

Position Papers and Memoranda
of the
United States Soccer Federation
Referee Education Department

Covering the Period
26 October 1999
to
5 August 2011

Foreword

The US Soccer Federation's Referee Education Department regularly communicates to the referee community via publication of memoranda and position papers. Memoranda are typically published to clarify interpretation of the laws of the game for a specific topic, such as "interfering with play" as it relates to Law 11 (Offside). Much of the information contained in these memos is then incorporated into the annual update of the publication "Advice to Referees on the Laws of the Game", typically updated after each annual IFAB meeting.

The individual memos and position papers continue to be useful in their own right, even after being incorporated into an ATR update. The memos often contain specific examples from professional matches – usually MLS – that illustrate the point being made. These illustrations can be helpful for understanding some of the finer points of the game. So, the memos continue to be a useful point of reference for the dutiful referee.

Unfortunately, the memos and position papers aren't organized in a particularly meaningful way, as they are listed alphabetically by subject on the US Soccer website. The subject lines themselves aren't always revealing about the contents of the memos, with subjects like "A Courageous Decision" and "I Got The Ball" to name but two examples.

This compendium endeavors to gather and organize the various memoranda and position papers by relevant Law. The result is intended to be a useful reference guide to the 85 memos and position papers published by USSF during the 12 year period covered within.

Care was taken not to alter the substance of the documents in any way. That being said, some changes were necessary in order to categorize and streamline 130+ pages of material. Those changes are:

- Distribution information was removed from the memos. This information is largely redundant, and in any event, all of the information is relevant to referees at most levels.
- The author of the memo was removed. All publications come from the Referee Education department at US Soccer, so names of specific individuals aren't relevant as reference material.
- A reference to a relevant law was added. This was done solely for the purpose of being able to organize the documents by Law. In the cases of two documents, a specific law could not be identified, so an "Other" category was created.
- The subject line was edited where necessary so that a reader who is unfamiliar with these publications would be able to judge whether the document is relevant to their research. For example, the memo titled "A Courageous Decision" was edited as "An Example of a Courageous Red Card Decision by a Referee". In all of these cases, the original subject line was retained for cross-reference purposes.

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Law 1: The Field of Play

Original Subject	The Field of Play (Equipment and Devices)
Edited Subject	Skycams and Other Objects On or Near the Field
File Under	Law 1
Date	March 29, 2005

Various questions have been raised recently regarding the status of cameras and other devices which may be found around, near, or even on the field of play. The fundamental principle is that the referee has authority under Law 5 to make final decisions regarding both the compliance of the field with the requirements of Law 1 and the overall safety of the field.

If a field has a physical object located directly above the field (e.g., a clock or moveable camera -- popularly called a "skycam"), play must be stopped if the ball makes contact with the object and then restarted with a dropped ball.

Any device or equipment intended to enhance communications, to assist in the management of the event, or to facilitate broadcasting the match and which is located on or around the field must be brought to the attention of the referee and made available for inspection prior to the commencement of the match. The referee will work with local facility managers to resolve any issues related to the presence or operation of such devices but the final decision regarding safety remains with the referee. At all times, such equipment must be operated so as not to interfere with or disrupt play.

Unusual equipment and devices which do not endanger the safety of players and which have been allowed by the referee must nevertheless be reported in the Competition Incident Report.

Subject	Padded Goal Structures
File Under	Law 1
Date	March 14, 2008

An issue has recently arisen regarding whether, under the Laws of the Game, the goalposts and/or the crossbar may be padded. The suggestion has been made that this could be considered a safety issue, that such padding is commercially available, and that it could be applied in such a way that the dimensions of the goal structure remain within the requirements of Law 1.

Despite these understandable concerns and good intentions, U.S. Soccer cannot approve the use of padding on goalposts or crossbars in affiliated matches for the following reasons:

- The Laws of the Game do not include padding of the goalposts and/or the crossbar as part of the equipment used on a field.
- The Laws of the Game already provide for the referee's obligation to not permit a game to be played if, in the opinion of the referee, the goal is dangerous in any way.
- An unpadded goal structure is not inherently dangerous.
- Padding could hide defects or dangerous goal conditions and interfere with the referee's evaluation of the safety of the goal.
- Padding on the goal structure could interfere in unpredictable ways with the play of the ball.

U.S. Soccer takes note of the fact that some matches might be played on fields controlled by public authorities which themselves require the padding of goal structures as a condition for using their facilities.

Original Subject	Objects on the Field
Edited Subject	Dealing with Objects on the Field that Interfere with Play
File Under	Law 1
Date	April 3, 2008

Soccer matches are exciting events, attended by partisan fans who celebrate the successes and bemoan the reverses of their favorite team. They wave flags, blare trumpets, beat drums, swirl scarves, and, sometimes, they throw things onto the field. Usually, what is thrown onto the field (confetti and streamers) is inconsequential, at most a momentary distraction.

At times, however, what is thrown onto the field constitutes a serious interference in the match, either because of the specific nature of the object (e.g., bottles or lit fireworks) or because of the volume of the material covering the field and making the surface dangerously unstable. In such cases, the referee must suspend play, preferably at a stoppage called for some other reason but otherwise without delay if the issue is the safety of the players, the officials, or team personnel in the technical areas. Before play can be resumed, it is the responsibility of the home club (the organization sponsoring the match) to resolve the problem without undue delay. Under certain circumstances, the referee may consider removing players from the field for their safety during this time.

A more difficult case is presented when what is thrown onto the field is not intrinsically dangerous but carries the threat of interfering with play in some significant way. Referees are, of course, alert to such interference when a ball enters the field and comes close enough to play to be mistaken for the match ball. Another example that might be cited is an EPL match (Sheffield United v. Manchester City) in which, about 10 minutes into the first half, the ball was played into the attacking third of the field at a time when more than a dozen balloons were also in the area (it may be important to note that the balloons were generally similar to the match ball in size and color).

On a shot across the face of the goal, the ball hit a balloon, causing the former to be redirected slightly and the latter to be knocked toward the goal. Further play resulted in other balloons moving and bouncing in front of the goalkeeper. A goal was scored during what may have been a very confusing few seconds.

In these “gray area” situations, the referee must evaluate a number of factors in order to determine if and when play should be suspended until the problem is resolved.

- What is the likelihood that the foreign object(s) might interfere with the safe movement of the players?
- What is the likelihood that the foreign object(s) might confuse players and/or disrupt the flow of play?
- Is the problem with foreign object(s) primarily at one end of the field and therefore more likely to disadvantage one team over another?

Play should not be suspended for inconsequential reasons and the referee must remain vigilant to the possibilities of the match being disrupted by the sudden appearance of unwanted objects on the field. Match officials must be sensitive to things which interfere unduly with the beauty of the sport and make a mockery of skilled play.

Law 3: The Number of Players

Subject	Abandoning a Match Due to Insufficient Number of Players
File Under	Law 3
Date	November 22, 2002

Each national association is given authority to set the minimum number of players in a match. The United States Soccer Federation has established this number at seven, one of whom must be identified as a goalkeeper. (Law 3 -- IFAB Decision 1).

Accordingly, the referee must abandon a match if a team either cannot or will not field at least seven players. This could occur as a result of a team having any combination of five or more players who:

- had been sent off the field for misconduct,
- failed to appear for the match despite being listed on the roster,
- were unable to play due to injury,
- had departed from the area of the field, or
- were unwilling to enter the field despite being present.

However, a match may continue if a team drops below seven players on the field as a result of a player requesting and receiving permission from the referee to leave the field temporarily (for treatment of an injury, for example) or a player being instructed to leave the field to correct equipment or for bleeding from a wound. In such cases, the referee should be satisfied that the team will be able to field the minimum number within a reasonable period of time as a result of the return of such players.

If a match has been officially started but must be abandoned due to a team not being able to field the minimum number of players (for whatever combination of reasons), the referee must provide a full report to the competition authority which includes information regarding the circumstances under which this occurred, what efforts were made to determine if qualified players or substitutes were available, and the score existing at the time the match was terminated. Before declaring the match terminated, the referee must determine if the rules of the competition provide for any alternative action.

In the absence of any rules from the competition authority requiring a different result, the team which was able to field the minimum number of players is declared the winner of the match, regardless of the score at the time the match had to be terminated.

Subject	No Replacement for Player Sent Off after the Game Has Started
File Under	Law 3
Date	November 22, 2002

International Football Association Board (IFAB) Decision 3, Law III, formerly stated: "A player who has been ordered off after play has started may not be replaced." The rewrite of the Laws of the Game in 1997 was extensive and included both new language and revisions of existing language: numerous provisions in the 1996 edition of the Laws of the Game, including this one, were also removed. Nevertheless, the provisions of IFAB Decision 3, Law III, remain valid to this day.

The intention of the IFAB was to clarify and simplify concepts, to replace older terminology, to present concepts which are more easily translated into languages other than English and to shorten the Laws of the Game overall. The removal of the IFAB decision should not be considered a rejection of the requirement but an affirmation that a separate, additional statement of the concept involved was unnecessary. In other words, the IFAB believed that the basic principle that a player sent off after the game has started may not be replaced was so well understood by the entire soccer community that it did not need to be mentioned in the Laws.

In applying the rewritten Laws of the Game, affiliated leagues, associations, officials and competitions are accordingly reminded that, except as described in "Memorandum 1997" or in subsequent memoranda regarding amendments to the Laws of the Game, there should be no change in either the understanding of the Laws or in their substantive application to game situations. Unless noted otherwise, the absence in later versions of the Laws of the Game of any language from the 1996 version is not to be interpreted as an indication IFAB intended that matches would no longer be governed by that language.

Law 3 currently states "A player who has been sent off before the kick-off may be replaced only by one of the named substitutes." Implied in that statement is a reiteration of the former IFAB Decision 3, Law III, that "A player who has been ordered off after play has started may not be replaced."

Law 4: The Players' Equipment

Subject	Shinguards
File Under	Law 4
Date	March 20, 2001

Law 4 requires all players to wear shinguards which

- are covered entirely by the stockings,
- are made of a suitable material, and
- provide a reasonable degree of protection.

These rather simple and direct statements seldom need further interpretation. Being "covered entirely by the stockings" means that the shinguards must be worn under the socks. Having the shinguards worn on top of the socks, even if the tops are rolled down over the shinguards, does not meet this requirement.

The "suitable material" is not specified but is presumed to be material which performs the cushioning and impact spreading function of shinguards.

A "reasonable degree of protection" means that the material is suitable for the purpose and that the size of the shinguard is appropriate for the age and size of the player.

Additionally, of course, as an article of player equipment, the shinguards must meet the general requirement of Law 4 that they not be dangerous to the wearer or to any other player.

In most cases, these requirements are adequately met by commercially manufactured shinguards and referees rarely need to perform any closer inspection. In any event, determining the legality of any article of player equipment under Law 4 is solely within the referee's judgment in accordance with these guidelines.

Subject	Medical Alert Jewelry and Law 4
File Under	Law 4
Date	October 29, 2001

Law 4, The Players' Equipment, states that "a player may not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewelry)."

USSF guidance to referees has always been that jewelry or clothing that might otherwise be prohibited could nevertheless be worn if:

- it was clearly religious or medical in nature **and**
- the referee decided that it was not dangerous.

The following points of emphasis should be noted regarding common sense applications of these requirements to medical alert jewelry (primarily, bracelets or necklaces):

- In order to decide if a medical item is dangerous, it must be inspected by the referee. Each situation must be decided on its own merits. Referees must not automatically include or exclude any item as dangerous without performing an inspection.
- Referees are urged to consider carefully any decision that medical alert jewelry presents a danger which cannot be resolved by such measures as taping the necklace inside the jersey or taping over the bracelet (without covering the critical medical information it displays).
- Referees should explain to the player the specific reasons why an item of medical jewelry is dangerous so that the player can attempt to correct the problem short of taking the item off. While the final decision whether any such correction is successful must remain with the referee, virtually all ordinary medical alert jewelry is either not dangerous as is or can easily be made not dangerous.

Original Subject	Law 4, Players' Equipment (Jewelry)
Edited Subject	Jewelry
File Under	Law 4
Date	March 17, 2003

Law 4 (The Players' Equipment) states very clearly that "A player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewelry)." In addition, FIFA included in the 2002/2003 edition of the Laws of the Game a section on "Additional Instructions for Referees, Assistant Referees and Fourth Officials" in which this requirement is further emphasized: "Referees are reminded that, in accordance with Law 4, players may not wear any kind of jewelry."

Referees officiating in professional matches must ensure that this clear restriction is properly enforced.

USSF reaffirms its advice to referees that jewelry worn solely for medical purposes may be permitted but only if, in the opinion of the referee, the item is not dangerous. Such items can often be worn safely if appropriately taped. Additionally, for married players, a wedding ring may also be permitted if it does not include any dangerous projections.

An item of jewelry permitted by the referee under these provisions must have been carefully inspected prior to the commencement of the match.

The match must not be permitted to start with any player wearing illegal equipment or apparel, including jewelry. Players who insist on retaining such items will not be permitted to participate in the match. Any player who, having been instructed to correct illegal equipment, nevertheless attempts to participate in play without having made the correction is subject to being cautioned for dissent.

The referee, assistant referees, and the fourth official all share in the responsibility to enforce the clear requirements of Law 4 related to jewelry and are advised to discuss in their pregame meeting specific measures each will take to ensure compliance prior to as well as throughout the match.

Subject	Jersey Sleeves Rule Suspended
File Under	Law 4
Date	November 4, 2002

USSF has been informed by FIFA that it has decided to temporarily set aside the new provision regarding jersey sleeves found in International Board Decision 1 of Law 4. Accordingly, effective immediately and until further notice:

- Referees will have no responsibility for determining the legality of jersey sleeves or for enforcing the provision in Law 4 related to jersey sleeves.
- Referees are directed not to include in their game reports any information regarding the presence, absence, or altered status of jersey sleeves unless required to do so by the rules of competition under which a particular game is being played.
- The only concern a referee has with respect to the condition of a player's jersey is **safety**.
- Referees are, however, expected to enforce all relevant provisions in the Rules of Competition governing a match, meaning, if a state association, organization, league or tournament has a rule regarding jersey sleeves, that rule should be enforced.

Subject	Player Dress
File Under	Law 4
Date	November 22, 2002

According to Law 4, The Players' Equipment, a player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player. The basic compulsory equipment of a player is a jersey or shirt, shorts, stockings, shinguards, and footwear. There is no provision for a player to wear a skirt or similar clothing.

However, in an analogous situation, in respect of certain religions that require members to wear head coverings, the Secretary General of the United States Soccer Federation has given permission to those bound by religious law to wear such headcoverings, usually a turban or yarmulke, provided the referee finds that the headgear does not pose a danger to the player wearing it or to the other players. This principle could be extended to other clothing required of members by their religion.

Since the referee may not know all the various religious rules, players must request the variance well enough ahead of game time by notifying the league. The league will notify the state association, which will pass the information on to the state referee committee. The state referee committee will make sure that the referees working that league's matches are informed.

The referee is still bound by the requirements of Law 4 -- the player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player, or use this equipment or clothing to circumvent the Laws of the Game. An example would be the use of equipment or garments to trap the ball or to distract an opponent.

Original Subject	Player's Equipment
Edited Subject	Players Wearing Non-Compulsory Equipment (Mar 2003)
File Under	Law 4
Date	March 7, 2003

USSF has received a number of inquiries recently about how officials should handle situations where players wish to wear equipment that is not included in the list of basic compulsory equipment in FIFA Laws of the Game. Referees are facing increased requests from players for permission to wear kneepads, elbowpads, headbands, soft casts, goggles, etc. The only concrete guidance in the Laws of the Game is found in Law 4:

“A player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player.”

This is followed by a list of required uniform items – jersey, shorts, socks, shoes, and shinguards.

Obviously, this language is quite general. USSF suggests the following approach to issues involving player equipment and uniforms:

1. Look to the applicable rules of the competition authority.

Some leagues, tournaments, and soccer organizations have specific local rules covering player uniforms and what other items may or may not be worn on the field during play. Referees who accept match assignments governed by these rules are obligated to enforce them. Note, however, that local rules cannot restrict the referee’s fundamental duty to ensure the safety of players.

2. Inspect the equipment.

All items of player equipment and uniforms must be inspected. However, anything outside the basic compulsory items must draw the particular attention of the referee and be inspected with special regard to safety. USSF does not “pre-approve” any item of player equipment by type or brand – each item must be evaluated individually.

3. Focus on the equipment itself – not how it might be improperly used, or whether it actually protects the player.

Generally, the referee’s safety inspection should focus on whether the equipment has such dangerous characteristics as: sharp edges, hard surfaces, pointed corners, dangling straps or loops, or dangerous protrusions. The referee should determine whether the equipment, by its nature, presents a safety risk to the player wearing it or to other players. If the equipment does not present such a safety risk, the referee should permit the player to wear it.

The referee should not forbid the equipment simply because it creates a possibility that a player could use it to foul another player or otherwise violate the Laws of the Game. However, as the game progresses, an item that the referee allowed may become dangerous, depending on changes in its condition (wear and tear) or on how the player uses it. Referees must be particularly sensitive to unfair or dangerous uses of player equipment and must be prepared to order a correction of the problem whenever they become aware of it.

The referee also should not forbid the equipment because of doubts about whether it actually protects the player. There are many new types of equipment on the market that claim to protect players. A referee's decision to allow a player to use equipment is not an endorsement of the equipment and does not signify that the referee believes the player will be safer while wearing the equipment.

4. Remember that the referee is the final word on whether equipment is dangerous.

Players, coaches, and others may argue that certain equipment is safe. They may contend that the equipment has been permitted in previous matches, or that the equipment actually increases the player's safety. These arguments may be accompanied by manufacturer's information, doctor's notes, etc. However, as with all referee decisions, determining what players may wear within the framework of the Laws of the Game and applicable local rules depends on the judgment of the referee. The referee must strive to be fair, objective, and consistent – but the final decision belongs to the referee.

Original Subject	Players Wearing Non-Compulsory Equipment
Edited Subject	Players Wearing Non-Compulsory Equipment (Sep 2003)
File Under	Law 4
Date	September 3, 2003

On August 25, 2003, FIFA issued Circular #863, regarding the legality of players wearing non-compulsory equipment. FIFA notes that, under the "Powers and Duties" of the referee in Law 5 -- The Referee, he or she has the authority to ensure that the players' equipment meets the requirements of Law 4, which states that a player must not wear anything that is dangerous.

Modern protective equipment such as headgear, facemasks, knee and arm protectors made of soft, lightweight, padded material are not considered dangerous and are therefore permitted.

FIFA also wishes to strongly endorse the statement on the use of sports spectacles made by the International F.A. Board on March 10, 2001, and subsequently in FIFA Circular #750, dated April 10, 2001. New technology has made sports spectacles much safer, both for the player himself or herself and for other players. This applies particularly to younger players.

Referees are expected to take full account of this fact and it would be considered extremely unusual for a referee to prevent a player taking part in a match because he or she was wearing modern sports spectacles.

Referees are reminded of the following points which can assist in guiding their decisions on this matter:

- Look to the applicable rules of the competition authority.
- Inspect the equipment.
- Focus on the equipment itself – not how it might be improperly used, or whether it actually protects the player.
- Remember that the referee is the final word on whether equipment is dangerous.

Subject	Hair Control Devices
File Under	Law 4
Date	June 8, 2009

Law 4 (The Players' Equipment) requires that nothing be used or worn which is dangerous, with certain limited exceptions (religious or medical items). It is the responsibility of all members of the officiating team to ensure that this requirement is enforced, not only at the start of play but throughout the entire match.

Although ultimately it is the responsibility of the referee to decide if an item of equipment or clothing presents a danger, an increasing number of hair control devices are being seen which should not be allowed on the field. Referees should take note of the following guidelines when evaluating such devices:

- Hair control devices which are elastic, flexible, and soft should be allowed.
- Devices which are made of hard, sharp, edged, or breakable materials are not safe and may not be worn.
- Beads or other similar decorative devices woven into or affixed on the hair are inherently dangerous and are not allowed.

Referees are strongly urged to be diligent in enforcing these guidelines in the interest of player safety.

Subject	Player Jerseys
File Under	Law 4
Date	October 21, 2008

According to Law 4 (Laws of the Game, 2008/2009), teams must wear jersey colors which distinguish them from each other and from the officials. Any other requirement regarding jerseys (e.g., player names and/or numbers) must either be found in the local rules of competition or, if they are silent on some issue, must be subject to the decision of the referee. If the decision falls to the referee, it must be based on such traditional concerns as safety, fairness, and enjoyment.

In a recent professional match, a player's jersey became bloodied and could not be cleaned sufficiently to permit it to be worn. This falls squarely in the authority of the referee to make such a determination. Unfortunately, the player did not have another exactly matching jersey to wear in its place and the issue became one of determining which of several options would be acceptable.

Given that the player's team was playing short while the issue was being addressed, there is an obvious need for some guidelines for resolving the matter as quickly as possible:

- Every effort should be made to find a solution which permits the player to return to the field.
- The solution should not give the player or the team an unfair advantage or cause confusion for the opposing team or the officials.
- The requirements of Law 4 and any pertinent local rules of competition must be met.
- The referee has the final decision on any replacement jersey that otherwise meets the requirements of the Law and the local rules of competition.
- Taping or masking information on an alternate jersey is a less desirable practice. If masking a name and number is used and the material becomes detached, the referee must consider this a violation of Law 4 and require the player to leave the field again until the masking is repaired.

Any of the following options should be considered to the extent that they are consistent with the above guidelines:

- A jersey of the same or substantially similar color and style may be used.
- The most desirable option is for the replacement jersey to have no other player's name or number on it. The wearing of an unnumbered jersey under these circumstances is permitted.
- A player should not wear a jersey with another person's name on it. Name information must be taped or masked.
- An alternate jersey with another person's player number may be worn only under the following circumstances:
 - The number is taped or masked if the person is a substituted player.

- The number is allowed if the person is a substitute whose name will be removed from the team roster (the roster must also be adjusted to show the replacement jersey number for the player now wearing it).

Law 5: The Referee

Subject	Players Temporarily Off the Field and Involvement of Fourth Official
File Under	Law 5
File Under	Law Addendums: The Fourth Official
Date	April 23, 2001

The International Board (IFAB) has issued several directives which are to be implemented immediately. Although these directives will be covered in the usual annual law changes memorandum, officials in professional league matches must begin now to follow the guidelines below regarding injuries, care of bleeding, correction of equipment problems, **and the role of the fourth official in these matters.**

Players Temporarily Off the Field

The safety of players must always be the main priority of the referee when there is an injury. Some injuries may be so serious that immediate removal from the field is not possible. However, the resumption of play is an important consideration and, where possible, referees should encourage the treatment of injuries off the field.

When a player has received permission to be temporarily off the field for the treatment of an injury or has been directed by the referee to leave the field to correct illegal equipment, bleeding, or blood on the uniform, **the referee must be concerned both with allowing the player to return to the field as soon as possible and with taking appropriate account of time lost while play is stopped to assess an injury.**

Where the injury does not involve bleeding, the referee must:

- be aware of when the injured player is ready to return
- grant permission to enter the field as soon as possible without waiting for a stoppage of play
- allow the player to enter the field from the touchline if play is continuing or across any boundary line if play is stopped

In cases of bleeding, blood on the uniform, or illegal equipment, the referee must:

- be aware of when the player is ready to return
- **grant permission to enter the field as soon as possible without waiting for a stoppage of play**
- be certain that the bleeding, blood on the uniform, or illegal equipment has been corrected
- The **full measure** of time lost due to stoppage for an injury should be added to the period of play.

As of this year **and effective immediately**, it is no longer required that the referee must wait for a stoppage of play to indicate that a player can return to the field, provided that any

problem which caused the player to be off the field in the first place has been corrected. The permission of the referee is still required.

