe miss the ball going out when necessary to keep up with potential offside. For a club linesmen (see below), who are not empowered to call offside, watching for the ball going out is the top priority.

2. ARs do not signal offside merely because a player is in an offside position. Rather, they consider all the factors in Law 11 (q.v.) and only make the call if the player is involved in active play.

3. If an AR sees a foul, but sees that the center referee also saw the incident, the linesman will usually not signal, even if she has a "better" or "closer" view. The AR only signals a foul if she is convinced the center referee's view is obstructed, and that the referee would make the same call if able to see it.

4. When the ball goes out and the AR signals who should get the ball, the center referee will often defer to the linesman's call, the center referee's call prevails if different from the AR's signal (even if the AR supposedly had a superior view). Sometimes, however, the referee may change the call if she realizes the AR knows better.

5. Club linesmen may be recruited from among the spectators to serve, if there are not two certified ARs (i.e. certified as referees) available for a game. A club linesman's duties are to signal when the ball goes out and who should get it, and to signal for substitutions. They do not include calling offside or calling fouls outside the view of the referee. If there is only one certified linesman and one club linesman, the rules dictate that both should have only the status of club linesman.

6. Teams sometimes will mutually agree to expand the club linesman's duties, particularly for help with offside calls. Although the LOTG do not provide that the limitations on club linesmen may be waived, even when a certified referee is available to serve as AR, in practice it is common for teams to mutually agree to various arrangements. If you do: 1) never do so without the full agreement and knowledge of the referee and both teams, including about the linesmen's possible interests with either team; 2) it is especially unsound to permit anyone with the technical status of a club linesman to call any fouls out of view of the referee; 3) the game result is at greater risk of being open to challenge from these non-standard arrangements, and some tournaments and leagues may and not be informally tolerated at all.

Law 7 -- The duration of a game

The laws define an official adult men's soccer game as two 45-minute halves. Most youth games are shorter with halves typically ranging from 20 to 40 minutes, varying according to the players' ages. Your league will have its own rules about this -- make sure both you and the referee know. Both halves must be the same length, and there must be a break in between. Because play is continuous, there are no time outs, and there is usually no visible clock, soccer timekeeping can seem unusual to those accustomed to sports like basketball.

Official time is kept by the referee, and you should keep a copy on your own watch. Each half will usually go on beyond the prescribed length, however, because the referee is supposed to add time to compensate for time "lost" due to injuries, lost balls, or other abnormal situations that prevent play. Even though soccer games have a strictly defined official length and end when that time runs out, the added time (which is entirely up to the referee) makes the exact duration hard for an observer to predict exactly. Perhaps halfway through each half, and then again near the end, you should ask the referee how much time is left, and from that you can estimate how much time, if any, is being added. Sometimes games are packed together so tightly that the referee cannot add as much time as he fairly should.

It is extremely rare for a game to end while a shot is in the air, or while a strong attacking move is taking place. One of the world's elite referees ended a half during a corner kick that was volleyed into the goal in a World Cup -- never again was he given an international assignment, even though he believed the kicking team had been delaying and didn't deserve any extra time. Soccer traditionally has not had the micro-second timing of basketball, for instance, and most coaches and players prefer to let the last-second goal be scored rather than use overtime or penalty kicks to settle a game. Many referees wait until the first minor lull in play (or ball out of play) after time runs out, or until the team that is leading gains control of the ball, before ending the game. Remember, the time to be added to make up for losses is entirely up to the ref.

Law 8 -- The start of play

Before the game, the two teams' captains meet and hold a coin toss. The winners choose which direction they will play in the first half, and the losers kick off from the center of the field. The teams swap ends and kick-off in the second half. The ball is in play once it is kicked forward (into the opponents' half). The ball only needs to move barely forward, and it may then be kicked backwards to the rest of the team by a teammate of the original kicker -- the first player cannot play it twice in a row.

Most stoppages have a defined restart -- for example, if the ball goes over a touch line, the restart is a throw-in. When the referee stops play on his own initiative while the ball is in play -- such as for injury, broken goalpost, or spectator on the field -- the restart is a dropped ball. Another reason for a dropped ball is misconduct that is not also a foul or infraction (see Law 12 for these terms), or for a situation where no other restart is specified. Usually, the ball is dropped between two opposing players, but the referee may perform a "one-man" dropped ball -- e.g., if play was stopped while the goalkeeper was holding the ball, it may be dropped

back to him. Once the dropped ball touches the ground, it is in play -- if the first player to touch it kicks it into a goal, the score counts.

Note: The other ways of restarting play after it is stopped are described in other Laws. Offside, described in Law 11, leads to a free kick. Law 12 identifies penal fouls, technical fouls and misconduct. These lead to free kicks, penalty kicks and on occasion a dropped ball. Free kicks and penalty kicks are described in Laws 13 and 14. Laws 15 through 17 describe the restarts after the ball goes out over a boundary line. In addition, scattered throughout the Laws are technical infringements that lead to indirect free kicks, such as playing the ball twice on a free kick.

