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So You Think You Know the Rules Better Than the Ref?



You can go to any youth soccer game and hear a common repertoire of comments coming from the coaching and/or spectator sidelines, including:

“That was offsides!”

“There’s a player down!”

“What was the call?!”

“Handball ref! Handball!”

“That was a foul!”

“What are you doing? That is a terrible call!”

“It was out on them!”

“Make them ask for 10!”

“Call it both ways ref!”

“You don’t know the rules!”

“You just cost us the game!”

These comments, along with misunderstandings about who can speak on the sidelines and to the referee often exacerbate a difficult reffing experience. This is especially true where the referee is young and/or inexperienced.

In this special newsletter edition, we will focus on commonly misunderstood laws of the game and attempt to shed some light on reasons for certain calls during a game.

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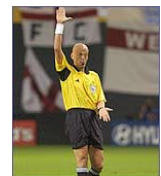
What do the Hand and Flag Motions Mean?

The referee motions several times during the game with his hands or the assistant referees with their flags. What does it mean?

“Direct free kick” - arm straight out from the side



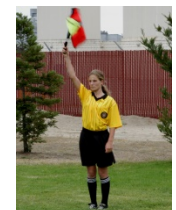
“Indirect free kick” - arm straight up



“Advantage” (Play on) - one or two arms held out in front



“Offside” - flag raised or pointing on angle to indicate near, middle or far side



Goal Keeper Control?



Frequently there is a dispute as to when the ball should be considered to be in the goal keeper's control. In the youth game, we are often balancing protecting the goal keeper with following the Laws of the Game. So is it one finger on the ball? Two? Your whole hand?

Following Law 12, A goalkeeper is considered to be in control of the ball when:

- the ball is between the hands or between the hand and any surface (e.g. ground, own body) or by touching it with any part of the hands or arms except if the ball rebounds accidentally from the goalkeeper or the goalkeeper has made a save
- holding the ball in the outstretched open hand
- bouncing it on the ground or throwing it in the air

A GK cannot be challenged by an opponent when in control of the ball with the hands.

What is the Call?



The player taking the kickoff touches the ball a second time before it touches another player. The referee should signal?

The correct call is an indirect free kick to the opposing team. See Law 8.

Handball or Handling?



Any time the ball hits a player, from the front or the back, and it strikes anywhere from the shoulder to the fingers, someone is liable to yell out "handball!"

Under Law 12, handling the ball involves a deliberate act of a player making contact with the ball with the hand or arm.

The following must be considered:

- the movement of the hand towards the ball (not the ball towards the hand)
- the distance between the opponent and the ball (unexpected ball)
- the position of the hand does not necessarily mean that there is an offense
- touching the ball with an object held in the hand (clothing, shinguard, etc.) is an offense
- hitting the ball with a thrown object (boot, shinguard, etc.) is an offense

The goalkeeper has the same restrictions on handling the ball as any other player outside the penalty area. Inside their penalty area, the goalkeeper cannot be guilty of a handling offense incurring a direct free kick or any related sanction but can be guilty of handling offenses that incur an indirect free kick.

Offsides or Offside?

First, in soccer, the call is offside, with no “s” at the end. Second, usually the coach (properly located near midfield) is in the worst position to dispute an offside call or non-call. If you are following the pass, you often miss where the receiving player was located at the time the ball was played as you turn to follow the ball. Plus you are not in as good of a position as the AR (looking directly across the field) to make an accurate call.

Remember it is not an offense to be in an offside position. A player is in an offside position if:

- any part of the head, body or feet is in the opponents’ half (excluding the halfway line or the opposing build out line for 7v7 games) and
- any part of the head, body or feet is nearer to the opponents’ goal line than both the ball and the second-last opponent

The hands and arms of all players, including the goalkeepers, are not considered. A player is not in an offside position if he is level with the second-last opponent or the last two opponents.

A player in an offside position at the moment the ball is played or touched by a team-mate is only penalised on becoming involved in active play by:

- interfering with play by playing or touching a ball passed or touched by a team-mate or
- interfering with an opponent by:
 - preventing an opponent from playing or being able to play the ball by clearly obstructing the opponent’s line of vision or
 - challenging an opponent for the ball or



- clearly attempting to play a ball which is close to him when this action impacts on an opponent or
- making an obvious action which clearly impacts on the ability of an opponent to play the ball
- or by gaining an advantage by playing the ball or interfering with an opponent when it has:
 - rebounded or been deflected off the goalpost, crossbar or an opponent
 - been deliberately saved by any opponent

A player in an offside position receiving the ball from an opponent who deliberately plays the ball (except from a deliberate save by any opponent) is not considered to have gained an advantage. A ‘save’ is when a player stops a ball which is going into or very close to the goal with any part of the body except the hands (unless the GK within the penalty area).

There is no offside offense if a player receives the ball directly from:

- a goal kick
- a throw-in
- a corner kick

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

True or False?



