



# The FA Referee Course

EXPLANATIONS AND GUIDELINES  
ON THE LAWS OF THE GAME

# Explanations and Guidelines on the Laws of the Game

## LAW 1: THE FIELD OF PLAY

A referee should visit the ground in good time before a match to see that everything is in order. If through bad weather or negligence the state of the ground is such that it may endanger the players, a referee should refuse to sanction play. If the lines or marks are not properly marked, the referee should see that, if time allows, it is done before the start of the match.

The referee should also examine the goal nets before every match and ensure that they are properly pegged down and that they are intact.

The field of play must be a wholly natural or, if competition rules permit, a wholly artificial playing surface except where competition rules permit an integrated combination of artificial and natural materials (hybrid system). The colour of artificial surfaces must be green.

### Technical Areas

Where a technical area exists, it must meet the requirements approved by IFAB.

### Goalpost Safety

Too many serious injuries and fatalities have occurred in recent years as a result of unsafe or incorrect use of goalposts. Safety is always of paramount importance and it is a prime responsibility of the referee to check the goalposts, before starting a game, to ensure they are safe.

For safety reasons goalposts of any size (including those which are portable and not installed permanently at a pitch or practice field) must always be anchored securely to the ground.

- Portable goalposts must be secured as per the manufacturer's instructions
- Under no circumstances should children or adults be allowed to climb on, swing or play with the structure of the goalposts
- Particular attention is drawn to the fact that if not properly assembled and secured, portable goalposts may overturn
- Regular inspections of goalposts must be carried out to check that they are properly maintained

The use of metal cup hooks on goals is now banned and referees have been instructed not to commence matches where such net fixings are evident for safety reasons. Nets should only be secured by plastic hooks, net grips or tape and not by metal cup hooks. Any metal cup hooks should have been removed and replaced.

## LAW 2: THE BALL

Unless a competition has specifically chosen to require the use of a ball with FIFA logos, to show its higher quality, referees should accept for use any ball satisfying the normal requirements of Law.

## LAW 3: THE PLAYERS

### (1) Substitutes

Players sent off before play begins may be replaced only by a named substitute. A team may commence a match with eleven players even when a player has been ordered off prior to the kick-off but a replacement substitute cannot be nominated.

Although the Law requires that clubs inform referees of the names of substitutes before a match and, in friendly matches, they have to reach an agreement on the maximum number to be used, referees are advised to be pro-active in obtaining the necessary information from clubs prior to the game in order to eliminate possible problems later.

Referees are reminded to speed up the substitution procedure so that no unnecessary time is lost when players are exchanged. However, the procedure must be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Law and due allowance made for any time lost during the substitution procedure.

There are variations to the substitute procedure in Futsal, Mini-Soccer and small sided football.



Substitute players may be nominated as substitutes for two matches taking place at the same time.

Note: Repeat substitutions - In some games played locally the use of repeat substitutions is allowed. Refer to competition rules.

### (2) Minimum number of players in a team

If a team with only seven players subsequently has one dismissed from the field of play, or a player leaves the field of play for any other reason (e.g. injury), that match must be abandoned.

### (3) Players leaving the field of play before completion of a game

A player who leaves the field of play for any reason, including being sent off by the referee for misconduct, is permitted to take part in another game which is taking place at the same time, unless the Competition Rules state otherwise.

## LAW 4: THE PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT

### (1) Safety

Match officials should ensure that players do not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to other players, officials or themselves. Match officials should set a good example by removing their own jewellery.

### (2) Undershirts/Undershorts

Undershirts must be the same colour as the main colour of the shirt sleeve; undershorts/tights must be the same colour as the main colour of the shorts or the lowest part of the shorts – players of the same team must wear the same colour.

### (3) Goalkeepers

Goalkeepers may choose to wear a cap and/or tracksuit trousers, if the state of the field of play or weather conditions render it necessary, provided the Competition Rules permit.

### (4) Playing Shirts

Where Competition Rules require shirts to be numbered and any player breaches the Rules, referees are advised to allow the player(s) to participate and later report the facts to the Competition.

All shirts must have sleeves and if a player wears a long sleeved shirt under a short sleeved team shirt, it must be of the same colour as the sleeves of the shirt.