Involvement of Fourth Official

As of this year ***and effective immediately*** (April 23, 2001), the referee has the option of delegating to the fourth official the authority to evaluate whether the appropriate remedial action has been taken, including the correction of equipment or bleeding situations, ***as a means of expediting the return of the player to the field***. If a fourth official has not been appointed, the assistant referees may be given this authorization. In either case, the referee no longer is required to perform personally the necessary inspection.

The involvement of the fourth official (or assistant referees) and permitting players to return to the field during play after correcting a bleeding or illegal equipment problem are specific changes in prior guidance and are now allowed as a means of ***minimizing the time a team must play below its authorized number of players***. The pre-game meeting must include a discussion of how the referee, assistant referees, and fourth official will coordinate their actions to achieve the above results. Referees must also review the general policies of each of the professional leagues regarding injured players and incorporate the above guidelines into these policies.

Original Subject	Availability of Water During a Match
Edited Subject	Providing Hydration During A Match (2002)
File Under	Law 5
Date	April 6, 2002

The FIFA Medical Committee recently emphasized the importance of proper hydration during a match and the need for water (or other appropriate liquids) to be available to the players. Referees are advised to use the following common sense guidelines in determining the correct ways in which this concern can be implemented. Although the term “water” is used below, the guidelines apply to all liquids that may be provided for player hydration in the immediate area of the field.

- Players may drink water during play or at a stoppage but only by going to a touch line or goal line.
- While drinking water, players may not leave the field nor may they carry water containers onto the field. The players should stand at the touch line or goal line while drinking water.
- Water containers may not be held in readiness where they will interfere with the movement of the assistant referees. After water containers are used, they must be removed so as not to interfere with the movement of the assistant referees.
- Under no circumstances may water containers of any sort (regardless of material, size, or construction) be thrown onto the field or to players even during stoppages of play.

Subject	Providing Hydration During A Match (2011)
File Under	Law 5
Date	April 4, 2011

As the summer months again approach, questions have been raised regarding the manner in which hydration (“water breaks”) may be provided to players. It was recently suggested, for example, that the FIFA Referee Committee had decided to permit, at the referee’s discretion, a formal hydration break. This is incorrect, no such decision was taken.

While player health and safety is a paramount concerns the Laws of the Game do not authorize or allow any stoppage called expressly for the purpose of providing hydration. Given the demonstrated importance of proper hydration during a match and the need for water (or other appropriate liquids) to be available to the players, the following common sense guidelines are provided. Although the term “water” is used below, the guidelines apply to all liquids that may be provided for player hydration in the immediate area of the field.

- Players may drink water during play or during any stoppage provided for by the Laws of the Game, but only by going to a touch line or goal line.
- While drinking water, players may not leave the field nor may they carry water containers onto the field. The players should stand at the touch line or goal line while drinking water. However, goalkeepers may keep a water container near the goal provided that the container’s location will not interfere with play.
- Water containers may not be held in readiness where they will interfere with the movement of the assistant referees. After water containers are used, they must be removed so as not to interfere with the movement of the assistant referees.
- Under no circumstances may water containers of any sort (regardless of material, size, or construction) be thrown onto the field, from the field, or back and forth among players, even during stoppages of play.
- In youth matches, a local competition authority might include a rule exception in which a water break is mandated. In such cases, a referee who agrees to accept the assignment is expected to implement the rule.

Subject	Mandatory Suspension Following Dismissal
File Under	Law 5
Date	October 22, 2002

FIFA Circular 821, dated October 1, 2002, reminds all national associations that any player dismissed from the field is to be **automatically suspended** from the next match of the competition in which the player was dismissed.

This mandatory suspension is to be enforced for **all** dismissals (red cards) regardless of the reason and will include send-offs for receiving a second yellow card as well as for actions leading directly to the dismissal. The duration of the suspension can be extended beyond one match by the competition authority.

All national associations are reminded in particular that they may not seek to avoid this binding instruction by passing "exceptional rules," i.e., a provision which creates any sort of exception. The automatic one-match suspension may **only** be waived if it is proven that the referee dismissed the wrong player in a case of mistaken identity.

In no case may the decision of the referee be modified after the game, as is clearly stated in Law 5 of *The Laws of the Game*.

Subject	Rescinding a Displayed Card for Misconduct
File Under	Law 5
Date	January 6, 2003

After the completion of a top professional league match recently played in Europe, the referee decided to cancel (rescind) a caution he had given during play for an act of misconduct. Questions have been raised regarding the correctness of this decision under the Laws of the Game. The following guidance is applicable to the general issue of whether a card for misconduct of any sort can be canceled.

- A displayed red or yellow card can be canceled by the referee if play has not restarted.
- If play has been restarted or if the match is over (including required periods of additional play and/or kicks from the penalty mark), a displayed red or yellow card cannot be canceled by the referee for any reason.
- If the referee believes a card has been issued in error, regardless of the reason, the card must still be included in the match report and the referee must provide all details relevant to the mistake. In such cases, the determination of the validity of the card is left to the competition authority.
- The failure of the referee to include accurately and fully all cards displayed during play is a serious violation of the referee's responsibilities.

Referees should note Question #9 under Law 12 in FIFA's Questions and Answers to the Laws of the Game where it is specifically noted that the referee may not decide to rescind a caution if the player who has already been charged with misconduct apologizes.

Subject	Dealing with Severe Weather
File Under	Law 5
Date	April 6, 2005

This position paper provides basic guidelines for dealing with lightning, windstorms, and other severe weather conditions. (This paper supersedes the paper dated September 23, 2003, on the same topic.) The peak season for severe weather occurs in the United States between May and August, typically in the late afternoon and early evening. Before taking any of the actions outlined in sections 1 (Lightning) or 2 (Other types of severe weather), you must consider the instructions in the following paragraph:

Many stadium operators, park districts, and school districts have acquired and installed **advanced technology that can aid the referee in making decisions about weather conditions**. If there is any indication that severe weather may occur, check with the appropriate authorities (field or park manager, athletic director, stadium operations personnel, city or county parks or education departments, etc.) for the latest information before making any decisions. Also check with these authorities during any weather-related interruption, as the new technology may allow you to restart earlier than indicated after a stoppage. It is not necessary to wait thirty (30) minutes when this assistance is available.

1) Lightning

- a) Recognizing the threat
 - i) Apply the 30-30 rule
 - (1) When you see lightning, count the time until you hear thunder. If this time is 30 seconds or less, seek proper shelter. If you can't see the lightning, just hearing the thunder is a good back-up rule. Wait 30 minutes or more after hearing the last thunder before leaving shelter.
 - ii) Know and heed warning systems and community rules
 - (1) Many communities or park systems have lightning detection and warning systems. Use this information and obey the rules established by the community or park system.
 - iii) Know and apply the rules or procedures established by the competition authority
 - iv) Minimize the risk of being struck
 - v) Protect the safety of all participants by stopping game activities quickly, so that participants and spectators may retire to a safer place before the lightning threat becomes significant.
 - vi) Remember, if you can hear the thunder, you are within reach of lightning.
- b) Seeking proper shelter
 - i) No place outside is safe near thunderstorms
 - ii) The best shelter is a large, fully enclosed, substantially constructed building. A vehicle with a solid metal roof and metal sides is a reasonable second choice.
- c) If there is no proper shelter, **avoid** the most dangerous locations: Higher elevations; wide open areas, including fields; tall isolated objects, such as trees, poles, or light

posts; unprotected open buildings; rain shelters; bus stops; metal fences and metal bleachers.

- d) If you cannot avoid these locations, crouch down on the balls of your feet, with your head tucked into your chest and your hands over your ears.
 - i) If someone is hit, remember that all deaths from lightning result from cardiac arrest and stopped breathing. CPR and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, respectively, are the recommended first aid.
 - ii) Referees should become involved in such assistance only if they have proper training.
 - e) Remain calm. A calm official will often be able to prevent panic by young players.
- 2) Other types of severe weather
- a) For all other types of severe storms, such as tornadoes, hurricanes, and hail, obey local rules and heed warnings. Clear the field and seek proper shelter immediately – see above. Remember, according to standard weather warning terminology a "warning" represents a more immediately likely occurrence than a "watch."

NO SEVERE WEATHER SAFETY GUIDELINES WILL GIVE 100% GUARANTEED TOTAL SAFETY, BUT THESE STEPS WILL HELP YOU AVOID THE VAST MAJORITY OF CASUALTIES.

If there is a possibility of severe weather, the referee and assistant referees should discuss these guidelines in their pregame meeting and ensure that all officials have a clear understanding of their respective duties. Referees in particular should clearly identify what assistance they expect in detecting and bringing to their immediate attention any dangerous weather conditions which may not be directly visible to them. If such conditions develop only after a match has begun, the referee should take the first stoppage opportunity to quickly review these matters with the assistant referees. A brief word to the coaches regarding steps the referee will take to ensure player safety in threatening weather conditions would be useful.

Subject	Impermissible Behavior by Team Officials in Professional Matches
File Under	Law 5
Date	March 8, 2006

Although the behavior of substitutes, players, and substituted players is clearly controlled by the Laws of the Game, the standards for team officials are less clear. Law 5 (The Referee) provides that team officials must conduct themselves in a "responsible manner" and, if they do not, the referee may "expel them from the field of play and its immediate surrounds."

All actions by team officials which result in expulsion from the field must be identified as "irresponsible behavior" in the match report. The match report, of course, must provide a specific description of the behavior. The following are examples of behavior that might be considered irresponsible:

- Throwing objects in protest
- Speaking insulting words or making offensive gestures
- Kicking chairs
- Making unwanted contact with opponents
- Striking advertising boards
- Persistently and flagrantly protesting decisions by an official
- Interfering with the performance of assistant referee or fourth official duties
- Refusing to return to the technical area
- Entering the field of play without the permission of the referee

Assistant referees and fourth officials assist the referee in monitoring the behavior of persons in the technical area and in alerting the referee when such behavior exceeds reasonable bounds. Officials should be mindful of the circumstances in which the irresponsible behavior occurred and should use the same criteria and concerns they would apply to similar behavior by players on the field (e.g., taking into account the emotion of the moment).

As of the 2006 playing season, MLS has modified its rules concerning who may be allowed in the team's technical area: 11 players in uniform, 7 substitutes in uniform, up to 3 coaches, up to 3 medical staff, 1 equipment manager, and up to 2 members of the team's administrative staff.

Accordingly, aside from players temporarily off the field, no more than 16 persons will be permitted in the technical area and only if they fall within these prescribed categories. **For purposes of this memorandum, anyone officially allowed in the technical area who is not a rostered player or substitute (or substituted player) is a team official.**

Subject	The Officiating Team, Increasing Communication Effectiveness
File Under	Law 5
Date	February 21, 2007
Cross-References	Guide to Procedures

With the approach of the 2007 season, it is critical that all officials consider carefully how to maximize the effectiveness of their communications as a team. Only then will we best be able to serve both the game and the players.

The effectiveness of the officiating team depends on all members understanding their respective responsibilities, tasks, and duties. Each official must rely upon the other members of the team to perform their duties in a timely, accurate, and responsible manner. Reviewing these responsibilities and clarifying how they are to be performed is one of the central purposes of the pregame conference (Guide to Procedures, "General Mechanics").

Before The Referee Has Made A Decision

This is the stage at which input from the officiating team can be most effective because it can prevent rather than correct problems. There is less damage done to the overall authority of the officiating team if the referee is able to gather as much relevant detail as possible before reaching a decision.

The pre-game conference must develop an understanding by all members of the team regarding the importance of making eye contact before any significant decision is made or announced and the specific signals by which the assistant referees and fourth official can provide relevant information. Among the issues for which the referee may need assistance is the possibility of

- a second caution,
- the occurrence of misconduct in addition to a foul,
- the level of severity of the misconduct, or
- the unnoticed involvement of other persons in the foul or misconduct.

After The Referee Has Made A Decision But Not Yet Restarted Play

The major responsibility here is to prevent a serious error from occurring. Because a decision has already been reached, announced, and perhaps even partially implemented, the officiating team will likely encounter resistance if something different eventually needs to be done.

Accordingly, an assistant referee or fourth official should act only if he or she has seen some element of the events on the field which there is strong reason to believe **would have likely resulted in a different decision if it had been seen**. The objective is to "get it right" while there is still time to correct matters. Among the potentially serious errors which the officiating team should prevent are:

- The failure to give a red card following the issuance of a second caution

- The display of a card to the wrong player
- The display of a wrong card to a player
- The failure to punish instigating behavior in addition to any retaliation
- An action which is contrary to the Laws of the Game or to local rules of competition
- An incorrect determination that a goal was scored or not
- Violent conduct has occurred which carries the threat of further serious misconduct

The pregame conference needs to include a discussion of increasingly noticeable and varied means of gaining the attention of the referee, of how other members of the team can assist in redirecting attention to the official who has relevant information, and how the needed information can be conveyed as quickly, unobtrusively, and efficiently as possible. The longer this process takes, the greater is the possibility of resistance and eroded authority.

After A Decision Has Been Taken And Play Restarted

The only decision which can be corrected at this point is the failure to show a red card following a second caution. However, any of the errors listed above should be brought to the attention of the referee at the earliest possible opportunity as the information may be used by the referee to recover some measure of authority through player management strategies.

Because the most likely opportunity is the next stoppage, the pregame should include an emphasis again of making eye contact at any stoppage as well as the means that could be employed to gain the referee's attention if important information needs to be provided. The assistant referee or fourth official may decide that, under the circumstances, the better alternative might be to wait for the end of a period of play to discuss any of these matters with the referee.

Communications Procedures

When information must be conveyed, the first line of communication is the array of standard signals described in the *Guide to Procedures*. If these are inadequate and direct communication is needed, assistant referees and fourth officials must compose their message quickly and focus on the essential facts needed by the referee – e.g., card color, team, player name or number, and reason under the Law for the recommendation (further detail should be at the request of the referee).

If it is necessary for members of the officiating team to confer directly, they must remember that they are doing so in an atmosphere of high tensions, considerable interest in the substance of the conversation, and the possibility of further misconduct. Accordingly, their attention must continue to focus on the field and players. *These conversations must be private* – the desire of others to participate or be nearby must be strongly discouraged. Further, officials should not allow themselves to be drawn into any subsequent statements or explanations of what was said.

Fourth officials should first seek to communicate with the referee through the near assistant referee but, if necessary, direct contact with the referee may be needed in order to ensure that all relevant information has been made available.

The essence of the diagonal system of control is communication, including the sharing of relevant, accurate, and timely information. As a team, the officials must use all available techniques to make the right decision.

Subject	Match Reports Involving Discipline
File Under	Law 5
Date	April 7, 2008

A Circular (No. 1137) recently received from FIFA's General Secretary emphasized the importance of referee match reports in properly evaluating acts of misconduct for any further response by FIFA's Disciplinary Committee. The issues raised by the Circular are equally important for the professional leagues, high level youth and amateur leagues, and major tournaments in this country. The same concerns are also felt in the regional and state associations.

Although all aspects of the referee's match report must meet high standards of clarity, accuracy, brevity, and pertinence, those sections involving misconduct require special attention, and reporting on acts of misconduct leading to a send off merit the highest concern. The need for effective match reporting starts at the lowest competitive level and becomes ever more critical as the competitive level of the match increases.

State Referee Administrators and State Directors of Instruction are strongly urged to ensure that effective match reporting is incorporated in their training of senior referees. In order for Disciplinary Committees to evaluate serious misconduct, match reports must start with:

- The name of (and additional identifying information for) the player who was sent off
- The time of the send off
- The specific reason in the Laws of the Game for the send off (Law 12)

In addition, however, the referee must supply sufficient detail regarding the circumstances of the misconduct to aid in evaluating its level of seriousness. Among the factors that should be addressed, where relevant, are:

- Whether the action occurred during a challenge for the ball
- Whether the misconduct occurred at a stoppage of play or during play
- If anyone was injured as a consequence of the misconduct
- Whether there was any prior incident that may have led to the player's actions
- The demeanor of the player during the send off (including any difficulties in implementing the player's removal from the field)
- The location of the action in relation to the goal line and penalty area being attacked at the time
- The subsequent intrusion of any other players (teammates or opponents) during the time the referee is managing the send off
- The specific words or gestures which were determined to be insulting, offensive, or abusive
- The identity of the opponent or official toward whom the misconduct was directed

- A summary of the prior misconduct (or a reference to the section of the report which detailed the prior caution) preceding the second caution for which the player was sent off
- The identity of the assistant referee, fourth official, or reserve assistant referee who provided independently observed facts to the referee regarding the misconduct
- All other details of the action which materially shaped the decision to send the player off

Any other facts which a Disciplinary Committee might decide it needs as a result of its review of the match report can be supplied by the referee on request of the Committee, but the most useful information will come from a properly completed, accurate, detailed, and clear match report. Match reports provided independently by assistant referees, fourth officials, or reserve assistant referees should follow these guidelines as well.

Subject	Player-Coaches
File Under	Law 5
Date	November 11, 2008

Nothing in the Laws of the Game prevents a player from coaching or a coach from playing. Indeed, this combination of roles is not uncommon in teams below the national professional competitive level (both in this country and elsewhere) and particularly in senior amateur play. For purposes of these guidelines, the term “coach” will include any team official (coach, assistant coach or trainer, for example). The term “player” includes being a substitute or substituted player.

The most important requirement for this arrangement is that all members of the officiating team must be aware of it. Merely mentioning it to the referee is not sufficient. As a player, the name of the player-coach must be shown on the team roster in the section used to list players. As a coach, the name of the player-coach must also be shown on the team roster in the section used to list team officials. If the roster has no separate section for team officials, the name of the player-coach must include a separate written designation as “coach” (or “assistant coach” or “trainer”) next to the player’s name. Players not clearly designated as a team official may not act at any time as a team official.

The following guidelines apply to the referee’s authority as regards a designated player/coach:

- When off the field and intending to act as a team official, a player-coach must change out of or wear something which covers the team jersey. Continuing to wear and have visible other parts of the player uniform (e.g., socks, cleated shoes, shorts) is permissible. A player-coach may not act as a team official while visibly wearing a team jersey.
- At all times, whether playing, off the field as a substitute or substituted player, or acting as a team official, the player-coach is under the authority of the referee and may be cautioned or sent off (and the appropriate color card displayed) for misconduct in accordance with the Laws of the Game. As a practical example of this, a caution given to a player-coach while acting as a player which is followed by a caution given to the same player-coach who is now acting as a team official must be followed by a red card for having received two cautions in the same match, as prescribed in Law 12.
- While acting as a team official, the player-coach has the additional requirement to act in a responsible manner. However, actual dismissal from the field (if warranted) must be in accordance with Law 12 – a red card must be shown and the correct reason for the send-off must be given in the match report (with all necessary supporting details).
- If a player-coach is sent off the field for any reason, whether while acting as a coach or as a player, the required automatic mandatory one game suspension applies to both roles. In other words, a player-coach who has been red carded cannot be present at the team’s next match in either a player or any team official capacity.

- The competition authority may extend the length of the suspension based on its review of the match reports and other evidence of the misconduct and may, at its discretion, apply additional penalties to either or both of the player or team official capacities.

Subject	Serious Injuries
File Under	Law 5
Date	March 25, 2009

There has been well established US Soccer guidance for referees at the highest level to be particularly mindful of serious injuries and to respond appropriately. Past National Program for Referee Development clinics have dealt with this matter in no uncertain terms and this was the specific topic of a directive this year which was covered at the Professional Seminar in Orlando and again in all the Referee Training Seminars preparing for the 2009 MLS/WPS/USL/PDL season.

In the DC United - LA Galaxy game (March 22), two players collided while attempting to jump for the ball. As a result, both suffered head injuries, with bleeding, that required stitches or staples to close the wounds.

Play should have been stopped immediately.

Whenever a player's head is injured—regardless of whether the collision was with an opponent, a teammate, or an object on the field such as a goal post—the safety of that player is of prime concern.

There is no higher priority.

Instructors, assessors, match inspectors, and others involved with referee training and administration must take every opportunity to remind referees of this requirement, if such a reminder is needed.

Subject	Head Injuries
File Under	Law 5
Date	March 30, 2009

USSF guidance for referees at all levels has always emphasized the importance of responding appropriately to serious player injuries. National Referee clinics in the past have dealt with this matter in no uncertain terms. A specific directive was issued this year in advance of the 2009 MLS season, and entry level USSF referee training materials have reminded all officials that the seriousness of an injury is more liberally defined for youth players.

In the DC United - LA Galaxy game (March 22), two players collided while attempting to jump for the ball. As a result, both suffered head injuries, with bleeding, that required stitches or staples to close the wounds.

Play should have been stopped immediately. Whenever a player's head is injured -- regardless of whether the collision was with an opponent, a teammate, or an object on the field such as a goal post -- the safety of that player is of prime concern. There is no higher priority.

Instructors, assessors, match inspectors, and others involved with referee training and administration must take every opportunity to remind referees of this requirement, if such a reminder is needed.

Law 6: The Assistant Referee

Subject	Priority of Assistant Referee Responsibilities
File Under	Law 6
Date	March 24, 2009

In a recent professional exhibition match, a group of referees, instructors, and assessors was discussing an incident in which the assistant referee was faced with a conflict in priorities – whether to hang back and observe the goalkeeper with the ball in case the goalkeeper went outside the penalty area with the ball still in his hands (a handling offense) or to move up field to get in position for assisting with offside in case there was a quick counterattack after the goalkeeper released the ball. The conversation was vigorous, but the matter should have been easily settled by reviewing the relative importance of the two possible violations.

A similar conflict in priorities can arise when a team is attacking along the touchline and the assistant referee must choose between looking up the touch line to signal if the ball leaves the field and looking across the field to monitor whether an attacker moves into an offside position. Dividing attention this way is not impossible, but both responsibilities will suffer.

The single most important responsibility for the assistant referee is making timely and accurate offside decisions. All other duties outlined in Law 6 are secondary.

Offside decisions are often “game critical” regardless of their specific result. A decision for offside is just as likely to be challenged as a decision against an offside violation. Whether the issue is offside position or involvement in active play, if a goal is called back, allowed, or interrupted as a result, the decision will be controversial. It must therefore be supported by the best fitness, mechanics, communications, and concentration that the assistant referee can bring to bear.

If there is not much difference between where the assistant referee must focus to handle each different duty then clearly both duties should be attempted. As one duty increasingly becomes a distraction for the other, the assistant referee should attempt to adjust positioning to reduce the conflict. Where the distraction is too great, the only solution is to focus on offside, leaving to other members of the officiating team the responsibility of covering to the best of their abilities the less critical conflicting duty.

Among the topics which must be covered in the officiating team’s pregame discussion is the issue of what the assistant referee should do to resolve a conflict between offside and such other responsibilities as determining if the ball has left the field, which team has possession, and the occurrence of violations which do not involve violence.

Subject	Electronic Flags
File Under	Law 6
Date	1998

"Electronic Flags" can be an effective tool for the officiating team. Though still relatively new, their use has been monitored carefully at the highest competitive levels and enough experience has been gained to suggest a number of general guidelines. These devices, however, remain a specialized aid for officials to be used judiciously.

"Electronic Flags" are first and foremost flags and, as such, must be used in accordance with the USSF Guide to Procedures (1998). The "beeper" feature is a means of enhancing communication between the referee and the assistant referees under conditions in which the flag by itself may not be noticed. There are very few situations in which the beeper alone would be used: in most cases, the assistant referee should use the beeper along with the appropriate flag signal.

Because the beeper feature of these flags more readily demands attention, assistant referees must take particular care not to overuse this signal enhancement to avoid distracting the referee from more important events on the field. The general principle should be that the electronic capability is a means only of calling the attention of the referee to the fact that a visual flag signal is being given out of the sight of the referee or that a critical visual flag signal is being given.