Law 9 -- Ball in and out of play

Play is started or restarted with a throw-in, goal kick, corner kick, free kick, kick-off, or a dropped ball, depending on the situation. If the restart is conducted properly, the ball is then in play until it goes out or the referee stops play. As stated earlier, to leave the field, the entire ball must pass completely beyond the outer edge of a touch line or goal line, either in the air or rolling on the ground -- the field is a 3-dimensional space. The key is the location of the ball, not the players or their feet -- if the ball goes out in the air and then curves back in, it is out. However, if a player's natural momentum carries her off the field, play continues as long as the ball remains wholly or partly inside.

If you think you see a foul but the referee has not blown the whistle, play on -- the ball is still in play. It's also still in play if it hits the goal post, crossbar, corner flag, referee or linesman and stays in the field.

Law 10 -- The method of scoring

A goal is scored when the entire ball passes **completely** beyond the goal line, between the goal posts, under the crossbar. It does not matter who touched it last. It does not matter if the goalkeeper is holding it. All that matters is the location of the ball. The referee is not allowed to award goals -- they must all be earned; if any "outside influence" such as a spectator enters the field and interferes with a goal by touching the ball, the goal does not count, even if the ball would have scored without the interference.

There are certain situations where an apparent "goal" does not count -- you cannot score against either team on a throw-in or indirect free kick; you cannot score against yourself on a direct free kick, goal kick, or corner kick. In those cases, if the ball goes directly into the goal without being touched after the initial throw or kick, the restart is as if the ball had missed the goal (goal kick or corner kick).

If a foul occurs in the play immediately preceding a goal, the referee may disallow the score, even if he did not have time to blow the whistle before the ball entered the goal -- as long as the foul happened first. This occurs most often, where the referee did not see the linesman's offside flag right away.

Law 11 -- Offside

A basic principle from the earliest days of soccer is that attacks have to go **through** the other team -- you cannot station a player behind the other team and pass the ball over everybody to her. This principle appears in the laws as the offside infraction. A player commits the infraction if she is (a) **involved in active play** while (b) **in an offside position**.

A player is **in an offside position** if she is all of these things:

- in the opponents' half of the field, **and**
- ahead of the ball (closer to the opponents' goal line than the ball), **and**
- ahead of the second-last defender (usually, the last defender is the keeper, and the second-last is the deepest fullback) **and**
- she is **not** receiving a throw-in, corner kick or goal kick (those three are exempt).

A player is **involved in active play** (participating is a term often used) if she does any one of these:

- interferes with play (such as receiving a pass or trying for the ball), **or**
- interferes with an opponent (such as getting in their way or challenging for possession), **or**
- gains an advantage as a result of being in that offside position (such as getting the rebound off a goalkeeper's save, or being in the right spot to capitalize on a defender's miss-kick).

An important feature of offside is that the offside position and participation in play are **judged at the moment the ball is played** by an attacking teammate.

- If an attacker is in an onside position when the ball is passed forward, and she then runs past the defense to get it, **that is not offside** even if she is beyond the second-last defender when she reaches the ball.
- If an attacker is in an offside position when the ball is passed, and then runs back into an onside position (such as into her own half) to collect it, **that is offside**, because offside position was determined when her teammate played the ball.
- You cannot be offside when the opponents have control of the ball -- offside position is judged at the moment a teammate plays the ball. So if the goalkeeper, after controlling the ball with his hands, accidentally throws it to an offside opponent, there is no offense.

Both conditions -- position and participation -- must be met.

- It is not an offense merely to be in offside position -- the player in offside position does not commit any offense if she just stands there and stays out of play.

- However, if the conditions are met, it is an offense even if the offside player did not intend anything wrong -- this infraction is based on simple geometry and participation in active play, not mind reading by the referee.
- For example, suppose the goalkeeper saves a shot (without controlling it), which rebounds to an attacker who was in offside position when the shot was taken. If the attacker then gains control, shoots and scores, that is offside and the goal doesn't count -- the attacker gained advantage from being in that position, even though she just happened to be there as the result of an earlier play. Notice that in this case, the goalkeeper's save did not cancel the potential for offside -- because the defense did not gain control, the attacking team's original "play" continued, and the offside determinations made the referee or linesman when the shot was taken continued to apply.
- In this example, if the goalkeeper is able to control the ball, many referees will not call offside even though the offside player is in a good position to play a rebound if one occurs. Without the rebound, the offside player does not become involved (she does not gain any advantage from her offside position), so the referee ignores the potential infraction.
- If the assistant referee is not quite sure just who is or isn't "involved in active play" at the moment the ball is played, he may wait a few seconds to see what the players in offside position are up to before deciding. ARs are instructed that if they are not completely sure, do not call it. Some observers, noting such a delay by an AR, conclude that participation by offside players should be judged only when the ball is received rather than when it is passed. This is incorrect; an AR will delay an offside call only when unable to determine participation immediately.

