

ASK THE REF. Questions and Answers

#1. Our first Ask the Ref is about handball.

Do you hear the call 'hand ball' from spectators, players and even coaches every time the ball hits a player's hand or arm?

First of all, unbeknownst to many, there is no such rule as "hand ball." In reality, Law XII states that it is illegal if a player "handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within his own penalty area)" This means that is not a foul if the ball touches a player's hand. It is only a foul if the player intentionally handles the ball. Therefore, all of those times that a defender kicks the ball right into a player's hand or the ball bounces up and hits an arm, these are not fouls and should not be called.

Nowhere in the LOTG does it say anything about it being a foul if the player whose hand or arm the ball has touched gains an advantage. In other words, even if the ball were to hit a player's arm and drop right at his feet or even were to go directly into his opponents' goal, these are not fouls if they were unintentional acts. As recently as 1996 FIFA specifically changed the laws to make it very clear that it is only a foul if the player handles the ball deliberately.

So how can one tell if a hand ball is intentional or not? First, if a ball, such as a clearance out of the defence, hits a player so fast that they have no time to react then this cannot be a hand ball. Likewise, bouncing balls that come up and hit a player's arm or balls that hit a player's arm when his or her back is turned are generally not fouls. On the other hand, when a player uses his or her hand at their side to control a ball that comes in at waist level or has time to reach out and touch a ball, then these clearly should be called. A good rule-of-thumb to use is if the player's hand comes to the ball, it is a foul. If the ball comes to the hand, it is not a foul; more commonly known as 'ball to hand, or hand to ball'.

Now, having said all of that, in female football and for female football players in general, it has been accepted practice to allow for players to protect themselves in vulnerable areas. I for one judge this to be when the ball is zooming at the chest area and will hurt the player. Instinctively players will use their arms and hands to protect themselves. This has to be judged by the referee on the spot and most err on the side of the player. However, one factor to take into consideration is, does the player have an alternative. Can they use their upper chest area to control the ball, can they use their head. The less experienced the player the more chance that they will be afraid of the ball in general and will use their arms to protect themselves when they didn't really need to. I believe this issue is partly a coaching one and more needs to be done in training to show players how to control a speeding ball.

In the end, it is the referee's decision whether a player intentionally handles a ball or not. It is a split second decision taking into account many factors, but I guess the impetus for discussing this topic is to inform those that didn't know that a ball hitting a players arm accidentally is not a foul.

#2. This week, we are looking at the passback.

The back-pass 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 them the ball, or from intentionally handling the ball when receiving directly from a throw-in.

The goalkeeper is still permitted to use his feet and other body parts to redirect the ball. Conversely, if an outfield player passes the ball back using any part of the body besides the feet, the keeper may pick up the ball. Unintentional pass or touch is not considered as an offence. For example, if a defender attempts to clear the ball but it deflects towards the keeper or is miss-kicked and the keeper picks it up, this is unintentional and is okay.

The actual offence committed is the handling of the ball by the goalkeeper, not the ball being passed back. 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.

The back-pass rule was introduced in 1992 to discourage time-wasting and overly defensive play, after the 1990 World Cup were described as exceedingly dull, rife with back-passing and goalkeepers holding up the ball. Also, 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-stalling 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 he has released it for play. This offence would also result in an indirect free kick to the opposition.

#3. For the third Ask the Ref we have taken on the mighty challenge of explaining what offside is.

However, we are copping out a bit and going to ask you to click this link <http://www.dynamic-thought.com/OffsideClicketteLo.html> and watch a four-minute dynamic presentation of the offside rule. Those people who have watched this have said that the light goes off and they magically and finally understand what everyone has been going on about all season. Even if you 'think' you know the offside rule, please take a look at the dynamic demonstration, at the very least you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you had it right all along!

Before we finish though we want to state three simple facts: you cannot be offside from a throw-in, or from a corner kick, or from a goal kick (not a kick from the goal keepers hands, but when the ball has gone out of play and a goal kick restarts play). Oh yeah, and you can't be offside when you are in your own half.

I hope you enjoy the explanation of offside and enjoy your games more as a result.

If you are interested in reading about the history of offside and other offside issues I have provided a link to an article in the Wikipedia that is not half bad as far as explanations go http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Offside_%28football%29.