1. The ball is not in play at kick off until it clearly moves forward.

A1: False. It must be kicked and clearly move. Law 8.
2. A goal can be scored directly from the kickoff into the opposing team's goal.

A2: True. Law 8.
3. Any number of players, including the GK, may contest a dropball.

A3: True. Law 8.
4. The second attacker is in an offside position if he is closer to the opposing goal than the second to last defender but behind the ball.

A4: False. Law 11.

A5: True. Law 11.
5. The position of a player's hands and arms are not considered in determining an offside position.

A6: False. No more than 1 coach may provide instruction at one time. Law 1.
6. No more than 3 coaches may provide instruction at the same time during a game.

A7: False. The team captain has no special privilege. Law 3.
7. The team captain has special permission to speak with the referee during the game.

A8: True. Law 5.
8. The referee may not change his/her call after play has restarted, even if he/she realizes it was wrong.

A9: False. It is within the referee's discretion to determine when to stop play. If the ref believes that there is only a slight injury, they may allow play to continue until the ball goes out of play. Law 5.
9. The referee must stop the game anytime a player kneels, sits or lies down to indicate they are injured.

A10: True. An indirect free kick should be awarded. Law 12.
10. It is a foul if an opposing player prevents the GK from releasing the ball from the hands or kicks or attempts to kick the ball when the GK is in the process of releasing it.

A11: False. Failure to give 10 yards (even without asking) merits a yellow card. Law 12.
11. Standing in front and blocking a free kick is not a penalty unless the player asks for 10 and the defender fails to move.

A12: False. A penalty kick should be given and a yellow card, unless the offense 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 offense 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.).
12. When a player commits an offense against an opponent within their own penalty area which denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, the ref should always award a penalty kick and a red card.

More Challenging Questions?

Q1: An attacker is fouled by a late tackle by a defender after the ball was passed to a teammate. The referee signals advantage. When the ball is received by the teammate, the AR signals offside. What is the call?

A1: A whistle and DFK to the attacking team. First, there was a foul, recognized by the advantage call. A player then in an offside position received the ball, which normally would have resulted in an IFK for the defending team. But because we were playing under an “advantage” call, the ball should come back to the spot of the first foul and restart with a DFK by the attacking team.

Q2: A player taking a free kick deliberately kicks a shot as hard as he can into the back of a retreating defender and then turns to the referee seeking a yellow card. The defending player was within 10 yards, making no attempt to delay restart and was moving away from the ball at the time. What is the call?

A2: A yellow card for UB or a red call for VC given to the kicker. There is no violation of Rule 13 because you can take a quick kick early and there was no attempt to delay the restart. Because the player was deliberately struck that would equate with UB by the kicker. Asking for a yellow card in this case could also be interpreted as dissent and again a yellow card. Kicking it intentionally as hard as you can could be interpreted as VC and result in a red card. At best, it is UB.

Q3: A ball is passed back to the keeper by one of his teammates. Right before it reaches the keeper, an opposing player challenges for the ball and the keeper quickly picks it up. What is the call?



A3: IFK to the opposing team. The GK had a choice to play the ball with his feet and the challenge by the opposing team does not excuse the handling of the ball.

Q4: There is a shot on goal that is touched by the GK and rebounds to another attacker who then shoots and scores. The AR signals offside. Does the goal stand?

A4: Depends. If the second attacker was onside when the first shot was taken, then they could not be called offside for the rebound. If the second attacker was in an offside position, a rebound from the crossbar, post, referee, a defender or a deliberate save from the GK does not change the offside status of the second attacker. So offside would be the correct call. If the defender unsuccessfully tried to control the ball and it wasn't simply a rebound, then the second attacker is no longer offside and the goal stands. It will depend on the opinion of the referee.

Q5: The attacking team shoots on goal and a defender saves the ball with his hand but it rebounds right to another attacker who shoots and scores. Does the goal stand? Should a card be shown?

A5: Yes to both. The defender would be sent off because Law 12 is violated even if the attempt to prevent an obvious goal scoring opportunity is unsuccessful.

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Final Miscellaneous Thoughts:

In no particular order:

- A coach does NOT have the right to speak with or question a referee at any time.
- No pass, no game day roster, no play, no exception. Electronic copies of passes or the GDR are not valid exceptions.
- Players may be red carded for intending to use excessive force regardless if contact is made.
- Indirect free kicks to the attacking team for an offense inside the opponents' goal area are taken from the nearest point on the goal area line which runs parallel to the goal line.
- Substitutions must be ready and waiting at midfield before they can enter the game.
- If, when a free kick is taken quickly by the defending team from inside its penalty area, any opponents are still inside the penalty area because they did not have time to leave, the referee will allow play to continue.
- On a goal kick for a 7v7 game, the opposing team must be beyond the build out line and cannot cross it until the ball leaves the penalty area.
- The 6 second rule for GK possession does not start until all members of the opposing team are beyond the penalty area or build out line as appropriate.