Offside is normally called by the assistant referee (linesman) if there is one, who tries to stay even with the second-last defender in order to judge whether any attackers are farther downfield and therefore in offside position. If he sees an offside infraction, the linesman will raise his flag and remain at that position until acknowledged by the referee. The linesman then indicates the location of the restart, which is an indirect free kick for the defense. Officially, the IFK is awarded at the point where the offside player was when the ball was played by her teammate, but frequently the linesman indicates a point opposite where he himself was standing at that moment -- which usually makes little difference.

Offside can be used as a tactical weapon by the defense. If they quickly follow play up to the halfway line, they force the attackers to pull out with them or risk being in offside position and unable to participate. This has the effect of compressing the area of play, which may be a tactical advantage. The "offside trap," where the defense quickly steps up just before an attacker kicks the ball forward, is an aggressive variant on this basic tactic. However, there are risks associated with a aggressive offside defense. All that open space behind the defense gives the attackers more room to play lead passes to fast runners, and the timing of an offside trap can misfire, leaving the defense going the wrong way. A further risk in the offside trap is that the team executing it depends on the referee and linesmen to make what are sometimes difficult calls -- in the past few years, FIFA and national associations have

given referees and ARs direction not to call offside if there is any doubt about either position or participation.

Law 12 -- Fouls and misconduct

This law provides the referee with the tools to maintain order in the dynamic, physical game of soccer. It is important to remember that calling fouls is almost entirely a matter of judgment -- the law names the fouls, but does not describe most of them. It is up to the referee to know what is and is not "fair play" (which can vary from one game to another).

Referees use the term foul to refer to unfair play that occurs on the field while the game is underway, that results in a free kick or penalty kick. These are divided into penal fouls that lead to direct free kicks, and technical fouls that lead to indirect free kicks. Misconduct covers offenses against the spirit of the game that lead to yellow and red cards. Misconduct can occur while the ball is in or out of play, before and after the game, on or off the field. During the game, misconduct is usually also associated with a penal or technical foul; hence, the restart for misconduct is usually the restart for that foul.

(a) Direct free kick fouls

The direct free kick (DFK) fouls are also called "penal" fouls -- if one of them is called against a defender within his own penalty area, the other team is awarded a penalty kick (see Law 14). Because of this severe consequence, referees often require a clear-cut foul with visible effect before making the call. If a "penal" foul occurs on the line bounding the penalty area, then it is within the area -- lines are part of the area they bound.

These DFK fouls can only occur (a) on the field, (b) against an opponent [except handling, which is against the ball], and (c) while the ball is in play. If the three conditions are not met, an action can be **misconduct** leading to a yellow or red card, but it can't be a **foul** in the strict sense, and the restart would not be a direct free kick or penalty kick.

Tripping, pushing, jumping at, striking, kicking

These fouls are for actions that are similar to normal play, which become fouls when they are carried out in a manner the referee judges to be "careless, reckless or with excessive force." Because the actions covered are so similar to normal play, many referees will call the fouls only when there is some effect on play (the fouling team gains possession or stops their opponents' attack), if there is severe contact, or if there is a deliberate attempt to play the man instead of the ball. In the case of tripping, striking and kicking, it is also an offense merely to attempt the action -- actual contact is not required.

Deliberate **tripping**, or clumsy play that results in a trip, is easy to recognize, as well as where a player slides and possibly tries for the ball, but is so late there's no real chance to do anything but bring down the dribbler. However, if a defender makes a clean play on the ball and then the attacker simply happens to trip over his outstretched leg while he's lying on the ground, that is probably not a trip, nor is it if the defender traps the ball so that the attacker, carried on by his momentum, falls over it.

Striking suggests hitting with the hands or fists, but is not limited to those. Striking can be done by the elbows or knees, and it's even striking to throw the ball at an opponent. Many cases of striking are also unsporting behavior [yellow card -- caution] or violent conduct [red card -- send-off].

Pushing means the obvious pushing with the hands, but also includes elbows, general play with the arms extended from the body, and pushing with the body or thighs. There is usually a lot of pushing with younger kids, which is often ignored when it has no effect on play. Even with older players, if the victim can fight it off, then many refs are inclined to turn a blind eye.

Players jostling for position on balls in the air can lead to obstruction, holding, pushing and/or tripping. The tripping foul on a high ball, a.k.a. bridging, is when one player goes in under his jumping opponent, who then falls over him. This action is potentially very dangerous, while looking quite innocent -- it often looks like the victim committed the foul.

"**Jumping at**" is a form of reckless, dangerous play where the opposing player, more than the ball, is the target. One case is where two players are trying to head a ball in the air, and one is properly positioned underneath the point of contact, while the other player, initially out of position, comes flying in from the side and collides with the opponent at the same moment as they both head the ball. Even though they are both "going for the ball," it is not a fair play. A similar case is two players going to play a ball on the ground, where one is in position and the other comes flying in cleats-first from far away. If the player flying in from the side is looking at his opponent rather than the ball, then it is certainly a foul--even if he is concentrating on the ball, it might still be reckless or careless, and a foul anyway.