#4. This week's Ask the Ref looks at the role of the goalkeeper (GK) and the specific rules for GKs.

Firstly, once the GK has possession of the ball from active play, they have only 6 seconds to distribute the ball into play. Kicking it or throwing it to a teammate can distribute the ball, or the GK can drop the ball at their feet and it is deemed to be in play from then on. If the GK holds the ball for more than six seconds it is an Indirect Free Kick (IFK) to the opposition taken from where the GK was at the time of the infringement. I myself, start a silent count as soon as the keeper has the ball, 'one-one thousand, etc', if the keeper has not released the ball on the count of six and is not in mid-step to release it then I blow for the IFK.

There are some common misconceptions surrounding the GK. One of the most common is that the keeper gets or deserves 'special treatment' from the referee. It is understandable how this has come about, as the GK can get themselves into some very vulnerable situations ('down where the boots are flying' so to speak). However, there are no rules in the Laws of the Game that instruct the referee to provide special treatment to the GK. But, there is a practical consideration that has everything to do with the dynamics of play and it does concern the GK's vulnerability when he jumps up to play a ball. Incoming attackers obviously can't jump high enough to head a ball at the level a keeper can play it with his hands, but players do come in fast and hard and they have the right to try to get to the ball but in this situation if the player makes contact with the GK before they have made contact with the ball then it is a foul and a DFK is awarded to the defending side.

Ever see a GK jump up to catch a ball and lift one knee in front even though no attacker might be near? This is a way of jumping that allows for more lift. But if the GK does manage to make contact with a player before they themselves handle the ball then it is a PK for the foul on the opposition. Timing is everything in this case and with a crowded penalty area it is up to the referee to be in an ideal position in order to detect any infringements either way.

The GK is subject to the Laws of the Game, as much as other players are, when they are outside of their own penalty areas. Inside their own penalty area, they may play the ball with their hands, but there are instances when they cannot (even though they are within their own penalty area). Let's look at those.

If for some reason one of his team-mates throws the ball to the GK and the ball does not touch an opponent before coming into the penalty area, the GK may not use their hands to play the ball. Additionally, if a team-mate intentionally passes a ball back to his own GK by kicking it, the GK cannot play it with his hands even though they are within their own penalty area – see more on the pass back issue in Ask the Ref # 1.

If a GK puts a ball back into play by dropping it or rolling it on the ground in front of them, they cannot again pick it up with their hands even though they are within their own penalty area. They have put the ball in play and must now kick it. This isn't something that happens often, but it can with an inexperienced GK. In similar circumstances, if a GK decides to bounce the ball before delivering it into play and they lose control of the ball as a consequence (a bad bounce or something), they cannot pick the ball back up with their hands, they have to kick the ball, as the ball, once out of the GK's control, is 'in play'.

If the GK plays or releases the ball out from their penalty area and no other player has touched the ball they cannot manoeuvre the ball back into their own penalty area and pick it up.

The GK must wear colours in a way as to be easily differentiated from their own team-mates, their opponents and from the officials.

Now to the vexed question of when does the GK have control of the ball. Luckily we have international FIFA referee Matthew Cream to advise us and he has used words such as: the GK is deemed to have control of the ball, therefore not allowing any player to challenge them for the ball, when the GK is applying pressure with one or two hands to the ball when it's on the ground. Also, when the GK is holding the ball in either one or two hands. And Matthew also has a timely reminder that players cannot challenge for the ball when the GK is kicking the ball from his hands and when the ball is between his hands and his kicking foot. Any player deliberately delaying the restart of play by interfering with the GK as he is releasing the ball is liable to draw not only an IFK but also a yellow card for 'deliberately delaying the restart of play' or 'Unsporting behaviour' by interfering with the GK. This is a warning for all those players that quietly drift into the GK's path as they are restarting the game and when approached act all innocent with an 'who me?' type look on their face.

Anyway, that's it for the Goalkeeper, the loneliest position on the field of play and one of the most specialised. For some amusing information check out this great website Goal Keepers are Different at <http://www.goalkeepersaredifferent.com>.

