

Ask the Ref # 7, 2011 – Twelve Misconceptions.

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 edition is a little bit different and draws on the experiences and stories, both this year and from the past, of our referees in the AHRB. It is about the things that SOMETIMES puzzle and confront us.



I should stress at the outset that these situations are generally quite rare. They are also often not deliberate attempts to be difficult but stem from the fact that we have a constant stream of officials and parents moving through our competition and so there are always things to learn.

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.

Twelve Misconceptions.

1. *The referee never makes mistakes.*

Wrong! (Parents at one of my games last Saturday would agree!)

BUT: The referee is always right.

Correct!

Referees make decisions in response to loud appeals from the spectators.

Wrong! Referees are trained to give the RIGHT decisions as quickly as possible. Sometimes this can mean looking for advantage, checking for a signal from an assistant or just a little thinking time. This may make it appear that the referee is reacting to the crowd. Not so; better a little late and correct than early and wrong is the strategy that applies for us.

Complaints or repetitive shouts of "Ohhh Ref!" (or similar) help the ref. and the game.

Wrong! The youngsters out on the pitch are almost without exception quite happy to get on with the game and accept the decisions of the referee. Why would anyone wish to try to create a situation where this does not operate? It won't change a decision but it may make it more difficult for a young referee to feel he or she is also a valued part of the match.

2. *The winner of the coin toss at the start of the game or a period of extra time has the choice of ends or the kick off.*

Wrong. This rule changed in – I can't remember when! But it is a while ago! The loser of the coin toss has the KO. The winner gets to choose an end to attack first.

3. *Deflections by a defender play an attacker on side.*

Wrong. This is a real oldie too. I think it used to be true when I was playing (when tight shorts were in fashion for soccer). The offside infringement occurs at the instant the ball is kicked (or headed etc.) to the advantage of a team mate (see "Ask the Ref. 2011 # 1").

4. *Whenever a player is in an offside position, the Assistant Referee should raise his or her flag!*

Wrong. The assistant should only raise the flag if the player has to be **penalised** for being in that position. It is not an offence to be in an offside position until (see "Ask the Ref. 2011 # 1").

5. *Spectators can stand wherever they like, in particular behind the goals in AHJSA matches.*

Wrong. Grounds in the Hills are not stadiums. There are usually no fences or real spectator areas at all. Having spectators in the area behind the goal is a risk given the nature of the play in this area. It is not fair to be coaching the keeper from behind the goal. This is a sensible and easily observed requirement set by the AHJSA and strongly endorsed by the AHRB.

6. *Constantly yelling out lots of instructions to young players (or referees) from off the pitch makes them less likely to make mistakes.*

Wrong! Think back to when you were playing. How much did you really hear and take in from off the pitch? You were busy trying your best to play your best game! I'll bet you remember the encouragement you got though!

7. *"But he/she got the ball!"*

Often irrelevant! How often do you hear this call when a player has been brought down in a tackle and the referee blows for a foul? A couple of phrases from the laws of the game are worth quoting. For example: ".....offences in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless or using excessive force" and 'trips **or attempts to trip** an opponent'. If the player goes down because the tackle is illegal, and this can occur for a number of reasons (see "Ask the Ref. 2011 # 4"), getting the ball becomes irrelevant. (It is often worth watching what the trailing leg does as well!)

8. *"50/50 contest ref.! Play on!"*

Often irrelevant! This is another feeling off expressed. In fact, if the misdemeanours are trifling, we may do this to keep the game moving. BUT, although we have the option of a drop ball, we try to identify the worse or more particularly the first of the two fouls. It is when it appears that fairness is not restored when players engage in foul play that matches can get unfortunate.

9. *There are different rules for very junior games. Red cards should not be given.*

Wrong! Once players are in competitive leagues, the laws apply. The only exceptions are special AHJSA requirements like the positioning of the ball for corners in the U 11 and U 12 grades. Free kicks and cards are a part of the game. They restore fairness. Referees have an important educative role with the very young teams when players are just learning the rules.

10. *Interchange players and coaching staff can stand wherever they like.*

Wrong! They should be in a technical area either side of the centre line, on the same side, whether marked or not. Interchange players should be sitting down or at least wearing a bib or different colour top. Spare a thought for the ref. here! It is difficult to see if a player, standing just over the touch line, is part of the play or not! Managing interchanges is much easier when they occur correctly.

11. *Some jewellery is OK.*

Wrong! The law is clear. "A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewellery)." Don't give the ref. a hard time for being forced to apply this law when players choose to ignore it!

12. *Soccer is a passionate game and I can behave how I like at matches!*

Wrong. The AHJSA website sets out guidelines for our competition. They are excellent and clearly set out on the website.

The link is: <http://www.ahjsa.asn.au/>

As an ex-teacher, I find that there is lot to like in **THE SAPSASA CODE**

FOR PLAYERS:

- Be a good sport
- Play for enjoyment
- Work hard for your team as well as yourself
- Treat all team mates and opponents as you enjoy being treated yourself
- Play by the rules
- Cooperate with team and game officials
- Control your behaviour on and off the field
- Learn to value honest effort, skilled performance and improvement

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FOR TEACHERS AND COACHES:

- Set a good example for your players
- Encourage and create opportunities
- Teach a wide range of team skills
- Ensure that the sport is appropriate for the age group and the skill development level of the players involved
- Teach your players to be friendly towards officials and opponents
- Give all interested students a chance to participate in training and in games
- Remove from the field of play any of your players whose behaviour is not acceptable
- Keep your own knowledge of coaching and the developments of the game up to date

FOR PARENTS:

- Encourage participation by your children
- Provide a model of good sporting spirit for your child to copy
- Be courteous in your communication with players, team officials, game officials and sport administrators
- Encourage honest effort, skilled performance and team loyalty
- Make any new parents feel welcome on all occasions
- Do not interfere with the conduct of any events

FOR SPECTATORS:

- Demonstrate appropriate social behaviour
- Remember children play for enjoyment. Don't let your behaviour detract from their enjoyment.
- Let game officials conduct events without interference
- Support skilled performances and team play with generous applause
- Demonstrate respect for opposing players and their supporters
- SAPSASA is smoke and alcohol free

In my experience, this is overwhelmingly what I have experienced at AHJSA matches. Thank you!

The few occasions where difficulties do occur can be very time and emotion consuming for those concerned but that should not distract from what happens most of the time.

That's all, until next week.

Peter van der Zwaag,
AHRB