



FIFA

For the Game. For the World.



Law 12

Fouls and Misconduct

(Part 1 - Fouls)

- Fouls
 - Basis requirements for a foul
 - Direct Free Kick
 - Indirect Free kick
- Careless, reckless, using excessive force
- Charging an opponent
- Holding an opponent
- Handling the ball
- Goalkeeper offences
- Dangerous play
- Impeding an opponent / obstructing
- Preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands



Basis requirements for a foul

The following conditions must be met for an offence to be considered a foul:

- **it must be committed by a player**
- **it must occur on the field of play**
- **it must occur while the ball is in play**

Remove any one of these conditions and the offence **is not and cannot be** a foul.

If the referee stops play due to an offence committed **outside** the field of play (when the ball is in play), play shall be restarted with a dropped ball in the position where the ball was located. *



Fouls – Direct Free Kick

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Group of Six:

- kicks **or attempts to** kick an opponent
- trips **or attempts to** trip an opponent
- jumps at an opponent
- charges an opponent
- strikes **or attempts to** strike an opponent
- pushes an opponent



Fouls – Direct Free Kick

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For this group of six, the referee must consider **how** the action was done:

- **carelessly**
- **recklessly**
- **with excessive force**

Group of four:

- **tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball, making contact with the opponent before touching the ball**
- **holds an opponent**
- **spits at an opponent**
- **handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within his own penalty area)**

For this group of four direct free kick fouls, the referee is concerned only with **whether the action occurred**, not with how it was done.

For fouls in both the group of six and the group of four:

- **restart with a direct free kick for the opposing team where the offence occurred***
- **exception: if the offence was committed by a defender inside his own penalty area**
 - **penalty kick for the attacking team**



Careless, Reckless, Using Excessive Force

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“**Careless**” means that the player has shown a lack of attention or consideration when making his challenge or that he acted without precaution:

- **no further disciplinary sanction is needed if a foul is judged to be careless**

“**Reckless**” means that the player has acted with complete disregard of the danger to, or consequences for, his opponent:

- **a player who plays in a reckless manner shall be cautioned**



Careless, Reckless, Using Excessive Force

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“**U**sing excessive force” means that the player has far exceeded the necessary use of force and is in danger of injuring his opponent:

- **a player who uses excessive force shall be sent off**



The act of charging is a challenge for space using physical contact within playing distance of the ball without using arms or elbows.

It is an offence to charge an opponent:

- in a **careless manner**
- in a **reckless manner**
- using **excessive force**

Inside the field of play:

- **disciplinary sanctions:**
 - no disciplinary action if careless
 - caution if reckless
 - send off if with excessive force or denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, using a manner considered to be careless or reckless
- **restart of play:**
 - direct free kick from where the offence occurred*
 - penalty kick (inside own penalty area)

Outside the field of play:

- **disciplinary sanctions:**
 - caution if reckless
 - send off if using excessive force
- **restart of Play:**
 - dropped ball from where the ball was located*

Holding an Opponent

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Holding an opponent includes the act of preventing him from moving past or around using the hand, the arms or the body.





Referees are reminded to make an early intervention and to deal firmly with holding offences especially inside the penalty area at corner kicks and free kicks.

To deal with these situations, the referee shall:

- **warn any player holding an opponent before the ball is in play**
- **caution the player if the holding continues**
- **award a direct free kick or penalty and caution the player if it happens once the ball is in play**

Disciplinary sanctions:

- a caution for unsporting behaviour shall be issued when a player holds an opponent to prevent him gaining possession of the ball or taking up an advantageous position
- a player shall be sent off if he denies an obvious goalscoring opportunity by holding an opponent
- no further disciplinary action shall be taken in other situation of holding an opponent

Restart of play:

- direct free kick from the position where the offence occurred*
- penalty kick if the offence occurred inside the penalty area
- if a defender starts holding an attacker outside the penalty area but continues holding inside the penalty area, the referee shall award a penalty kick

Handling the ball involves a **deliberate** act of a player making contact with the ball with his hand or arm.