Guideline 1. When electronic flags will be used, the referee will discuss the techniques and requirements (in what situations, in what manner, etc.) as a part of the pregame preparation.

Guideline 2. In most cases, the electronic signal is used with an existing visual flag signal (in accordance with the USSF Guide to Procedures). The electronic signal can be used with no visual flag signal to indicate:

- A request during active play to return to the field from a previously injured player who had left the field temporarily, and
- A malfunction of the scoreboard clock or an otherwise apparent error in timing.

Guideline 3. In implementing Guideline 2, in addition to the proper visual signal, the beeper can be used to draw the referee's attention to:

- A request to substitute. If the beeper signal is maintained even after eye contact with the referee is made, it indicates a request for the referee to inspect a returning player who had previously been sent from the field to correct equipment, bleeding, or blood on the uniform;
- Serious misconduct or a foul occurring out of the sight of the referee, for which the referee would likely stop play if aware of the event (where electronic flags are being used, the lead assistant referee is not expected to "mirror" such a signal from the trail assistant referee since the main purpose of "mirroring" is to draw the referee's attention to a visual flag signal being given behind his back);

- Continued play or competition for the ball even though it has wholly crossed over a boundary line and returned to the field (including situations in which an otherwise unnoticed goal has been scored); and
- An offside infringement in which the attacking team retains control of the ball either during play or for a restart, particularly if the offside infringement occurs inside the penalty area where the infringing attacker retains control of the ball and continues an active attack on goal.

Guideline 4. Referees are warned not to become overly reliant on the enhanced signaling ability of the electronic flags. Do not replace or reduce existing recommended mechanics of glancing at the assistant referee on through balls or of making frequent visual contact with all members of the officiating team at stoppages or lulls in active play.

Guideline 5. Assistant Referees should avoid overuse of the electronic signal to the point that it becomes either a distraction or merely additional background "noise." Referees are advised to monitor such use during the first half of play and to discuss any problems during the halftime break.

Guideline 6. The flag with the faster "beep" should be assigned to the senior assistant referee and should be checked prior to taking the field for the second half. Electronic flags must be tested as part of the pregame preparations and extra batteries should be kept at the fourth official's table.

Guideline 7. Except as may be modified in the pregame conference and assuming an electronic signal is to be given, assistant referees should continue signaling electronically until the objective is achieved -- gaining the referee's attention -- as indicated in most cases by positive eye contact.

Guideline 8. The pregame discussion regarding the use of the electronic signal should include means of avoiding situations in which both assistant referees attempt to signal the referee simultaneously. When it is likely that both assistant referees are reacting to the same event, only the assistant referee who is closer to the event should use the electronic signal. In those rare situations in which the farther assistant referee believes it is necessary to use the electronic signal to indicate a separate, different event, the signal should be delayed if at all possible until the nearer assistant referee is no longer using the "beeper" (e.g. when the flag is dropped).

The above guidelines define the circumstances in which electronic flags are properly used. As flags alone, they come under the provisions of the USSF Guide to Procedures (1998). The additional electronic signaling function must not be used for ordinary events when the referee is fully aware of the visual flag signal.

The beeper is limited, for example, to very specific offside situations, not for every offside. It is limited to very specific foul and misconduct situations, not for every foul or case of misconduct. It is limited to signaling for a substitution only when the referee cannot see the visual signal.

The guidelines for the use of electronic flags are part of the United States Soccer Federation's referee development and education program. The initial draft of this document was prepared by Brian Hall in association with Greg Barkey, Richard Grady, Kevin Stott, and Paul Tamborino. Thanks go to Dan Heldman, who edited and compiled the final version, and Josef Zeevi, who prepared this memorandum for publication in both hardcopy and electronic formats.

Law 7: The Duration of the Match

Subject	Managing Match Time
File Under	Law 7
Date	March 4, 2003

Law 7 requires the referee to make allowance in either period for "all time lost through:

- substitution(s)
- assessment of injury to players
- removal of injured players from the field of play for treatment
- wasting time
- any other cause"

Law 7 notes that the "allowance for time lost is at the discretion of the referee." More recently, in Memorandum 2001, USSF reported FIFA's position that, although the safety of players must be the main priority, referees were "instructed to add the full amount of time lost for reasons relating to injuries."

Most stoppages of play are ordinary elements of the game and "time lost" is a much more restricted concept than "time not played." The Laws of the Game encourage a match management approach by the referee that keeps the game moving with as few stoppages of play as possible and a minimum amount of delay in all restarts.

Referees must provide players with full adjustments of time for delays that are longer than what is minimally needed for the purpose of the restart. In general, most ordinary restarts can be accomplished quickly, regardless of the reason (substitution, goal celebration, disciplinary action, assessment of injury, and so forth). In such cases, the referee is not expected to consider the time as "lost."

Where delays are excessive, however, the referee is obliged to take their length fully into account in timing each half. Such decisions must always be made in accordance with the referee's feeling for the spirit of the game.

Law 8: The Start and Restart of Play

Subject	Ceremonial Restart after Misconduct
File Under	Law 8
Date	October 26, 1999

After stopping play for a foul, the referee must remember the other team's right to restart play as quickly as it may wish. The referee should not interfere with this right except under certain exceptional circumstances (see Advice to Referees 12.27, 13.3, and 13.5). The decision to caution or send off a player is one of those exceptions.

If misconduct has been committed (standing alone or in conjunction with a foul) and if the referee has decided that a card will be displayed at the next stoppage of play, the very first action the referee must take when that stoppage occurs is to inform all players that the restart may not occur except by a signal from the referee, i.e., a "ceremonial" restart. This applies whether the referee has stopped play immediately for the infringement or has applied advantage and is waiting for the next stoppage of play.

The referee's first responsibility is to make it clear to both teams that the free kick must be delayed until a signal is given. This can be done verbally, by holding an arm outward toward the attackers and showing the palm (the classic "stop" gesture), or by other means, but the referee should also move as quickly as possible to give the caution which is causing the delayed restart. The practice of raising the whistle and pointing toward it should be used as a last resort when the referee is not certain the players understand the situation (due to crowd noise, language barriers, etc. Standing in front of the ball is neither approved nor recommended as it invites dissent and other attempts to engage the referee in discussions about the decision.

In the case of a ceremonial restart, the referee should proceed deliberately and in accordance with standard mechanics to book the misconduct and display the appropriate card. It is important to remember that players will be focused intently on listening for the whistle to restart play and therefore the whistle should not be used for other purposes (e.g., gaining the attention of defenders in the process of enforcing the minimum distance).

Subject	Positioning at Free Kick Restarts
Edited Subject	Proper Positioning of the Referee Team at Free Kick Restarts
File Under	Law 8
Date	November 22, 2002

In accordance with current instructional guidance from FIFA and CONCACAF, the United States Soccer Federation adopts the following advice to referees regarding positioning for a free kick restart taken close enough to the opponent's goal that a score might result.

When a free kick restart has been awarded within scoring distance of the opponent's goal, the officiating team has three important areas of concern at the taking of the free kick:

- Fouls and misconduct committed in the "wall"
- Offside infringement
- Whether a goal is scored

It is important that these areas of concern be specifically and thoroughly discussed during the pregame meeting of the referee and assistant referees. The referee and lead assistant referee must be able to take their respective positions with a minimum of hesitation based on their pre-game discussion and their assessment of the circumstances of the free kick.

The referee must select the area of concern which has the highest priority under the particular circumstances of the restart based on location, observation of prior free kicks, the nature of the foul or misconduct which produced the restart, and other factors. This will normally mean that the referee takes responsibility for monitoring the behavior of players defending against the free kick and of any attackers attempting to include themselves in the "wall" (see USSF Memorandum on "Misconduct by Attackers at a Free Kick," January 26, 1999). The lead assistant referee would therefore take a position appropriate for judging if a goal is scored.

This leaves the issue of an offside infringement to be covered. Since any attacker in an offside position at the taking of a free kick would have to be somewhere between a defensive "wall" and the goal line, either the referee or the lead assistant referee could assume responsibility for this area of concern. Which official will do so must be addressed in the pre-game, along with a mutual understanding of any signal used by the referee to indicate his decision on the matter.

Among the factors to be taken into account in deciding which official will cover offside infringements arising from a free kick within scoring distance of the opponent's goal are:

- Whether one or more attackers are part of the defensive "wall" (particularly if there has been prior evidence of problems)
- How close a potentially offside position attacker is to either the "wall" or the goal line
- How likely is the scoring of a goal as a result of the free kick

Normally, if there is a possibility of both misconduct in the "wall" and an offside infringement, the referee should focus on the former and direct the lead assistant referee to take a position to judge offside. Under these circumstances, the lead assistant referee must be prepared to move quickly downfield to judge the validity of a goal.

Subject	Restarts after Striking, Throwing or Spitting
File Under	Law 8
Date	2001

Restarts for stoppages of play due to fouls and/or misconduct are normally placed where the foul or misconduct occurred. Penalty kick restarts and restarts inside the goal area are common exceptions to this principle. Determining where the foul/misconduct occurred is relatively easy when direct player-to-player contact (e. g., tripping, pushing, charging) or player-to-ball contact (deliberate handling) is involved. It is the point of contact which determines the location of the infringement and therefore the correct restart. The location of the rest of the infringing player is irrelevant.

Problems can arise, however, when the foul/misconduct does not involve direct contact. Law 12, for example, includes as penal fouls attempting to trip, kick, or strike. Spitting is also a penal foul which does not require direct contact at all (both attempts and successful acts are punished). Finally, striking can include the use of thrown objects which, like spitting, may or may not be successful in actually making contact with the victim.

The International Football Association Board (IFAB) has recently provided a new interpretation of where a foul has occurred when there has been no direct contact or when the contact has occurred off the field of play. Prior to now, for example, striking using a thrown object was punished where the action originated (see *USSF Advice to Referees on the Laws of the Game 12.6*, which will be updated in 2001). The IFAB now instructs that all such infringements are to be punished where the contact occurs or would have occurred if the action had been successful, provided this location is on the field of play. The July 2000 version of FIFA's *Questions and Answers to the Laws of the Game* incorporates this new interpretation and referees in the United States should begin to implement this guidance immediately.

The following six cases illustrate the International Board's interpretation on restarts for striking, whether done with the hand or with an object. When reading these cases, please remember that:

- a. "objects" can be the ball, shoes, stones, dirt clods, etc.;
- b. in all the cases covered in this memorandum, spitting should be treated as striking, except that the referee's match report must say that the player was sent off for spitting at an opponent, not violent conduct;
- c. if the ball was not in play when the striking took place, when the ball or an object was thrown, or when a participant spat at an opponent or any other person, the restart can be only for the reason that the ball was out of play.

The misconduct will be punished as indicated.

Case 1 (Q&A 12.18): Striking an opponent or throwing a ball or object from within the player's own penalty area (or spitting at an opponent)

1a. The goalkeeper, standing within his own penalty area, strikes or throws the ball or an object violently at an opponent standing outside the penalty area. The goalkeeper must be sent off for violent conduct and shown the red card.

Whether the blow or the ball/object strikes the opponent or not, the restart is a direct free kick from the place where the opponent was when the blow, ball or object was thrown at him. (If the opponent was within the penalty area at the moment the goalkeeper threw the ball or object, the restart is a penalty kick.)

1b. The punishment and restart are the same as above if another player strikes or throws an object from within his own penalty area at an opponent standing outside the penalty area. (If the opponent was within the penalty area at the moment the player threw the ball or object, the restart is a penalty kick.)

1c. A player other than the goalkeeper throws the ball from within his own penalty area at an opponent standing outside the penalty area. The player is sent off for violent conduct and shown the red card, but the restart is a penalty kick, because the player deliberately handled the ball within his own penalty area before throwing it at the opponent.

Case 2 (Q&A 12.18): Striking an opponent or throwing an object into the penalty area

2a. While the ball is in play, a player throws an object (shoe, dirt clod, etc.) at the opposing goalkeeper who is standing inside his own penalty area. Whether the object hit the goalkeeper or not, the restart is a direct free kick where the goalkeeper was standing (not from where the throw was initiated).

2b. While the ball is in play, a fullback standing outside his own penalty area throws an object at an opponent who is inside the fullback's penalty area. The restart is a penalty kick.

2c. While the ball is in play, a player outside his penalty area picks up the ball and throws it at an opponent. Regardless of where the opponent is standing, the restart is a direct free for the deliberate handling.

In all three situations under Case 2, the thrower is sent off for violent conduct and shown the red card.

Case 3 (Q&A 12.19): Player on field strikes or throws the ball or an object at an opponent or other person off the field of play

3a. With the ball in play, a player on the field strikes or throws an object at an opponent or other person off the field of play. The restart is an indirect free kick for the opponent's team from the place where the striking was initiated because play was stopped for the violent conduct (misconduct).

3b. A player on the field picks up the ball and throws it at an opponent or other person off the field of play. The restart is a direct free kick from the place where the ball was deliberately handled.

In both cases, the thrower is sent off for violent conduct and shown the red card.

Case 4 (Q&A 12.20): A player or substitute off the field strikes or throws an object at an opponent on the field while the ball is in play. The player or substitute must be ordered off for violent conduct and shown the red card. The restart is a dropped ball at the place where the ball was when the blow or object was thrown. (The misconduct was not committed by a player on the field and so stopping for this misconduct requires a dropped ball).

Case 5 (Q&A 3.13): A substitute of Team A enters the field of play without permission and is struck by an opponent (Team B) while the ball is in play. The opponent (Team B) is sent off for violent conduct and shown the red card. The substitute (Team A) is cautioned for illegally entering the field. The game is restarted with an indirect free kick for Team A from the place where the contact occurred. No foul was committed in this case and so the stoppage was for misconduct committed by a player on the field.

In this situation, if the referee had already decided to stop play for the illegal entry before the opponent struck the substitute, the restart would be a dropped ball at the place where the ball was when the referee decided to stop play.

Case 6 (Q&A 15.3): Throwing the ball at an opponent at a throw-in

6a. If a legal throw-in was not thrown carelessly, recklessly or with excessive force and had no effect on the player who was struck, there is no infringement of the Law.

6b. If a legal throw-in was thrown at an opponent carelessly, recklessly, or with excessive force, the referee should call the foul and/or the misconduct. If there was misconduct, the thrower should either be cautioned for unsporting behavior and shown the yellow card (if the action was reckless) or sent off for violent conduct and shown the red card (if the action involved excessive force). In both cases, the restart would be a direct free kick from the place where contact (would have) occurred.

6c. In the case of an illegal throw-in, one not taken in accordance with the requirements of Law 15, the thrower may still be punished as in 6b. The restart would be a throw-in by the opposing team because the throw-in was not taken in accordance with Law 15 and therefore the misconduct occurred during a stoppage of play.

NOTE: For all direct and indirect free kick or dropped ball restarts noted in this memorandum the referee must remember the special circumstances of Law 8 (restarts within the goal area).

Striking/Throwing Committed→	Contact on field by player on field		Contact ¹ off field by player on field	Contact ¹ on field by non-player or player off the field
Against→	Opponent	Any other person	Anyone	Anyone
Restart→	DFK/PK at point of contact ^{1,2}	IFK at point of contact ^{1,2}	IFK at point of initiation	Dropped ball at place where ball was
Punishment→	Send-off ⁴			
Ball out of play? ⁵ Restart must be appropriate to reason ball was out of play				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Or, if unsuccessful, where contact would have occurred 2. Subject to the special circumstances described in law 8 3. Restart for misconduct takes precedence over dropped ball 4. In case of throw-in, restart and punishment depend on legality of throw-in and degree of force used 5. For example, ball deliberately handled on the field before being thrown by a player 				

Subject	Cardable Offenses and the Restart of Play
File Under	Law 8
Date	August 26, 2003

A situation in a recent U.S. Professional Division match presented a difficult decision involving a cardable offense and a quick restart of play. The referee must balance two competing objectives – effective management of misconduct and a team’s right to a quick free kick restart.

- A card for misconduct (caution or send-off) must be given at the next stoppage of play or the opportunity is lost. If the opportunity passes without the card being shown, the referee must nevertheless include all details in the match report.
- The referee may decide that a quick restart is significantly beneficial for a team and outweighs the particular value of preventing the restart in order to display the card.
- However, if the referee has decided that the red or yellow card must be given, despite the benefit of play being restarted quickly, the referee must act to prevent the restart and, should the restart occur before this decision can be announced, the referee can call the ball back so that the misconduct can be properly handled. The restart can now occur only by the express signal of the referee.

Subject	Fouls, Misconduct, and the Restart of Play
Edited Subject	Restart of Play Determined by whether an Offense is a Foul or Misconduct
File Under	Law 8
Date	August 18, 2006

A basic principle in the Laws of the Game is that an offense cannot be considered a foul (within the meaning of Law 12) unless the action is committed

- by a player,
- on the field of play, and
- while the ball is in play.

Accordingly, any offense which does not meet at least these three criteria cannot be considered a foul (a substitute or substituted player, for example, cannot commit a foul under any circumstances). The action can, of course, be misconduct.

If play is stopped for an offense which is only misconduct (no foul occurred), play must restart with either an indirect free kick if the misconduct was by a player on the field or a dropped ball if the misconduct was committed off the field by anyone (player, substitute, or substituted player).

In connection with restarts for misconduct, it is important to remember several things.

- The restart is unchanged if the misconduct is committed by anyone during a stoppage of play.
- When play is stopped for an offense which is both a foul and misconduct, the restart is determined by the foul, not the misconduct.
- Whether the misconduct results in a caution (yellow card) or a send-off (red card), the restart is not affected.

In the attached clip from a match between the Columbus Crew and Real Salt Lake on August 16, RSL #16 (Forko) actively challenged Crew #7 (Thomas) for the ball just above the RSL goal line in the 21st minute. Their momentum carried them both off the field where Thomas went down (the ball left the field shortly thereafter).

- If the referee's decision was that Forko in fact caused Thomas to fall (trip, charge, push, etc.) while off the field, this would be misconduct only and play should restart with a dropped ball where the ball was at the time (just above the goal line) after showing Forko the appropriate card.
- If the referee's decision was that Forko's actions off the field were not misconduct, then no offense at all was committed and play should restart with a goal kick based on how the ball subsequently left the field.
- If the referee decided that Forko began committing a direct free kick foul while still on the field and merely continued this offense after leaving the field, play should restart with a penalty kick since the foul was committed by a defender inside his penalty area.

It is important to remember that the actual stoppage of play by the referee is marked from when the referee decided to stop play, not when the whistle sounds.

Original Subject	Disallowed Goal from a Pass Back Violation Restart
Edited Subject	Analysis of an Indirect Free Kick Restart and Subsequent Disallowed Goal
File Under	Law 8
Date	July 31, 2008

In the 26th minute of a match played July 27 by Columbus at Colorado, the referee stopped play for an indirect free kick violation. An apparent goal scored from a quick restart was disallowed. All elements of this sequence of events were handled properly.

First, the assistant referee and the referee recognized an uncommon Law 12 offense often referred to as a “pass back” violation. The offense rests on three events occurring in the following sequence:

- The ball is kicked (played with the foot) by a teammate of the goalkeeper,
- This action is deemed to be deliberate rather than a deflection, and
- The goalkeeper handles the ball directly (no intervening touch or play of the ball by anyone else)

The attached clip clearly demonstrates that these requirements were met.

- The ball was deliberately kicked by Columbus player #12 (Gavin).
- The ball was then directly handled by the Columbus goalkeeper (Hesmer).

If the ball had continued on into the net, despite having been handled by the Columbus goalkeeper, the referee would have applied advantage and counted the goal.

Second, the referee did not interfere with the restart and thus allowed Colorado to perform a quick free kick. Quick restarts generally, and quick free kicks in particular, are favored by the Laws of the Game and should be allowed unless:

- the ball is not stationary,
- the location is not correct based on where the offense occurred, or
- a specific and compelling reason exists to delay the restart (e.g., a serious injury or the need to card for misconduct).

Third, because the ball was kicked directly into the net by Colorado #11 (Cooke) from an indirect free kick restart, the goal could not be allowed. Before announcing his decision, the referee took a quick look at the lead assistant referee and confirmed that the assistant referee was indicating that the goal was not valid. If the Columbus goalkeeper had made contact with the ball in any way, the goal would not have been scored “directly” from the indirect free kick and would have counted.

The officiating team’s decisions and actions were soundly grounded in their knowledge of the Laws of the Game and recommended mechanics.

Law 11: Offside

Subject	Law 11 – Offside, IFAB advice on the application of Law 11, Decision 2
Edited Subject	Touching the Ball (2005)
File Under	Law 11
Date	August 24, 2005

The International Football Association Board (IFAB) revised Law 11 (Offside) effective 1 July 2005 by, among other things, incorporating definitions of what it means to “interfere with play,” “interfere with an opponent,” and “gain an advantage by being in an offside position.” The **USSF Advice to Referees** section of Memorandum 2005 ended its discussion of the addition of these three definitions by noting:

Referees are reminded that the reference to “playing or touching the ball” does not mean that an offside infraction cannot be called until an attacker in an offside position actually touches the ball.

Because of recent developments which appear to focus on “touching the ball,” there has been some confusion about the above statement. **“Touching the ball” is not a requirement for calling an offside violation if the attacker is interfering with an opponent by making a movement or gesture which, in the opinion of the referee, deceives or distracts that opponent.** What the International Board has recently emphasized is that, in the unlikely event an attacker in an offside position is not challenged by any opponent, the attacker should not be ruled offside unless and until the attacker physically touches the ball.

This emphasis is both simple and easily implemented:

- An attacker in an offside position who is not challenged by any opponent and not competing for the ball with a teammate coming from an onside position who could, in the opinion of the officiating team, get to the ball first should not be ruled offside for interfering with play or gaining an advantage unless that attacker actually touches the ball. In a close race between an onside and an offside attacker, it would be necessary to see which player touches the ball before deciding if an offside offense has occurred.
- An attacker in an offside position whose gestures or movements, in the opinion of the officiating team, cause an opponent to challenge for the ball has interfered with an opponent and should be ruled offside whether the attacker touches the ball or not.

The International Board issued a Circular on August 17, 2005, which reaffirmed the above approach. As the Board stated (emphasis added): “A player in an offside position may be penalized before playing or touching the ball if, in the opinion of the referee, no other teammate in an onside position has the opportunity to play the ball.” Further, “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 the offside position shall be penalized for interfering with an opponent.” Finally, the Board confirmed the requirement that the indirect free kick restart for an offside

offense is taken “from the initial place where the player was adjudged to be in an offside position.”

All referees, instructors, and assessors should review these guidelines carefully. It is important that officials understand and handle the offside offense in a correct, consistent, and realistic manner. Personal interpretations which differ from the approach outlined here can only cause confusion and hard feelings on the part of players, team officials, and spectators.

USSF will shortly distribute to the state associations and place on its website a PowerPoint presentation incorporating this clarification.

Original Subject	An Offside Issue – Is Touching the Ball a Requirement?
Edited Subject	Touching the Ball (2007)
File Under	Law 11
Date	April 18, 2007

In a match on April 15, 2007, between the New York Red Bulls and FC Dallas (clip attached), Red Bulls player #19 (Richards) shoots on goal. The ball is stopped and deflected by Dallas goalkeeper #1 (Hislop) but it goes to Red Bulls player #11 (van den Bergh) who takes another shot on goal.

When van den Bergh strikes the ball, his teammate, Mathis (#13) is in an offside position – indeed, Mathis is just barely above the goal line on the right hand side of the goal – and the ball is moving directly toward him. Mathis jumps up and the ball passes under him into the net for a score.

The following issues and concerns are raised by this scenario:

- The only action Mathis took was to avoid contact with the ball.
- In so doing, he did not block an opponent's movement or vision or deceive or distract an opponent.
- Mathis did not commit an offside violation because he was not actively involved in play by interfering with play, interfering with an opponent, or gaining an advantage.