Kicking usually means actually kicking an opponent (even if by accident), which can happen through careless play when opposing players try to play the ball simultaneously. It can also mean a deliberate attempt to kick an opponent that misses. Accidental kicks that miss are usually ignored or considered dangerous play (see under indirect free kicks, below).

This group of fouls requires a lot of referee judgment as to whether the game needs to be stopped. An apparent foul may well be trifling (not really rough, no effect on play) or alternatively, the foul may be real but advantage should be applied (the fouled team kept its attack going anyway). Just because one player has her hands on an opponent's back, or an elbow in her side, that does not mean that a foul must be called -- even though the action may meet the definition of the foul. Referees often distinguish "playing the man" and "playing the ball" based on the player's eyes -- to play the ball is to look at it.

Holding, spitting, handling

These fouls are somewhat more clear-cut than the pushing-holding-jumping at group, largely because they are not simple extensions of "normal play." The most obvious is spitting at an opponent, or attempting to spit at, which is obviously not part of a soccer game (and it leads to a sending-off or red card).

Holding is commonly grabbing an opponent's uniform -- one reason referees will ask players to keep their shirts tucked in is to make this more difficult. However, if the held player is still able to play effectively, the referee may ignore the foul by putting it in the trifling-

doubtful-advantage category. There are other forms of holding besides the obvious grabbing with the hands, including using an arm or thigh to shield an opponent off the ball (these might alternatively be interpreted as pushing), and the two-on-one "sandwich," where a player is pinned between two opponents.

Handling the ball involves **deliberately** playing it with the hand or arm. It is not a foul every time the ball makes contact with a hand, although players from some cultures believe that is so. Cases where the ball strikes a player's hand entirely through accident or the actions of other players are not fouls providing the player did not contribute to the outcome -- however, players need to learn how to play with the arms out of the way, because holding the arms where they are likely to get in the way of the ball may be interpreted as deliberately causing the ball to strike the hand, therefore a foul -- guarding space with the arms held out is not permitted. A reflex action to protect oneself may not be called, although should be if the player has enough time to play the ball another way. For players defending a free kick in a wall, as long as they position their arms for self-protection before the ball is kicked, and don't move them while the ball is in flight, a foul should not be called if they are struck on the arms at relatively close range.

Tackling and charging offenses

As with the fouls for tripping, etc., these offenses are "normal play" that is not executed correctly. Indeed, tackling and charging are not merely normal play, they are the very essence of soccer defense and therefore cannot be forbidden by the referee -- although they can become fouls. This is clearly a judgment call. With young players, this foul will occur rarely, while in a game of older kids or adults, the referee will need to "draw the line" somewhere and stick to it, based on his perception of the players and their expectations.

Charging is an act by a defensive player to gain possession of the ball through body contact. For a charge to be legal, the contact should be a staccato shoulder-to-shoulder action, with arms close to the body; the charger should have at least one foot on the ground; and the ball should be within playing distance (a yard or two). If the charging player leaves the ground, then it is likely to be an illegal charge, or jumping at.

The player with the ball is permitted some leeway in keeping his body in the way to shield the ball and fend off opponents. How much physical contact is permitted in these situations varies according to the age, sex and nationality[!] of the players, and according to the referee's expectations. Slide tackles are entirely legal, and if the tackler gets the ball and afterwards the opponent trips over his outstretched leg, that isn't a foul. However, there is a distinction between a slide tackle and a trip, and this is an area where the referee's positioning and judgment come to the fore, because it is often easy to see exactly what happened. Hip checking (a defender going in sideways but not playing with the shoulder) is not a legal charge.

There are times when an apparently legal charge is not legal. If the two players involved are not within playing distance of the ball, then the charge is not legal -- it might be obstruction [IFK], holding [DFK], or simply an illegal charge. (Obstruction in this circumstance was formerly in the law as an IFK for charging without being in playing distance.) If an attacker with

the ball has his back to the opponents' goal, then he can expect some pressure from behind to be tolerated by the ref; if he's facing the goal and has a shooting opportunity, a hard charge on his back is more likely to be a foul.

The referee often bases the call on whether the defender is "playing the ball" or "playing the man" -- the latter is the foul, such as riding the player away from the ball. If two defenders simultaneously play the man and make a sandwich, that is usually holding.

(b) Technical (indirect free kick) fouls

The IFK is for less serious offenses, offenses not directly involving an opponent, and also relatively technical violations described in other laws such as playing the ball twice on a dead-ball restart. Some referees try to make effective use of the flexibility provided by this "less serious" offense and use it to steer the game in a more sporting direction, by awarding an indirect free kick (usually combined with a talking-to) rather than a caution for minor unsporting acts such as time wasting. Other referees "chicken out" and award an IFK when a penalty kick is called for.

As with the DFK fouls, these offenses can only be called while the ball is in play and must occur on the field.