### (5) Footwear

Competition Rules may require referees to examine footwear and/or players' equipment. Referees may do so additionally either during a match or at half time if they have any reason to doubt their safety.

## LAW 5: THE REFEREE

### (1) Injury to players or the referee

A player who has left the field of play for treatment for an injury when they are bleeding from a wound may only return to the field of play after inspection by the referee, neutral assistant referee or the fourth official, which, through necessity, will normally be during a stoppage in play and on the touchline. The player is only allowed to return to the field of play on receiving a signal from the referee.

Care needs to be exercised before a seriously injured player is removed from the field of play and referees must continue to be vigilant and err on the side of safety, accepting the advice of those who are medically qualified or claim to have similar skills. There is a particular need for a rapid assessment and action in cases of head injuries. However, in local football, when there are no medically qualified personnel in attendance, professional assistance should be quickly obtained and the advice offered acted upon. Referees are reminded to add the full amount of time lost to the end of each period of play.



Particular attention is drawn to the Laws of the Game in relation to the liability of referees, assistant referees and fourth officials.

If a referee becomes incapacitated and an assistant referee replaces the original referee, the 'new' referee has the authority to reverse a decision made by their colleague, provided the game has not been restarted.

A club trainer or physiotherapist who has been guilty of misconduct should still be granted permission to enter the field of play to treat an injured player. However, a player sent from the field of play, by a referee, for misconduct, cannot return to the field in any official capacity. Suitable reports must be sent to the appropriate authority.

### (2) Calling by a player

It is permissible for a player to call instructions to a player of their own side during a game. This includes calling for the ball. Referees should only penalise such calling where it is done deliberately to put off an opponent.

The resulting free kick is for the referee stopping the game to caution a player for unsporting behaviour.

### (3) Team Captain

The team captain has no special status or privileges but has a degree of responsibility for the behaviour of the team.

### (4) Use of red and yellow cards

The Law requires referees to use these cards at all levels of the game. The mandatory use of the cards is merely a simple aid for better communication.

Referees should not use either card in an aggressive or provocative manner likely to inflame an already emotive situation. Neither should the cards be used in an over demonstrative manner, which may humiliate a player and perhaps cause the players to over-react. The sequence of action approved by The Football Association and which should be followed is:

1. State that the player is being cautioned
2. Enquire the player's name
3. Warn the player about future conduct
4. Show a yellow card as described above

Obviously, a red card will be used for a dismissal, unless that dismissal is for a 'second caution in the same match,' in which case a yellow card will be shown immediately before the red card. However, referees operating at International and some National levels have the option to show red and yellow cards immediately after offences or as above, but only in exceptional circumstances such as to defuse a possible flashpoint or to prevent an act of retaliation. If a player is about to be sent from the field of play for sending off offences 1–7, it is advisable to enquire the name prior to the sending off.

If a player commits either a cautionable or sending off offence during the half time interval or on the field of play after the final whistle, the appropriate card(s) should be shown.

Only a player or substitute or substituted player may be shown the red or yellow card.

The referee has the authority to take disciplinary action from entering the field of play for the pre-match inspection until leaving the field of play after the match ends (including kicks from the penalty mark).

If a named substitute commits an act of misconduct, the substitute will be treated as a player, including being shown a yellow card or a red card depending on the offence. If, at a later stage in the match, a player commits a further cautionable offence, the offender shall be sent from the field of play and shown a yellow card followed by a red card. This will apply even if the player is acting as an assistant referee.

Although the Law requires a referee to show a yellow card to a player as part of the cautioning procedure, failure to do so does not mean that a caution has not been administered and the player concerned will be dealt with in accordance with the laid-down disciplinary procedures.

### **(5) Referees' powers regarding dismissal of players**

A referee's authority permits him/her to order a player from the field of play.

After dismissal from the field of play the player is expected to leave the playing area, i.e. not allowed to sit on the trainer's bench. Club officials will need to make special arrangements for the player to leave the vicinity of the field of play. The referee should not restart the game until the player being sent off has left the field of play. If, when a referee is about to caution a player, and before having done so, the player commits another offence

which merits a caution, the player shall be sent off the field of play. A player sent from the field of play may not take part in the game as an assistant referee.

