

Ask the Ref # 6, 2011 – Fouls and Misconduct (2).

Hi all football enthusiasts, coaches, referees, players and long suffering parents,

Welcome to the next slightly edited edition of Ask the Ref, the Adelaide Hills Referee Branch's weekly bulletin on the rules of the game that is sent out each year.

This week is the SECOND of two bulletins discussing some issues relating to the long and complex topic of **Fouls and Misconduct**.



© www.ClipProject.info

As usual please distribute this bulletin as widely as possible through your club contacts and networks. The aim of this bulletin is to reach those who know nothing about the game so that they may learn and grow to enjoy the game more as a result. If it also informs those who have been around for a while then that's a bonus.

This week is Part 2 of the Ask the Referee bulletin looking at Fouls and Misconduct. Let's consider persistent Infringements of the Laws of the Game, playing advantage, taking free kicks and generally comment on whether football (soccer) is a contact or non-contact sport.

Fouls and Misconduct Part 2

Persistent Infringement and the Roadblocks technique

Adelaide Hills Referees apply the Roadblocks technique to manage players and infringements on the field. This approach encourages referees to slowly build up the level of their warnings to players.

Have you ever been on the sideline watching a game and seen a player commit a foul and after a word from the referee the play is simply restarted with a DFK, and then five minutes later a different player commits a similar foul and gets a YC? '*Inconsistent!*' is the usual cry, although other more colourful language is regrettably more often used! Well, what you might be witnessing is the correct use of the Roadblocks system.

This is where the referee detects that a player may be headed for trouble in some way. The referee would have talked to the player, a quiet word at first, possibly hardly noticeable to anyone else even other players. Depending on the severity of the offence or the close 'miss' on a tackle, the referee may next ensure that all the players hear what now could be called a public warning, and they may even strike a posture that ensures the coaches and the spectators are aware that the player is being talked to and is being watched from now on.

You might at this stage ask why the spectators and coaches don't get to see this from the start. The reason we tend not to escalate to this level straight away is because we are dealing with juniors and the psychology of the

adolescent is such that public berating can have the opposite affect to the 'quiet word' and make the player less cautious rather than more cautious.

Good examples of invisible 'roadblocks' having been applied would be the many cases seen on TV games. How many times have you seen a professional referee approach a player and count their fingers in front of them? They are saying, "I warned you once, I warned you twice, this is the third time, here's a YC for your troubles. Next time it is Red"!

So, remember referees in the Hills are active participants in the game. They are constantly watching and checking and controlling the game with many devices. The best games are when no cards are used, any verbal warnings sink in early and the game is played in good spirits. This is often also very much under the control of the coaches!

Playing Advantage.

Rather than stopping play for an offence, the referee may allow play to continue if doing so will benefit the team against which an offence has been committed. This is known as "playing advantage". It is a split second judgement that does not always go right, but if it doesn't then the referee can call back play and penalise the original offence if the anticipated advantage does not materialise within a short period.

You will generally know that an 'advantage' is being played as the referee will extend their arms out in front of them and also will call 'advantage', but the verbal instruction is not necessary and is not always able to be used. This is where the instruction to the players to 'play the whistle' is very important. A player may have the 'advantage' but he/she or other players may stop, expecting the foul to be given. They may not be aware that the referee is playing 'advantage' therefore it is always best for players to keep on going and only stop play when the whistle is heard.

Even if an offence occurs that is worthy of a caution (yellow card YC or red card RC), advantage can still be played and the player committing the offence may be cautioned at the next stoppage of play.

Of course, in the majority of cases, when a Red Card offence has occurred, play is stopped and the player is sent off and the direct free kick is given. The advantage may be applied if a clear goal scoring opportunity exists.

Contact or non-contact sport?

In the section on Impeding discussed last week, we talked about occupying space around the ball. The fact is that any player anywhere is allowed to occupy any space on the ground. It is only when a player takes that 'space' illegally that they should be penalised.

What we all see very often in a game is a shoulder-to-shoulder contact between two players vying for the space around the ball. As long as nothing illegal is being done in this situation there is nothing wrong with two players using their strength to occupy space that they both have the right to occupy.

What is illegal is when for instance a player changes direction away from the line of the ball and knocks or collides into the other player, usually resulting in the other player being knocked off balance or when elbows and arms are raised and used to prevent a player from occupying space. That is illegal and a DFK is awarded. If a player persistently does this throughout the match then they will be penalised for persistent infringement. So, contrary to popular belief our game is not a completely non-contact sport although the players' principal objective is to play the ball.

Free Kicks.

Direct Free Kicks and Indirect Free Kicks are often seen as punishments. Another way of looking at them is that a free kick restores to a team the advantage that has been unfairly taken away from them. This becomes apparent when you have the team that knows it can take its free kick as quickly as it likes, the 'quick one'.

There is no obligation for the team awarded the free kick to wait for the opposition to assemble its players in their desired position. They took away the advantage unfairly to begin with and it is not a referee's job to assist the opposition to gain an advantage after they have deprived the other team of an initial advantage unfairly. The exception to this is when the referee shows the whistle to the players over the ball when he has been asked to get the 'wall' back the required distance.

Have a look at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGpV5aK-WHs> from a Champions League game. And this one is a beauty too: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCWjiolR5MM>

What do you think?

That's all, until next week.

Peter van der Zwaag,
AHRB

Footnote:

Coaches, other officials and spectators can also have a big impact on the manner in which players conduct themselves with respect to fouls and misconduct during a match. I have often appreciated the support from coaches when a player has become agitated and is interchanged by the coach to cool down. This is fantastic education for young players.

The AHJSA has clear expectations of people at games and for good reason. Mind you, I find that the vast majority of people involved in our matches behave impeccably, encouraging the young players positively and supporting officials. Every now and then, unfortunately, an individual will constantly harangue players or loudly "assist" the referee with calls for decisions which he or she is often in the process of making correctly or even question them publicly! The effect on some young players is noticeable and unfortunate. Remember that we all share a responsibility in setting up young players and referees properly for a lifetime of wonderful sporting involvement in this great game.