Impeding (a.k.a. obstruction)

Impeding involves getting in an opponent's way to screen and prevent him from reaching or challenging for the ball. It is generally not a contact foul -- if it is executed with physical contact, the referee may call holding or pushing (DFK) instead. What the referee looks for is playing the man vs. playing the ball. However, it is perfectly legal to shield the ball to maintain possession. The key question: is the ball within playing distance? (Playing distance is a couple of yards -- close enough that the player can reach out and touch it if he wishes.) If the ball is that close, then shielding is a perfectly legal form of "playing" it.

The most common example of legal shielding is protecting the ball from an opponent while it runs out of bounds, so as to gain the restart. Illegal impeding may be a player deliberately running in an opponent's way to make him go around, so that a teammate will be able to reach the ball first, or the ball will run out of play.

A variation is preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball, once he has it in his hands, which also leads to an IFK. A certain amount of accidental obstruction also occurs in a normal game, and it is typically ignored.

A minor terminological point: impeding is the name of the foul, while obstruction refers to protecting the ball legally.

Dangerous play

In its most succinct form, DP is any play that looks dangerous, and that is how it's usually called with very young players. Examples include kicking at a high ball near another player's face, or trying to head a ball near the ground while another player is playing the ball with his feet. These calls can be made whether the other player is an opponent or a teammate. It is

also dangerous play if a player's actions cause an opponent to refrain from making a normal play because of the risk of injury -- a player who accidentally falls and lies on the ball prevents other players from playing it because they do not want to kick her.

At higher levels, the referee is unlikely to make the call unless the play is very obviously dangerous (such as an overhead bicycle kick in the middle of a crowd), or the play involves preventing an opponent from making his normal play (it does not usually apply to endangering teammates or preventing them from playing). For example, if a player ends up accidentally lying on the ball on the ground, other players will be reluctant to play it out of a fear of injuring him; the foul is called to compensate them for being prevented from making their "normal" play.

With younger kids, dangerous play is called more often, which leads some observers to conclude that high kicking, low heading, and playing on the ground are always forbidden. That is not the law -- these actions are dangerous play only when they endanger someone, and with older players probably only when the opponents are effected also -- there must be another player nearby for there to be DP.

Dangerous play also applies to standard ball challenges and tackles that are carried out in a way that increases the potential for injury, even if the player playing dangerously misses both the ball and the opponent. The slide tackle from behind so hopeless that it misses by a foot or two is an example -- the referee may call DP to make an example.

The goalkeeper

There are some special rules for the goalkeeper, because she is the only player who can use her hands. (This is one of the reasons the referee needs to know who is the designated keeper -- it is the one in the Spider Man shirt -- and why that designation cannot be changed without informing the ref.) There are five IFK fouls that can be committed only by a keeper:

- **taking more than four steps** while holding the ball in her hands. This rule is designed to prevent time-wasting, and to prevent the keeper from taking undue advantage of her privilege to use hands. Referees rarely count steps exactly, and usually won't call the foul if the keeper puts the ball into play promptly even if she takes some extra steps.
- **"double possession"** is a foul that occurs when the keeper puts the ball into play (i.e., deliberately puts it on the ground to be played with the feet by herself or a teammate), and then handles it again. This rule is designed to keep the ball in play. It should not be double possession if the keeper accidentally drops the ball while trying to kick it and then picks it up again.
- **handling a ball deliberately kicked to her by a teammate.** This rule is designed to prevent endless back-and-forth passing between the keeper and a fullback. The kick needs to be deliberate -- it's okay for the keeper to handle the ball if a pass or shot on goal is deflected towards her by a teammate attempting to block it, or if the teammate makes a desperation clear to "anywhere."
- **handling a ball thrown-in by a teammate.** This rule is designed to keep play moving along without having the keeper "withdraw the ball from play" by picking it up unneces-

sarily. If another player from either team touches the ball before the keeper, this rule does not apply.

- **wasting time** while holding the ball. Referees are instructed to award an IFK if the keeper holds the ball for more than "five or six" seconds without putting it into play.

(c) Misconduct

Misconduct refers to the **caution** [yellow card] and **sending-off** [red card], which are the referee's strongest weapons against actions contrary to the spirit of the game and fair play. The fouls mentioned earlier are mostly "ordinary play carried to excess," whereas misconduct covers deliberate acts of poor sportsmanship that go entirely beyond the realm of fair play. The punishment for misconduct is given personally to the player, in addition to the free kick awarded against his team.

Certain specific acts are defined in LOTG as misconduct, such as spitting, dissent, and unsporting behavior. However, many referees will "go up the ladder" and try to stem bad behavior through warnings and force of personality before showing cards, and some referees are relatively deaf to dissent. Other referees will immediately reach into their pocket for the piece of plastic. Your team has to be ready for either approach -- if your team includes some hotheads, you will need to size up the referee.