### **(6) Referees' uniforms**

The Council of The Football Association has decided that in all Football Association Cup Competitions, referees and assistant referees must wear traditional plain black shirts, with white or black collar and cuffs, and black shorts. However, uniforms of other colours may be permitted in some Competitions involving Senior Professional Clubs, details of which are included in the relevant Competition Rules. Also, permission may be granted by The Football Association for match officials in a particular League or Competition to wear a uniform which is a colour other than black. Unless this permission is given, referees must wear the traditional black uniforms described above.

### **(7) Players felt to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs**

Referees should always exercise extreme care in their choice of words to describe players who may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, especially in connection with drug influence. In such circumstances, the matter should be considered as a team responsibility and suitable attention be drawn to a club official, perhaps suggesting that a player was too ill to continue/participate or seemed to have a problem.



### **(8) Advantage**

If a referee allows play to continue when the team against which an offence has been committed will benefit from such an advantage, it is important that this should be indicated clearly by voice, and the approved arm signal, that this action is being taken. This clause is also designed to ensure that the team offended against does not suffer unfairly if a referee reasonably attempts to invoke advantage but then extraneous factors contrive to immediately nullify the anticipated benefit (e.g. the ball "bobbles" awkwardly; the fouled player trips over their own feet and immediately loses balance, etc.). In the event, however, of the fouled player being allowed the advantage then

wasting it as a result of a subsequent error (or a colleague who receives the ball immediately from the advantage loses it, or shoots wide of goal, etc.) then play should not be halted to penalise the original offence.

Referees are advised to consider the ability levels of the players, the tempo of the game and the playing conditions before making use of this clause. Sometimes, it may be a greater advantage to the team offended against to have a free kick rather than the opportunity for the game to continue. For example, they may have a team tactic to take advantage from free kicks close to goal in which case, to award a free kick in this vicinity will be beneficial to this team.

The use of advantage does not absolve the referee from the responsibility of dealing with the offending player at the first opportunity, if the offence deserved disciplinary action. Failure to take action often leads to retaliation by the player who was offended against. However, if the offence is going to result in a sending off, then it is not recommended to allow advantage in order to reduce the risk of further misconduct.

Remember, possession of the ball does not always mean an advantage.

### **(9) Delays, Postponements, Suspensions and Terminations**

When considering any of the above possibilities, it is advisable to make a decision only after very careful consideration of all relevant factors. In some circumstances, it will be obvious that the game will not commence or restart. However, in the event of fog, hailstorms, floodlight failure, crowd intrusion or other similar situations, it may be possible to commence or continue the game after a suitable delay. Referees are reminded to communicate regularly with the club officials of both teams in these circumstances and to try to complete/play a game if at all possible provided it is safe to do so.

### **(10) Record of the Game**

Referees are advised not to trust to memory alone in keeping a record of the game; note the time of start and the time at which, if no time has to be allowed for stoppages, half time and the end of the game will fall due. Assistant referees may be used to confirm the amount of time

played. Keep a note of the goals as they are scored as well as all cautions, sending-offs and substitutions.

### **(11) Outside Interference**

Outside interference may be defined as anything or anybody other than the players actually partaking in the game at the time, plus the referee. For example, this may be spectators or animals encroaching onto the field of play. The game must be restarted in accordance with Law 8.

### **(12) Friendly Games**

Referees are not permitted to adopt unapproved variations in the Laws of the Game in pre-season matches including the use of 'sin-bins' for punishment of misconduct. The punishment of cautions and sendings off must still apply when offences requiring these actions are committed.

The Laws of the Game must be applied correctly and consistently in all matches. Match officials should always consider sensible preventative measures to ensure the safety and co-operation of players. They will also benefit from adopting appropriate player management skills.

## **LAW 6: THE OTHER MATCH OFFICIALS**

### **Duties and Assistance**

They indicate when:

- The whole of the ball leaves the field of play and which team is entitled to a corner kick, goal kick or throw-in
- A player in an offside position may be penalised
- A substitution is requested
- At penalty kicks, the goalkeeper moves off the goal line before the ball is kicked and if the ball crosses the line; if additional assistant referees have been appointed the assistant referee takes a position in line with the penalty mark

The assistant referee's assistance also includes monitoring the substitution procedure.

The assistant referee may enter the field of play to help control the 9.15m (10 yards) distance.

