

Ask the Ref # 6, 2011 – The “Passback”.

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 nearly weekly bulletin on the rules of the game that is sent out each year.

This looks at passing the ball back to the goal keeper.



© 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.

The **pass back or back-pass** refers to two clauses within Law 12 of the Laws of the Game.

These clauses prohibit the goalkeeper from **intentionally** handling the ball when a teammate uses his/her feet to **intentionally** pass the ball to them, or from **intentionally** handling the ball when receiving it directly from a throw-in.

The goalkeeper is still permitted to use his feet and other body parts to redirect the ball. BUT IF an outfield player passes the ball back using any part of the body besides the feet (e.g. uses their head, chest or other body part), then the keeper may pick up the ball.

An unintentional pass or touch that goes to the keeper is not considered an offence. For example, if a defender attempts to clear the ball but it deflects towards the keeper or if the ball flies to the keeper following a contest for the ball or it is mis-kicked and the keeper picks it up, this is unintentional and it is okay for the GK to pick up balls that come to him or her in these circumstances.

The actual offence being committed in a back pass situation is the handling of the ball by the goalkeeper, not the ball being passed back. When a pass back is picked up, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team from the place where the offence occurred, i.e., where the goalkeeper deliberately handled the ball (unless the offence was committed within the goal area, in which case the kick is taken from a point on the forward edge of the goal area closest to where the offence occurred).

If the goalkeeper handles the ball outside the penalty area (whether receiving the ball from a team-mate or not), a direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team where the offence occurred because this is simply a handball situation.

The back-pass rule was introduced in 1992 to discourage time-wasting and overly defensive play. The 1990 World Cup was generally felt to be an exceedingly dull event, rife with back-passing and goalkeepers holding up the ball. Goalkeepers would frequently drop the ball and dribble it around, only to pick it up again once opponents came closer to put them under pressure; a typical time-wasting technique.

Therefore, another rule was introduced at the same time as the back-pass rule, with the same intentions. This rule prohibits the goalkeeper from handling the ball again once they have released it from their hands. This offence would also result in an indirect free kick to the opposition if it occurred.

The rule limiting the keeper to a maximum of six seconds before he or she has to release the ball is there for the same reason. By the way, six seconds is a long time!

To make it as clear as possible, the only difficult area of the pass back rule is whether the player has **deliberately** passed the ball back to the keeper or not. A pressured defender, especially in the younger age groups, may kick the ball in the general direction of the goal area. The ball may spill to the keeper from a tackle. If the keeper picks the ball up in this situation the referee has to make a judgement call as to whether this was deliberate or not. Body language and the positioning of the player and the GK are critical as well as the time left to play and the spirit in which the game is being played.

A player using a deliberate trick to play the ball back to the GK, for instance juggling the ball and then heading it back to the GK would be deemed to be unsporting and an IFK would be awarded. The rule and spirit in which it is enforced is there to keep the play positive and moving and, for all our sakes, not boring.

Anyway, I hope you have enjoyed this instalment of Ask the Ref. If you have any areas that you would like future bulletins to cover why not drop me a line with your suggestions.

We'll try and answer any reasonable questions you might have of a general nature.

Regards,

Peter van der Zwaag
Adelaide Hills Referee Branch.

P.S. Not on this topic but regarding some matters I was asked about this week, here are some links you may find useful.

There is a lot of information on the FFA website with respect to opportunities for coaches, development goals for players and many other useful resources.

http://www.footballaustralia.com.au/2009GameDev/default.aspx?s=community_coaching_news_news_item_new&id=18616

This is similar information with respect to refereeing development.

http://www.footballaustralia.com.au/2009GameDev/default.aspx?s=comm_referees_new

A lot of this material is quite new with different schedules being introduced in recent times.