In the strict FIFA laws, a caution is a warning of a potential sending-off, which in a game with extremely limited substitutions, is a serious threat. However, most youth soccer employs relatively free substitutions so that cautioned players can be moved to the bench at no further cost. As well as being instruments to regulate games, cards have become of interest in themselves, and are tracked by leagues as a measure of players' and teams' worthiness. Consequently, referees need to be consistent in issuing cards, and FIFA have provided guidelines over the past few years to bring more consistency to this decision.

Yellow card offenses generally cover bad sportsmanship and disruption of the game -- but not acts that cause injury or affect the score. A good example is "persistent infringement" -- a succession of "ordinary" fouls. Red cards are reserved for acts completely against the spirit of the game (e.g., handling the ball to prevent an obvious goal) or totally inappropriate behavior (e.g., spitting or fighting).

Historically, referees have been reluctant to issue yellow and red cards, for various reasons we all know. Although this may not be a problem in youth games, international soccer has become a pretty rough game with marquee players getting serious injuries, and the law writers (the "International Board") have responded by imploring referees to deal more severely with "professional fouls," and by singling out more specific acts as misconduct. As a result, the lawbook that in 1973 listed only seven yellow and red card offenses now lists fourteen. The definitions have not really changed (e.g., it was always considered "ungentlemanly conduct" to interrupt the taking of a free kick, even before that particular offense was singled out), but the message to the world's referees is clear: crack down on unsporting play and get those players out of the game. A side-effect that coaches need to be aware of is

that a few referees interpret the guidance as an invitation to caution and send off players at the drop of a hat, instead of trying to keep all players on the field and the game flowing.

Although misconduct fouls are usually serious, the referee may give advantage and not stop play immediately to show the card. For an example, see the scenario in the discussion of advantage, under Law 5, above. If misconduct occurs without an accompanying foul while the ball is in play -- this often happens with dissent -- and the referee stops play, the restart is an IFK for the other team if the misconduct was committed by a player and occurred on the field, or a drop ball in other cases. If the misconduct is serious enough for a red card, the referee will almost always stop play immediately. If misconduct occurs while the ball is out of play, the restart is what it would have been -- for instance, if the ball went out over a touch line, the restart is a throw-in, whether or not misconduct occurs before the ball is put back into play.

Two of the most serious red card offenses are violent conduct and serious foul play. Generally, SFP is something totally outside the realm of fair play, but still part of the game in some sense, such as an extremely violent tackle from behind which injures the victim's legs -- assuming the tackle is an attempt to play the ball. Violent conduct, in contrast, is simply fighting without regard to the game. In many leagues, VC results in a longer suspension than SFP.

Two specific forms of SFP [red card] that have been singled out in recent years are denying a goal through handling the ball, and denying an "obvious goal-scoring opportunity." Denying a goal is a player other than the keeper stopping a would-be goal with his hands. Denying an obvious opportunity to score means a foul to prevent a shot committed against an attacker who (a) has the ball or is about to get it, (b) is heading towards the goal with at most one defender ahead of him, and (c) has a reasonable shooting opportunity. Because of the required conditions, these often also lead to penalty kicks.

According to the FIFA laws, which are followed by the national federations such as USSF, only players and substitutes should be shown red or yellow cards, although many competitions permit, encourage or even require showing a card when anyone is cautioned or sent off. Coaches and other bench personnel may be "warned" and "dismissed" without cards, but not "cautioned" and "sent off." The difference in terminology is minor, but ask if the referee says he is warning you -- it may be a formal caution. Similarly, if the ref shows a yellow card to a group of players, they should ask exactly which individual has been cautioned.

Law 13 -- Free kicks

Free kicks are the restart after a foul or other infraction. The referee's signal is a whistle to stop play, followed by an arm pointing in the direction the kicking team is going. Both teams need to determine quickly which team has the kick and get into position, because a free kick is potentially dangerous -- a disproportionate number of goals are scored off FKs among players old enough to score from just outside the penalty area.

One additional piece of information also needs to be obtained: is the free kick direct or indirect? A goal can be scored directly from a direct free kick (DFK) but not from an indirect

(IFK) -- on an IFK a second player must touch the ball after it's in play for a goal to count. The referee signals an IFK by holding one arm straight up; the lack of a signal indicates a DFK (although if the referee simply forgets to raise his arm and the foul was an IFK foul, it's still an IFK). Both kinds of free kicks are taken from the spot of the foul, which the referee will often indicate, especially if it is not clear.

The term "free kick" indicates that the kick is to be free from interference and may be kicked in any direction. Consequently, all opponents must move at least 10 yards away in all directions. The referee may stop play and get the opponents back if they are too close, or he may wait for the kicking team either to ask him to move them back or take a quick kick. If the referee does intervene, he should direct the kicker to wait for a whistle before kicking, and have the defenders move back to a point he indicates, where they usually form a "wall." This is called a "**ceremonial free kick**."

If your team has the free kick, you are permitted to put the ball down and restart immediately (a "**quick free kick**") after having retrieved the ball to the spot of the foul. (The referee typically does not care if the ball is not placed precisely on the spot). If the opponents are disorganized or short-handed in this part of the field, you may want to get going immediately, and there is no need to wait for a signal, unless the referee directs you to wait -- the whistle that stops play for the foul is also a signal that a quick free kick may be taken.