#5. Fouls and Misconduct - Part One

The fouls and misconduct described

A foul occurs when a player commits an offence listed in Law 12 of the Laws of the Game while the ball is in play, and they are: 'kicks or attempts to kick an opponent' (yes, you can be given a foul if you 'try' to kick someone), 'trips or attempts to trip an opponent', 'jumps at an opponent' (watch out for that jumping-in on the player you younger players), 'charges an opponent' (no credit cards please), 'strikes or attempts to strike an opponent' (our younger referees agree that teachers' strikes are acceptable!), 'pushes an opponent', 'tackles an opponent', 'holds an opponent', 'spits at an opponent', 'handles the ball deliberately' (except

for the GK within their own penalty area of course). For any of these offences a direct free kick (DFK) is awarded to the opposition to be taken from where the offence occurred, or a penalty kick if the offence occurred within the penalty area. The referee indicates a DFK by pointing their arm in the direction that the team that is being awarded the free kick is attacking.

Other fouls, that fall generally into the category of 'technical fouls', like: 'plays in a dangerous manner', 'impedes the progress of an opponent' (without making contact, 'cos that would be a push wouldn't it and therefore a DFK - more on this later), or 'prevents the GK from releasing the ball from their hands', etc are punishable by what's called an indirect free kick (IFK). You will know if an IFK is being given as the Referee will signal this by raising their arm straight up in the air and will only bring their arm down once the ball has been touched by another player after the free kick is taken.

Impeding

Impeding in football (soccer), or shepherding as they call it in that other code, when it is done properly without drawing a foul is mostly called shielding. A player may shield a ball from the opposition player and it happens a lot during play, but is most evident when a ball is running out of play and the defender wants it to go out and prevents the opposition from getting to the ball. What a referee will look for in this situation is whether the ball is playable by the player shielding the ball – usually if the ball is within one metre of the player (a decent sized step) then they can reasonably play the ball and therefore have the right to occupy any of the space within and around the ball and deny the opposition that space by occupying it. However, it is advisable for players to keep their arms down when doing this, otherwise they will easily unfairly obstruct a player. One popular way of shielding that doesn't work and one that, in general, players' seem to think no-one sees is when the player sticks their rear end out to try and stop a player from getting to the ball, really, you can't feasibly play the ball when you are contorting like Houdini in such a manner on the field and the referee will, probably with a wry smile, blow their whistle and award an IFK.

The use of cautions yellow and red

The referee may punish a player or a substitute's foul or misconduct by a caution (yellow card YC) or sending-off (red card RC). A second YC at the same game leads to an automatic RC, and therefore to a sending-off. If a player has been sent-off, no substitute can be brought on in their place.

A player is cautioned and shown a YC if they commit any of the following offences: 'unsporting behaviour', 'dissent by word or action' (and that's to anyone, the referee, another player, an official, a spectator), 'persistent infringement of the Laws of the Game' (more on this one next week), 'delaying the restart of play', 'failing to respect the required distance for the restart of play from a corner kick, a free kick or a throw in'; 'entering or re-entering the field of play without the referee's permission'; 'deliberately leaving the field of play without the referee's permission'. A substitute or substituted player (on the bench or in the technical area) can also be cautioned for: 'unsporting behaviour', 'dissent by word or action' or 'delaying the restart of play'.

Misconduct may occur at any time, and while the offences that constitute misconduct are listed, the definitions are broad. In particular, the offence of "unsporting behaviour" which may be used to deal with most events that violate the 'spirit of the game', even if they are not listed as specific offences. Non-players such as managers and support staff cannot be shown a yellow or red card, but the referee can expel them from the technical area if they fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner.

A player, substitute or substituted player is sent off for the following offences: 'serious foul play'; 'violent conduct'; 'spitting at an opponent or any other person'; 'denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball or by an offence punishable by a DFK or penalty kick' – at the AHJSRA we have held several training sessions that have emphasised that the word obvious in the rule 'obvious goal scoring opportunity' needs to be underlined. It cannot be for *maybe* they could have *possibly* scored a goal, it has to be obvious that there

was a goal scoring opportunity. Players can also be sent off for 'using offensive, insulting or abusive language or gestures'; and for 'receiving a second YC in the same match'.