The referee shall take the following into consideration:

- **the movement of the hand towards the ball (not the ball towards the hand)**
- **the distance between the opponent and the ball (unexpected ball)**
- **position of the hand does not necessarily mean that there is an infringement**
- **touching the ball with an object held in the hand (clothing, shinguard etc.) counts as an infringement**
- **hitting the ball with a thrown object (a boot, shinguard etc.) counts as an infringement**

Disciplinary sanctions:

- **there are circumstances when a caution for unsporting behaviour is required when a player deliberately handles the ball, e.g. when a player:**
 - **deliberately and blatantly handles the ball to prevent an opponent gaining possession**
 - **attempts to score a goal by deliberately handling the ball**
- **a player is sent off, however, if he prevents a goal or an obvious goalscoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball. This punishment arises not from the act of the player deliberately handling the ball but from the unacceptable and unfair intervention that prevented a goal being scored**

Restart of play:



- **direct free kick from the position where the offence occurred* or penalty kick**
- **outside his own penalty area, the goalkeeper has the same restrictions on handling the ball as does any other player**
- **inside his own penalty area, the goalkeeper cannot be guilty of a handling offence incurring a direct free kick or any misconduct related to handling the ball. He can, however, be guilty of several offences that incur an indirect free kick**

Four examples:

- **attacker or defender handles the ball to gain control**
 - foul, no misconduct
- **defender handles the ball to break up attacking play**
 - foul, misconduct (caution for unsporting behaviour)
- **attacker handles the ball in an attempt to score a goal**
 - foul, misconduct (caution for unsporting behaviour)
- **defender handles the ball to prevent a goal**
 - foul, misconduct (send off for preventing the goal)
- **in all cases, direct free kick restart if outside own penalty area, penalty kick if inside**



There are four offences for which an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a goalkeeper, inside his own penalty area, commits any of the following offences:

- **takes more than six seconds while controlling the ball with his hands before releasing it from his possession**
- **touches the ball again with his hands after it has been released from his possession and has not touched any other player**
- **touches the ball with his hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a team-mate**
- **touches the ball with his hands after he has received it directly from a throw-in taken by a team-mate**

There four offences for which an indirect free kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player, in the opinion of the referee:

- **plays in a dangerous manner**
- **impedes the progress of an opponent**
- **prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands**
- **commits any other offence, not previously mentioned in Law 12, for which play is stopped to caution or dismiss a player**



Fouls – Indirect Free kick

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Restart of play:

- where the offence occurred*
- exception: if the offence was committed by a defender or an attacker inside the goal areas



Goalkeepers are not permitted to keep possession of the ball in their hands for more than six seconds. The goalkeeper is considered to be in possession of the ball:

- **while the ball is between his hands or between his hand and any surface (e.g., ground, own body) or**
- **while holding the ball in his outstretched open hand**
- **while in the act of bouncing it on the ground or tossing it into the air**

When a goalkeeper has gained possession of the ball with his hands, it cannot be challenged by an opponent.

Restart of play:

- **indirect free kick from where the offence occurred***

Goalkeepers are not permitted to touch the ball with his hand inside his own penalty area in the following circumstances:

- **if he handles the ball again after it has been released from his possession and has not touched any other player**
 - the goalkeeper is considered to be in control of the ball by touching it with any part of his hands or arms except if the ball rebounds accidentally from the goalkeeper, for example after he has made a save
 - possession of the ball includes the goalkeeper deliberately parrying the ball
- **if he touches the ball with his hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a team-mate**
- **if he touches the ball with his hands after he has received it directly from a thrown-in taken by a team-mate**

Restart of play:

- **indirect free kick from the position where the offence occurred***



It is an offence for a player to prevent a goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands:

- a player must be penalised for playing in a dangerous manner if he kicks or attempts to kick the ball when the goalkeeper is in the process of releasing it
- referees should make every effort to anticipate this offence, which tends to cause bad feelings and lead to retaliation, and to prevent its occurrence

It is an offence to restrict the movement of the goalkeeper by unfairly impeding him, e.g. at the taking of a corner kick.

Playing in a Dangerous Manner

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Playing in a dangerous manner is defined as any action that, while trying to play the ball, threatens injury to someone (including the player himself)

It is committed with an opponent nearby and prevents the opponent from playing the ball for fear of injury.

The action becomes an offence only when an opponent is adversely affected.

A scissors or bicycle kick is permissible provided that, in the opinion of the referee, it is not dangerous to an opponent.

Playing in a Dangerous Manner

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Playing in a dangerous manner involves no physical contact between the players.

If there is a physical contact, the action becomes an offence punishable with a direct free kick or penalty kick.

In case of physical contact, the referee should carefully consider the high probability that misconduct has also been committed.