If the other team has the free kick, your players should back away the required 10 yards, or else risk a caution [yellow card] for "failing to respect the required distance." You might be able to delay the kickers a little or retreat a bit less than 10 yards, but many referees are quite properly hard-nosed on this issue and caution promptly. If it is a ceremonial kick and the referee blows the whistle for the kick, your players cannot dash forward -- the whistle is only to tell the kickers that it's okay to kick, and the defenders have to continue to wait until the actual kick.

As long as they are 10 yards from the spot of the kick, defenders may form a "wall" between the ball and their own goal. They may jump after the ball is kicked, but may not leap about beforehand to distract the kicker. Members of the attacking team may also join the wall, provided they get there first (defenders are unlikely to invite them in); an attacker might vacate his position just as the kick is made, leaving a gap through which the ball can pass.

Ideally, a FK should be totally "quick" or totally "ceremonial" -- the referee should either not intervene at all, or he should tell the kicking team to wait and have the kick taken only on his whistle. However, sometimes the referee intervenes "a little bit" to talk the defenders back the 10 yards, distracting one or both teams, without telling the kicker to wait for a whistle. The defenders should be very wary if this happens and concentrate on the kicker, not the referee.

There is an exception to the rule that a FK is taken from the spot of the foul and the opponents must be 10 yards away -- these change for an IFK awarded inside the opponents' goal area (right in front of their goal), which might happen for a technical violation by the goalkeeper. In that case, the kick is taken from the nearest point on the boundary of the area (the 6 yd line), and defenders may occupy the goal line between the goal posts, even if that is less than 10 yards from the ball. In this situation, some kickers will just blast the ball

into the wall on the goal line -- even though it's an IFK that can't score directly, they figure the ball probably will touch somebody on its way through the wall and then pass over the line; the risk is the ball might bounce back and not score at all.

Another set of exceptions applies for free kicks within a team's own penalty area. (a) If the FK is awarded within the goal area, then it may be taken from anywhere within the goal area, just like a goal kick (Law 16). (b) The opposing team must entirely vacate the penalty area when the kick is taken and until the ball leaves the penalty area. (c) The ball is not in play until it has entirely left the penalty area. If the ball fails to leave the area, or is touched before it leaves, the kick should be retaken.

Except for the FK from within one's own penalty area, the ball is "in play" once it is "kicked and moves." In practice and according to directives from USSF, this means once it's been touched by a foot -- which means there is not much difference between a DFK and an IFK! However, not all referees may have seen this directive and may have another idea of what "kicked and moves" means. But technically, on an IFK the first player need only touch the ball with his foot, and the second player can then try to score. (Defenders may rush forward as soon as the ball is touched.) It's not permitted, however, for the first player to play the ball twice on either DFKs or IFKs.

Law 14 -- Penalty kicks

A PK is a dramatic, nerve-wracking, stylized, ultra-ceremonial form of DFK, taken from the penalty spot 12 yards from the goal. A PK is awarded when one of the DFK or "penal" fouls is committed by the defenders within their own penalty area. A PK is similar to a direct free kick, except:

- All players except the goalkeeper must be behind the ball (i.e., at least 12 yards from the goal line) until it is kicked.
- The kicker must be clearly identified, both to the referee and, more importantly, to the goalkeeper.
- All players except the goalkeeper and kicker must be outside the penalty area and more than 10 yards from the ball (there's a 10-yard arc on the edge of the penalty area for just this purpose) until the ball is kicked.
- The goalkeeper must remain on the goal line between the posts. She may move laterally, but not forward, before the ball is kicked.
- The kicker must move relatively straight ahead, with no feinting.
- The ball must be kicked forward.
- The kicker must wait for the referee's signal (whistle) before kicking.

FIFA laws permit substituting the goalkeeper or kicker for a penalty kick, but USA high school rules (National Federation) specifically forbid these substitutions (unless the keeper

is injured). The goalkeeper may also be changed (switched with a field player already in the game) under both FIFA and NF rules.

If the penalty spot is not marked, a ball should be located mid-way between the outer edge of the goal area (6 yards from the goal line) and the edge of the penalty area (18 yards), and directly opposite the center of the goal.

Law 15 -- Throw-ins

A throw-in is the restart when the ball goes out of play over one of the touch lines. It is awarded to the team that did not touch the ball last. A throw-in may be indicated by the assistant referee pointing his flag in the direction the throwing team is going, or by the referee with his arm. As always, the referee's call takes precedence in a conflict. The throw-in should be executed from within a meter (~a yard) of where the ball went out, which means a meter each way along the line, and a meter back away from the line. If the referee or assistant points or otherwise indicates where to take the throw, then be sure to go to that spot. If not, then it probably doesn't matter if you're a few yards away -- but if you gain a discernible advantage by being in the wrong spot, the referee can require the throw be retaken, or rule it a bad throw and give the throw-in to the other team.