#6 Fouls and Misconduct - Part 2

Persistent Infringement and the Roadblocks technique

In the AHJSRA we have adopted the nationwide Roadblocks technique to manage players and infringements on the field. What this system does is encourage 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. Yes? The 'referee's inconsistent' is the usual cry, although other more colourful language is more than often used yeah? 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, either tackling recklessly but just getting away with it or mumbling sweet nothings to those within earshot about how well the referee is not running the game, constantly tripping opponents, etc. Well, the referee would have had words with 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 ensure that all the players hear what now could be called a verbal 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 watched from now on in. You might at this stage ask 'why don't we, the spectators and coaches, 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. Probably the best example of 'roadblocks' having been applied would be the many cases seen on TV games. How many times have you seen the 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 and the verbal warnings sink in early and the game is played in good spirits.

Playing Advantage

Now, let's move onto another matter of importance when looking at fouls and misconduct. 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 an 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, usually between three to four seconds. You will know that an 'advantage' is being played as the referee will extend their arms out in front of them and also by calling either 'advantage' or 'play on', but the verbal instruction is not necessary and is not always able to be used. This is where the coaches 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) and advantage is still played the player committing the offence may be cautioned at the next stoppage of play. In the majority of cases, when an Red Card offence has occurred play is stopped and the player is sent off and the DFK is given, but the offence could easily take place within sight of a clear goal and outside of the penalty area and I believe that most teams would prefer the advantage to a set piece DFK that allows the opposition to gather and position themselves to stop a goal opportunity.

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' by pushing a player in order to occupy that space that they should be penalised. What we all see very often in a game is a shoulder-to-shoulder exchange 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 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 – now that is illegal and a DFK is awarded. If a player persistently does this throughout the match then they are in trouble and will be penalised for persistent infringement. So, contrary to popular belief our game is not a non-contact sport.

On the funnier side, one of the more common things we see is two players shoulder-to-shoulder and one player cleverly steps away, resulting in the other player losing their balance. In a fast paced action, this can often be interpreted by observers as a foul on the player who's lost their balance (usually from those on the blind side of play), but it is just the laws of gravity having a bit of fun really.

That is all for today, except to say that it is very easy to see DFKs and IFKs as punishments. Another way of looking at them is that a DFK and an IFK 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 quick 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, it was they that 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 the advantage unfairly.

To catch up with previous Ask the Ref bulletins on 'Handball', 'The Passback', 'Offside', 'The Role of the Goal Keeper' and last week's 'Fouls and Misconduct Part One', go to the AHJSA website and follow this link http://www.ahjsa.asn.au/word/ASK_%20THE_REF.doc

#7 Ask not what you can do for the ref, but what can the ref do for you?

This is the final Ask the Ref for 2008, so, we thought we'd finish by letting you know what you can expect from Adelaide Hills referees when they turn up for a game.

Accredited Training

Our referees are trained by firstly completing a Level 5 theory-based certification course, usually run over 4 two-hour sessions. They then take on Level 4 accreditation, which focuses on the practical application of the Laws of the Game over two two-hour sessions and also includes practical game time as centre referees – this lasts for most of the new referee's first season.

30 minutes before the game

Our referees are appointed to a game usually up to a week in advance. As part of their preparation, the referee will have an expectations of the game as a result of checking the standing of the two teams and considering their playing history. Our referees are instructed to be at the ground at least 30 minutes prior to kick off. In this time they will undertake a pitch inspection, take charge of the Team Sheets, check the players' equipment and provide any instructions and advice to the players as needed and they will also do their own warm-up. They will meet with the coaches and managers and again, provide any advice or instruction necessary. Importantly, the referee will liaise with the volunteer linespeople and provide them with advice, instruction and, as is often the case, some quick lessons on offside and what they can and can't do as volunteer officials of the game.

As you can see, there's a lot to be done within 30 minutes. Sometimes, when a referee has back-to-back games at the same location, the 30-minute preparation time becomes 5

minutes. This is when, as clubs, the more the teams' managers and coaches are organised the better for the smooth transition from one game to another.

Getting the game 'in' on time

Our referees are instructed to cut games back if they start late for whatever reason. A late starting game can have a domino affect on the whole Hills schedule and leave the referee appointments roster in a mess. It is therefore vitally important that the first games of the day finish on time, especially the non-competitive games and younger age groups.

Appearance and attitude

We expect our referees will always attend to a game in their prescribed uniforms, they will be smart in their appearance and will be enthusiastic and professional towards players, spectators, coaches, managers and others present.