Disciplinary sanctions:

- if a player plays in a dangerous manner in a “normal” challenge, the referee should not take any disciplinary action
- if the action is made with obvious risk of injury the referee should caution the player
- if a player denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity playing in a dangerous manner the referee should send off the player

Restart of play:

- indirect free kick from the position where the offence occurred*
- **if there is contact, a different offence has been committed, punishable by a direct free kick**



Impeding the Progress of an Opponent

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Impeding the progress of an opponent means moving into the path of the opponent to obstruct, block, slow down or force a change of direction by an opponent when the ball is not within playing distance of either player.

All players have a right to their position on the field of play, being in the way of an opponent is not the same as moving into the way of an opponent.



Impeding the Progress of an Opponent

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Shielding the ball is permitted.

A player who places himself between an opponent and the ball for tactical reasons has not committed an offence as long as the ball is kept in playing distance and the player does not hold off the opponent with his arms or body.

If the ball is within playing distance, the player may be fairly charged by an opponent.

Impeding the Progress of an Opponent

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Inside the field of play:

- **disciplinary sanctions:**
 - send off if the action denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity
- **restart of play:**
 - indirect free kick from where the offence occurred*

Outside the field of play:

- **disciplinary sanctions**
- **restart of play:**
 - dropped ball from where the ball was located*



Impeding the Progress of an Opponent

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If unfair physical contact between the player and the opponent occurs, the referee may consider two possibilities:

- a holding offence, limiting the movement of an opponent by the defender (DFK)
- unfair charging offence, committed by the attacker (DFK)





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Law 12

Fouls and Misconduct (Part 2 - Misconduct)

- Who may be sanctioned?
- What is the sanction?
- Unsporting behaviour
- Dissent
- Delaying the restart of play
- Persistent infringement
- Serious foul play
- Violent conduct
- Denying a goal or goal-scoring opportunity
- Offensive, insulting or abusive language



Who May Be Sanctioned?

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Only a player, substitute or substituted player may be shown the red or yellow card:

- all players, substitutes and substituted players come under the jurisdiction of the referee whether they are on the field of play or not
- the use of the yellow card or red card is to give a clear indication that a sanction is being issued
- cards and sanctioned misconduct cannot be changed once play has been properly restarted and all such actions must be included in the match report



Who May Be Sanctioned?

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Team officials **cannot** be shown the red or yellow card nor can they be reported as having committed misconduct:

- if a team official is guilty of **irresponsible behaviour**, the referee will expel the official from the technical area and its vicinity behind the boundary fences (where such a fence exists)
- the referee will report this conduct to the appropriate authorities

“Team official” includes all persons allowed in the technical/bench area other than players, substitutes, and substituted players.



Who May Be Sanctioned?

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The referee has the authority to take disciplinary sanctions (including expelling a team official) from the moment he enters the field of play until he leaves the field of play after the final whistle.

This includes during the halftime break, all other stoppages of play, extra time and kicks from the penalty mark.



Cards displayed before the match:

- **yellow: player carries the yellow into the match (i.e., "1st yellow")**
- **red: player must leave but team plays 11 (replacement from substitution list, does not count as substitution, no replacement for substitute who is now player)**

Cards displayed during the match (including stoppages and kicks from the penalty mark)

- **yellow: player warned that another cautionable offence will lead to send-off**
- **red: player must leave and cannot be replaced**

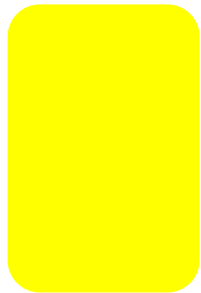
Cards displayed after the match:

- **yellow: if "2nd yellow," player is shown red card**
- **red: no immediate consequences for match (match is over) but the card and misconduct are reported. If there are extra time or kicks from the penalty mark, this player cannot participate**

Delaying the restart of play to issue a card:

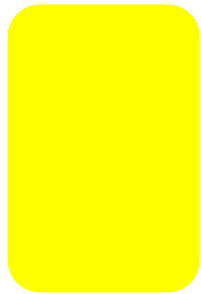
- **once the referee has decided to issue a card, whether to caution or send off a player, play shall not be restarted until the sanction has been administered**

There are seven offences for which **a player** is cautioned and shown the yellow card if he:



1. **is guilty of unsporting behaviour**
2. **shows dissent by word or action**
3. **persistently infringes the Laws of the Game**
4. **delays the restart of play**
5. **fails to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick, free kick or throw-in**
6. **enters or re-enters the field of play without the referee's permission**
7. **deliberately leaves the field of play without the referee's permission**

There are three offences for which a **substitute or substituted player** can be cautioned and shown the yellow card if he:



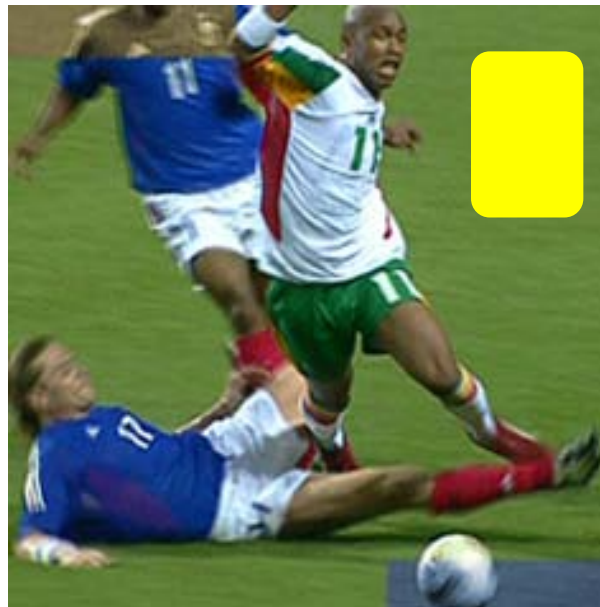
1. **is guilty of unsporting behaviour**
2. **shows dissent by word or action**
3. **delays the restart of play**

Circumstances when a player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour e.g.

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If a player commits in a reckless manner one of the six offences that incur a direct free kick.

- **“reckless” means that the player has made the move with complete disregard for danger to, or consequences for, his opponent**





Circumstances when a player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour e.g.

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If a player commits a foul for the tactical purpose of interfering with or breaking up a promising attack.



Circumstances when a player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour e.g.

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If a player holds an opponent for the tactical purpose of pulling the opponent away from the ball or preventing the opponent from getting to the ball.





Circumstances when a player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour e.g.

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If a player (other than the goalkeeper within his own penalty area) handles the ball to prevent an opponent gaining possession or developing an attack.

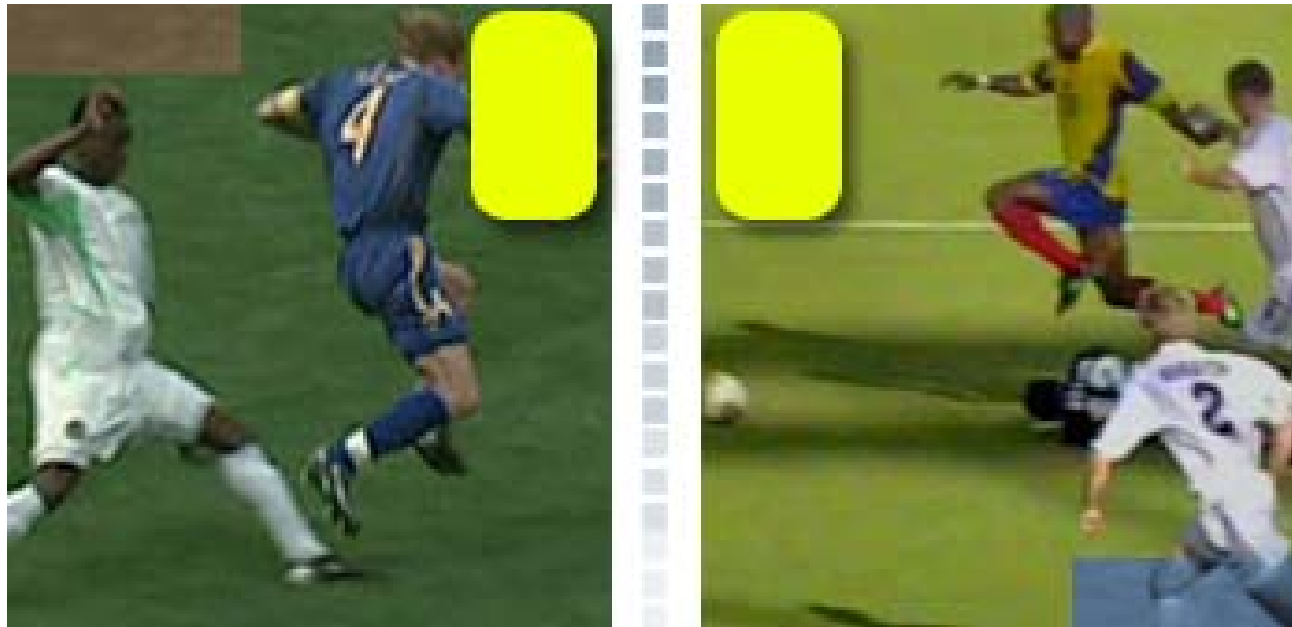
If a player handles the ball in an attempt to score a goal (irrespective of whether or not the attempt is successful)