In the event of undue interference or improper conduct, the referee will relieve an assistant referee of his duties and make a report to the appropriate authorities.



### **LAW 7: THE DURATION OF THE MATCH**

A referee has no power to set aside the Rules of Cup and other Competitions where the time to be played is specified. It is essential that referees are aware of precise details of Competition Rules, e.g. number of substitutions permitted to be nominated, method of deciding the outcome of drawn matches.

Normal period means 90 minutes, or if a shorter period is mutually agreed upon and is permissible under the Rules of the Competition, the period should be divided in equal halves.

Referees officiating in Small Sided games, Futsal, Mini Soccer, Girls' and Women's and Veterans' football should check the Competition Rules to ensure they are fully familiar with the requirements applicable in these games.

## LAW 8: THE START AND RESTART OF PLAY

### (1) Kick-off

A kick-off starts both halves of a match, both halves of extra time and restarts play after a goal has been scored.

For every kick-off:

- all players must be in their own half of the field of play
- the opponents of the team taking the kick-off must be at least 9.15 m (10 yds) from the ball until it is in play
- the ball must be stationary on the centre mark
- the referee gives a signal
- the ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves
- a goal may be scored directly against the opponents from the kick-off

### (2) Restarting by a dropped ball

Occasions do occur in a game when a player, having fallen to the ground, has the ball locked between the feet and legs. To dispossess a player of the ball may not only be difficult, but fraught with danger of injury. The referee may, therefore, feel justified in halting play and restarting by dropping the ball appropriately, in accordance with the relevant Law. Similarly, there will be occasions when the goalkeeper, in taking possession of the ball, is injured and no offence has occurred. In this situation, the welfare and safety of the goalkeeper is paramount and the game should be stopped

immediately. Once the goalkeeper, or the replacement, is ready to take part in the game, the ball must be dropped by the referee in accordance with Law. In keeping with the spirit of the game, referees should ensure that no unfair advantage accrues in favour of either team. Referees are reminded that it is not essential to have a player from either side present at the dropping of the ball.

As a means of restarting the game after a temporary suspension, referees should not bounce the ball or throw it in the air. The ball should simply be released from no higher than waist level and allowed to fall to the ground.

## LAW 9: THE BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY

### Ball out of play

The ball is out of play when:

- It has wholly crossed the goal line or touch line whether on the ground or in the air
- Play has been stopped by the referee

### Ball in play

The ball is in play at all other times, including when:

- It rebounds off a goalpost, crossbar or corner flagpost and remains in the field of play
- It rebounds off either the referee or an assistant referee when they are on

## LAW 10: DETERMINING THE OUTCOME OF A MATCH

Referees are reminded that it is not permitted to set aside the decisions of IFAB in order to determine the winner of a match.

## LAW 11: OFFSIDE

Whether a player commits an offside offence or not is determined by the player's position at the moment the ball is touched or played by a member of the same team and whether (in the opinion of the referee) the player is involved in active play by interfering with play, or interfering with an opponent, or gaining an advantage by being in that position. The fact that the ball later strikes an opponent does not negate the original offside. If any doubt exists, then the referee should decide in favour of the attacker and allow the play to continue, but should remember that football is played with the head, body and feet. If these are nearer the opponents' goal line, there is a potential advantage; there is no advantage to be gained if only the arms are in advance of the opponent.

A player not in an offside position at the moment the ball is touched or played by a member of their own team, but in an offside position when receiving the ball, cannot be given offside.

If an attacking player kicks the ball directly into goal when a colleague is in an offside position but not involved in the active play, nor gaining an advantage by being in that position, no offence is committed and a goal is awarded. However, if the ball

rebounds from the crossbar or goalpost to this player who plays or touches the ball, an advantage has been gained and an offence has been committed.

This should then be punished by the award of an indirect free kick against this team from where the offence occurred. If an attacking player indicates by gesture that they are not involved in the active play but subsequently gains an advantage, this must be penalised, even though it will mean a delayed flag signal by an assistant referee and/or a delayed whistle signal from a referee.

A player in an offside position may be penalised before playing or touching the ball if, in the opinion of the referee, no other team-mate in an onside position has the opportunity to play the ball. If an opponent becomes involved in the play and if, in the opinion of the referee, there is potential for physical contact, the player in an offside position shall be penalised for interfering with an opponent.

