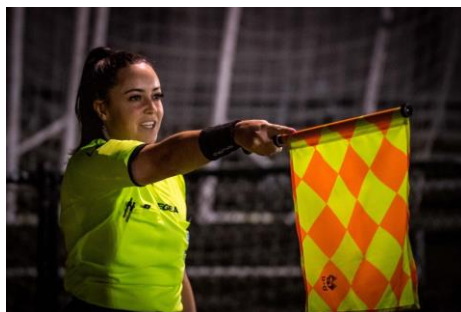




Welcome to this ninety first edition of **“The Referee”**, the newsletter for all NSW State League Football Referees. This newsletter will enable our branch to communicate directly with our members and will cover issues and areas of interest to all referees. We wish to ensure that all information, educational resources and opportunities that our branch provides for referees finds its way to those who are likely to benefit most – and that’s you!




**To do for NSWSLFR members in May 2021:**

1. [Review the 2020/21 LOTG changes](#)
2. [Make yourself available for competition matches on Horizon WebRef](#)
3. [Attend training every week](#)
4. [Attend May General Meeting](#)

## ***DOGSO & SPA: How to Effectively Recognise an Attempt to Play the Ball***

One of the biggest changes in the history of the Laws of The Game took place in 2016. IFAB introduced the concept of an attempt to play the ball in the penalty area on DOGSOs and SPAs and adjusted the sanctioning relative to this. The law changes are designed to allow defenders and goalkeepers to attempt challenges in the penalty area without worrying about an automatic red card, thus improving the spectacle of football and improving the laws' fairness.

The IFAB (Law 12 - IFAB Fouls and Misconducts Changes | Denial of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity) said: The main reason for the change is that a penalty kick is a very good opportunity to score a goal so it 'restores' the goal-scoring opportunity that was 'lost' by the DOGSO offence. Therefore, the punishment of the player should not be as severe/strong as the punishment for a DOGSO committed outside the penalty area where the red card is deserved as a free kick is not as good a scoring opportunity as a penalty. The footballing world received this change positively as it is in line with the expectations and understanding of fans, players and anyone involved in the beautiful game.

IFAB changed Law 12 to the following text (rewording all referees should be now familiar with): Where a player denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by a handball offence, the player is sent off wherever the offence occurs. Where a player commits an offence against an opponent within their own penalty area which denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the referee awards a penalty kick, the offender is cautioned if the offence was an attempt to play the ball; in all other circumstances (e.g. holding, pulling, pushing, no possibility to play the ball etc.) the offending player must be sent off. A player, sent-off player, substitute or substituted player who enters the field of play without the required referee's permission and interferes with play or an opponent and denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity is guilty of a sending-off offence.

### ***WHAT IS NOT CONSIDERED AN ATTEMPT TO PLAY THE BALL?***

The first sentence of the law clearly states that any handball DOGSO offence, wherever it occurs, must be punished with a send-off. This is a simple concept: players cannot play the ball with their hands; therefore, all handball DOGSO offences must be punished with a red card.

The same is valid for these offences: Holding, Pulling and Pushing

An offence, if DOGSO, where the offending player is penalised for holding, pulling or pushing will still be sanctioned with a sending-off (red card) as these offences are not part of a fair challenge of an opponent for the ball. These four offences (Holding, Pulling, Pushing and Handball) are not within the spirit of the game and cannot be considered an attempt to play the ball. In conclusion, if any of these offences result in a DOGSO, a red card must be issued.

### ***SO, WHAT IS AN ATTEMPT TO PLAY THE BALL?***

Many referees have been struggling with the concept of attempting to play the ball. In the documentation released by IFAB about these changes, there is one very significant statement:

"Where a player commits an offence against an opponent within their own penalty area which denies an opponent an obvious goal scoring opportunity and the referee awards a penalty kick, the offending player is cautioned if the attempt to play the ball; in all other circumstances (e.g. holding, pulling, pushing, the possibility to play the ball etc.) the offending player will be sent off.



## Some DOGSO offences in penalty area are YC

Further explanation:

*“Where a player commits an offence against an opponent within their own penalty area which denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the referee awards a penalty kick, the offending player is cautioned (...)”*

This statement emphasises that for DOGSO offences in the penalty area, the offending player is cautioned (yellow card) not sent off (red card), unless the offence falls into one of the DOGSO offences which remains a red card.

Referees should apply the philosophy of the Law change - if the player unsuccessfully attempts to play the ball or challenge the opponent for the ball and a penalty kick is awarded, the correct sanction is a caution (yellow card). The player’s movement towards the ball/opponent is a good indication of whether or not the player was attempting to play the ball or challenge the opponent for the ball.

That last sentence, “the player’s movement towards the ball/opponent is a good indication of whether or not the player was attempting to play the ball or challenge the opponent for the ball” is the key to it all. We cannot read the minds of players, so we need to resort to objectively analysing facts. IFAB tell us that a player’s movement towards the ball or their opponent is a good indication of whether or not a player is attempting to play the ball.

- These are some considerations we can use when judging an attempt to play the ball:
- Is the offender moving towards the ball/opponent?
- Is the ball at a playable distance?
- Was the offender chasing the ball along with the opponent?
- Was there any opportunity, even if minimal, for the offender to play the ball?