Circumstances when a player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour e.g.

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If a player attempts to deceive the referee by feigning injury or pretending to have been fouled (**Simulation**)





Circumstances when a player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour e.g.

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To deal with simulation the referee should know the difference between:

- **a tackle (challenging for the ball and touching it)**
 - no action
- **a foul made by the defender**
 - free kick or penalty kick and disciplinary sanction if needed
- **a Simulation (attempts to deceive the referee by feigning injury or pretending to have been fouled)**
 - yellow card
- **a fall (no attempt to deceive the referee)**
 - no action

Circumstances when a player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour e.g.

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If a player removes his jersey or shirt over his head or covers his head with his jersey or shirt when celebrating a goal.

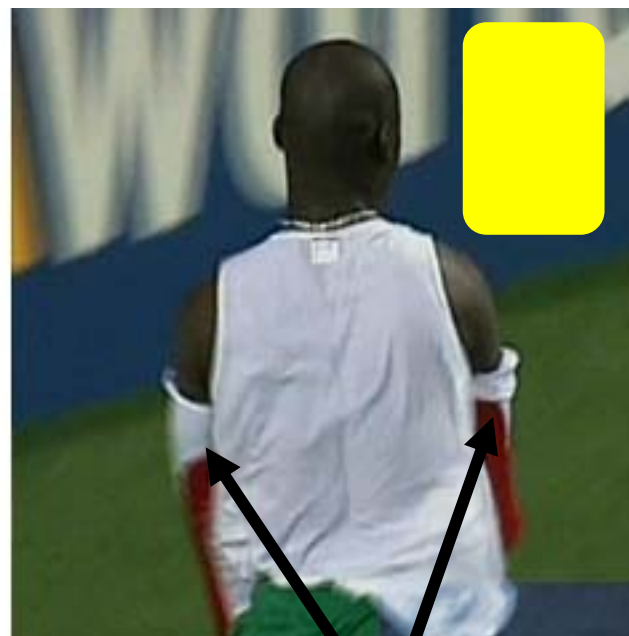
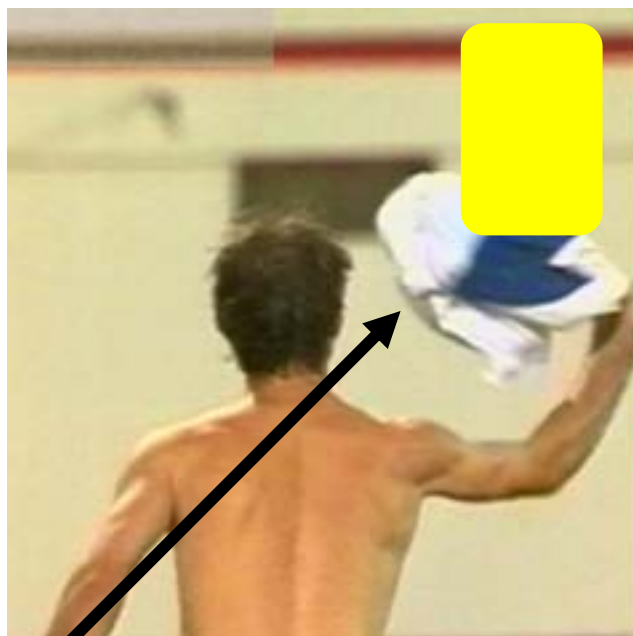
If, in the opinion of the referee, a player makes gestures which are provocative, derisory or inflammatory when celebrating a goal.

If a player climbs on to a perimeter fence to celebrate a goal being scored.

Jersey

Circumstances when a player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour e.g.

