

11 Aside Soccer Rules Simplified

Introduction

The official F.I.F.A. laws of the game are written and revised yearly for professional adult soccer games. They may be revised by youth recreational leagues so suit their needs and the age of the players. One thing that always remains constant is that the decisions of the referee are final. Many of the official laws also include the words “in the opinion of the referee”.

Youth referees do not have the benefit of official, qualified linesmen to help them make calls or see fouls committed behind the play. They must make instant decisions on the field and can only call what they can see.

RULE 1 - No Hands

The rule for a hand ball includes using any part of the body from the tips of the fingers to the shoulder. This does not mean that any time the ball touches a player’s arms or hands a hand ball should be called.

The rule states that a player cannot “handle” the ball. A ball that is kicked and hits a player’s hand or arm is not a hand ball. The referee must use his or her own judgment in determining whether or not a hand ball is accidental contact or a purposeful attempt to gain an advantage.

The referee must determine if the play was:

Ball to Hand (which is legal)

or

Hand to Ball (which is illegal)

There is also a situation in which the goalie cannot use his/her hands. This is called the back-pass rule. Goalkeepers cannot pick up a pass that came directly from one of their teammates. In this case, the goalkeeper must use his feet, chest, head or thighs. Infraction of this soccer rule will result in an indirect kick from the point of the infraction.

RULE 2 - Equipment

The basic equipment for soccer required are:

- shirt
- shorts
- stockings
- shin guards
- outdoor soccer shoes (no metal cleats)

Shin guards are mandatory and the referee cannot allow a player to play without them.

A player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player:

This includes hard casts, metal knee braces, necklaces, earrings, nose rings, belly rings, watches and bracelets.

RULE 3 – Start and Restart

A minimum of 7 players is required to start or continue with the game.

A soccer game is started or restarted by a kick-off:

- at the start of a game
- after a goal has been scored
- at the start of the second half

The ball is placed in the center of the field. All players must be in their own half of the field and the opponents of the team taking the kick-off must be at least 10 yards from the ball.

The referee will blow his/her whistle to indicate they are ready for the kickoff.

The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward.

Note that the two-touch rule applies here (see Rule 8).

After a team scores a goal, the kick-off is taken by the other team.

RULE 4 - Throw-ins

A throw-in is taken when the ball crosses a sideline and leaves the field. The two basic soccer rules for a proper throw-in are to have both feet on the ground and to throw the ball with both hands over the head. The ball must be thrown in the direction the player is facing.

Part of both feet must be on the ground, on or behind the sideline, ***when the ball is thrown.***

RULE 5 - Corner Kicks & Goal Kicks

A corner kick or goal kick is taken when the ball leaves the field across a goal line (end line).

If the offensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a goal kick.

If the defensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a corner kick.

The goal kick is taken from anywhere inside the “goal box”. It can be taken by any player, not just the goalkeeper. The ball is not back “in play” until it leaves the penalty area, the large box outside of the “goal box”. If either team touches the ball before it leaves the penalty area the kick must be retaken, and if the ball is not kicked hard enough to leave the area, the kick must be retaken

The corner kick is taken from the corner nearest to where the ball left the field. The “two-touch rule applies” (see rule 8)

RULE 6 - Direct and Indirect Free Kicks

Direct and indirect kicks are two ways that play is restarted after the referee stops play for an infraction.

On a direct kick you can score by kicking the ball *directly* into the goal. On an indirect kick you cannot score. An indirect kick must be touched by another player on either team before it can go into the goal.

For an indirect kick, the referee will hold one arm straight up in the air until the second person touches the ball. If the referee does not have his arm up it's a direct kick.

The ball must be stationary before it is kicked and the opposing players should be a minimum of 10 yards away. However, the referee does not enforce this rule unless the player taking the kick asks for 10 yards. This is because many times the team wants to take the kick quickly and not give the opposing team time to set up their defense.