On August 24, 2006, USSF issued a memorandum based on the developing interpretation and application of Law 11 which specifically laid out the proposition that “interfering with play” requires either touching the ball or making a credible move to play the ball. Acting to avoid contact (if successful) does not meet either of these criteria.

An attacker in an offside position must act (touch the ball, move to the ball, interfere with an opponent, block an opponent, distract or deceive an opponent) to be declared offside. Action to avoid involvement (if successful) must be excluded.

Referees should remember that a scenario such as this one, *which might have been called differently in years past*, must now meet more stringent standards for an offside violation. Although the basic requirements for an offside violation under Law 11 remain the same, our understanding of how to implement these requirements has been evolving to match the modern game.

Original Subject	A Classic Offside Scenario
Edited Subject	A Classic Illustration of Why Assistant Referees Must Delay Offside Decisions
File Under	Law 11
Date	May 2, 2007

Offside is often the subject of spirited debates among players, team officials, referees, and spectators. This has been particularly the case in the last few years following the publication of several definitions from FIFA clarifying what it means to be interfering with play, interfering with an opponent, and gaining an advantage in violation of Law 11 (Offside). In support of these definitions, USSF has distributed several detailed memoranda (August 24, 2005, and April 18, 2007).

In a match played in Los Angeles on April 28, 2007, between LA Galaxy and Chivas USA, an incident took place which is a classic example of one of the most contentious issues in the offside decision – two attackers pursuing the ball, one coming from an offside position and one coming from an onside position.

The incident also emphasizes the vital need for officials to avoid hasty decisions and to wait to see how the play develops.

In the 86th minute, Galaxy #24 (Sturgis) played the ball forward into space. At the time, Galaxy #11 (Jaqua) was in an offside position near the center of the field and his teammate, Galaxy #10 (Donovan), was onside well behind the second to last defender to Jaqua's right. Both attackers reacted almost immediately and began sprinting hard to the ball. Although Donovan started about three yards behind his teammate, he had pulled level with him within the next few strides. There is no indication that Jaqua interfered with any opponent. In situations where an attacker is coming from an onside position and another attacker coming from an offside position, each with an equally credible chance of getting to the ball, it is imperative that officials withhold a decision until either it becomes clear which attacker will get to the ball first (even if this means having to wait until one or the other player actually touches the ball) or the action of the attacker coming from the offside position causes one or more opponents to be deceived or distracted.

Subject	Offside Offense on a Corner Kick
File Under	Law 11
Date	April 24, 2008

Officials must remain focused and vigilant in order to make correct offside decisions, particularly in situations where an offside violation is not expected. Such was the case last Sunday, April 20, in the match between Kansas City at Chicago when corner kicks were called in favor of Chicago.

Twice, in a set play often referred to as a “short corner,” Chicago players (#21, Mapp, and #10, Blanco) committed offside violations which were not detected by the officiating team. Referees must remember that Law 11 states there is no offside offense if a player receives the ball directly from a corner kick. However, once the corner kick has been taken (i.e., after the ball is kicked and moved), all play occurring afterward must be closely monitored for a possible offside offense and all the usual requirements of Law 11 must be applied.

The accompanying video clip highlights how a corner kick can develop almost immediately into the sort of play where an offside offense can occur. The referee and assistant referee should have been alerted to this challenge by the presence of two attackers close to each other at the corner, a team tactic which has become more common in recent years. The corner kick taker plays the ball to this nearby teammate. The teammate stops the ball to allow the kicker to play the ball again or may even play the ball back to the corner kick taker. However, the moment the teammate makes contact with the ball, the assistant referee must quickly determine if the basic conditions of an offside position exist regarding any attacker but most particularly regarding the corner kick taker.

If at least two defenders had been standing on the goal line at the moment the Chicago attacker stopped the ball which he had received from the corner kick, there would have been no offside position and therefore no offside violation in either situation.

This is a difficult play to observe and the purpose of this paper is to raise awareness as to its challenges for the officiating team. Referees and assistant referees should also be prepared for actions by the opposing team to counter the “short corner” tactic, including an increased likelihood of an encroachment violation as opponents attempt to move in closer to mark both attackers.

Original Subject	Offside Issues
Edited Subject	Analysis of a Contentious Goal from the 2007 MLS Season
File Under	Law 11
Date	October 16, 2007

During a match between FC Dallas and the Columbus Crew on October 6, 2007, a sequence of play occurred which resulted in the scoring of a goal by Columbus player #12 (Eddie Gaven). At the time, Columbus player #26 (Andy Herron) was indisputably in an offside position and some analyses of the play have suggested that the goal should have been canceled because Herron had committed an offside infraction.

Being in an offside position is not an offense. A player in an offside position is only penalized if he is, in the opinion of the referee, involved in active play by:

- Interfering with play or
- Interfering with an opponent or
- Gaining an advantage by being in that position.

Below, using the guidance provided by FIFA, we examine whether Herron should have been penalized for being in an offside position.

Although Herron is seen sticking his leg out as the ball passes him, there is no contact with the ball and therefore Herron cannot be considered to have *interfered with play*. This is a fact.

The camera angles on the several replays of the event on the attached clip do not provide us with a clear line of sight from the perspective of the Dallas goalkeeper #30 (Ray Burse) so we must draw our conclusions from what can be seen. First, Herron is about 12 yards from the Dallas goalkeeper when the play was initiated by Columbus. Accordingly, Herron occupied only a small portion of the goalkeeper's field of view and it is therefore inconclusive that Herron interfered with the goalkeeper by blocking Burse's view of the path of the ball. Second, there is no video evidence that Herron's actions deceived or distracted the goalkeeper (much less any other defender). The goalkeeper's position to defend against this shot on goal appears to be set by the trajectory of the ball as it left Gaven's foot, not by any action taken by Herron. The evidence thus supports a decision that Herron did not *interfere with an opponent*.

Gaining an advantage while in an offside position is not an issue here since there was no deflection from the goalposts, crossbar, or a defender. This also is a fact.

As a consequence, none of the elements of involvement in active play while in an offside position were present and the referee's decision not to penalize Herron for his position must be supported.

Original Subject	Offside, Interfering with Play and Interfering with an Opponent
Edited Subject	Interfering with Play: Clarification of Proper Law Application
File Under	Law 11
Date	August 24, 2006

The proper interpretation and application of Law 11 have been evolving in recent years. To this end, the International Board has provided detailed definitions of the ways in which a player may become involved in active play (Law 11, International Board Decision 2). On August 17, 2005, a Circular from the FIFA further clarified some of the confusion regarding whether "touching the ball" was a requirement for "interfering with play" (emphasis added):

- A player in an offside position may be penalized before playing or touching the ball if, in the opinion of the referee, no other teammate 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 the offside position shall be penalized for interfering with an opponent.

To "interfere with play" means that the attacker must touch the ball or make a play for the ball. While "touching the ball" is obvious, an attacker has not made a play for the ball if, in fact, he does not move toward the ball or does not move any part of his body in an attempt to touch a ball played toward him. It is not correct to consider "in the area of active play" to be the same as "involved in active play" -- merely being near the ball is not enough to judge that the attacker is involved in active play. The attacker must act to play the ball, though the "action" does not have to include touching the ball.

To "interfere with an opponent" means that an opponent must actually be prevented from playing or being able to play the ball by clearly blocking the opponent's line of vision or direction of movement or by "making a gesture or movement which, in the opinion of the referee, deceives or distracts an opponent." To be deceived or distracted, however, the opponent must be within some reasonable distance of the play.

There is no hard and fast test of "nearness" beyond the opinion of the referee but the interference with an opponent must be clear (not just hypothetical or theoretically possible) before deciding that an offside violation has occurred.

In the attached USL clip, Miami player Romario is in an obvious offside position when the ball is last touched by his teammate, Gil, and Gil then plays the ball forward almost directly toward Romario. However, Romario neither touches nor makes any play for the ball. Furthermore, there is no opponent close enough to be reasonably obstructed or impeded in any way nor does Romario make any gesture or movement which could reasonably be considered deceptive or distracting. Gil proceeds to run forward, takes control of his own pass, moves farther downfield from Romario, and then passes the ball back to Romario who ultimately scores a goal. The goal was valid and, in particular, there was no offside offense during any part of this sequence of play. In a situation such as this, neither the referee nor the lead

assistant referee should assume that Romario will play the ball simply because it was sent in his direction. They must wait to see if Romario touches the ball, makes a play toward the ball, or moves in such a way as to obstruct, impede, deceive, or distract an opponent who is close enough that the opponent is prevented from participating in the play.

Original Subject	Offside and Interfering with Play
Edited Subject	Interfering with Play: Example from a USWNT Match
File Under	Law 11
Date	July 26, 2007

The attached clip displays an offside decision in a match between the U.S. Women's national team and Brazil played on June 23 at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford NJ. Early in the match, the U.S. team (Lopez) took a corner kick which was played into the top of Brazil's goal area. A Brazilian player headed the ball out but it was returned by Lori Chalupny toward her teammate, Cat Whitehill (#4).

Whitehill, while on the run, neatly flipped the ball above an opponent and ran forward, in effect passing the ball to herself as she then retook control of the ball past the second to last Brazilian opponent, with only the goalkeeper to beat. When Whitehill flipped the ball up, a teammate (Heather O'Reilly) was arguably in an offside position (the camera angle makes an independent decision unclear).

However, O'Reilly was flagged for an offside violation even though she did not touch the ball and her teammate, Whitehill, was running hard from an onside position to retake control of the ball. The only action O'Reilly took was to wait for her teammate to control the ball and then to run alongside her as Whitehill dribbled to the goal, kicked, and put the ball into the net.

The assistant referee should have withheld the flag until it was clear which of the two attackers, one (O'Reilly) in an offside position and one (Whitehill) running hard from an onside position to collect her own pass, would get to the ball first. O'Reilly neither interfered with play nor with an opponent.

The goal should have been allowed.

Original Subject	Offside – Interfering with Play
Edited Subject	Interfering with Play: Example from 2009 MLS Season
File Under	Law 11
Date	March 25, 2009

The first goal scored in the new MLS season (New York Red Bulls at Seattle Sounders, March 19, see accompanying clip) was the subject of controversy based on the argument that a teammate of the scorer was in an offside position at the time and had become involved in active play by interfering with play. The goal was from Sounder #17 (Montero) against the Red Bull goalkeeper #1 (Cepero) and the Sounder forward alleged to have been offside was #23 (Nyassi).

The following facts are not in dispute:

- Nyassi was in an offside position.
- Nyassi did not become involved in active play by gaining an advantage (historically, this is only an issue if the ball has rebounded from the crossbar, a goalpost, or a defender, which it did not in this case).
- Nyassi did not interfere with an opponent. He did not get in the way of a defender, make any movement or gesture which deceived or distracted an opponent, and, most importantly, did not block the goalkeeper's line of sight (the attack came in from the goalkeeper's left whereas the attacker ran from the goalkeeper's right and was at least several yards away from the goalkeeper when the shot on goal was made).
- Nyassi did not interfere with play (no contact with the ball).

The assistant referee was well placed, in line with the second to last defender, to confirm these essential elements in deciding for an offside violation. Accordingly, there was no offside violation and the goal was valid.

The debate has been vigorous over the last several years regarding the way in which an attacker in an offside position can be involved in active play. The definition provided by the International Board regarding "gaining an advantage" is clear and based on concrete observable facts. The definition of "interfering with an opponent" involves various judgments but is generally clear in its application since the primary issue here is whether the interference results from blocking paths and/or lines of sight.

This memorandum confirms that "interfering with play" cannot be decided unless the attacker in an offside position makes contact with the ball.

Subject	When Defenders Leave the Field
File Under	Law 11
Date	August 12, 2009

A more definitive interpretation of Law 11 (Offside) was circulated this year by the International Board as part of its annual notice of Law changes and clarifications. This has led to some discussion among referees, players, and coaches regarding how this interpretation should be implemented in different game situations involving a defender leaving the field during play across the goal line or touch line. The following scenarios should be considered:

- During the normal course of play. The critical issue is whether, in the opinion of the referee, the defender's action was a normal part of play. For example, the defender left briefly to get around an opponent or the defender's momentum necessarily resulted in crossing the goal line or touchline. In this case, no violation has occurred and the defender is expected to return to the field without undue delay. The permission of the referee is not required.
- Attempting to create an offside situation. If, in the opinion of the referee, the defender left the field with the intention of placing an attacker in an apparent offside position (by changing the determination of which teammates are the last and second to last defenders), this is a violation of the Law and a form of misconduct (leaving the field without the permission of the referee). However, play should normally be allowed to continue but the defender off the field is considered to be on the closest point of the boundary line for purposes of determining an attacker's offside position. Thus, if the defender on the field closest to the goal line is the goalkeeper standing a few feet from the goal line and the defender left the field across the goal line, that defender is, in effect, considered to be on the goal line as the last defender and the goalkeeper has become the second to last defender.
- Misconduct. When a defender has committed misconduct by leaving the field in an attempt to place an attacker in an offside position, the referee's normal course of action is to allow play to continue but to caution the defender when the ball goes next out of play. However, it is not necessary to wait for the ball to leave the field. The next stoppage of play could occur in a number of ways – a foul or a serious injury or the expiration of time, for example. The referee could also whistle to stop play solely because the attacking team no longer controls the ball (e.g., a shot on goal by the attacker is saved and held by the goalkeeper). In this case, the stoppage is due solely to misconduct by a player off the field: after showing the yellow card, the restart would be an indirect free kick for the opposing team where the ball was when play was stopped by the referee.

Law 12: Fouls and Misconduct

Fouls

Subject	<i>Throw-In to Keeper by Teammate</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	January 1, 2000

As of the 1997-98 Laws of the Game, Law 12 prevents the goalkeeper from handling the ball directly from a throw-in by a teammate. An indirect free kick must be given from the place where the handling occurred (subject to the usual special circumstances within the goal area). As with the restriction on handling if the ball is received from a teammate's kick, questions have arisen regarding the proper action to take under several scenarios.

- A thrown ball is apparently going toward goal and the keeper reaches out to parry or punch the ball away. A violation of Law 12 has clearly occurred but, since a goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in, there is no misconduct. Only the technical foul is punished with an indirect free kick.
- Starting with the same scenario as above, suppose the handling by the goalkeeper is unsuccessful and the ball continues directly into the goal. First, a violation of Law 12 has occurred but, as with any other violation of Law 12, the referee would apply advantage and allow play to continue. Second, the goal would count since it was not scored directly from the throw-in.
- Suppose another teammate (not the goalkeeper) reaches up and touches the ball. If the handling is successful, the player has violated Law 12 (penal foul) and a penalty kick restart must be awarded if the handling occurred within the penalty area (otherwise, a direct free kick). This foul has not prevented a goal (a sending-off misconduct) since a goal could not be scored directly from the throw-in. Likewise, if the handling had been unsuccessful and the ball went into the net, the goal would be counted as the referee would apply advantage to the offense (a caution might be considered for unsporting behavior, bringing the game into disrepute).

Referees must carefully study these situations and their expected outcomes so that decisions are rendered quickly, authoritatively, and accurately in the fast paced environment of a match.

Subject	<i>Sequential Infringements of the Law</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	November 22, 2002

Recent matches in the professional division have highlighted a basic principle of the Laws of the Game -- that a foul cannot be committed when the ball is not in play. Reduced to its most simple elements, this principle assists the referee in deciding what action to take if an infringement of the Law occurs after play is stopped. Because such action cannot be a foul, the referee must deal with it as misconduct and remember that the restart has already been determined based on what stopped play in the first place.

This concept, however, depends on understanding when and under what circumstances the ball is not in play and the role of the assistant referee.

- Law 9 states that the ball is out of play when it leaves the field, across the touch line or goal line, or when the referee stops play
- USSF Advice to Referees (9.1) explains that the referee has stopped play at the moment the decision is made, not when it is announced by some signal (e.g., a whistle)

Accordingly, the decision to stop play marks the beginning of the stoppage and the time between the decision to stop play and the announcement of this decision is included in the period of stoppage. Any infringement during this period is therefore misconduct and plays no part in determining the correct restart.

Particularly with infringements of Law 11 (Offside), however, it is the assistant referee who is most likely to have given the initial signal that a violation may have occurred. Under the Laws of the Game, this information is subject to the decision of the referee. If the referee accepts the information, then the offside has been called and is considered to have occurred when the assistant referee gave the original signal. Anything happening after the assistant referee's signal must be dealt with as misconduct.

This is exemplified by a situation in which the original flag signal for offside by the assistant referee is not initially seen but a subsequent apparent foul is whistled by the referee. If the referee becomes aware of the assistant referee signal prior to restarting play and if the original signal is confirmed by the referee, the subsequent apparent foul must be handled as misconduct rather than as a foul and the restart would be an indirect free kick for the defense (for the offside violation) no matter what action the referee has taken regarding the misconduct (caution or sending off).

Of course, these matters need to be included in the pregame briefing of the officials. Further, keeping the assistant referees in better view during play will reduce the likelihood of embarrassingly extended delays in becoming aware of their signals.

Subject	<i>Handling Offenses</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	April 27, 2005

Recent incidents in the professional leagues involving possible handling offenses have caused considerable comment and debate. For those not officiating the match, multiple camera angles, instant replay, and slow-motion viewing make the debate easier because they allow a leisurely analysis of the facts well after the relevant decision has to be made.

The Laws of the Game declare that a direct free kick is given to the opposing team if a player “handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within his own penalty area).” This simple statement defines one of the ten listed offenses in the first part of Law 12 (Fouls and Misconduct) and lies at the historical and traditional heart of soccer, a game played with all parts of the body other than the hands. Only the goalkeeper is exempt from this restriction and only while within his own penalty area.

What are the characteristics of a clear handling offense?

- A player deliberately carries, strikes, or propels the ball with the hand or arm
- It is the player’s action that initiates the contact with the ball

What characteristics of ball contact are clearly not handling offenses?

- The ball strikes the hand or arm (i.e., the ball initiates the contact)
- The contact is accidental (not the result of action by the player)
- The contact is the result of a purely reflexive effort at self-protection

What are the standards of judgment which the referee will apply when the handling offense is not immediately clear?

- The distance or time within which the player had to react to avoid contact – if there was time to avoid the contact, the likelihood of an offense is greater
- The position of the player’s hand or arm at the time of the contact – if the hand or arm is carried in an unnatural or unusual position (e.g., high up in the air or, while defending against a free kick, far away from the body), the likelihood of an offense is greater
- Directing the ball after initial accidental or reflexive contact – if the player takes advantage to control or push the ball away, a handling offense has occurred

The referee, with input from the assistant referees, must make the immediate decision based on the best available evidence in an increasingly fast paced game. This difficult decision must be **respected and final**.

Subject	<i>Use of the Elbow</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	August 31, 2005

The International Football Association Board (IFAB) has urged referees to be more aware of and to deal properly with the use of the elbow during challenges.

Increasingly, the Board has noted, elbows are being used to gain an unfair advantage and, often, to injure opponents.

USSF shares this concern and notes a growing number of such incidents in professional matches:

- Clip 1 (KC Wizards - Columbus Crew, 7/23/2005), #3 Garcia cynically and with excessive force targets #29 Cameron's head. A red card was clearly warranted.
- Clip 2 (NY MetroStars – Columbus Crew, 5/31/2003), Wolyniec retaliates against #5 McCarty for an earlier foul and uses excessive force to the opponent's head. Another definite red card.
- Clip 3 (FC Dallas – NE Revolution, 7/16/2005), #22 Leonard is closely behind #9 Mina and Mina uses his elbow or upper arm to strike backwards. The action was reckless but not performed with excessive force (the arm was moving naturally as both players were at a full run). A caution was warranted.
- Clip 4 (Chicago Fire – LA Galaxy, 8/13/2005), #29 Thiago is closely marked (considerable contact and some holding) by #8 Vagenas and Thiago, in recklessly swinging his arm backward to ward off further contact, strikes Vagenas in the face. A caution was appropriate.
- Clip 5 (NY Metrostars – CD Chivas USA, 8/20/2005), #11 Ibrahim jumps up to challenge and, while doing so, rakes a straight arm along the face of #7 Ramirez. While arguably a foul, it does not appear to have involved misconduct (contact with the elbow was incidental to contact with the entire arm).
- Clip 6 (NE Revolution – Colorado Rapids, 8/17/2005), #2 Dempsey is jumping up to challenge, leads with an arm extended and bent, and connects with #3 Kotschau. The decision as to whether such foul is seen as reckless or committed with excessive force depends, of course, on the referee's angle and information he may receive from his assistants and fourth official. In all cases the safety of players must be a primary concern and the inherent danger of blows to the head recognized.

Taking these and other clips together, certain generalizations are possible regarding criteria on which officials should focus when evaluating situations involving the use of an elbow (the guidelines below assume that the action occurs during play, on the field, and against an opponent):

- When an elbow is used, the potential offense is **striking** and therefore the action must be assessed in the context of Law 12 (careless, reckless, or excessive force).

- Any form of striking, including the use of an elbow, also carries the high likelihood of being misconduct – if the action is reckless, the player must be cautioned for unsporting behavior but, if excessive force is used, the player must be sent off and shown a red card for violent conduct or, if competing for the ball, serious foul play.
- Given the impact and likelihood of injury, a player who appears to be targeting the head (based, for example, on the direction of the player's view) must be dealt with firmly and promptly.
- Jumping toward an opponent with the arm bent and held above shoulder level must be considered particularly serious since the force is increased by the weight and momentum of the body. If contact is made with the elbow or forearm, the foul must be called and the offending player's misconduct dealt with accordingly. In such cases, the referee should not consider applying advantage except under the most unusual circumstances.
- Although it is possible for a player to contact an opponent with an elbow or forearm entirely accidentally, this is rare and referees must be prepared to suspect that a foul has occurred unless concretely convinced otherwise. Instances where the offending player is looking at the opponent or where the opportunity to avoid contact was ignored should draw the referee's attention and concern. The natural movement and placement of an arm while running should be taken into account in deciding if contact is reckless or merely careless.
- The angle of view is critical and referees must expend an extra effort to achieve a position to see the event clearly when their reading of the play and the players suggests that elbow or forearm contact is possible. Where a poor angle is suspected, the referee must quickly determine if an assistant referee can provide relevant information before making the decision.

Original Subject	Obvious Goal-Scoring Opportunity Denied (The 4 Ds)
Edited Subject	<i>Obvious Goal Scoring Opportunity: The 4 Elements of DOGSO</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	September 16, 2002

Law 12 provides that a defender whose violation of the Law prevents a goal or denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity must be sent off and shown the red card. The "professional foul" which is taken in a cynical attempt to prevent opponents from scoring requires a quick, firm response by the referee. Such misconduct by the defender overshadows the severity of the foul itself.

In order for a player to be sent off for denying an "obvious goal-scoring opportunity," four elements must be present:

- Number of Defenders -- not more than one defender between the foul and the goal, not counting the defender who committed the foul
- Distance to goal -- the closer the foul is to the goal, the more likely it is an obvious goalscoring opportunity
- Distance to ball -- the attacker must have been close enough to the ball at the time of the foul to have continued playing the ball
- Direction of play -- the attacker must have been moving toward the goal at the time the foul was committed

If any element is missing, there can be no send off for denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity. Further, the presence of each of these elements must be "obvious" in order for the send off to be appropriate under this provision of Law 12.

However, the foul might, by itself, warrant a card -- a caution for unsporting behavior, for example, if the challenge was reckless or a send off if the challenge was violent. If the foul by the defender is both violent and qualifies as an obvious goal-scoring opportunity offense misconduct, the referee should include both facts in the game report but must only list one official reason for the red card.

Referees are reminded that offenses which deny a goal-scoring opportunity are not limited to those punishable by a direct free kick or penalty kick but may include technical fouls for which the restart is an indirect free kick.