51

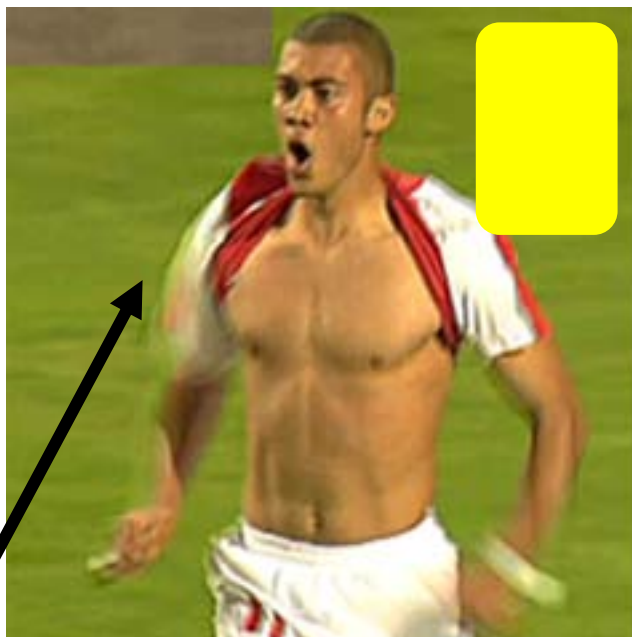


Jersey

Jersey

Circumstances when a player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour e.g.

52



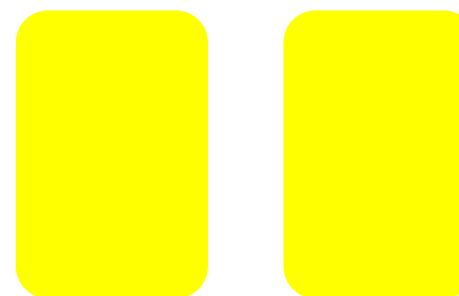
Jersey



Jersey

Circumstances when a player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour e.g.

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Yellow card for
both players

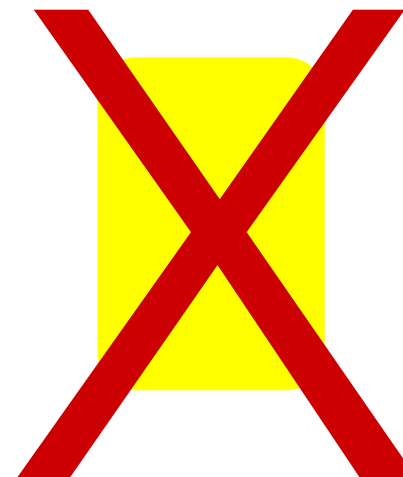
Jerseys

Circumstances when a player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour e.g.

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No yellow card:

- jersey was not removed
- jersey does not cover face



Circumstances when a player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour e.g.

55

If a player covers his face with a mask or other similar when celebrating a goal:

- **this is an unnecessary and excessive display of celebration**





Circumstances when a player is cautioned for unsporting behaviour e.g.

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If a player changes places with the goalkeeper during play or without the referee's permission.

If a player plays the ball when is walking off the field of play after being granted permission to leave the field of play.

If a player verbally distracts an opponent during play or at a restart.

If a player acts in a manner which shows a lack of respect for the game.

If a player makes unauthorised marks on the field of play.



Caution for showing dissent by word or action

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A player who is guilty of dissent by protesting (verbally or nonverbally) against a referee's decision must be cautioned.

The captain of a team has no special status or privileges under the Laws of the Game but he has a degree of responsibility for the behaviour of his team.

Objective is to avoid erosion of authority and the likelihood of the dissent spreading.

Referees must caution players who delay the restart of play by tactics such as:

- taking a free kick from the wrong position with the sole intention of forcing the referee to order a retake
- appearing to take a throw-in but suddenly leaving it to one of his team-mates to take
- kicking the ball away or carrying it away with the hands after the referee has stopped play
- excessively delaying the taking of a throw-in or free kick
- delaying leaving the field of play when being substituted
- provoking a confrontation by deliberately touching the ball after the referee has stopped play
- standing or crossing directly in front of the ball on a free kick



Caution for Persistent Infringement

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Referees should be alert at all times to players who persistently infringe the Laws. In particular, they must be aware that even if a player commits a number of different offences, he must still be cautioned for persistently infringing the Laws.