All of these considerations can help us correctly identify an attempt to play the ball. However, more importantly is the concept of the spirit of the game.

As we have discussed above, we can’t read player minds so must referee off the facts we have. At times where there is doubt as to whether the defender has made an attempt to play the ball or not, we must always lower our sanction and give the players the benefit of the doubt, in line with the spirit of the game.

***Modified and adapted from an article in refcoach.org***



## 2020-2021 Laws of the Game Quiz

A thorough understanding of the Laws of the Game is an essential quality of a good referee. All referees should regularly review their Laws of the Game book to ensure they are correctly interpreting and applying them.

This monthly LOTG Quiz is highly recommended for all active referees and assessors and counts towards meeting part of the criteria for honour games consideration and annual awards. To reinforce your knowledge, you are encouraged to utilise your Laws of the Game Book to assist in answering the quiz questions. All quiz questions are based on the new 2020/2021 IFAB LOTG.

**Click Here**

*Click on the "Click Here" button to complete the highly recommended monthly LOTG Quiz to test yourself on how well you know the laws.*

**April 2021 LOTG Quiz Answers: 1 - A; 2 - A; 3 - D; 4 - B; 5 - C; 6 - A; 7 - B; 8 - C; 9 - D; 10 - C.**

## Important Dates

**Friday 7th May 2021 – General Meeting at Bankstown Sports Club, 8 Greenfield Parade, Bankstown NSW 2200, starts at 7.30 pm.**

**Friday 4th June 2021 – TBC**

**Friday 2nd July 2021 – TBC**

**Friday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2021 - TBC**

**Note: Zoom meetings may replace in person meetings.**

## Adopting Philosophies For Letting Go of Mistakes

At this moment in time referees making perceived errors and the frequency of those errors are being called into question. In total, officials make on average five errors per game, meaning they are right 98% of the time. An assistant referee makes on average 50 decisions each game; 45 of these are pure offside judgements, with four of these resulting in offside flags. The accuracy of those decisions? Again, an impressive 98%. This article offers advice for officials who may find themselves in a similar position, having made an error.

One of the hardest things for any referee to do is to move on after a mistake, focus and "stay in the moment." Yet many officials are constantly told by their referee coaches and managers to forget about the last half, the previous game or the mistake that happened. Think about a time when, in the height of the intensity of a game, you made a critical mistake. For example, the bad position you got yourself into which meant you missed a penalty decision, the serious foul play challenge that you only punished with a caution, the case of mistaken identity which meant a player was sent-off for a second bookable offence.

You probably felt a rush of negative emotions (frustration, anger, embarrassment) flow through your body and mind. You talk to your referee coach and your coach says: "Forget about that mistake." That is, of course, a lot easier said than done. In fact, the word which probably most hits home in that quote is 'mistake'. Replay it in your mind until you are totally taken out of your game. You know performing in the moment is necessary, but it seems impossible to focus after you make a stupid mistake or an error on a routine decision.

**Why is it so Difficult to Let go of That Silly Error?** One explanation is that you are human, this is exactly why you make mistakes. When you make a mistake, it is normal to be upset. If you aren't upset after a mistake, either you don't care or you expect to always underperform. The second explanation is that you were not taught how to disregard mistakes, have not practiced the skill of focusing in the moment, or have not learned how to refocus after a mistake.

**Advice for Adopting the 'Next Decision' Philosophy:** Process the mistakes and start asking yourself, "What's the next decision I'm going to have to make?" Rest assured, whatever is next will come around quickly. As referees we make around 245 decisions per game on average. Approximately 45 of these decisions are technical. Be it goal-kicks, corners or throw-ins, leaving around 200 decisions to be judging physical contact and disciplinary actions. Of those 200, around 35 are visible decisions where an action is taken (fouls, restarts), and 165 are non-visible, where we can allow play to continue.

This prompt helps you focus on what you must do next. This gets your head out of the last decision you had to make and puts your focus in the present moment. If you consistently ask yourself this question, you will develop the habit of focusing on the present moment. Referees who judge themselves during their performance can apply the same strategy. Instead of thinking about how well you performed the last half or match, tell yourself "Move on and be ready for the next decision."

*Modified and adapted from an article in The Third Team Blog by Nathan Sherratt*

## **Factors to consider when applying advantage**

The referee allows play to continue when an offence occurs and the non-offending team will benefit from the advantage and penalises the offence if the anticipated advantage does not ensue at that time or within a few seconds. If a team has possession of the ball, it does not always constitute an advantage!

### **Factors to consider:**

- Severity of the offence
- Chances of an immediate promising attack
- Location on the field
- Control of the ball
- Direction of play
- Location and number of defenders vs attackers
- Injury management
- Atmosphere and temperature of the match
- Skill level
- State of the match
- Condition of the field
- Referee's control

All the factors play an important part when considering playing an advantage. Ultimately, it is down to the referee's control on whether the referee applies the advantage clause or not. **Remember P.O.P – Possession, Opportunity, Players and Proximity.** All advantage decisions are at the discretion of the referee, based solely on his or her judgment as to the specific circumstances of each individual offence.



**Richard Baker - NSWSLFR TSC Member  
and Newsletter Editor**