Original Subject	The Opinion of the Referee and Obvious Goal Scoring Opportunities
Edited Subject	<i>Obvious Goal Scoring Opportunity: The Opinion of the Referee</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	September 25, 2007

Attached is a clip from a match played September 16 between Chivas USA and Colorado Rapids (at Colorado). The clip presents a series of issues which, among other things, focuses our attention on the critical role of the referee's judgment in grey areas and on staying current as to interpretations of the Laws of the Game.

The simple facts are that Chivas player # 10 (Merlin) was attacking the Colorado goal and was fouled in the 11th minute by Colorado # 3 (Erpen). As a result, Erpen was given a red card and Chivas were given a penalty kick.

The first core issue is where the foul by Erpen happened. Fouls are complex events and require both time and space to occur. They cannot be easily pinpointed at a given spot on the field and a given second on the clock.

Recognizing this, FIFA made it clear last year that a foul may begin outside the penalty area and conclude inside the penalty area – in which case, the referee should award a penalty kick.

That was clearly the case here. Initial contact with Merlin was outside the Colorado penalty area but the nature and consequences of that contact did not become evident for several more steps and seconds of play, by which time the event itself had continued into the penalty area. The penalty kick was a correct decision.

The second core issue is whether the offense met the requirements of an obvious goal scoring opportunity (the "4 Ds"). Here, the clip is less revealing. Each of the requirements involves judgment, some more than others, but three of the "Ds" would appear to be present based on the evidence – distance to goal, distance to the ball, and direction of play.

At the time of the foul (measured by when the referee decided the foul had occurred), Colorado player #29 (Sanneh) was definitely in the area of the offense. Based on the referee's distance and angle, Sanneh could have been judged either not between the foul and the opposing goal (making the Colorado goalkeeper Coundoul the only defender) or not able to add materially to Colorado's defense had Merlin not been fouled. Either decision would result in the 4th D (number of defenders) also being met.

This latter element confirms once again that, even with an apparently objective and factual issue such as "number of defenders," there remain critical decisions which are and always will be based on "in the opinion of the referee."

Subject	<i>Advantage and Obvious Goalscoring Opportunities</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	June 2, 2006

Recent matches have caused considerable debate regarding the practical interpretation and application of advantage in obvious goalscoring opportunity situations. Two clips are attached: one is from a match played on May 13, Chivas at New England Revolution, and the other is from the final of the UEFA Champion's Cup, Arsenal against Barcelona (May 17). The guidance below should not be considered a commentary on the actions of the referees in the respective matches – the clips are included only to provide a practical basis for responding to questions regarding the options available to a referee who has applied advantage to a foul which interferes with a goal or an obvious goalscoring opportunity.

Some general principles need to be recalled:

- Applying advantage is a decision of the referee, whereas calling out "Play on!" and swinging the arms upward (the verbal and visual signal) is only the announcement of the decision.
- A sequence of plays can occur so quickly in a match involving skilled players that the conditions for an advantage decision may pass before it is possible to signal the decision. Nevertheless, advantage has been applied if that was the referee's decision.
- The referee is expected to stop play within a short time (roughly, 2- 3 seconds) after the foul if the advantage does not develop or does not continue.
- Advantage is a team concept and thus the advantage gained by a team when the referee decides not to stop play can be enjoyed by the player who was fouled as well as by any teammate of that player.

Given a foul judged to be an interference with a goal or a goalscoring opportunity and given the referee's decision to apply advantage, the following scenarios should be considered carefully:

- If the advantage does not continue, the referee is expected to stop play as soon as this is evident. The defender committing the foul must be sent off and shown the red card, and play must be restarted correctly (based on the foul and its location).
- If the advantage continues and the attacking team is able to score a goal (regardless of whether it was by the attacker who was fouled or by a teammate), the defender who committed the foul may not be sent off (since a goal was not prevented and the team's goalscoring opportunity was not interfered with successfully). The misconduct would be more appropriately categorized as unsporting behavior (tactical foul) warranting a caution and the showing of the yellow card. However, if the foul involved violent conduct or serious foul play, a red card must be given.

In the Chivas-Revolution clip, Twellman (Revolution #20) was fouled by Llamosa (Chivas #11) at the 39th minute. The referee applied advantage (though this is not evident from the clip).

Several seconds later, the referee judged that the advantage had been lost (the foul slowed Twellman sufficiently that an opponent was able to catch up to and challenge him). The referee stopped play for the original foul and, prior to the restart, cautioned Llamosa. If the original foul had been considered an interference with an obvious goalscoring opportunity (all elements for this misconduct – the “4 Ds” – were present), the correct referee action would have been to send off Llamosa for “denied goal by foul” (DGF).

In the Arsenal-Barcelona clip, the referee stopped play after the Arsenal goalkeeper, Lehmann, fouled Barcelona’s Eto’o at the 18th minute at the top of the Arsenal penalty area. Just after the whistle was blown, Barcelona teammate Giuly came streaking in from the right and struck the ball into the net. The goal was canceled and Lehmann was sent off. If the referee had allowed the advantage to develop, the offended team would have scored and, prior to the kick-off, Lehmann should have been cautioned. The goal, regrettably, was not valid because the referee decided the advantage had not continued and stopped play before the ball was struck into the net. Under these circumstances, the referee had no choice but to return to the original decision that a goalscoring opportunity had been denied – Lehmann was sent off and shown the red card.

Subject	<i>Advantage in the Penalty Area</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	April 11, 2008

Special circumstances govern the application of advantage for offenses committed by defenders inside their own penalty area. Although the basic concept of advantage remains the same, the specific decision by the referee must be governed by both the close proximity to the goal and the likelihood of scoring from the penalty kick restart if play is stopped instead of applying advantage.

The basic elements of the decision are straightforward:

- Advantage is a team concept and thus the referee must be aware not only of the fouled player's ability to continue his or her attack but also of the ability of any of the player's teammates to continue the attack themselves.
- Advantage has been applied when the decision is made, not when the advantage signal is given. The signal itself may often be delayed for 2-3 seconds while the referee evaluates the advantage situation to determine if it will continue.
- Where it does not continue, the Laws of the Game provide for the referee to stop play for the original foul.
- If the original foul involved violence, the referee is advised not to apply advantage unless there is an immediate chance of scoring a goal.

Inside the penalty area, the competitive tension is much greater and the referee is called upon to make quicker decisions. The time during which the referee looks for advantage to continue becomes defined by the probability of scoring a goal directly following the foul or from the subsequent play.

In the attached clip of an incident occurring in the 27th minute of a match on April 9 between New England and Kansas City. NE defender #31 (Nyassi) fouls KC attacker #11 (Morsink) near the top of the penalty area. Just as Morsink is fouled, however, he passes the ball to his teammate #19 (Sealy).

The referee properly recognized the advantage but then whistled for the foul against Morsink after he decided that a goal would not be scored by Sealy. In fact, Sealy made a shot on goal just as the whistle sounded and the ball failed to enter the net.

- In the absence of a whistle stopping play and if the ball had entered the net, the advantage would clearly have continued and the goal would be counted.
- If, in this case, the ball had entered the goal after the whistle had sounded, the goal could not be counted.
- **Ideally, the referee in this incident should have delayed stopping play for the original foul until he saw more concretely what Sealy would have been able to do with the ball.**

In this incident, the penalty kick for the original foul was successful.

Subject	<i>The "Pass Back" Violation</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	May 21, 2008

The attached clip from a match played by Columbus at Toronto last Saturday, May 17, involves an often misunderstood offense commonly referred to as the "pass back" violation. Unfortunately, the phrase "pass back" itself can be a source of confusion.

This rarely seen infraction came into the Laws of the Game in 1992 as part of the general effort to restrict opportunities for goalkeepers to waste time by unfairly withholding the ball from active challenge by taking possession of the ball with the hands. Other measures along the same lines include the 6 second limit on goalkeeper possession, the second possession restriction, and the throw-in to the goalkeeper by a teammate.

The offense rests on three events occurring in the following sequence:

- The ball is kicked (played with the foot) by a teammate of the goalkeeper,
- This action is deemed to be deliberate rather than a deflection, and
- The goalkeeper handles the ball directly (no intervening touch of play of the ball by anyone else)

When, in the opinion of the referee, these three conditions are met, the violation has occurred. It is not necessary for the ball to be "passed," it is not necessary for the ball to go "back," and it is not necessary for the deliberate play by the teammate to be "to" the goalkeeper.

In the incident clip, Toronto and Columbus are tied and the match has entered the second minute of a total of two minutes of added time. The Columbus goalkeeper punts the ball well past midfield. After a brief but vigorous competition for possession, a Toronto player passes the ball apparently in the direction of his fullback but the ball actually enters space where a Columbus attacker actively pressures for control and the ball, chased by this attacker and defender, continues onward to the Toronto goalkeeper who picks it up with the onrushing attacker only a few steps away.

The offense must be properly understood in the following terms:

- The ball was clearly kicked by a Toronto defender
- The ball was neither deflected nor accidentally misdirected -- that is, the pass was deliberate
- It is irrelevant that the pass was arguably not to the goalkeeper
- The goalkeeper clearly handled the ball directly from the kick by his teammate
- Instead of playing the ball in some other way, the goalkeeper chose to handle it, thus removing the ball from active challenge by the Columbus attacker

Referees must be alert to the possibility of even uncommon offenses such as this. The requirements of the "iron triangle" (played by the teammate's foot, deliberate action, goalkeeper directly handling) were met and the violation should have been called.

Subject	<i>Striking</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	July 3, 2008

As a result of several recent incidents, as well as a general rise in actions which demonstrate disrespect by players toward each other in MLS matches, referees need to review the following guidelines regarding "strikes or attempts to strike" as a foul and/or misconduct, the appropriate action to take in each case, and the reasons why such behavior must be dealt with firmly.

Striking is not defined in the Laws of the Game. Referees must therefore apply commonly accepted usage and common sense in identifying the actions which would properly be called striking. As a foul, striking consists of a player making (or attempting to make):

- direct contact with an opponent;
- on the field during play;
- using a hand, elbow, arm, head, or knee;
- or by throwing any object at an opponent (including the ball).

Underlying the concept is the notion that the action involves at least some degree of force -- merely touching an opponent would clearly not be seen as a striking foul. There should be no hesitation in whistling the offense and indicating the correct restart (direct free kick or penalty kick) -- according to the IFAB, advantage is not applied to such behavior unless there is a clear, immediate possibility of a goal.

If the referee's decision is that a striking foul has occurred, the assumption should be that a red card should be shown and the player should be sent off (violent conduct). A red card must be given when the striking is performed:

- using the backhand, open-handed slap, fist, or poking fingers; or
- in a manner intended to increase pain, injury, or humiliation.

Particular attention must be paid to striking the head, face, or other vulnerable parts of the body (e.g., the eyes). Grabbing the hair of the opponent could be considered striking or holding but, in either case, would be evaluated using the above criteria. If the contact does not involve force and would thus not be considered a foul, the referee must still consider the likelihood of misconduct punishable by a red card if it is performed in an insulting, offensive, or derisory manner designed to provoke, intimidate, or humiliate the opponent (the card would not be reported as violent conduct but as insulting or offensive language, which includes gestures).

In the attached clip from a match involving Los Angeles Galaxy at DC United (June 29, 2008), United player Gallardo contacts the face of Galaxy player Donovan with a backhanded slap in the 42nd minute. Although not delivered with the aggressive force of a punch nor with the sort of "cocked and thrown" aspect of an elbow, it is nevertheless a clear case of striking (the foul)

which must also be considered a send-off offense as the contact was to the face, delivered with enough force to produce bleeding, and done to intimidate. The fact that it was in retaliation for an immediately prior offense (tactical holding) neither excuses the foul nor mitigates the misconduct. It demonstrates the importance of the referee stepping in quickly in the absence of a clear advantage to prevent further problems.

Misconduct

Subject	<i>Display of Cards</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	August 26, 2002

Questions have been raised recently regarding the use of yellow and red cards before, during, and after play and regarding misconduct committed by various people in or around the field. Although the answers to these questions can generally be obtained from the ***Laws of the Game***, prior USSF Memoranda, and ***Advice to Referees on the Laws of the Game***, this memo is intended to summarize in a single place the correct referee action in these different situations. A substantially similar memorandum was issued on June 8, 2000.

Yellow and red cards, which are now mandatory indications of cautions and send-offs, may be shown only for misconduct committed by **players, named substitutes, or substituted players** during a match. "During a match" includes:

- any periods in which play is temporarily stopped,
- half time or similar breaks in play,
- required overtime periods,
- kicks from the penalty mark if this procedure is used in case a winner must be determined,
- *the period of time immediately prior to a match during which players and substitutes are physically on the field warming up, stretching, or otherwise preparing for the match, and*
- *the period of time immediately following a match during which the players and substitutes are physically on the field but in the process of exiting.*

The items above in italics are highlighted because they are recent additions to Advice 3.14 in the 2001 edition of ***Advice to Referees***.

If misconduct occurs prior to the match but not on the field or in advance of players in uniform performing warm-up exercises, no card should be shown and the referee's action does not affect the accumulation of cautions during the match (it must still be included in the referee's report of match incidents).

"Players, named substitutes, or substituted players" means any person listed on a team's roster given to the referee prior to the start of play. If a roster is not normally provided or if it has not yet been given to the referee, it means any person in the vicinity of the field wearing an identifiable team uniform who is subject to being called to participate in the match. Named substitutes are included even if they are never called on to play. Players who have been substituted and, under Law 3, are not permitted to return to the field remain under the authority of the referee as long as they stay in the vicinity of the field. It does not include anyone sent from the field for misconduct (red card) since the maximum penalty has already been applied.

Yellow and red cards are not normally displayed prior to a match or after the match is over. However, as noted above in the definition of "during a match," USSF guidance follows

international practice in recognizing the need to enforce misconduct sanctions for certain periods of time immediately prior to and after the match as though the misconduct had occurred during the match itself. In other words, a player who is on the field warming up before the match may be cautioned and shown the yellow card for misconduct (e.g., dissent). If this player then receives another caution during the match, he must be sent off under Law 12 for the second caution. A player shown a red card and sent from the field for misconduct prior to the match may be replaced from the substitute list and the team can field eleven players, but the roster cannot otherwise be changed (i.e., no new substitute name may be added to the roster) and this replacement is not counted against the team's substitution limit under Law 3.

All misconduct must be included in the referee's report of the match, even if no card is shown. If misconduct is committed before or after a match, the referee must describe the incident in accordance with the language of Law 12 just as though the incident had occurred during the match.

In particular, referees in professional league games are expected to use the prescribed misconduct codes and point values. This will assist the competition authority in determining the correct action to take.

Persons who are not players, named substitutes, or substituted players cannot commit misconduct within the meaning of Law 12 and therefore cannot be shown yellow or red cards nor will their behavior be described in match reports as misconduct. Law 5 is very clear that "team officials" (coaches, trainers, etc.) must behave responsibly and, if they fail to do so, the referee has two primary courses of action. First, the referee may warn the team official that the irresponsible behavior puts him or her at risk. Second, the referee may expel the team official from the field and its immediate area. It is not necessary for a warning to be given in cases of extreme provocation.

As with a player or named substitute who fails to depart the field if sent off, the referee has the power under Law 5 to suspend or terminate a match if an expelled team official refuses to leave.

Disciplinary action against a team official must also be included in the referee's match report.

Subject	<i>Attackers at a Free Kick</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	November 22, 2002

At the taking of a free kick, referees often focus their attention on the defenders and are alert for misconduct which defenders might commit in these circumstances. Such misconduct usually involves failing to respect the required distance and actions designed to delay the restart of play.

This attention is proper and should remain an important element in the referee's mechanics for handling free kick restarts.

If defenders form a wall at the proper distance and one or more attackers are involved in this formation, the referee must be alert for specific dangers and must adopt appropriate positioning in order to watch for possible misconduct by these attackers. Increasingly in recent years, some teams have adopted a strategy in which an attacker joins the wall (either at an end or inside) and, at the moment of taking the free kick, pulls or pushes a defender in the wall so as to open a space through which the ball might pass. It is expected that referees will recognize the opportunity for a foul and/or misconduct to be committed by an attacker under these circumstances and will act appropriately to deal with it. What is of even greater importance, however, is the need to develop an approach to positioning at free kicks which will enable the referee to see such behavior (which frequently involves holding or locking arms behind the backs of the players). Experienced referees will also realize that proper positioning often serves to prevent actions of this sort from occurring in the first place.

Subject	Mass Confrontation
File Under	Law 12
Date	March 14, 2003

The referee's ability to maintain composure in the face of dissent from a player is magnified when he becomes the focus of dissent and challenge from several players simultaneously. For the purpose of this guidance, a "mass confrontation" is defined as the concerted actions of three or more players from the same team who are disputing a decision while surrounding the referee or hindering or forcing movement by the referee. Such situations bring the game into disrepute, are inherently intimidating, and create a strongly negative public image.

The *Laws of the Game* provide adequate tools to deal with dissent on an individual level, but mass confrontations add a dangerous element calling for special measures involving all members of the officiating team. Instances of mass confrontation are significant events that transcend the sum of the individual acts of misconduct which the referee must handle.

Referee

- Attempt to assess the likelihood of a mass confrontation and move out of the area where it would probably occur.
- Distinguish between those players who are actively and aggressively increasing the tension and those who, though physically nearby, are clearly trying to reduce tension.
- Pay particular attention to those who instigate the confrontation, those who join it from the immediate area, and those who move a considerable distance in order to participate in the confrontation.
- Consult with the assistant referees and the fourth official before taking disciplinary action.
- Assess the appropriate punitive measures individually and, if a player is to be sent off, ensure that this occurs before moving on to other players who are to be disciplined.
- Ensure that all cards for misconduct are displayed and recorded before play is restarted.

Assistant Referees

- Both assistants move along the touchline to a point as near as possible to the confrontation and, if necessary, prepare to enter the field for a better viewing position.
- The nearer assistant should concentrate fully on the confrontation and attempt to identify the instigator(s) while the farther assistant concentrates on players who join the confrontation from a distance.
- The senior assistant (on the bench side of the field) should additionally monitor persons coming from the bench into the field to participate in the confrontation, but this assistant's primary objective remains monitoring the confrontation itself.

- After the confrontation has ended, both assistants should be ready to provide information to the referee regarding the identities of persons they observed and the role each such person played in the confrontation.

Fourth Official

- The fourth official assists the referee at all times.
- The fourth official's primary task in a mass confrontation situation is to observe and record the behavior of persons (substitutes and team officials) in the technical areas.
- After the confrontation has ended, the fourth official should be ready to provide information to the referee regarding the behavior of persons whom he has observed. If any relevant behavior involved violence and was not observed by either the referee or the assistant referees, the fourth official must be ready to include such observations in his report.

The referee's game report must list and describe separately any instances of mass confrontation in addition to the actions the referee took to handle individual misconduct that may have been part of the confrontation. Individual misconduct is clearly the responsibility of the referee and must be handled during the match in accordance with standard procedures. Competition authorities reserve the right to administer supplementary discipline to players involved in mass confrontations who may have escaped the attention of the officiating team.

Officials should not rely on the right of any competition authority in this regard but instead make every effort to properly administer justice for misconduct at the time it occurs.

Original Subject	Misconduct Involving Language/Gestures
Edited Subject	<i>Language and Gestures</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	March 14, 2003

Player language, including gestures and other forms of nonverbal communication, can take many forms:

- passing information along to teammates or urging special efforts during play – this is completely acceptable. Referee action: no action needed.
- momentary emotional outburst – borderline acceptable, perhaps a trifling offense only. Referee action: a stern look or verbal admonishment.
- dissent or unsporting behavior – unacceptable misconduct. Referee action: caution and display yellow card.
- offensive, insulting or abusive language – more serious misconduct. Referee action: send off and display red card.

The referee must intelligently apply common sense, feel for the spirit of the game, and knowledge of the way in which player language can affect management of the match in order to distinguish effectively among these forms.

Regardless of age or competitive level, players become excited as their personal or team fortunes rise or fall, and it is not uncommon for language to be used in the heat of the moment. Such outbursts, while possibly vivid, are typically brief, undirected, and often quickly regretted. The referee must understand the complex emotions of players in relation to the match and discount appropriately language which does no lasting harm to those who might have heard or seen the outburst. Of course, the player might well be warned in various ways (a brief word, direct eye contact, etc.) regarding his behavior.

When the words or gestures directly challenge the authority of the referee or assistant referees, actively dispute an official's decision, or are likely to be taken up by a widening circle of other players, the referee must determine if this dissent can be halted through the more formal action of cautioning the player and displaying the yellow card. The objective of the caution for dissent or unsporting behavior (in the case of language which is not dissent but which falls short of deserving a red card), is to protect the referee's ability to continue to manage the match.

Language or gestures can also be “offensive, insulting or abusive” with the result that the player involved is required to leave the field and is shown a red card. The fundamental principle in recognizing offensive, insulting, or abusive language is that the referee must protect the safety and enjoyment of the participants as well as the fairness of the play. Accordingly, language that is generally accepted by players, does not produce adverse or aggressive reactions, and is generally tolerated by them should less likely result in a red card being shown.

The referee might well choose to talk to, warn, admonish, or caution players whose undesirable language occurs in a short, emotional outburst and send off a player whose language is a sustained, calculated, and aggressive verbal assault.

The three critical criteria to be used in evaluating whether language needs to be handled as misconduct warranting a red card are:

- The specific words and/or gestures used. Some words are inherently more offensive than others and are more likely to provoke aggressive reactions. Words that focus on religious, ethnic, racial, or sexual characteristics generally fall in this category and often require a fast, strong response by the referee.
- The audibility or visibility of the language. Language which might call for a more limited response if said quietly and/or to a restricted audience might require a sendoff if performed more publicly.
- Specifically targeted language. Language that is clearly directed at specific persons (for example, opponents or officials) is more likely to spark a reprisal and will usually require a stronger response by the referee.

Referees must take care not to inject purely personal opinions as to the nature of the language when determining a course of action. The primary focus of the referee must be on the effective management of the match and the players in the context of the overall feel for the spirit of the game.

Subject	<i>Automatic Suspension Following an Expulsion from a Match</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	November 14, 2003

FIFA recently distributed Circular 866 to clarify and confirm any doubts remaining from its earlier Circular (821, dated October 1, 2002) regarding the issue of mandatory suspensions for a player who has been expelled from a match. The clarifications took the form of unambiguous answers to certain frequently asked questions.

1. Any player sent off during a football match shall automatically be suspended for the following match (Art. 19, para. 4; Art. 39 FDC)
 2. Any appeal against an automatic suspension shall not have a suspensive effect. Under no circumstances may a player take part in the following match while awaiting a decision on his appeal, regardless of the reasons for his appeal.
 3. Any appeals against an automatic suspension as a result of an obvious error made by the referee under the terms of Art. 83 FDC (principally an error regarding the identify of a player involved in an incident leading to a sending off) can and must be accepted or rejected immediately in order to allow any players who have been erroneously suspended to play in the next match.
 4. The disciplinary body is able to reach an immediate decision with regard to such an appeal as obvious errors, by their very nature, can also be confirmed without delay. If any doubts remain, the referee has clearly not made an obvious error and the appeal will also be rejected immediately.
- We therefore ask the national associations of FIFA to make use of the judicial instruments referred to in the FIFA Disciplinary Code (Art. 134 and 140) in order to be able to make an immediate decision regarding appeals: either allow the disciplinary body to hold an immediate conference or permit a single judge to pronounce a decision.
5. If a player is unable to serve the automatic suspension in a domestic or continental club competition, the relevant bodies shall decide on how the suspension shall be carried over to another competition.
 6. The principle of automatic suspension shall be applied in the same way, irrespective of the offence committed by the player. However, in the case of particularly serious offences, the relevant body may extend the sanction imposed to apply to all competitions organised under its jurisdiction in order to prevent a player, after having committed such an offence, from playing in any other competition. All competition authorities under USSF must ensure that their disciplinary procedures take these clarifications into consideration.