It is generally advisable, **though not required**, to warn a player that he is nearing the threshold level before actually applying the sanction of a caution.

There is no specific number of infringements which constitutes “persistence” or the presence of a pattern – this is entirely a matter of judgement and must be reached in the context of effective game management.

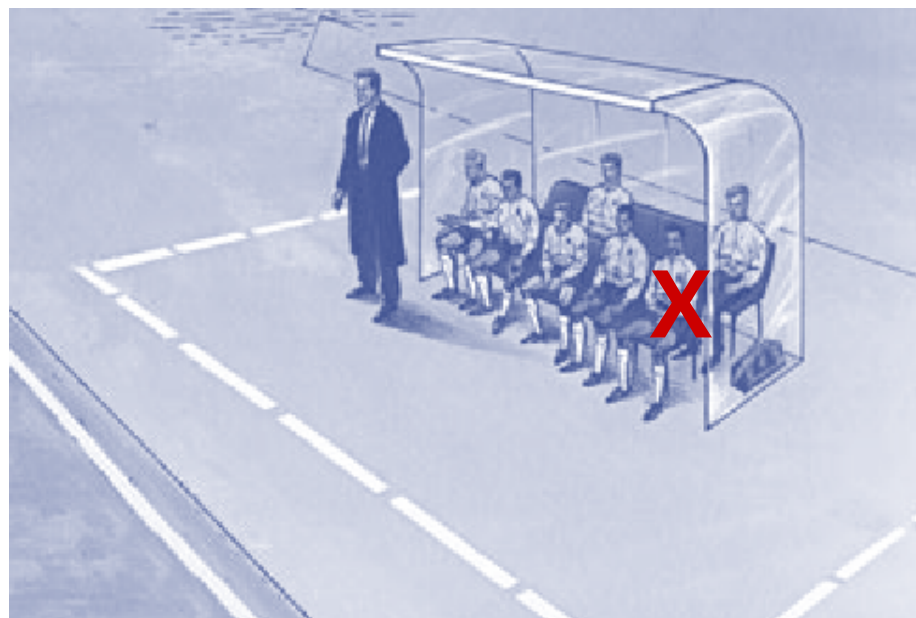
Referees should consider the following circumstances:

- the length of time during which the fouls occur – spread out over 90 minutes of play may not be as serious as the same number committed over the space near of 15 minutes
- the fouls themselves can be of various types (generally, those described in Law 12 but including as well repeated violations of Law 14)
- fouls to which advantage has been applied must be included in determining “persistence”

There are seven offences for which a **player, substitute or substituted player** can be sent off and shown the red card if he:

- 
1. is guilty of serious foul play
 2. is guilty of violent conduct
 3. spits at an opponent or at any other person
 4. denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to a goalkeeper within his own penalty area)
 5. denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offence punishable by a free kick or a penalty kick
 6. uses offensive or insulting or abusive language and/or gestures
 7. receives a second caution in the same match

A player, **substitute or substituted player** who has been sent off **and shown the red card** must leave the vicinity of the field of play and the technical area.



A player is guilty of serious foul play if he uses excessive force or brutality against an opponent when challenging for the ball when it is in play.

- **“using excessive force”** means that the player has far exceeded the necessary use of force and is in danger of injuring his opponent



Any player who lunges at an opponent in challenging for the ball from the front, from the side or from behind using one or both legs, with excessive force and endangering the safety of an opponent is guilty of serious foul play.



Advantage should not be applied in situations involving serious foul play unless there is a clear subsequent opportunity to score a goal.

The referee shall send off the player guilty of serious foul play when the ball is next out of play.



Disciplinary sanctions:

- **send the player off**

Restart of play:

- **direct free kick** from the position where the offence occurred*
- **penalty kick** (if the offence occurred inside the offender's penalty area)



A player is guilty of violent conduct if he uses excessive force or brutality against an opponent when not challenging for the ball.

He is also guilty of violent conduct if he uses excessive force or brutality against a team-mate, spectator, match official or any other person.

Violent conduct may occur either on the field of play or outside its boundaries, whether the ball is in play or not.

A player, substitute or substituted player who is guilty of violent conduct shall be sent off.



Violent Conduct

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Advantage should not be applied in situations involving violent conduct unless there is a clear subsequent opportunity to score a goal.

The referee shall send off the player guilty of violent conduct when the ball is next out of play.

