



# Western New York State Referee Association, Inc.

December 10, 2009

Though there have not been significant change in the Laws of the Game for the upcoming season, USSF has clarified and/or changed the interpretation of some of the existing Laws, as well as instructing referees to place particular emphasis on certain infractions.

We will be instructing referees on these changes during our recertification training programs. Keep in mind that referees are in the process of learning to change what they have been doing, and there will be a period of adjustment. (As always, referees are told to apply common sense when enforcing “strict” interpretations at the lowest age levels.)

These changes in interpretation may require changes in playing and coaching styles. This information is being distributed to the leagues, with the hope that it will be passed on to the clubs and teams. We’d like to make every effort to avoid “surprising” players with calls that they didn’t expect.

Remember - this is a work in progress.

Please feel free to contact me if you require any further clarification.

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## Quick Free Kicks

Referees have always been encouraged to avoid interfering with teams attempting a quick free kick. But contrary to common opinion, this does NOT mean that the kicking team is required to “ask for ten.” In fact, the opposite is true - the Law requires that the defending team retire ten yards from the point of the kick. There is no requirement that they be told - they are required to do so on their own.

As we all know, defenders frequently position themselves closer than ten yards. But since referees are instructed to make efforts to enforce the 10 yard limit without interfering with the attacking team’s ability to take a quick kick, referees generally try to deal with the situation by simply telling the offending players to move back. Our goal is to keep the game moving as much as possible.

I will say this again (and probably again later) - there is no change in the requirement that defenders retire 10 yards. In an extreme situation (for example, a defender runs in and stands two inches from the ball to prevent the kick), the referee has the authority to intervene and deal with the situation as appropriate, which may include cautioning the offending player - even if the referee’s action might interfere with the taking of a quick kick. But that should not happen very often.

Although the defenders have a responsibility to retire 10 yards, the US Soccer Federation has now placed a greater responsibility on attackers who choose to take a quick free kick. USSF has established the following standards for dealing with quick free kicks. Remember - it is the “opinion of the referee” that controls the decision.

1. If at the time of the kick, a defender less than ten yards from the ball is moving toward the ball and interferes with the kick, play is stopped, the defender is cautioned, and the kick retaken. (“Interferes with the kick” generally means that the defender touched the ball, so if the offending player does not touch the ball, play should generally be allowed to continue.)
2. If no defender is moving closer than 10 yards to the ball, play continues.

This is the biggest change. There used to be different rules based on whether or not the ball was kicked directly at the defender, or if the defender stuck out a leg, or if the defender moved blatantly to the side. No more.

If the defender is in the process of retiring 10 yards from the ball and the kicking team decides to kick the ball, the defender may play the ball. If the defender sticks out a leg and deflects the ball, or sidesteps and gains control of the ball, play continues. The same rule applies if, at the time of the kick, the defender is standing still at a point less than 10 yards from the ball. The only thing the defender cannot do is move closer to the ball.

USFF says that a team taking a quick free kick does so at their own peril.

Again, it is important to stress to the players - this is NOT a green light to encroach. They are required to retire 10 yards from the ball and may be cautioned if they fail to respect the required distance on a free kick.

### **Injuries**

- Referee must determine if there is a “serious injury” (Taking into account things like age, part of body injured, obvious bleeding, etc.)
- If the referee determines the injury is serious, he/she is to stop play.
- If the injury is not deemed to be serious, play continues.
- Referees are being instructed not to tell players to “kick it out.” If the referee believes it is necessary for play to stop, he/she will stop play and restart with a dropped ball after the injured player is removed.

### **100% Misconduct**

The Federation has stated that there are situations where referees MUST punish misconduct 100% of the time:

- Tactical fouls must always result in a caution;
- Tackles that endanger the safety of an opponent must result in a send off.

(There needs to be common sense application at the younger levels, but referees are being told to “deal with it” at all levels. A 9 year old may not get a card for a tactical foul, but the referee should explain that the action is not acceptable. (And no, we won’t try to explain “tactical foul” to a 9 year old!))

### **Contact above the shoulder**

- New “point of emphasis” by Federation, intended to reduce injuries. Referees are being advised to be more strict in enforcing violations.
- Generally involves hand, arm, elbow to face, head or neck though there are other possibilities, including a head butt.
- If the referee deems the act careless, a foul must be called.
- If the referee deems the act reckless, a caution must be given.
- If the referee deems the act to be committed with excessive force, the player must be sent off.

### **Contact above the shoulder on a dead ball**

- USSF direction: “Any deliberate or intentional contact above the shoulder when the ball is out of play must be treated as violent conduct and the player sent off.”
- “Any contact” means any contact. A pat on the head, placing a palm against the face ... it need not be a “violent” contact. Just contact.
- Please stress this to the players - USSF has directed that contact above the shoulder on a dead ball - however slight - requires that the offending player be sent off. Make sure the players know about this before they see a red card.
- There is an exclusion for situations where it is obvious to the referee that the contact was friendly and not confrontational.
- This is an easy situation for players to avoid - keep your hands away from their faces!