If an offside offence occurs, the referee awards an indirect free kick where the offence occurred, including if it is in the player's own half of the field of play.

A defending player who leaves the field of play without the referee's permission shall be considered to be on the goal line or touchline for the purposes of offside until the next stoppage in play or until the defending team has played the ball towards the halfway line and it is outside their penalty area. If the player left the field of play deliberately, the player must be cautioned when the ball is next out of play.

## LAW 12: FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

Undoubtedly, the application of Law 12, dealing as it does with fouls and misconduct, is of primary importance in controlling a game. So much depends upon the referee's instantaneous judgement and a determination to administer the Law without fear or favour.

Direct and indirect free kicks and penalty kicks can only be awarded for offences and infringements committed when the ball is in play.

If an offence involves contact it is penalised by a direct free kick or penalty kick.

The following are aspects of this Law to which particular attention is drawn:

### (1) Handling the ball

Law 12 is quite emphatic that it is only the deliberate offence which shall be penalised. Occasions do arise where it is impossible for a player to avoid handling the ball, as there has been insufficient time to withdraw the hand or arm before the ball strikes the player. Such non-deliberate handling should not be penalised no matter where it occurs on the field. The definition of 'hand' in the context of this Law includes the whole of the hand and arm.

### (2) Unsporting behaviour

Whilst it is not usual for a player to be cautioned under the heading of unsporting behaviour for handling the ball or holding an opponent, there are exceptional circumstances in which, in addition, to imposing the customary

penalty, the referee must caution a player who commits one or other of those offences:

- when the player, in order to prevent an opponent from gaining
- possession of the ball and because of being unable to play it in any other way, stops it with one or both hands, punches it or catches it
- when the player, in order to prevent an opponent from making progress towards goal, holds the opponent or pulls the shirt, unless this clearly denies an obvious goal or goal-scoring opportunity, the player shall be cautioned for unsporting behaviour as the advantage has been taken away from the opponent
- if a player leans on the shoulders of another player from their own team in order to head the ball, the referee shall stop the game, caution the player for unsporting behaviour and award an indirect free kick to the opposing side.

### (3) Denying obvious goal-scoring opportunities

Where a player denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by a deliberate handball offence the player is sent off wherever the offence occurs.

Where a player commits an offence against an opponent within their own penalty area which denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the referee awards a penalty kick, the offending player is cautioned unless:

- The offence is holding, pulling or pushing or
- The offending player does not attempt to play the ball or there is no possibility for the player making the challenge to play the ball or
- The offence is one which is punishable by a red card wherever it occurs on the field of play (e.g. serious foul play, violent conduct etc.)

In all the above circumstances the player is sent off.

These circumstances are most likely to arise when one of the teams, from a defensive position, sets up a favourable attacking position by quickly transferring the ball from one end of the field of play to the other. However, referees are reminded that obvious is the key word in this context. Therefore, factors to consider before making a judgement about such an offence are the distance from the goal, the direction that the attacking player is moving and the number of defenders that are in positions to make a legal challenge on the attacking player.

If the ball is deliberately kicked directly towards the team's own goalkeeper by a colleague and the goalkeeper prevents an obvious goal scoring opportunity by handling the ball, the restart will be an indirect free kick from where the offence occurred notwithstanding the special circumstances covered in Law 8.

Further action could be taken against the goalkeeper if it was felt that the player knew that without their illegal intervention the ball would enter the goal. This action in intervening could be construed as unsporting behaviour by arguing that the goalkeeper could have

chosen not to handle the ball deliberately but rather use another part of the body to change the path of the ball.

### (4) Unfair play by a goalkeeper

If the goalkeeper either strikes an opponent by throwing the ball, or pushes the player with the ball while still holding it, the referee shall award a penalty kick if the offence took place within the penalty area when the ball is in play.