Referees are reminded that violent conduct often leads to mass confrontation therefore they must try to avert this with active intervention.

All officials record as much detail as possible:

- **who were the most active participants?**
- **who came from a distance?**
- **who came off the bench?**



Disciplinary sanctions:

- a player, substitute or substituted player who is guilty of violent conduct shall be sent off

Restart of play:

- if the ball is out of play, play is restarted according to the previous decision

Restart of play:

- if the **ball is in play** and the offence occurred **outside the field of play**:
 - play is restarted with a **dropped ball*** from the position in which the ball was located when play was stopped*
 - if the player leaves the field of play to commit the offence, play is restarted with an **indirect free kick** from the position in which the ball was located when play was stopped*

Restart of play:

- if the **ball is in play** and the offence occurred **inside the field of play**:
 - against an opponent, play is restarted with a direct free kick from the position where the offence occurred* or a penalty kick.
 - against a team-mate, play is restarted with an indirect free kick from the position where the offence occurred.*
 - against a substitute or substituted player, play is restarted with an indirect free kick from the position in which the ball was located when play was stopped*
 - against the referee or an assistant referee, play is restarted with an indirect free kick from the position where the offence occurred*
 - against another person, play is restarted with a dropped ball from the position in which the ball was located when play was stopped*



Offences where an object (or the ball) is thrown

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If while the ball is in play, a player, substitute or substituted player throws an object at an opponent or other person in a reckless manner the referee shall stop play and shall caution player, substitute or substituted player.

If while the ball is in play, a player, substitute or substituted player throws an object at an opponent or other person using excessive force the referee shall stop play and shall send off the player, substitute or substituted player for violent conduct.



Offences where an object (or the ball) is thrown

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Restart of play:

- if a player standing inside his own penalty area throws an object at an opponent standing outside the penalty area the referee restarts play with a direct free kick to the opponents' team taken from the position where the object struck or would have struck the opponent
- if a player standing outside his own penalty area throws an object at an opponent standing inside the penalty area the referee restart play with a penalty kick

Restart of play (Cont.)

- if a **player standing inside the field of play throws an object at any person standing outside the field of play** the referee restarts play with an indirect free kick taken from the position in which the ball was located when play was stopped *

Restart of play (Cont.)

- if a player standing outside the field of play throws an object at an opponent standing inside the field of play the referee restarts play with a direct free kick to the opponents' team taken from the position where the object struck or would have struck the opponent or with a penalty kick
- if a substitute or substituted player standing outside the field of play throws an object at an opponent standing inside the field of play the referee restarts play with an indirect free kick to the opposing team from the position in which the ball was located when play was stopped*

Denying a Goal or a Goal-Scoring Opportunity

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There are two sending-off offences that deal with denying an opponent an obvious opportunity to score a goal:

- if a player denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball.
- if a player denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offence punishable by a free kick (direct or indirect) or a penalty kick

It is not necessary for the offence to occur inside the penalty area.

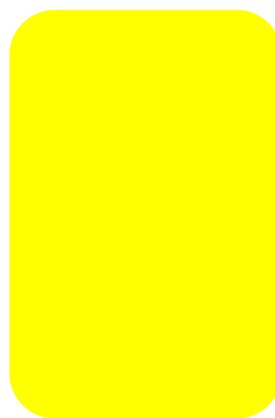




Denying a Goal or a Goal-Scoring Opportunity

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If the referee applies advantage during an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and a goal is scored directly, despite the opponent's handling the ball or fouling an opponent, the player cannot be sent off but he may still be cautioned.





Denying a Goal or a Goal-Scoring Opportunity

79

Referees should consider the following circumstances when deciding whether to send off a player for denying a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by handling the ball:

- **the distance between the offence (Handling the ball) and the goal**
 - the closer, the more likely the sanction
- **the likelihood that the ball would have gone into the goal but for the illegal handling**



Denying a Goal or a Goal-Scoring Opportunity

80

Referees should consider the following circumstances when deciding whether to send off a player for an offence which denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity:

- the distance between the offence and the goal
- the likelihood of keeping or gaining control of the ball
- the direction of the play
 - toward the goal
- the location and number of defenders
- the offence which denies an opponent an obvious goal scoring opportunity may be an offence that incurs a direct free kick or an indirect free kick



Offensive, Insulting or Abusive Language

81

A player who is guilty of using offensive, insulting or abusive language or gestures must be sent off.

