

Law

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# The Referee

## 1. The authority of the referee

Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match.

## 2. Decisions of the referee

Decisions will be made to the best of the referee's ability according to the Laws of the Game and the 'spirit of the game' and will be based on the opinion of the referee, who has the discretion to take appropriate action within the framework of the Laws of the Game.

The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play, including whether or not a goal is scored and the result of the match, are final. The decisions of the referee, and all other match officials, must always be respected.

The referee may not change a restart decision on realising that it is incorrect or on the advice of another match official if play has restarted or the referee has signalled the end of the first or second half (including extra time) and left the field of play or abandoned the match. However, if at the end of the half, the referee leaves the field of play to go to the referee review area (RRA) or to instruct the players to return to the field of play, this does not prevent a decision being changed for an incident which occurred before the end of the half.

Except as outlined in Law 12.3 and the VAR protocol, a disciplinary sanction may only be issued after play has restarted if another match official had identified and attempted to communicate the offence to the referee before play restarted; the restart associated with the sanction does not apply.

If a referee is incapacitated, play may continue under the supervision of the other match officials until the ball is next out of play.

### **3. Powers and duties**

The referee:

- enforces the Laws of the Game
- controls the match in cooperation with the other match officials
- acts as timekeeper, keeps a record of the match and provides the appropriate authorities with a match report, including information on disciplinary action and any other incidents that occurred before, during or after the match
- supervises and/or indicates the restart of play

#### **Advantage**

- allows play to continue when an offence occurs and the non-offending team will benefit from the advantage, and penalises the offence if the anticipated advantage does not ensue at that time or within a few seconds

#### **Disciplinary action**

- punishes the more serious offence, in terms of sanction, restart, physical severity and tactical impact, when more than one offence occurs at the same time
- takes disciplinary action against players guilty of cautionable and sending-off offences
- 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, before entering the field of play at the start of the match, a player commits a sending-off offence, the referee has the authority to prevent the player taking part in the match (see Law 3.6); the referee will report any other misconduct
- has the power to show yellow or red cards and, where competition rules permit, temporarily dismiss a player, from entering the field of play at the start of the match until after the match has ended, including during the half-time interval, extra time and kicks from the penalty mark
- takes action against team officials who fail to act in a responsible manner and warns or shows a yellow card for a caution or a red card for a sending-off from the field of play and its immediate surrounds, including the technical area; if the offender cannot be identified, the senior coach present

in the technical area will receive the sanction. A medical team official who commits a sending-off offence may remain if the team has no other medical person available, and act if a player needs medical attention

- acts on the advice of other match officials regarding incidents that the referee has not seen

## Injuries

- allows play to continue until the ball is out of play if a player is only slightly injured
- stops play if a player is seriously injured and ensures that the player is removed from the field of play. An injured player may not be treated on the field of play and may only re-enter after play has restarted; if the ball is in play, re-entry must be from the touchline but if the ball is out of play, it may be from any boundary line. Exceptions to the requirement to leave the field of play are only when:
  - a goalkeeper is injured
  - a goalkeeper and an outfield player have collided and need attention
  - players from the same team have collided and need attention
  - a severe injury has occurred
  - a player is injured as the result of a physical offence for which the opponent is cautioned or sent off (e.g. reckless or serious foul challenge), if the assessment/treatment is completed quickly
  - a penalty kick has been awarded and the injured player will be the kicker
- ensures that any player bleeding leaves the field of play. The player may only re-enter on receiving a signal from the referee, who must be satisfied that the bleeding has stopped and there is no blood on the equipment
- if the referee has authorised the doctors and/or stretcher bearers to enter the field of play, the player must leave on a stretcher or on foot. A player who does not comply must be cautioned for unsporting behaviour
- if the referee has decided to caution or send off a player who is injured and has to leave the field of play for treatment, the card must be shown before the player leaves
- if play has not been stopped for another reason, or if an injury suffered by a player is not the result of an offence, play is restarted with a dropped ball