### (5) Persistent infringement of the Laws of the Game

It is necessary to give serious attention to obvious infringements of Law 12. Referees should also be alert to persistent foul play. The fouls may be petty and less obvious in character; however, the player shall be cautioned if persistently infringing the Laws of the Game. It is not possible to define persistence in terms of the actual number of fouls committed by a player but, when an offender commits three or four penal offences in close succession,

the possibility of a caution under Law 12 must be considered. Equally, a similar number of offences spread over the duration of a game may be perceived differently. Action by the referee may avoid retaliation from a victim who feels that the player has received no protection from the referee. In order to monitor possible persistent offenders, referees need to concentrate and memorise such an offender probably by making a mental note of their shirt number or by any personal characteristics that will aid accurate recall.

## (6) Unfair Impeding

A player having the ball under control and within playing distance (i.e. the distance in which the player covers the ball for tactical reasons) in order to avoid it being played by an opponent is not guilty of an offence unless the arm or body is used to hold the opponent, in which case a direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team.

Any player who unfairly impedes the progress of an opponent by crossing directly in front of them or running between them and the ball, or intervening so as to form an obstacle with the aim of delaying progress, must be punished with the award of an indirect free kick in favour of the opposing team.

However, any player who unfairly impedes the progress of an opponent by physical contact, whether by using the hand, arm, leg, or any other part of the body, shall be penalised by the award of a direct free kick to the opposing team, or by a penalty kick, if the offence was committed within the team's penalty area. This constitutes holding an opponent and is, therefore, a penal offence.

If a player uses the arms to impede an opponent and steps from one side to the other, moving the arms up and down to delay an opponent, forcing the player to change course, but does not make body contact, the referee may deem this to be unsporting behaviour and award an indirect free kick and also caution the offender.

During any match, in the ordinary course of play, there are many occasions when a player will come between an opponent and the ball, but, in the majority of such instances, this is quite natural and fair.

The intention is to play the ball and the player is entitled to make every legitimate move to obtain or retain possession of it. Provided that the ball is within playing distance, the player may interpose the body between the opponent and the ball in a feint to play at it and yet allow it to go to a colleague. This is legitimate.

It is when the ball is not within playing distance of a player and when this player is not making any attempt to play the ball that this offence may occur. But it is strongly emphasised that the offence must be deliberate. It is quite possible for a player, when not playing the ball, to be in the path of an opponent and yet not be impeding.

A simple rule of thumb to enable referees to differentiate between a penal and a technical offence in this context is that when there is body contact it is a holding offence and, therefore, a direct free kick must be awarded but when there is no body contact an indirect free kick will be the correct restart.

## (7) Players and Team Officials

Coaching of players during a game is permitted. However, coaching must be from within the confines of the technical area, where such an area is provided.

In the higher echelons of the game, where such a technical area is recognised, the latter is defined in terms of the length of the bench, plus one metre at each side of the bench and the area in front of the bench, up to one metre distant from and parallel to the touchline. Competition Rules must show how many persons may be in the technical area.

Where no such area is provided, referees should exercise common sense and allow the passing on of tactical instructions. Only if the coaching is not carried out in a responsible manner should a referee take action and report the misconduct.

It is important that players, coaches, managers and officials in charge of teams should all co-operate in stamping out acts which bring the game into disrepute.

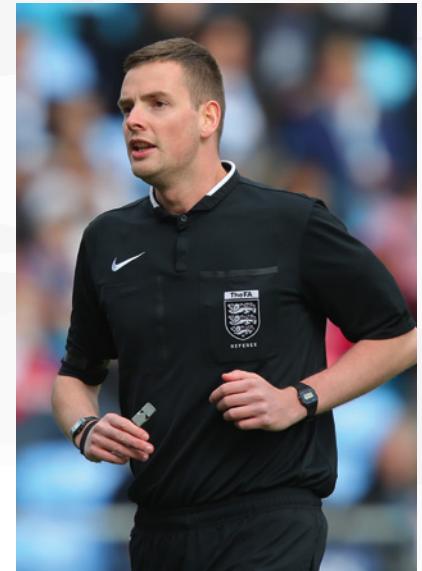
## (8) Time wasting

There is sometimes too much time wasting in taking free kicks, goal kicks and throws-in, especially when one team is winning and is endeavouring to retain that lead. It is important to appreciate the difference between time wasting and time consuming. Any time lost shall, in such circumstances, be meticulously allowed.