- A one game suspension is mandatory following a send-off (red card).
- The suspension may be extended for more serious offenses but it cannot be reduced, no matter what the reason was for the send-off.

- The suspension must be served even if it is being appealed. Under no circumstances can the fact of an appeal be used to suspend or delay the suspension.
- All appeals must be decided quickly, before the match is played for which the affected player would be suspended. If the send-off was erroneous due to an obvious error in identifying the player, this appeal can be resolved quickly because the error was obvious; if the error was not obvious, the appeal will be quickly resolved by rejecting it.

Subject	<i>Send-Offs for Receiving a Second Caution</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	October 12, 2004

Recent incidents in several professional matches suggest that referees are hesitating to caution a player who has already been cautioned in the match as this would then require that the player be sent off and shown the red card. Referees must remember, however, that the purpose of this action is to remove from the field a player who has previously been officially notified through the first caution that the player's behavior is unacceptable and that, upon repetition, the player will not be permitted to take any further part in the game.

The "second caution send-off" does not distinguish among the various reasons for either the original caution or the second one. In other words, there is no requirement that the misconduct must be more "serious" or of the same type as that which caused the first caution.

Although no caution should be given lightly, a second caution carries the same result as the most serious conduct for which a player would earn a red card. Accordingly, referees should take care that the pattern of misconduct represented by the two cautions reflects behavior that truly is worthy of the player being sent from the field. In cases where the player's conduct on its own would warrant a caution regardless of the player's prior behavior, the referee must consider whether, in addition and looking at the total pattern of behavior within the spirit and feel for the game, the second instance of misconduct rises to the level of a send-off.

Where it does, the referee must not hesitate to take the necessary action.

Where it does not, the referee should consider other means of encouraging proper behavior by the player, including increasingly assertive demonstrations of dissatisfaction with the player's conduct or increasingly severe verbal admonishments. In any event, full details of all misconduct, whether resulting in a card or not, must be included in the match report.

Subject	<i>The Status of Players Who Are Sent Off</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	July 6, 2006

In a recent World Cup match, several players who had been sent off were seen to be still within the stadium walls and arguably within the area of the field.

This has raised questions as to the practical result of being “sent from the field.” The Laws of the Game provide that players, substitutes and substituted players who are sent off for misconduct are required to leave the field. There is no further indication of what this means, what someone who has been sent off may or may not do thereafter, or what authority the referee has regarding this person. Except as may be otherwise noted, the term “player” hereafter is intended to include substitutes and substituted players.

Referees must keep in mind the following four basic principles:

- The purpose of “sending off” a player is to ensure that this person no longer takes any further part in the match (sometimes referred to as being “out of sight, out of sound”).
- “Leaving the field” is generally interpreted as meaning “the area of the field” and is therefore not limited to its formal boundaries (touch lines and goal lines). Accordingly, technical areas and team benches are to be considered within the area of the field.
- With the exception of youth players where continued adult supervision might be needed, players sent off are expected to have no further contact or involvement with their team.
- The *rules of competition* may define, for any given facility or match location, where players who are sent off are required to go. To the extent such rules are not inconsistent with these principles, they should be followed.

Based on the above principles, referees should note the following guidelines for specific situations that may arise:

- In the absence of more restrictive *rules of competition*, the referee has the authority to define “the area of the field” and to require players who have been sent off to exit this area. The referee is encouraged to use existing features which clearly demarcate the area of the field (e.g., fences, walls, ropes).
- A player who has left the area of the field but who remains in or returns to the facility (e.g., sits in the stands or spectator area) should not continue to wear the team’s uniform.
- The referee, with the assistance of the fourth official and the assistant referees, is encouraged to enlist the aid of competition authority officials, facility managers, and on-site security staff to enforce these requirements.
- A youth player who is being allowed to remain with the team or any player who is out of the area of the field but still within the general facility cannot continue to commit

misconduct since the most serious penalty allowed by the Law (send off) has already occurred.

- Further inappropriate conduct by a player under these circumstances may, depending on the severity of the behavior, result in the referee suspending or terminating the match. Under all circumstances, full details must be included in the match report.

Original Subject	Contact with Game Officials
Edited Subject	<i>Physical Contact with Game Officials Initiated by Players</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	August 9, 2006

In several recent matches, there have been instances where players have indicated their disagreement with decisions by match officials by initiating or continuing unacceptable, unwanted, and aggressive physical contact with the referee, an assistant referee, or the fourth official. It does not matter if this contact occurs during a match or when the official is still in the area of the field before or after a match. Four clips related to this issue are attached.

Obviously, not every occasion when a player physically makes contact with a match official is misconduct. Players may seek to offer sincere congratulations for the work of the official or to greet in friendly fashion an official with whom they have had previous experience. Officials should **not** tolerate physical contact by a player (including a substitute, substituted player, or any other person under the authority of the referee) which:

- involves force or aggression (grabbing, pushing, slapping, bumping, stepping on feet, and so forth)
- the official has sought to avoid by moving away and by making a gesture which clearly indicates any further approach is unwelcome (continued pursuit by a player, if performed in a threatening manner, is included here even if physical contact does not result)
- is initiated from an unexpected direction and unaccompanied by any warning
- is delivered in a context which clearly includes disapproval, lack of friendliness, or anger
- restrains or prevents an official from withdrawing from the contact (e.g., by blocking retreat or holding)

It follows, however, that officials themselves should not initiate contact with players under similar circumstances except to the minimum extent needed to perform the responsibilities required by the Laws of the Game. Where an official observes one or more approaching players who appear intent on making impermissible contact, it is appropriate to take reasonable measures to avoid the confrontation, but this should not require the official to retreat in haste or for an excessive distance. The official should indicate as quickly as possible that the approach is unwelcome, at which point player movement toward the official should cease. If it does not, the action by the player could be dealt with in accordance with this memorandum or, if it involves several players without physical contact, under the guidelines for mass confrontation.

Under no circumstances can aggressive, unwanted physical contact with officials be tolerated and all instances must be dealt with firmly both by the appropriate action under the Law (red card for violent conduct) and by including all details in the match report.

The four video clips associated with this memorandum provide useful examples of how these guidelines can be applied.

- NY Red Bulls and FC Dallas (July 8, 2006): the referee's hands are slapped down by a player. This is aggressive contact and must be dealt with severely (USSF advises a red card).
- Chivas and Colorado (July 20, 2006): a player grabbed the referee and forced him to turn around. Again, this entirely unnecessary and aggressive contact requires a very strong response (USSF advises a red card).
- Kansas City and Los Angeles (July 1, 2006): the referee is aggressively pursued despite attempts to indicate that the player should not approach further (preferably, some sort of warning gesture in addition to moving away would have sent this message even more clearly to the player). This is covered by the second bullet point (the player had already been sent off so his subsequent impermissible actions need to be described in detail in the match report).
- Colorado and Real Salt Lake (June 9, 2006): The player's actions are aggressive and unwanted. Even more importantly, they were directed toward the assistant referee who was then forced to call upon the referee for a response. This behavior also needs a firm response under these guidelines (USSF advises a yellow card).

Subject	<i>Quick Free Kicks versus Ceremonial Restarts [After Misconduct]</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	April 10, 2007

In a professional match last weekend (DC United at Colorado Rapids, April 7, 2007), a foul was committed by Colorado player #12 (Petke) against DC United #10 (Gomez). The referee stopped play and, although clearly holding a yellow card in his hand to display to Petke for what was obviously a reckless tackle, he nevertheless allowed play to restart without actually recording the misconduct or displaying the card.

This is contrary to consistent guidelines from FIFA and USSF, publicized as long ago as a 2002 USSF memorandum "Ceremonial Restarts After Misconduct" (November 22) and emphasized as recently as the 2006 Advice to Referees 12.26 and 13.3. Once the referee has decided to issue a card, whether to caution or send off a player from either team, the restart must be delayed to give the card. This is particularly necessary when, as in this incident, the referee has made the card visible and created an expectation that the restart will not occur until allowed by the referee.

In such a situation, the referee's first action must be to announce clearly, by voice and, if necessary, by the commonly understood action of holding the whistle up in the air and pointing to it, that play may not restart until another signal is given. If such an indication is not immediately given and play restarts quickly or if the referee signals appropriately to hold up play but the ball is kicked anyway, the referee must call the play back so that the proper procedure is followed.

Subject	<i>Player Gesturing for a Card</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	March 23, 2007

Major League Soccer (MLS) gave a presentation at the 2007 National Camp which included a request that referees pay particular attention to the practice of players gesturing in a manner traditionally interpreted as a request or demand that a card be given to an opponent for some action. The same topic has drawn attention recently in certain European competitions.

FIFA, the international body responsible for developing and implementing the Laws of the Game for all national associations, has consistently emphasized "Fair Play" and USSF supports this concern. Although there is **no automatic rule** that player gestures calling for a card must be cautioned, such actions can be considered cautionable if they are blatantly disruptive, for example, by indicating disagreement with an official's decision, aggressively aimed at a particular opponent or an official, or being part of a simulation (faking) to gain a favorable decision. The public nature of the action often makes the gesture too obvious to ignore and can spread to other players, who either agree or disagree, thus provoking further conflict.

Referees must be sensitive to any effort by affiliated leagues or tournaments to support the highest level of sporting behavior and should deal promptly with players who engage in misconduct.

Subject	<i>Rescinding a Card</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	June 26, 2008

A EURO 2008 quarterfinal match between Russia and The Netherlands (June 21, 2008) was the occasion for a referee action which many misunderstood. In the 91st minute (added time), the referee apparently whistled play stopped for a challenge by Russian player #8 (Kolodin) against Netherlands player #10 (Sneijder). Kolodin was cautioned and then, because he had been cautioned already earlier in the match, Kolodin was shown a red card.

Before the restart for the apparent foul, however, and following an exchange of information between the referee and the lead assistant referee, the second caution and the accompanying red card were rescinded and play was restarted with a goal kick. The issue was widely debated as to whether the referee could take this action in view of the fact that both cards had been displayed.

The referee's actions were within the Law. Based on information provided by the assistant referee whose position provided a better angle of view, the referee accepted two facts:

- The challenge by Kolodin to which the referee reacted occurred after the ball had left the field of play.
- The tackle by Kolodin actually occurred several feet away from the Netherlands attacker, who then tumbled over the defender's body.

From this information, the referee therefore correctly concluded that:

- the challenge (regardless of its nature) occurred when the ball was out of play and therefore the restart had to be a goal kick, and
- the challenge itself was either entirely fair or at least did not rise to the level of misconduct so the yellow card was not justified (with the consequence that the red card also was not justified).

Prior to play restarting following the display of a card, the referee can revise his decision about what he observed on the field, re-evaluate the significance of the player action, or receive additional relevant information from another official (either or both assistant referees or the fourth official). As a result of this further reflection or assistance from other members of the officiating team, the referee can:

- rescind the card entirely,
- decide that the card should be given to a different player,
- display a card to additional players,
- or display a different color card in place of the one originally shown.

As a practical matter, it must be emphasized that the occasion for such an action should be infrequent, that the need to rescind a card is reduced by having as much information as

possible before displaying a card, and that referees should not be seen as acting in response to player appeals. If play has been properly restarted, any cards shown must be reported.

Original Subject	Courageous Call
Edited Subject	<i>An Example of a Courageous Red Card Decision by a Referee</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	February 13, 2009

On February 11, 2009, in a World Cup qualifier match between the United States and Mexico (played in Columbus, Ohio) a courageous call was made by the referee under circumstances which, while clearly requiring a red card, might well have been handled less correctly by many referees.

In the 65th minute, Mexico captain Rafael Marquez tackled US goalkeeper Tim Howard and, as a result, Marquez was sent off with no hesitation by the referee. The photograph below captures the moment:



Note the nature of the tackle: studs up, delivered in the knee area, while the victim was entirely up in the air.

Given that the match up to this point had been calm, generally friendly, and virtually devoid of misconduct, referees must decide whether they would have the presence of mind and courage to take the necessary action.

Original Subject	100% Misconduct: Tactical and Red Card Tackles
Edited Subject	<i>Tactical and Red Card Tackles</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	February 2, 2009

Tactical Fouls: The Definition

Tactical fouls are primarily fouls that don't necessarily endanger the safety of an opponent but are committed either to break down a promising attack or to gain an advantage in attack. These fouls are often considered minor because they normally don't involve hard, physical contact. Because of this "soft" classification, they often go unpunished as officials do not recognize the tactical implication and the attacking advantage that is being denied. Shirt pulling or using their body to make contact with the opponent and impede their progress are frequent examples. Tactical fouls are not only an illegal challenge but where the foul interferes with a promising attack it should be considered as unsporting behavior. Here are some characteristics of tactical fouls:

- **Usually in attacking end of the field.**
Defensive players commit the foul because they acknowledge that the attacking team will have a credible opportunity to go to goal with a high degree of effectiveness. It normally involves speed of the attack.
- **Numerical advantage.**
Committed by defenders to prevent an attacking team or player from gaining a numeric advantage – not to be confused with denying a goal scoring opportunity.
- **Time to defend.**
Tactical fouls are committed to give the defending team time to get goalside of the ball. In other words, to give the defending team (as opposed to the attacking team) time to get a numeric advantage between the ball and the goal.
- **Prevent the ball and/or player from advancing.**
Normally, committed to prevent the ball and/or attacking player from getting into space behind a defender or behind the defense. This assists in developing a numeric advantage. It is the "if the ball gets by, the player doesn't or if the player gets by, the ball doesn't" theory. Look for open areas of space that the ball would normally be played into or where an attacking player would run into if they were to receive the ball. This would be behind a defender, into space and normally in the attacking half of the field, often within 35-40 yards of the goal.
- **The defender knows he is beat.**
Defenders commit this foul because they know they have been beat by the attacker. Look for one vs. one situations: for example, an attacking player along the touchline going by his defender into space (normally along the wing) to set up a cross or to cut in toward the goal.

- **Minor nature of the challenge.**

Normally do not involve hard, physical contact.

These are just a few of the characteristics of tactical fouls. Work on training your eye to distinguish them. Ask yourself, “Why did the player commit the foul here?” Often times the fouls occur in the wide channels of the field, so it is critical that assistant referees also be aware of these characteristics and provide the referee with appropriate assistance.

Players work very hard to hide tactical-type fouls and make them difficult for the referee to identify. Tactical fouls are also labeled as “gamesmanship,” as they are designed to cheat the game and/or disrupt attacking play. Often, these fouls seem so minor that the referee fails to recognize the reason the player is committing the foul.

Tactical fouls require a yellow card for unsporting behavior.

Red Card Tackles

The Laws of the Game (Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct) provide for three (3) types of challenges that escalate in terms of severity: from careless (simple foul) to reckless (caution) to using excessive force. Of the three, “using excessive force” requires the referee to red card the player.

1. Careless

“The player has shown a lack of attention or consideration when making a challenge or that he acted without precaution.” In other words, the player has not exercised due caution in making a play. Normally exhibited as a miscalculation of strength or a stretch of judgment by the player committing the foul. **No disciplinary sanction is required.**

2. Reckless

“The player has acted with complete disregard to the danger to, or consequences for, his opponent.” Clearly outside the norm for fair play. **A caution is required.**

3. Using Excessive Force

“The player has far exceeded the necessary use of force and is in danger of injuring his opponent.” The challenge places the opponent in considerable danger of bodily harm. **A red card is required.**

Red card tackles usually involve combinations of the following components:

- Speed of play and the tackle
- Intent
- Aggressive nature
- Position of the tackler – in particular, his legs (height of the tackler’s leading leg and the follow up action by the tackler’s trailing leg)
- Opportunity to play the ball
- Atmosphere of the game

Original Subject	"7 + 7": Cautionable, Sending-Off Offenses, Professional, Adult and Youth Competitions
Edited Subject	<i>Cautionable and Sending-Off Offenses ("7 + 7")</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	2011

7 CAUTIONABLE OFFENSES

A player is cautioned and shown the yellow card for committing any of the following seven offenses (actions of special concern to FIFA are displayed in **bold** print):

- 1) Is guilty of unsporting behavior (UB) (The following actions are examples only and are not a complete list.)
 - a) Commits a direct free kick foul in a reckless manner (for example, charging, pushing, tripping)
 - b) Commits a direct free kick foul in a reckless manner while tackling for the ball from any direction
 - c) **Commits a tactical foul designed to interfere with or impede an opposing team's attacking play (e.g., pushing an opponent, blatantly holding an opponent or an opponent's uniform, handling the ball deliberately)**
 - d) Handles the ball deliberately to score a goal
 - e) Commits an act which, in the opinion of the referee, shows a lack of respect for the game (e.g., aggressive attitude, inflammatory behavior, or taunting)
 - f) **Fakes an injury or exaggerates the seriousness of an injury**
 - g) **Fakes a foul (dives) or exaggerates the severity of a foul**
 - h) Interferes with or prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from the hands into play
 - i) Verbally distracts an opponent during play or at a restart
 - j) **Unfairly distracts or impedes an opponent performing a throw-in**
 - k) Changes jerseys with the goalkeeper during play or without the referee's permission (both players must be cautioned)
 - l) Engages in trickery to circumvent the goalkeeper's limitation on handling the ball played from a teammate's foot (the defender who initiates the "trickery" is cautioned, the decision does not require that the goalkeeper actually handles the ball, and the misconduct can occur during dynamic play or at a restart)
 - m) Makes unauthorized marks on the field
 - n) **Removes the jersey or covers the face with a mask or similar device after scoring a goal**
 - o) Uses an artificial aid to unfairly assist play (for example, leaning on the shoulders of a teammate, using an article of clothing to avoid direct contact with the ball, moving or removing a corner flag on a corner kick, hanging on a crossbar)
 - p) Uses tobacco or tobacco products in any form in the area of the field
 - q) **At a penalty kick, feints to kick the ball once the run-up to the ball has been completed**

- 2) Shows dissent by word or action (DT)
 - a) Verbally or through action disputes or shows contempt for an official's decision
 - b) If playing as a goalkeeper, leaves the penalty area (not beckoned by the referee) to engage an official in debate regarding a decision
- 3) Persistently infringes the Laws of the Game (PI)
 - a) Repeatedly fouls or participates in a pattern of fouls directed at an opponent
 - b) Violates Law 14 again, having previously been warned
 - c) If playing as goalkeeper, wastes time, having previously been warned or penalized for this behavior
- 4) Delays the restart of play (DR)
 - a) Kicks or throws the ball away or holds the ball to prevent a free kick restart by an opponent
 - b) Kicks or throws the ball away or holds the ball to prevent a throw-in or corner kick by an opponent
 - c) Fails to restart play after being instructed to do so by the referee or hinders the restart of play
 - d) Excessively celebrates a goal
 - e) Fails to return to the field upon conclusion of the midgame break, fails to perform a kick-off when signaled to do so by the referee, or fails to be in a correct position for a kick-off
 - f) Provokes a confrontation by deliberately touching the ball after the referee has stopped play**
- 5) Fails to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick, free kick or throw-in (FRD)
 - a) Does not retire at least ten yards away from an opponent's free kick
 - b) Does not retire at least ten yards away from an opponent's corner kick
 - c) Does not retire at least two yards away from an opponent's throw-in
- 6) Enters or re-enters the field of play without the referee's permission (E)
 - a) After having previously been instructed to leave the field to correct equipment
 - b) After having previously been given permission by the referee to leave the field due to an injury
 - c) After having previously been instructed to leave the field due to bleeding or blood on the uniform
- 7) Deliberately leaves the field of play without the referee's permission (L)
 - a) To place an opponent in an apparent offside position
 - b) Other than through the normal course of play

A substitute or substituted player is cautioned and shown the yellow card if he commits any of the following three offenses:

1. is guilty of unsporting behavior
2. shows dissent by word or action
3. delays the restart of play

If a substitute who enters the field of play without the permission of the referee is to be cautioned, the official reason given must be “unsporting behavior” – this applies as well to previously substituted players except where the rules of competition allow unlimited re-entry with the permission of the referee.

7 SENDING-OFF OFFENSES

A player, substitute or substituted player is sent off and shown the red card for committing any of the following seven offenses:

1. Is guilty of serious foul play (SFP)
2. Is guilty of violent conduct (VC)
3. Spits at an opponent or any other person (S)
4. Denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to the goalkeeper within his or her own penalty area) (DGH)
5. Denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offense punishable by a free kick or a penalty kick (DGF)
6. Uses offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures (AL)
7. Receives a second caution in the same match (2CT)

A substitute or substituted player who commits any violent act should be sent off and shown the red card for Violent Conduct.

Original Subject	I Got the Ball
Edited Subject	<i>Determining the Legality of Tackles ("I Got the Ball")</i>
File Under	Law 12
Date	August 5, 2011

In a match played on July 29, 2011 (Philadelphia Union v. Colorado Rapids, at Philadelphia), an illegal tackle occurred which was neither whistled by the referee nor signaled by the assistant referee and did not lead to any card shown for misconduct.

Tackles occur regularly in soccer. Most of them are legal but some are not, and the difference between a legal and an illegal tackle has been discussed often in USSF publications.

The following points must be kept in mind by all referees and, where appropriate, assistant referees:

- Getting the ball first does not make a tackle legal.
- Not getting the ball first does make the tackle illegal.
- Getting the ball first but following through with the rest of the body in a careless or reckless manner or using excessive force does make the tackle illegal.
- **“Getting the ball” cannot be used as an excuse for committing a tackle which is out of control.**

In the case of the tackle in question, performed by Colorado #15 (Thompson) on Philadelphia #25 (Williams) in the 63rd minute of what was then a 2-0 match for Colorado, Thompson came sliding in from the front with the left leg extended. Unfortunately, after contacting the ball, the rest of Thompson’s body followed through and upended Williams. This is often termed “bridging” and, could be considered misconduct based on such factors as:

- The direction of tackle
- The speed of the tackler
- The height of the tackler’s leg or legs (ball height or above)
- Exposure of the studs

The tackle by Thompson was from the front, no higher than the ball, and no studs were exposed. However, the speed of the tackle (which produced a rather spectacular upset) could have been considered reckless, thus warranting a caution.

Where the referee’s angle of sight might obscure important elements of the tackle, making it appear legal, the assistant referee must be prepared to signal a foul of this potential severity and provide information regarding elements of misconduct for the referee’s consideration.

Law 13: Free Kicks

Subject	Quick Kick
File Under	Law 13
Date	June 22, 2007
Cross-Reference	Advice To Referees, Section 13.3

In the accompanying video clip of the June 16, 2007 MLS game between Columbus and New England, Columbus player #6, Marcos Gonzalez, is fouled in the 13th minute of the game and chooses to take a “quick kick.” New England player, #27, Wells Thompson, is only 2 yards off the ball when the quick kick is taken. Thompson raises his leg to the ball and blocks the kick. The ball goes off his foot directly to teammate, #7, Adam Cristman, who breaks to goal and scores.

Referees are advised in the most current edition of Advice to Referees on the Laws of the Game, under Law 13 in Section 13.3, of the following:

“An attacking team which chooses to take a free kick with an opponent closer than the minimum distance may not thereafter claim infringement of the distance requirement, even when the ball is kicked to the infringing opponent, who thereby is able to control the ball without moving toward it. In such a case, the referee cannot caution the opponent who has not remained at the required distance from the ball.”

The key phrase to remember when viewing the attached clip is, “**able to control the ball without moving toward it.**”

It is the consensus of the U.S. Soccer technical staff, that in this particular clip, New England’s Wells Thompson did move toward the ball by thrusting his leg forward to block the kick. The free kick should have been retaken and set up as a ceremonial free kick with the required distance from the ball attained.