However, it is the responsibility of the defending team to respect the required distance on a free kick. The referee may blow the whistle, have the free kick be retaken and also caution the defending player if they deliberately interfere with the taking of the free kick.

If a free kick is taken by the defending team inside the penalty area the ball is not in play until it has left the penalty area.

A player who, **in the opinion of the referee, intentionally** commits any of the following offences, shall be penalized by the awarding of a direct free kick to the opposing team:

- Spits at an opponent
- Kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
- Trips or attempts to trip an opponent
- Jumps at an opponent
- Charges an opponent
- Strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- Holds an opponent
- Pushes an opponent
- Handles the ball deliberately, except the goalkeeper within his own penalty area
- Tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball, making contact with the opponent before the ball

Should a player commit one of the above offences within his own penalty area, a penalty kick shall be awarded.

The referee may send a player off for the remainder of the game for violent conduct, foul or abusive language or if they continue to play in a dangerous manner after being warned by the referee.

All other free kicks are indirect.

RULE 7 - Penalty Kick

Direct free kicks for infractions inside the penalty area become penalty kicks.

The ball is placed on the penalty spot or mark, 12 yards in front of the center of the goal.

All players must remain outside the penalty area and the penalty arc until the ball is kicked.

The goalkeeper must have both feet on the goal line until the ball is kicked.

If after the ball is kicked, it rebounds off of the keeper and stays on the field, the ball is “live” and anyone can play it.

If after the ball is kicked, it rebounds off of the goal and stays on the field, the ball is “live” and anyone can play it **except the person who just kicked the ball**. If the ball rebounds off of the goal and back into play, the person who kicked the ball cannot play it until the ball is touched by another player on either team.

RULE 8 - Two-touch Rule

A player cannot touch the ball twice in a row when putting the ball in play in any of the following situations:

- on kick-offs
- corner kicks
- on direct free kicks, indirect free kicks & penalty kicks
- on throw-ins

The only exception to this rule is on drop balls. Drop balls are used to put the ball back in play after play is stopped for injuries.

RULE 9 – Fouls and Punishment

A player cannot kick, trip, jump at, charge, strike, push, hold, or spit at an opponent.

However, soccer can be a physical, contact sport when two opposing players both want the soccer ball. Bumping or going shoulder-to-shoulder while competing for a ball is *not a foul* unless the hands or elbows come up. This is a judgment call and not all referees will call it the same way.

The normal consequence of a foul is a direct kick for the opposing team.

However, depending on the type of foul and severity, the player may also be given a yellow or red card.

A yellow card is a warning that the player is playing dangerously, continually breaking the rules, showing dissent to the referees calls or displaying poor sportsmanship. By showing a yellow card, the referee is communicating to the player and the coaches that if the player continues to disregard the rules or to play dangerously he will be sent off the field for the remainder of the game.

Two yellow cards in the same game results in a red card.

When a player gets a red card, they must leave the game and their team must play short. An ejected player cannot be replaced (unless they are ejected prior to the start of the game).

If a red on the situation, the player may card is shown, the referee will write a report on the back of the game sheet. Depending on the situation, the player may be subject to further disciplinary action and be suspended from one or more games. For violent conduct players may be suspended for the remainder of the season.

RULE 10 - Offside

Also, *it is not an offense for a player to be in an offside position*. The player must be involved in active play as determined by the referee to be called offside.

A player is in an offside position if: *he is nearer to his opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent (including the goalkeeper)*

In other words, an offensive or attacking player can't be ahead of the ball and involved in the play unless there is a defender between him and the goalkeeper. Or, you can't just wait at the other team's goal waiting for the ball.

You cannot be offside on a corner kick, goal kick, or throw-in.

You can't be offside if you are standing on your half of the field.

Also, the offside rule applies *when the ball is kicked*, not when the player receives the ball.

Without the assistance of linesmen, it is very difficult sometimes impossible for the referee to determine when a player is offside. For this reason coaches should not be relying on the "offside trap" instead of teaching players to be goal side of their opponents when defending.