A throw-in needs merely to touch the plane of the field (the plane above the outside edge of the touch line) to be in play. If it then curves out, that is a throw-in for the other team. The field is three-dimensional, and the ball does not need to touch the ground to be in play.

The thrower should face the field (i.e., not throw the ball over his head from front to back), have both feet on the ground, use both hands, and throw the ball from behind his head over the top of his head. (Touching the ball to the back of the neck on the backswing is a pretty reliable way to ensure a good throw.) The thrower's feet need to remain on the ground until the ball has left his hands. If these technical requirements are not met, the referee can award the throw-in to the other team. A throw-in that bounces before entering play should be retaken, whether or not it eventually enters play.

There are some technical law issues the team taking a throw-in should know:

- If you throw the ball to your own goalkeeper, she cannot handle the ball. She can play it with her feet like any other player, but if she uses her hands, that's an IFK.
- The direct recipient of a throw-in cannot be called offside (see Law 11).
- The thrower can't play the ball a second time before anyone else plays it -- that's an IFK infraction.
- You cannot score a goal against either team directly from a throw-in.

The team defending a throw-in should know that it is an offense to jump about to impede or distract the thrower. In essence, the throw-in is just a "neutral" restart, not intended as to provide an immediate scoring opportunity, so the defenders should just get out of the way and let it happen. One possible exception to this is the "flip" throw-in, which is in generally legal, assuming the thrower can meet the technical requirements of this law.

Law 16 -- Goal kicks

A goal kick is the restart if the attackers kick the ball over your goal line without scoring. Usually, this means they took a shot and missed, but goal kicks can also apply when an apparent goal happens in a situation where you cannot score -- such as scoring directly on an indirect free kick. The referee signals a GK by pointing to the goal.

Briefly, a GK is like a DFK from within your own goal area. The ball may be placed anywhere within the goal area. The opponents must be outside the penalty area and must stay outside until the ball leaves the area. Your players may be anywhere, but must not play the ball until it leaves the penalty area -- the ball is not in play until it entirely leaves the area. If the ball is touched before it leaves the penalty area, the GK should be retaken.

Law 17 -- Corner kicks

A corner kick is awarded if the ball goes over the goal line last touched by the defense. The referee's signal is to point to the corner with the arm raised at about 45 degrees. A CK is essentially like a DFK at the attacking corner -- from within the 1-yd arc at the corner flag (or on the line). As with a free kick the opponents must stay 10 yards away until the ball is played, and the ball is in play when it has been kicked (touched with a foot).

An important issue with corner kicks is the jostling, pushing, holding, and obstruction that sometimes occur in front of the goal. Although players from both teams are entitled to station themselves wherever they want on the field, if the referee thinks that attackers surrounding the goalkeeper are not trying to play the ball but are instead trying to prevent the keeper from playing, he is likely to call a foul for impeding (IFK) or holding (DFK). This is sometimes a close call, but many refs tend to favor the defenders. Something the defenders can do is station several players around the keeper who leave when the ball is kicked -- this denies the attackers this space, leaving it clear for the keeper.

Because of the amount of contact and contesting for position that is likely to occur, corner kicks can be important indicators of the referee's attitude to physical play. Take note. The goalkeeper has no special rights, but is frequently given the benefit of the doubt.

Law 18 -- Spirit of the laws

The laws of soccer have their own history, and they may change, but their spirit does not change -- they embody the notion of "fair play" drawn from the "gentlemanly" game of the mid-19th century, adjusted to relate to the game as it is played at our moment in history.

- The laws frame a code for the concept of fair play, but no code can really do this satisfactorily -- fair play is a general notion of something positive that should be done, while codes tend to be prescriptive lists of specific things that can and cannot be done.
- Fair play is based on the notion of a game among friends. Friends give each other an equal chance, avoid malicious behavior, and expect justice as opposed to strict punishment for violations of minor details.

- Part of the spirit of the game is competition, and the laws try to ensure the competition is fair, even if the players are poorly matched. The laws also have been designed to ensure a uniform approach from one game to another and one region or league to another.
- To maintain fairness and a sense of justice, different infringements are dealt with in different ways. Infringements against fair play and the spirit of the laws are more difficult to assess and deal with than direct infringements of the laws themselves.
- Decisions on infringements are in the hands of the referee, who however, should not intervene until a player infringes the laws or their spirit, and then only if he believes the intervention will benefit the side offended against. This is perhaps the referee's greatest power -- the discretion as to whether intervention is called for or not.
- An important criterion in the referee's judgment is intention. Some incidents which would be punished if intentional, may properly go unpunished if inadvertent, accidental or incidental.
- The referee should preserve his authority by never misusing his powers. He must be qualified to apply the letter of the laws, but he must also know when to apply it, so as to maintain the spirit of the laws.
- Decisions of the referee should be accepted cheerfully and sportingly, in part because it is the spirit of the laws that the referee's decision on matters of fact should be final.