Law 14: The Penalty Kick

Subject	Feinting at the Taking of a Penalty Kick
File Under	Law 14
Date	April 5, 2001

The 115th Annual Meeting of the International Football Association Board (IFAB) met on March 10, 2001, and dealt with various matters, including its publication last year of a revised ***Questions and Answers on the Laws of the Game***. Question 10 under Law 14 reads:

A player taking a penalty kick feints before kicking the ball. Is this permitted?

Yes.

The International Board has reasoned that, since a penalty kick is awarded for a violation which otherwise would cause play to be restarted with a direct free kick, the team taking the kick should have at least some of the same latitude which is given for a direct free kick restart. It is permissible to feint at the taking of a direct free kick (Question 6 under Law 13 notes that "feinting tactics to confuse opponents" are permitted and are "part of football").

Nevertheless, referees must still decide if any particular action by the kicker is clearly unsporting. An example of this was seen recently in a pre-season MLS game. The kicker ran past the ball, backed up, during which time various players (teammates and opponents) entered the penalty area, the penalty arc, or moved closer than 12 yards from the goal line, and the goalkeeper moved off the line. This sort of conduct, which produced mass confusion, should be whistled immediately upon seeing the movement past the ball, the kicker cautioned, and play resumed in accordance with Law 14.

The kicker should also be considered guilty of misconduct if his behavior before actually kicking the ball results in unnecessary delay in restarting play (for example, by excessively changing direction during the run to the ball). Where possible, this also should be dealt with before the ball is kicked.

However, in situations where the manner of taking the kick is deemed unsporting but the referee is unable to stop play before the kick occurs, the referee must follow Law 14 by allowing the kick to proceed. If the ball goes into the goal, the penalty kick is retaken after cautioning the kicker for unsporting behavior. If the ball does not enter the goal, play continues and the kicker should be cautioned at the next stoppage of play.

Subject	Penalty Kicks and the 2005-2006 Law Changes
File Under	Law 14
Date	June 13, 2005

Some questions have been raised regarding the impact of the 2005-2006 changes in the Laws of the Game on Law 14 (Penalty Kicks). Except for the two specific bullet points which were modified by the International Board (IFAB), neither Law 14 nor the manner in which it is administered has changed.

Law 14 has three distinct parts. The first part identifies the infringements which will result in a penalty kick restart. The second part outlines the steps the referee must take to manage the penalty kick restart. No element in either of these parts was affected by the 2005-2006 Law changes.

The third part discusses the action the referee must take if a player infringes Law 14 itself – in other words, an infraction involving the penalty kick.

As in the past, the referee had to consider who infringed Law 14 and what was the outcome of the kick. This approach remains the same.

The only change in Law 14 for 2005-2006 is that an indirect free kick is now specified as the restart if an attacker infringes Law 14 and the ball does not go into the net. The chart below summarizes this third part of Law 14:

Consequences of an Infringement of Law 14

Who infringed Law 14?	What was the outcome of the kick?	
	Ball goes into goal	Ball does not go into goal
Attacker (including the kicker)	RETAKE PENALTY KICK	INDIRECT FREE KICK*
Defender (including the goalkeeper)	GOAL (KICK-OFF)	RETAKE PENALTY KICK
Both attacker and defender	RETAKE PENALTY KICK	RETAKE PENALTY KICK

*From where the infringement occurred

The shaded area represents the only change in Law 14 announced this year. Prior to 2005, the referee action when an attacker infringed Law 14 and the ball did not go into the net was to let play continue, except for the specific case where the ball rebounded from the goal post, crossbar, or goalkeeper back to the attacker who had encroached (indirect free kick). The IFAB simply extended this restart beyond the special case to include all infringements by attackers when the ball does not enter the goal.

Subject	Violations of Law 14 (The Penalty Kick)
File Under	Law 14
Date	August 1, 2007

A series of incidents over the last three years, most recently on July 27 in a match during the National Championship Series U.S. Youth Soccer (Frisco, TX), indicate that some referees remain confused about the correct way to handle violations of Law 14 (The Penalty Kick).

Players are restricted in where they can be and what they can do during the taking of a penalty kick. If there are violations of these restrictions, the referee must decide what to do.

Law 14 was modified in 2005 -- an indirect free kick is now the required restart when the kicker or a teammate of the kicker infringes Law 14 and the ball does not go into the net. In 2006, the location of the indirect free kick was confirmed to be where the offense occurred.

Who infringed Law 14?	What was the outcome of the kick?	
	Ball goes into goal	Ball does not go into goal
Attacker (including the kicker)	RETAKE PENALTY KICK	INDIRECT FREE KICK*
Defender (including the goalkeeper)	GOAL (KICK-OFF)	RETAKE PENALTY KICK
Both attacker and defender	RETAKE PENALTY KICK	RETAKE PENALTY KICK

*From where the infringement occurred

The following points must be kept in mind when applying the above decisions:

- “Ball does **not** go into goal” includes any result of the penalty kick other than the ball being kicked into the net (e.g.: ball deflected over the goal line by the goalkeeper; ball kicked over the crossbar).
- The violations at issue include: the goalkeeper moving off the goal line; the kicker engaging in unfair tactics while taking the kick; and any player other than the goalkeeper and the kicker entering the penalty area, entering the penalty arc, or moving closer to the goal line than the ball (i.e., failing to remain at least 12 yards from the goal line).
- It is not required for the same player to perform a penalty kick which the referee has ordered retaken

The exceptions to the above chart of decisions are:

- If an attacker other than the identified kicker takes the penalty kick, play is restarted with an indirect free kick for the opposing team where the attacker illegally entered the penalty arc or penalty area, regardless of the outcome of any kick that may have been performed by this attacker.
- If the kicker plays the ball backward (any direction other than forward), play is restarted with an indirect free kick for the opposing team at the penalty mark, regardless of any further play that may result from the kicker’s action.

Referees must take care to identify who violated Law 14 and the outcome of the kick.

The chart above summarizes the correct restart based on these two factors. Given the importance of penalty kick situations, referees must take particular care to get these decisions right.

Subject	Deception at the Taking of a Penalty Kick
File Under	Law 14
Date	August 25, 2009

In 2000, the International Board clarified its guideline regarding what the player taking a penalty kick may do to confuse or deceive the defending goalkeeper. Most recently, the new “interpretations” section of the Law book states:

Feinting to take a penalty kick to confuse an opponent is permitted However, if, in the opinion of the referee, the feinting is considered an act of unsporting behavior, the player must be cautioned.

In explaining its new stance in 2000, the International Board noted that various forms of deception are allowed at a free kick restart and, in many respects (including this one), a penalty kick is similar to a free kick.

What is the line between acceptable “feinting” and unacceptable “unsporting behavior”? In essence, it is “the opinion of the referee” -- informed by the specific circumstances of the kicker’s actions and the referee’s “feel” for the match at that point.

However, referees should keep in mind that USSF has previously provided three specific examples of behavior by the identified kicker which are not acceptable, i.e., which cross the line into unacceptable unsporting behavior:

- Running past the ball and then stepping backward to perform the kick
- Excessively changing directions or taking an excessively long run to the ball (thus causing an unnecessary delay in the restart, in the opinion of the referee)
- Making a hand or arm gesture which obviously distracts or deceives the goalkeeper

At the same time, referees should evaluate the behavior of the player taking the kick in terms of what would and would not be acceptable at the taking of a free kick. An action which clearly is consistent with acceptable behavior while taking a free kick should be considered as falling within the category of acceptable “feigning” where the restart is a penalty kick.

The gray area in between must be decided firmly and quickly by the referee. The attached clip from a Confederations Cup match between DC United and Firpo (August 4, 2009) involves such a decision. The kicker’s action was not clearly one of the prohibited behaviors nor can it be said that, if the player had been taking a free kick, the brief “stutter” would have been deemed anything other than acceptable deception. Accordingly, the kicker’s action was not a violation of Law 14 and the resulting goal was properly allowed to stand.

Subject	Managing Feinting by the Kicker at a Penalty Kick or Kick from the Mark
File Under	Law 14
Date	July 12, 2010

In response to requests for clarification of its earlier guideline on deception at the taking of a penalty kick, the International Football Association Board (IFAB) published a circular in 2010 outlining the circumstances in which a player taking a penalty kick may act to deceive the goalkeeper by performing a “feint” between the time the referee signals for the kick to be taken and when the ball is considered to be “in play.” This memo provides those clarifications in summary form, followed by several points of emphasis to assist referees in managing the process.

A. On a penalty kick, if the kicker performs an illegal deception after the referee has blown the whistle for the kick to be taken and before the ball is in play:

OUTCOME OF THE KICK FROM THE MARK		PUNISHMENT
GOAL	NO GOAL	
KICK IS RETAKEN ¹	INDIRECT FREE KICK FROM THE PLACE WHERE THE INFRINGEMENT OCCURRED	CAUTION ²

¹Another teammate of the original kicker may take the kick if a retake is ordered.

²If this is a second caution, the kicker is sent off and shown the red card.

NOTE: If a player from the defending team also violates Law 14, the penalty kick is retaken regardless of the outcome

B. On a kick from the penalty mark (as part of a tie-breaking procedure), if the kicker performs an illegal deception after the referee has blown the whistle for the kick to be taken and before the ball is in play:

OUTCOME OF THE KICK FROM THE MARK		PUNISHMENT
GOAL	NO GOAL	
KICK IS RETAKEN ¹	KICK IS COMPLETE: NO RETAKE ²	CAUTION ³

¹Another teammate of the original kicker may take the kick if a retake is ordered. However, a replacement kicker must still meet the requirement of the rules governing “Kicks from the

Penalty Mark” that no eligible player can kick an additional time until all eligible players have kicked. If no teammate is available who meets this requirement, the original kicker must kick the retake.

²The kicker is, however, credited with having taken the kick and may not kick again until all other eligible teammates have kicked the same number of times.

³ If this is a second caution, the kicker is sent off and shown the red card (the opposing team does not “reduce to equate”).

Referees are reminded that they must still monitor other actions by the kicker which might also violate Law 14 (or the kicks from the mark procedure). For example, the kicker must not take such a long, convoluted run to the ball that, in the opinion of the referee, this action delays the restart of play; the kicker must not run past the ball and then back up before kicking; and the kicker must not make a hand or arm gesture which, in the opinion of the referee distracts or deceives the goalkeeper.

The term “illegal deception” used above with respect to penalty kicks or kicks from the mark refers to the action of the kicker described in USSF’s “Memorandum 2010”:

This would include clearly stopping and waiting for a reaction by the goalkeeper before taking the kick or any similar clear hesitation after the run to the ball is complete and before kicking the ball into play. In other words, once the kicker has reached the ball, the kick must be taken without hesitation or delay.

Law 15: The Throw-in

Original Subject	Regarding Law 15
Edited Subject	Enforcing the Minimum Distance at a Throw-in
File Under	Law 15
Date	January 18, 2006

In 2005, the International Board approved a change in Law 15 (The Throw-In) to impose a minimum distance requirement for opponents. The Board noted that, with this modification, all restarts conducted by players now mandate that opponents be some minimum distance away so as not to interfere with the taking of the restart.

In the case of a throw-in, the Board specified that opponents must be at least two meters from the thrower. USSF has indicated that two yards is an acceptable alternative to two meters. Since the appearance of this requirement, referees have raised questions about the correct method of enforcing it. *The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance on managing the minimum distance requirement at a throw-in.*

- First and foremost, all procedures, including those described below, must be discussed in the pregame meeting, particularly the division of responsibilities between the referee and the nearest assistant referee.
- Second, USSF recommends that the minimum distance requirement be enforced based on the same principles and guidelines used in connection with the ten yard minimum distance requirement in Law 13 (The Free Kick).

The following points briefly summarize these principles and guidelines.

- Quick throw-ins are preferable
- The referee should interfere with the throw-in restart as little and as seldom as possible
- If the thrower requests assistance in enforcing the minimum distance, the referee should:
 - Clearly announce that the throw-in cannot be taken except by a signal from the referee (ceremonial restart) and
 - Establish the minimum distance quickly and fairly
- Blatant and obvious violations of the minimum distance which interfere with the thrower can be considered misconduct and should be dealt with appropriately.

Several issues are specific to the throw-in.

- The minimum distance is measured from the touchline. The fact that a player may perform the throw-in from as much as a yard back from the touchline does not permit an opponent to be closer than two yards from the touchline.
- The minimum distance from the touchline is measured from the point where the ball will actually enter the field. The fact that the thrower may take the throw-in from as much as a yard up or down the touchline from where the ball left the field does not permit an opponent to be closer than two yards from this point.
- An opponent is not permitted to jump about and wave his or her arms if, in the opinion of the referee, this action unfairly distracts or impedes the thrower even if the opponent is more than two yards from the thrower. Referees are strongly encouraged to prevent such behavior from occurring or interfering with the restart.

Law Addendums: Procedures to Determine the Winner of a Match

Subject	Kicks from the Penalty Mark, The “Reduce to Equate” Principle
File Under	Law Addendums: Procedures to Determine the Winner of a Match
Date	June 11, 2002

The Laws of the Game provide for the taking of kicks from the penalty mark as one way to decide which team will advance when, after regulation play and any extra periods of play required by the rules of competition are ended, the score remains tied.

The specific rules governing the match (“**the rules of competition**”) can differ in this regard. For example, FIFA requires up to two fifteen minute periods of play with the first goal ending the match.

The purpose of this position paper is to focus on one particular element of the taking of kicks which has recently been introduced and remains subject to some uncertainty – the “reduce to equate” principle. Introduced into The Laws of the Game in 2001, the principle ensures that teams begin the procedure with the same number of players.

The following guidelines are to be used in implementing “**reduce to equate**” in those matches for which the rules of competition mandate the taking of kicks from the penalty mark.

“**Regulation play**” includes any extra periods of play called for by the rules of competition.

“**Kicks**” will refer generally to the taking of kicks from the penalty mark.

- The kicks phase of the match begins at the moment regulation play ends (including any overtime periods of play.)
- A team might have fewer than eleven players eligible to participate at the end of regulation play due to injury or misconduct or because the team began the match with fewer players.
- The captain of the team with more players must identify which of its players will not participate if regulation play ends with the team at unequal sizes.
- “Players eligible to participate” includes those players who are legally on the field at the end of regulation play, plus any other players off the field temporarily (e.g., to correct equipment, bleeding, or having an injury tended).
- Only the goalkeeper may be substituted in the case of injury during the kicks phase and only if the team has a substitution remaining from its permitted maximum.
- Once kicks begin (following any “reduce to equate” adjustment), a player may become unable to participate due to injury or ineligible to participate due to misconduct.
- Under no circumstances will a team be required to “reduce to equate” if the opposing team loses one or more players due to injury or misconduct occurring during the kicks phase of the match.
- Until a result is produced, both teams must continue to use their eligible players without duplication until all (including the goalkeeper) have kicked, at which time players who have already kicked may kick again. If one team has fewer players than the other, it will need to begin using again its players who have already kicked sooner than will the

opposing team.

Subject	Kicks from the Penalty Mark (Updated)
File Under	Law Addendums: Procedures to Determine the Winner of a Match
Date	October 14, 2004

The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize the important elements of the kicks from the penalty mark procedure. It updates and expands prior memoranda on this subject.

- Only the players on the field at the end of the match or at the end of any extra time can participate. This includes any player temporarily off the field to correct equipment, for treatment of an injury, or to correct bleeding or blood on the uniform.
- The kicks from the penalty mark procedure officially begins immediately at the conclusion of the match or after any extra time.
- An injured goalkeeper may be substituted if the team has not used its maximum allowed substitutions permitted under the competition rules. Under no circumstances may a field player be substituted after any extra time is over.
- The team whose captain wins the coin toss decides which team will kick first.
- Players who are waiting to kick or who have already kicked are required to be in the area of the center circle. No other persons are permitted on the field.
- The referee selects the goal toward which kicks will be taken. However, the referee should consult with the competition authority to determine if any additional information should be taken into account in deciding this matter (e.g., television or other video recording needs).
- If the condition of the selected goal or of the field in front of this goal seriously deteriorates once kicks have begun, the referee may switch to the other goal. In this rare circumstance, the referee should endeavor to make the change only after the teams have taken an equal number of kicks.
- If a team finishes the match and any extra time with fewer players than the opposing team (due to injury or misconduct), the captain of the opposing team must select and identify for the referee those players who will not participate in kicks from the penalty mark. In other words, the team must "Reduce to Equate" so that the kicks from the penalty mark procedure begins with teams having an equal number of players.
- The goalkeeper not defending against a kick from the penalty mark must be positioned at the intersection of the penalty area line and the goal line, behind the assistant referee, until it is his turn to defend.
- Only one player at a time (other than the goalkeepers) may leave the center circle and only for the purpose of taking a kick. The kick is taken, without unnecessary delay, only after the referee signals.
- Kicks will proceed in an initial group of five for each team, unless a point is reached when no further kicks could alter the outcome. If all five kicks for each team are taken with each team having an equal number of goals, kicks thereafter will proceed in pairs of one per team until one team scores and the other team does not.
- All kicks from the penalty mark are taken in pairs, alternating by each team. A player may not kick again until all team members have kicked. If a player is required to leave

the field during kicks from the penalty mark (due to injury or misconduct), the opposing team will not remove players to equal the reduced number of opponents. In such a case, the team with fewer players may use all its eligible players before the other team and will therefore begin allowing its players to kick a second time before this occurs for the other team.

- During the taking of kicks from the penalty mark, player uniforms (e.g., the wearing of shinguards) must still meet the requirements of Law 4. The authority of the referee under Law 5 to deal with any misconduct or irresponsible behavior also continues.

A player is guilty of unsporting behavior at the taking of a kick from the penalty mark if, in the opinion of the referee:

- he delays unnecessarily after being signaled by the referee to proceed,
- he runs past the ball and then backs up to take the kick,
- he excessively changes direction during the run to the ball, or
- he makes any motion of the hand or arm which is clearly intended to misdirect the attention of the goalkeeper.

In such cases, the referee should suspend the procedure, caution the player involved, and then signal once again for the kick to be taken. If the kick has already been taken, the referee should order it retaken only if the ball enters the goal. The player must still be cautioned for his misconduct regardless of the outcome.

Law Addendums: The Technical Area

Subject	Management of Behavior in the Technical Area
File Under	Law Addendums: The Technical Area
Date	March 22, 2006

The "technical area" is provided for in International Board Decision 8 of Law 1 (The Field of Play) and, in more detail, in the section labeled "The Technical Area" in the Law book. Additionally, the permissible behavior of team officials as regards the technical area is described in International Board Decision 2 of Law 3 (The Number of Players).

USSF's annual law change memorandum for 2004 noted that "many matches are played on fields which have no designated technical area." This is particularly the case in youth and at lower competitive levels. USSF advised that, in such cases, the referee could "sketch out an approximation of team technical areas for game control purposes."

In general, as far as matters which pertain to the responsibilities of the referee, only three types of persons are permitted within the technical area, depending on the rules of competition:

- Players temporarily off the field with the permission of the referee,
- Substitutes (including substituted players), and
- Team officials.

The category of "team official" includes but is not limited to such persons as coaches, assistant coaches, trainers and other medical support persons, together with any other persons formally associated with the team which the rules of competition allow.

These rules may or may not specify that team officials must be named (e.g., included on a team roster), but the Laws of the Game require that the team roster list and identify the players and substitutes. Rules of competition may also mandate standards of dress for team officials

In short, in match conditions where spectators are not allowed near the immediate area of the field (for example, restricting spectators to stadium seats or behind barriers), the persons allowed in or near the field are strictly limited to players, substitutes, and team officials. **For purposes of this memorandum, anyone officially allowed in the technical area who is not a rostered player or substitute (or substituted player) is a team official.**

Substitutes

Law 3 provides that "all substitutes are subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the referee, whether called upon to play or not." One important practical consequence of this is that substitutes (and substituted players) may be cautioned or sent off for misconduct exactly as they would be were they players on the field. Examples of behavior that might be considered misconduct if committed by a substitute or substituted player would include:

- Dissent

- Offensive, insulting, or abusive language
- Entering the field without the permission of the referee
- Violent conduct
- Unsporting behavior
- Receiving a second yellow card in the same match

Team Officials

Law 5 (The Referee) provides that team officials must conduct themselves in a "responsible manner" (language echoed in Law 3, IBD 2, and in the section on the technical area). If they do not, the referee may "expel them from the field of play and its immediate surrounds." Law 12 (Fouls and Misconduct) expressly provides that only players, substitutes, and substituted players may be shown a red or yellow card.

What this means in practice is that team officials cannot commit misconduct within the meaning of Law 12. All actions by team officials which result in expulsion from the field must be identified as "irresponsible behavior" in the match report. The match report, of course, must provide a specific description of the behavior. The following are examples of behavior that might be considered irresponsible:

- Throwing objects in protest
- Speaking insulting words or making offensive gestures
- Kicking chairs
- Making unwanted contact with opponents
- Striking advertising boards
- Persistently and flagrantly protesting decisions by an official
- Interfering with the performance of assistant referee or fourth official duties
- Refusing to return to the technical area
- Entering the field of play without the permission of the referee

Assistant referees and fourth officials assist the referee in monitoring the behavior of persons in the technical area and in alerting the referee when such behavior exceeds reasonable bounds.

In dealing with impermissible actions (whether misconduct or irresponsible behavior) by persons who are off the field, the referee should use the same criteria and concerns they would apply to similar behavior by players on the field. For example, a substitute might proclaim disagreement with a decision by the referee. Is it dissent? Detailed guidelines have been developed and published regarding this matter and should be followed whether the speaker is a player, substitute, or team official. Language might be tolerated if uttered in a brief emotional outburst but would be unacceptable under other circumstances. After all, substitutes and team officials may become just as caught up in the emotion of the moment as any player and should be provided comparable leeway.

Although team officials **may not** be cautioned and shown the yellow card, they may be warned that their behavior is at risk of being considered irresponsible. If the behavior continues, they

may be expelled from the field but not shown the red card.

Subject	The Technical Area and Signage
File Under	Law Addendums: The Technical Area
Date	April 21, 2009

Several venues for matches played in the WPS professional league have signage which cuts through the technical areas, in effect dividing these areas into two parts and acting as a wall between the team bench and the top of the technical area.

Referees, assistant referees, and fourth officials must remember in such cases that team officials are permitted to be in the part of the technical area in front of the signage. There is no requirement that, having moved to be in front of the signage while staying in the technical area, the team official must then return to the bench behind the signage.

Irresponsible behavior by anyone in the technical area, regardless of the location of the sign boards, must not be tolerated. Please refer to the paper "Management of Behavior in the Technical Area" which can be found under Position Papers at ussoccer.com (Behavior in the Technical Area - added 1/12/07).

Subject	Headsets in the Technical Area
File Under	Law Addendums: The Technical Area
Date	April 29, 2009

A question has arisen regarding the use of headsets by team officials in the technical area. Be advised that their use is not a violation of the Laws of the Game.

- The International Board's Referee Committee decided in 1997 not to prohibit mobile phones on the players' bench.
- Although this policy has not been specifically extended to headsets, walkie-talkies are used in FIFA competitions.
- A separate communication from a FIFA official in 2001 indicated that, based on a prior incident, a coach was allowed to give instructions by phone to his assistant in the technical area.

Accordingly, subject only to the requirement that the team official behaves in a responsible manner, mobile phones, headsets, walkie-talkies, and other similar communication devices may be used in the technical area.

Other

Subject	Instructions for Referees and Resolutions Affecting Team Coaches and Players [in] Regional and National Cup Competitions and Tournaments
File Under	All
Date	2005

The decisions and instructions to referees appointed to Regional and National Cup Competitions and Tournaments contained herein conform to the Laws of the Game, the decisions of the International F.A. Board, and guidance from USSF through its Advice to Referees, Guide to Procedures, and various official memoranda.

This document is therefore regarded as authoritative and may be quoted as such. For further details on any of these points, consult the sources listed above.