A few examples of time wasting are as follows:

- The ball, having been placed in position for a free kick, is sometimes kicked away to allow the defending team's players to take up defensive positions
- An opponent may stand over the ball, in order to delay the taking of a free kick. In both of these cases the offending players shall be cautioned under Law 12
- Sometimes, a player or players may refuse to retire the required distance at the taking of a free kick, a corner kick or throw-in
- Referees should be alert to players who claim a throw-in and take possession of the ball, walking away

with it and only passing it to the thrower when they and the players of their own side have taken up an advantageous position



Time consuming is not an offence against the Laws of the Game. An example of this is the act of passing the ball between the goalkeeper and a colleague, when an opponent comes in to challenge. As long as the ball is in play and opponents have a chance of possession, no offence against the Laws is committed.

Referees are advised to be seen to be managing situations when there are attempts to delay a restart by speaking in an obvious manner to the player(s) concerned and, if they repeat such actions, a caution will be appropriate.



## (9) Playing dangerously

Football is a game where body contact occurs and the Laws are framed so that the players can play without danger to themselves, if their opponents respect both the letter and spirit of the Laws. Each incident must be judged by the referee as it happens and the question of danger rests entirely on the referee's opinion.

### (a) The "Scissors" kick:

This is a clear example of the importance of judging an action according to the situation in which it is performed. A player who kicks or attempts to kick the ball in this way, with no other player anywhere nearby, cannot be penalised for dangerous play. The same action with a player nearby could be dangerous and would be punished by the award of an indirect free kick. If contact is made, then a direct free kick must be awarded against the offending player.

### (b) Playing dangerously close to goalkeepers:

Kicking or attempting to kick the ball whilst it is in the goalkeeper's possession is universally considered to be dangerous; raising the foot to block the ball when kicking it from the hands is equally dangerous. Attempts to kick the ball powerfully as it is about to come into the goalkeeper's possession are also a common source of danger to goalkeepers. Depending on the degree or intensity of the offender's action, the referee may have to caution or send off the player committing such an offence.

### (c) Goalkeepers:

Goalkeepers, when advancing to catch the ball, sometimes raise one leg in an outward direction to keep opposing players at a distance. If an opponent is in close proximity to the goalkeeper, the referee may well consider such action constitutes careless or even reckless play, but if the opponent is further away then it would be deemed dangerous play and be punished accordingly.

## (10) Tackling

Fair tackling (eg, making direct contact with the ball) is permitted as it is a skill similar to passing the ball, shooting at goal, etc. However, if a player makes contact with an opponent before touching the ball, then this must be punished by the award of a direct free kick. Depending on the degree and intensity of the challenge, a player may receive an additional punishment in the form of a caution or a sending off.

### (a) Tackling with the foot lifted from the ground:

This may be dangerous, but is not necessarily so. Using the sole of the foot is an effective method of controlling the ball, but a player who lifts the foot should be penalised if the referee considers that this is endangering an opponent by doing so. If the player deliberately makes an unfair challenge over the ball and makes contact with an opponent's leg, this should be considered serious foul play.

### (b) Tackling with two feet together:

In the case of an uncontrolled jump at the ball from a distance and at speed, the tackle entails a large element of danger to the opponent and should result in firm, disciplinary action taken by the referee.

### (c) Tackling by sliding:

This tackle is carried out with one or both legs outstretched, and the same considerations as for the two-footed tackle apply. The player tackling in this way, whether or not it may bring the opponent down, should be penalised if the player connects with the opponent before the ball.

### (d) Tackling which endangers the safety of an opponent

A tackle which is violent with little or no attempt to play the ball and which endangers the safety of an opponent is prohibited and must be sanctioned as serious foul play.

Referees should watch for players who make contact with the ball with one foot but trip the opponent with the other foot. In these circumstances, a penal offence has been committed.

## (11) Carrying by the goalkeeper

One cannot deviate from the fundamental principle that the goalkeeper should not be prevented and hence forbidden from playing the ball with the feet in their own penalty area. The goalkeeper is, and remains, a player who is entitled to participate fully in the game, including within their own penalty area.

Hence, the following principles of application are valid:

- Once the goalkeeper has the ball under control (with the hands), they can take up to the six seconds with the ball in their possession:
- holding the ball with the hands, or
- bouncing the ball on the ground, or
- throwing the ball in the air and catching it again

After having taken six seconds, the ball must be released into play.

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