Formal Inspections

You might see another referee at a ground wandering around with a clipboard. This would be a Referee Inspector. We try to have our referees inspected at least once and where possible twice a season. The inspections are detailed constructive advice on what the referee is doing right and where they can improve. These inspections come in the form of a report that is shared with the referee and the AHJSRA Executive.

Mentors

A new referee will be mentored in their first few games. This is usually undertaken by a more senior or experienced junior referee and is a more relaxed version of the formal inspection. The advice given is of a general nature and the mentor usually guides the referee through their first few games only.

Green Shirts

You can spot a first-year referee by the green shirt they are wearing. This program has many benefits, and is intended to ensure that a new referee is recognised as such by spectators, players and officials, and that behaviour towards the new referee is moderated accordingly.

Ongoing training

The AHJSRA runs training sessions throughout the season, approximately every six weeks. These are compulsory for AHJSRA referees to attend. The training sessions drill down a bit deeper into one aspect of the game or another, be it positioning or foul recognition or whatever the need is as identified by the AHJSRA's Referee Development Officer.

New recruits

We are always in need of more referees. At the moment the AHJSRA has 30 members, with 70% being under the age of 18. About half of our members are new to refereeing this year. Each year some referees choose not to continue for various reasons, with the two most common reasons being SACE or ongoing playing commitments.

Why become a referee?

The reasons people become referees are wide and varied. Whether they do it to live the dream to referee a World Cup game or at a professional level or just to stay fit – whatever the reason, most agree it is a very satisfying way to spend a not inconsiderable part of the winter weekends. There are costs associated with being a referee, these can include professional referee membership fees, purchasing and maintaining equipment and uniforms, a commitment to ongoing training, attendance at training and referee meetings, transport and petrol costs, etc. To cover these costs, Adelaide Hills' referees are provided with match fees for each game they are appointed to. Refereeing is a great hobby for most, a fantastic way to keep fit and a way to stay involved in the great game, and, as long as parents are happy to provide the transport for free, it can be a good way for young people to earn some pocket money. Being a professional referee is also something that you can proudly put on your cv.

Referee Training is Subsidised

The AHJSA encourages the training of referees by offering a subsidy to clubs that covers the accredited training course costs. From the training, club members can develop their skills in

order to confidently referee for the club in the non-competitive leagues or to improve their overall knowledge of the game, or to enable club members to confidently volunteer as linespeople, or, ultimately, become fully-fledged members of a referee association such as the AHJSRA and regularly referee on weekends. Check with your club officials for details of the subsidy available.

Help us recruit – spread the word

You can help us to recruit new referees by making it known through your club or team that there will be Level 5 and 4 training sessions being held in the Adelaide Hills in February and March 2009.

Other courses are held at different times of the year at various locations (check the FFSA website for details), but the Hills-based Level 5 course will be on Monday 2, 9, 16 and 23 February 2009 followed by the Level 4 course on Monday 2 and 9 March 2009. All sessions will be held at the Bridgewater Sports and Social Club from 7 to 9 pm. Matthew Cream, who is the Referee Development Officer at the Football Federation SA, runs the course. For more information contact Paul Rees on 8339 4724 or 0417 803 795 or book your place on the course directly by contacting the Matthew Cream at the FFSA on 8354 1422.

What is the AHJSRA and what does it do?

The Adelaide Hills Junior Soccer Referee Association is the body that supports refereeing of junior soccer in the Adelaide Hills. We are affiliated with the Football Federation of South Australia. We have strong connections with other referee associations throughout the state. Through a service agreement with the AHJSA, our primary purpose is to provide qualified referees for the AHJSA's competitive league and cup competitions, mostly played on Saturdays during the winter months (we do not supply referees for the non-competitive age groups). We also supply referees, when requested, to the FFSA's Junior Premier League, mostly played on Sundays and SAWSA's Women's league, also played on Sundays. We supply referees for the State and Country Championships, and we have, through our connections, also supplied referees to school-based competitions in the area (a great one for our younger referees who can referee a game straight after finishing school themselves) and to competitions such as the Twilight games run by Stirling Districts.

We have an executive team that meets regularly and we are also involved in the State's Referee Standing Committee. We are committed to referee development wherever and whenever we can. We also provide advice and involve ourselves in planning issues for football (soccer) development in the Hills and throughout the State.

2008 has been a great season and we look forward to 2009 with glee.

See you out there.

Cheers

Paul Rees
Secretary
AHJSRA