References throughout to the male gender in respect of players, referees, assistant referees, fourth officials, and others are for simplification and apply to both males and females.

Decisions made during play depend entirely on the opinion of the referee, who forms his judgment at the time of the incident. Coaches are requested to inform their players of the points specified below and to ensure that every game is played sportingly.

1. Serious Foul Play and Violent Conduct

Soccer is a tough, combative sport. The contest to gain possession of the ball should nonetheless be fair and gentlemanly. Any actions meeting these criteria, even when vigorous, must be allowed by the referee.

Serious Foul Play and Violent Conduct are, however, strictly forbidden and the referee must react to them by stringently applying the Laws of the Game.

These two offenses can be defined as follows:

(a) It is serious foul play when a player uses excessive force, formerly defined as "disproportionate and unnecessary strength," when challenging for the ball on the field against an opponent. There can be no serious foul play against a teammate, the referee, an assistant referee, a spectator, etc.

(b) It is violent conduct when a player is guilty of aggression (excessive force or deliberate violence) towards an opponent when they are not competing for the ball. It is also violent conduct if the excessive force is used when the ball is not in play or if it is directed at anyone other than an opponent (e. g., teammate, referee, assistant referee, coach, spectator, etc.). If the violent conduct is committed against an opponent on the field during play, the restart is a direct free kick for the opposing team where the foul occurred (or a penalty kick if it was committed by a defender inside his penalty area). If the violent conduct is by a player during play against anyone on the field other than an opponent, the restart is an indirect free kick

where the misconduct occurred. If the violent conduct is committed during a stoppage of play, the restart is not changed. A dropped ball where the ball was when play is stopped is the correct restart if the violent conduct is committed during play either off the field or by a substitute.

2. Tackling

A tackle as such is not an infringement of the Laws of the Game. It becomes an infringement only if the tackler plays carelessly, recklessly, or with excessive force, or places his opponent in danger.

(a) A sliding tackle from the front or side, made with one or both legs, is permissible if, in the opinion of the referee, it is not dangerous. If, however, the player making the tackle trips his opponent before, during, or after making contact with the ball, the referee shall award a direct free kick to the opposing team. The referee must judge whether an illegal trip occurred or whether the opponent fell over the leg of the player making a legal tackle.

(b) Tackling with the foot lifted from the ground may be dangerous, whether contact is made with the ball or not. A player who lifts his foot should be penalized if the referee considers he is endangering an opponent by so doing. If the player deliberately plays over the ball and makes contact with his opponent's leg, this is serious foul play and must be sanctioned with a send-off (red card) and a direct free kick (or a penalty kick, if appropriate).

(c) Tackling with two feet together, studs up, if uncontrolled and from a distance, could be judged as at least dangerous to the opponent and possibly reckless as well. If controlled and from a short distance, there may be no danger.

(d) A tackle, regardless of direction, which endangers the safety of an opponent and must be sanctioned as serious foul play. The player must be sent from the field (red card) and play restarted with a direct free kick (or a penalty kick if committed by a defender inside his own penalty area).

3. Charging from behind

Charging from behind is permissible only if the opponent is intentionally impeding (shielding the ball). The charge, however, must be made fairly and under no circumstances to the back (spinal area).

4. Offenses against goalkeepers

It is an offense if a player:

(a) jumps at a goalkeeper under the pretext of heading the ball;

(b) dodges about in front of a goalkeeper in order to interfere with or prevent him from releasing the ball;

(c) who is standing in front of a goalkeeper when a corner kick is being taken, takes advantage of his position to impede the goalkeeper before the kick is taken and before the ball is in play;

(d) makes any play for the ball while the goalkeeper is still controlling it with his hands.

5. Impeding the progress of an opponent

A player who has the ball under control within playing distance (i.e., the distance at which the player is covering the ball for tactical reasons in order to avoid its being played by an opponent, without using his arms) is not guilty of impeding the progress of his opponent.

Any player who intentionally impedes the progress of an opponent by crossing directly in front of him or running between him and the ball or intervening so as to form an obstacle with the aim of delaying his advance, must be sanctioned with an indirect free kick in favor of the opposing team.

However, any player who intentionally impedes the progress of an opponent by physical contact, whether using his hand, arm, leg, or any other part of his body, shall be penalized by the award of a direct free kick to the opposing team, or by a penalty kick, if the offense was committed within his penalty area.

6. Scissors or bicycle kick

Such a kick is permissible, provided that in the opinion of the referee it is not dangerous to an opponent.

7. Jumping at an opponent

A player who jumps at an opponent under the pretext of heading the ball shall be penalized by the award of a direct free kick to the opposing team.

8. Prohibited use of body

A player who holds off an opponent using his hand, arm, leg, or body (except through a legal charge) is guilty of an infringement of Law 12 and shall be punished by the award of a direct free kick to the opposing team. Holding or hindering when the ball is out of play in order to prevent the opponent from running into position is misconduct and shall be penalized by a caution for unsporting behavior.

9. Caution for handling the ball or holding an opponent

A caution for unsporting behavior is appropriate if a player:

(a) holds an opponent to interfere with attacking play (e.g., prevents the opponent from getting to the ball or pulls an opponent away from possession of the ball),

(b) handles the ball to interfere with attacking play, or

(c) handles the ball in an attempt to score a goal.

(Note: if handling the ball or holding the opponent prevents a goal or interferes with a goalscoring opportunity, the offender must be shown the red card and sent off the field.)

10. Free kicks

(a) The referee shall indicate the award of an indirect free kick by raising an arm above his head. He shall keep his arm in that position from the moment the kick is taken until the ball has been next touched or played by another player or goes out of play.

(b) Any player who, for any reason, deliberately delays a free kick being taken by the opposing team may be cautioned (yellow card) at the referee's discretion.

(c) Any player who prematurely (before the ball is in play) rushes forward from the defensive wall, formed at least 10 yards (9.15 m) from the ball, before the ball has been kicked, may be cautioned (yellow card) at the referee's discretion.

(d) While the Law states that all opposing players should retire to a distance of at least 10 yards (9.15 m) from the ball, the referee has discretionary power to disregard this requirement to enable a free kick to be taken quickly.

11. Use of advantage

If the referee applies the advantage and the advantage which was anticipated does not develop after a short time, i.e., 2-3 seconds, and the ball remains in play, the referee should immediately stop the game and penalize the original offense.

12. Denying a goal or an obvious goalscoring opportunity

(a) If, in the opinion of the referee, a player who is moving towards his opponent's goal, with an obvious opportunity to score a goal, is denied that goalscoring opportunity by an offense punishable by a free kick or penalty kick, the offending player shall be shown the red card and sent off the field of play.

(b) If, in the opinion of the referee, a player, other than the goalkeeper within his own penalty area, deliberately handles the ball to prevent it from entering his goal and thus denies the opposing side a goal or an obvious goalscoring opportunity, the player shall be shown the red card and sent off the field of play. There need not be an opponent nearby with an opportunity to play the ball.

13. Penalty kick

(a) Positioning of ball and players during a penalty kick

During a penalty kick, the goalkeeper shall stand on the goal line. Apart from the goalkeeper and the player taking the kick, all the players shall take up a position on the field of play behind the penalty mark and outside the penalty area at least 10 yards (9.15 m) from the penalty mark and stay there until the ball is in play (kicked and moved forward).

(b) Penalty kick at the end of a half or at the end of the match

If play is prolonged before half-time or at the end of the match to allow for a penalty kick to be taken or for one to be retaken, a goal shall be allowed if, before going into the goal, the ball touches any combination of the goalposts, crossbar, goalkeeper, or ground (providing no other infringement has been committed).

14. Player in offside position

(a) It is not an offense in itself to be in an offside position.

(b) A player shall be penalized for being offside if, at the moment the ball touches or is played by one of his team, he is, in the opinion of the referee, involved in the active play by

1. interfering with play or with an opponent, or
2. gaining an advantage by being in that position.

(c) A player shall not be penalized for offside by the referee

1. merely because he is in an offside position, or
2. if he receives the ball directly from a goal kick, a corner kick, or a throw-in.

An assistant referee must not signal merely because a player is in an offside position. Furthermore, if an assistant referee is in any doubt as to whether a player is offside (active position) or not, he should decide in favor of the attacker; in other words, he shall refrain from signaling offside.

15. Goalkeeper restrictions

An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a goalkeeper, inside his own penalty area,

- takes more than six seconds from the moment he establishes control of the ball with his hands to release it into play
- touches the ball again with his hands after it has been released from his possession and has not touched any other player outside his penalty area or has touched only a teammate inside his penalty area
- touches the ball with his hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a teammate
- touches the ball with his hands after he has received it directly from a throw-in taken by a teammate

16. Persistent infringements

Any player who repeatedly infringes the Laws of the Game by committing multiple fouls or by participating in a pattern of fouls directed at an opponent shall be cautioned and shown the yellow card.

17. Substitution

When a substitution is to take place, the substitute shall report to the fourth official (or assistant referee) and surrender the substitution card (if applicable), properly completed, at the halfway line. A player who is going to be replaced may not leave the field of play without the referee's permission and then only when the ball is out of play. The substitute may then enter the field at the halfway line after receiving a signal to do so from the referee.

The substitute must be fully ready to play before reporting to the appropriate official. Referees should not delay the timely restart of play to allow substitutes to correct their equipment or uniforms before entering the field nor shall the referee prevent a team from restarting play if the substitute has not reported to the appropriate official prior to play being stopped.

18. Injury of a player

If a player is bleeding, he must leave the field immediately to have the bleeding stopped and his skin and uniform cleaned as thoroughly as possible. When the player is ready to return to the game, the player's injuries and the uniform must be inspected by an official. This can be the referee or, if delegated by the referee in the pregame conference, the fourth official or, if there is no fourth official, an assistant referee.

Only then will the referee give his permission to re-enter the game; the game need not be stopped in this situation.

Only the referee may permit the return to the field of play of a player who was instructed to leave the field for treatment of an injury. This is not a substitution. The player who left the field for treatment of an injury may return during play with the permission of the referee, but only from the touch line. If the ball is out of play, the player may return with the permission of the referee across any boundary line.

Up to two team officials are permitted to enter the field of play with the referee's permission solely for the purpose of assessing an injury—not to treat it—and to arrange for the player's removal.

The referee must exercise care before allowing removal of a seriously injured player from the field.

In all cases, an injured player who has been removed from the field for treatment of injury during a stoppage may return to the field of play only with the permission of the referee and only after the match has restarted.

19. Attitude towards referees

Any player who protests at an official's decision may be cautioned. Any player who assaults or insults an official shall be sent off. The captain of a team, although responsible for his team's behavior, has no special rights.

20. Throw-in

A throw-in may not be taken from a distance of more than one yard (one meter) outside the touch line. Players who stand in front of the thrower in such a way as to harass the thrower or to interfere with the throw-in must be cautioned for unsporting behavior and shown the yellow card.

21. Wasting time

Any player who wastes time shall be cautioned for unsporting behavior. Wasting time occurs whenever a player:

- feigns injury;
- takes a free kick from a wrong position with the sole intention of forcing the referee to demand a retake;
- appears to prepare for a throw-in but suddenly leaves it to one of his team to perform the throw-in;
- performs any restart in such a way that the ball is not properly put into play, thus forcing a repetition of the restart;
- kicks the ball away or carries it away with the hands after the referee has stopped play for any reason;
- stands in front of the ball when a free kick has been awarded to the opposing team in order to give his team time to organize the defensive wall;
- excessively delays taking any restart;
- delays leaving the field when being substituted.

22. Celebration of goal

(a) After a goal has been scored, the player who has scored it is allowed to share his joy with his teammates. However, the referee must not allow them to spend an excessive amount of time in their opponents' half of the field. Neither shall he allow players to taunt their opponents. In any of these cases, he will caution the offending player for unsporting behavior. Referees must look beyond the behavior of players celebrating goals and consider as misconduct only those actions which are provocative, obscene or insulting, or which unnecessarily delay the restart of play.

(b) If a player removes his shirt to celebrate a goal, he must be cautioned for unsporting behavior and shown the yellow card. A player may lift his shirt, but the undershirt must not contain messages of a political, religious, commercial or antisocial nature.

23. Liquid refreshments during the match

Players shall be entitled to take liquid refreshments during a stoppage in the match but only on the touchline. Players may not leave the field during play to take liquids. It is forbidden to throw plastic water bags or any other water containers onto the field.

24. Players' equipment

(a) The referee shall ensure that each player wears the uniform properly and check that anything worn by the player conforms with the requirements of Law 4. Players shall be made aware that their jersey remains tucked inside their shorts and that their socks remain pulled up. The referee shall also make sure that each player is wearing shinguards and that none of them is wearing potentially dangerous objects (such as watches or other jewelry of any nature).

(b) Players are permitted to wear visible undergarments such as thermopants. They must, however, be the same color as the shorts of the team of the player wearing them and not extend beyond the top of the knee. If a team wears multicolored shorts, the undergarment must be the same color as the predominant color.

(c) The referee, assisted as needed by the assistant referees, shall ensure that player equipment and uniforms comply with Law 4 and will pay particular attention to any items (e.g., braces) worn by a player which are not included in the standard uniform.

25. The Role of the Fourth Official

The Fourth Official will assist the referee at all times. He must indicate to the referee if the wrong player is cautioned or when a player who has been given a second caution is not sent off or when violent conduct occurs out of the view of the referee and assistant referees. The referee, however, retains the authority to decide on all points connected with play.

26. Trickery (cf. Law 12 IFAB Decision 3)

A player using a deliberate trick to circumvent the text and spirit of Law 12 regarding passes to his own goalkeeper shall be cautioned for unsporting behavior and shown a yellow card.

27. Technical area

Team officials may convey tactical instructions to players during the game. However, team officials must remain within the confines of the technical area while doing so and must conduct themselves, at all times, in a responsible manner. Only one person at a time may be on his feet in the technical area, giving instructions to the team.

The technical area may be defined as an area covering the length of the substitutes' bench plus one yard on either side and extending from the front of the bench up to a distance of one yard (one meter) away from the touchline.

It is recommended that markings be used to define this area, but the absence of such markings does not relieve team officials from the obligation to behave responsibly.

28. Reckless challenges

Referees should take stringent measures against players moving their arms and elbows without due care, by applying the sanctions available to them under Law 12.

29. Simulation (Law 12, IFAB Decision 5)

Any simulating action anywhere on the field, which is intended to deceive the referee, must be sanctioned as unsporting behavior.

A number of specific actions may be considered cautionable as unsporting behavior. These include faking an injury or exaggerating the seriousness of an injury and faking a foul (diving) or exaggerating the severity of a foul.

Original Subject	Speaking Directly
Edited Subject	Clarifying Use of the Words “Direct” and “Directly” within the Laws of the Game
File Under	Other
Date	2001

If a “direct” free kick is kicked directly into the opponents’ goal, a goal is awarded. (This is not the case with an “indirect” free kick, where a goal cannot be scored if the ball does not touch a second player — which can be the goalkeeper, who is, after all, also a player — before entering the goal.)

That is the primary meaning of “direct”; however, there are references in the Laws of the Game to “direct” or “directly” which do not apply to scoring goals. These references seem to confuse some referees:

- Law 11 states that there is no offside offense if a player receives the ball directly from a goal kick, a throw-in or a corner kick
- throw-in taken by a teammate
- Law 13 and Law 16 declare the ball kicked from within a team’s own penalty area to be in play from a free kick or a goal kick only when it leaves the penalty area and goes directly into play
- Laws 16 and 17 tell us that a goal may be scored directly from a goal kick or a corner kick, but only against the opposing team

The use of “directly” in Laws 12, 13, 15, 16, and 17 is fairly clear: if the ball goes from point A to point B without interference, something can or cannot happen. That is not true of the use of “directly” in Law 11. Tradition and custom give us a slightly different meaning of the word “directly” in the context of offside.

If at a goal kick, throw-in, or a corner kick taken by his team, a player receives the ball directly from the restart, there is no problem. Nor should there be any problem at a corner kick, as it is physically impossible for a player on the field of play to be offside directly from a corner kick. The confusion arises at throw-ins or goal kicks when the ball is deflected or misplayed by an opponent and then comes to the teammate of the thrower or kicker who is in an offside position. In such cases, the referee must disregard the deflection or misplay of the ball by the opponent, as there has been no infringement of the Law. However, if the ball were to be deflected or misplayed instead by a teammate of the thrower or kicker on its way to the player in the offside position, that player must be declared offside.

Annual Law Change Memoranda

Subject	Memorandum of Law Changes, 2005
File Under	Laws 11, 12
Date	March 29, 2005

Changes in the Laws of the Game recently announced by FIFA are not due to be implemented until July 1, 2005. Under the rules of the International Football Association Board, member associations are required to delay the introduction of alterations in the Law if their playing season begins prior to July 1, 2005.

Certain decisions taken by the International Board were clarifications rather than changes in existing Law. These **and only these** are adopted now by USSF and should be implemented immediately:

- In the definition of offside, “nearer to his opponents” goal line means that any part of the attacker’s head, body, or feet is nearer to his opponents’ goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent. The arms are not included in this definition.
- A tackle, **regardless of direction**, which endangers the safety of an opponent must be sanctioned as serious foul play.
- The referee has the authority to take disciplinary sanctions (including the display of red and yellow cards) from the moment the he enters the field of play until he leaves the field of play after the final whistle.

Subject	Memorandum of Law Changes, 2010
File Under	Laws 1, 5, 14, The Fourth Official
Date	June 16, 2010

The 124th Annual General Meeting of the International Football Association Board (IFAB) took place in Zurich on 6 March 2010. The amendments to the Laws of the Game approved at this meeting and the various instructions and directives issued are listed below.

Amendments to the Laws of the Game and Decisions of the Board

1. Law 1 -- The Field of Play

Goals

Present Text

The goalposts and crossbar must be made of wood, metal or other approved material. They may be square, rectangular, round or elliptical in shape and must not be dangerous to players.

New Text

The goalposts and crossbar must be made of wood, metal or other approved material. They must be square, rectangular, round or elliptical in shape and must not be dangerous to players.

Reason

The current definition has been clarified in order to indicate that goalposts of any other shape are not permitted.

USSF Advice to Referees: The above change effectively limits the crossbar and goalposts to one of the four listed shapes. No other shapes are permitted.

2. Law 5 – The Referee

Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees

Injured Players

Present Text

Exceptions to this ruling are to be made only when:

- a goalkeeper is injured
- a goalkeeper and an outfield player have collided and need immediate attention
- a severe injury has occurred, e.g. swallowed tongue, concussion, broken leg

New Text

Exceptions to this ruling are to be made only when:

- a goalkeeper is injured
- a goalkeeper and an outfield player have collided and need immediate attention
- players from the same team have collided and need immediate attention
- a severe injury has occurred, e.g. swallowed tongue, concussion, broken leg

Reason

It was considered unfair that players of the same team who collided were required to leave the field to receive treatment, leaving the team concerned at a numerical disadvantage.

USSF Advice to Referees: The new third bullet point extends the exception to be treated on the field to injuries resulting from the collision of two or more players on the same team. The reference to “outfield player” in the second bullet point (collision of the goalkeeper and an outfield player) is interpreted to include any field player from either team.

3. Law 5 – The Referee

Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees

Injured Players

Present Text

- the stretcher-bearers should enter the field of play with a stretcher at the same time as the doctors to allow the player to be removed as quickly as possible

New Text

- the stretcher-bearers should enter the field of play with a stretcher following a signal from the referee

Reason

Stretcher-bearers' mandatory entry onto the field of play for all injuries where a doctor is requested frequently caused unnecessary disruption of the game.

USSF Advice to Referees: The effect of this change is to disconnect the referee's call for medical person to attend to an injured player and the call for a stretcher. The referee may permit the entry of medical personnel with or without stretcher-bearers at the same time, or may permit stretcher-bearers to enter the field after the entry of medical personnel, or may decide not to permit stretcher-bearers to enter at all if deemed not necessary.

Other decisions of the IFAB

1. Law 1 – The Field of Play

Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees

Logos and emblems

The IFAB reiterated that the reproduction, whether real or virtual, of representative logos or emblems of FIFA, confederations, member associations, leagues, clubs or other bodies is forbidden on the field of play, the goal nets and the areas they enclose, the goals, the flagposts and their flags during playing time.

Particular emphasis was placed on the fact that such logos may not be reproduced on corner flags.

2. Goal-line technology (continuation of discussions at the 122nd Annual General Meeting)

The use of goal-line technology and indeed technology in general within the game was rejected by majority decision.

3. Authoritative language for the Laws of the Game

It was confirmed that in the event of any divergence between translations of the Laws of the Game, the English text is authoritative.

4. Additional instructions to match officials

It has been noted that certain associations and confederations are unilaterally issuing their own instructions and recommendations to referees within their territories concerning the enforcement of the Laws of the Game, thus increasing the chance of differing interpretations around the world. We would like to reiterate that the International Football Association Board (or FIFA on its behalf) is the only body with the authority to issue such additional instructions concerning the Laws of the Game in order to ensure uniform application worldwide.

Moreover, a special meeting of the International Football Association Board (IFAB) took place in Zurich on 18 May 2010. The amendments to the Laws of the Game approved are listed below.

Amendments to the Laws of the Game and Decisions of the Board

1. Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees

Procedure

Present Text

Feinting to take a penalty kick to confuse opponents is permitted as part of football. However, if, in the opinion of the referee, the feinting is considered an act of unsporting behavior, the player must be cautioned.

New Text

Feinting in the run-up to take a penalty kick to confuse opponents is permitted as part of football. However, feinting to kick the ball once the player has completed his run-up is

considered an infringement of Law 14 and an act of unsporting behavior for which the player must be cautioned.

Reason

In view of an increasing trend in players feinting to take a penalty kick to deceive the goalkeeper, it is necessary to clarify what is permitted and what action a referee must take in the event of an infringement

USSF Advice to Referees: Players may feint during the run to the ball (so long as this does not involve, in the opinion of the referee, excessive changes in direction or similar delays in the taking of the kick) but feinting actions once the run to the ball is complete are now to be considered a violation of Law 14 by the kicker. This would include clearly stopping and waiting for a reaction by the goalkeeper before taking the kick or any similar clear hesitation after the run to the ball is complete and before kicking the ball into play. In other words, once the kicker has reached the ball, the kick must be taken without hesitation or delay. In most cases, the referee should allow the kick to proceed and then decide on the appropriate action to take based on the outcome of the kick: if the ball went into the net, the goal is canceled and the kick retaken; if the ball did not go into the net, an indirect free kick is given to the opposing team where the violation occurred. In either case, before play is restarted, the kicker must be cautioned for unsporting behavior.

2. The fourth official

The fourth official and the reserve assistant referee (bullet point 7)

Present Text

He must indicate to the referee when the wrong player is cautioned because of mistaken identity or when a player is not sent off having been seen to be given a second caution or when violent conduct occurs out of the view of the referee and assistant referees. The referee, however, retains the authority to decide on all points connected with play.

New Text

He assists the referee to control the match in accordance with the Laws of the Game. The referee, however, retains the authority to decide on all points connected with play.

Reason

It is considered that the scope of the fourth official's duty to assist the referee should be extended to allow him to offer support and advice not only in the limited number of situations under the existing Laws of the Game.

USSF Advice to Referees: The removal of the listed duties for the fourth official does not mean that they no longer are fourth official responsibilities. As the Board explained, the change was for the purpose of broadening the areas of fourth official assistance to include anything which may pertain to assisting the referee to control the match. The change emphasizes the

importance of including in the pregame conference a discussion of the areas in which the referee wishes the fourth official to provide specific assistance.

Entry into force of Laws of the Game 2010/2011

The IFAB unanimously agreed that the decisions of the 124th IFAB Annual General Meeting and the special meeting of the International Football Association Board (IFAB) would come into force on 1 June 2010 and therefore apply for the 2010 FIFA World Cup™.