## **Outside interference**

- stops, suspends or abandons the match for any offences or because of outside interference e.g. if:
  - the floodlights are inadequate
  - an object thrown by a spectator hits a match official, a player or team official, the referee may allow the match to continue, or stop, suspend or abandon it depending on the severity of the incident
  - a spectator blows a whistle which interferes with play – play is stopped and restarted with a dropped ball
  - an extra ball, other object or animal enters the field of play during the match, the referee must:
    - stop play (and restart with a dropped ball) only if it interferes with play
      - unless the ball is going into the goal and the interference does not prevent a defending player playing the ball; the goal is awarded if the ball enters the goal (even if contact was made with the ball) unless the interference was by the attacking team
    - allow play to continue if it does not interfere with play and have it removed at the earliest possible opportunity
- allows no unauthorised persons to enter the field of play

## **4. Video assistant referee (VAR)**

The use of video assistant referees (VARs) is only permitted where the match/competition organiser has fulfilled all Implementation Assistance and Approval Programme (IAAP) requirements as set out in FIFA's IAAP documents, and has received written permission from FIFA.

The referee may be assisted by a video assistant referee (VAR) only in the event of a 'clear and obvious error' or 'serious missed incident' in relation to:

- goal/no goal
- penalty/no penalty
- direct red card (not second caution)
- mistaken identity when the referee cautions or sends off the wrong player of the offending team

The assistance from the video assistant referee (VAR) will relate to using replay(s) of the incident. The referee will make the final decision which may be based solely on the information from the VAR and/or the referee reviewing the replay footage directly ('on-field review').

Except for a 'serious missed incident', the referee (and where relevant other 'on-field' match officials) must always make a decision (including a decision not to penalise a potential offence); this decision does not change unless it is a 'clear and obvious error'.

### **Reviews after play has restarted**

If play has stopped and restarted, the referee may only undertake a 'review', and take the appropriate disciplinary sanction, for mistaken identity or for a potential sending-off offence relating to violent conduct, spitting, biting or extremely offensive, insulting and/or abusive action(s).

## **5. Referee's equipment**

### **Compulsory equipment**

Referees must have the following equipment:

- Whistle(s)
- Watch(es)
- Red and yellow cards
- Notebook (or other means of keeping a record of the match)

### **Other equipment**

Referees may be permitted to use:

- Equipment for communicating with other match officials – buzzer/beep flags, headsets etc.
- EPTS or other fitness monitoring equipment

Referees and other 'on-field' match officials are prohibited from wearing jewellery or any other electronic equipment, including cameras.

## 6. Referee signals

Refer to graphics for approved referee signals.



**Penalty** kick



**Indirect** free kick



**Direct** free kick



**Advantage (1)**



**Advantage (2)**



**Corner kick**



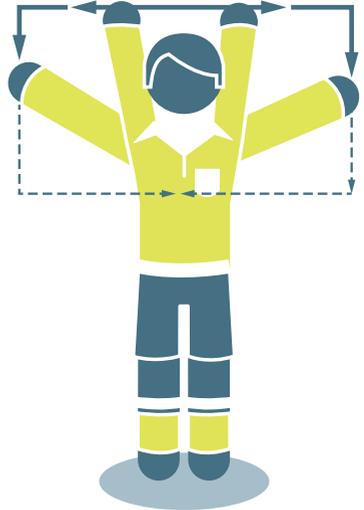
**Goal kick**



**Red** and **yellow** card



**Check:** finger to ear,  
other hand/arm extended



**Review:** 'TV signal'

## 7. Liability of match officials

A referee or other match official is not held liable for:

- any kind of injury suffered by a player, official or spectator
- any damage to property of any kind
- any other loss suffered by any individual, club, company, association or other body, which is due or which may be due to any decision taken under the terms of the Laws of the Game or in respect of the normal procedures required to hold, play and control a match

Such decisions may include a decision:

- that the condition of the field of play or its surrounds or that the weather conditions are such as to allow or not to allow a match to take place
- to abandon a match for whatever reason
- as to the suitability of the field equipment and ball used during a match
- to stop or not to stop a match due to spectator interference or any problem in spectator areas
- to stop or not to stop play to allow an injured player to be removed from the field of play for treatment
- to require an injured player to be removed from the field of play for treatment
- to allow or not to allow a player to wear certain clothing or equipment
- where the referee has the authority, to allow or not to allow any persons (including team or stadium officials, security officers, photographers or other media representatives) to be present in the vicinity of the field of play
- any other decision taken in accordance with the Laws of the Game or in conformity with their duties under the terms of FIFA, confederation, national football association or competition rules or regulations under which the match is played