



The Ref's Report

August 2025
Volume 1 – Edition 5

Dear Match Officials,

As we approach the finals series of the 2025 football season, now is the time to sharpen your focus, lift your standards, and lead with professionalism and pride. The intensity of matches is increasing, and with that comes greater scrutiny. You must rise to the moment.

There is a clear expectation from players, team officials, and spectators that the game will be officiated fairly, consistently, and confidently. That responsibility lies with *you*. Every time you step onto the pitch, you represent not just yourself, but all match officials and the integrity of our game.

The Laws of the Game must be the foundation of every decision you make. Know them. Apply them. Uphold them.

Be a team of officials – not an official team. Support each other. Communicate before, during, and after matches. Ask questions. Share insights. Encourage your colleagues and help raise the collective standard. When we work together, we all improve.

Serve the game – don't seek to be above it. Our role is to protect the spirit of football, to ensure it is played with fairness, flow, and respect. Approach every match with humility, integrity, and the mindset to *add value* to the contest.

To the many of you who quietly and reliably accept your appointments each week, thank you. Your commitment does not go unnoticed. You show up, you officiate with care, and you make football possible. And to those who do it not for financial reward, but for the love of the game – we are deeply grateful.

But we must never settle. No matter how experienced you are, **there is always room for growth.** Set yourself a goal before every match – one or two areas to focus on and improve. Be better than your last game. Reflect. Learn. Evolve.

Let's finish the season with energy, unity, and excellence. The game needs you at your best.

Lee MacMaster – Match Officials Development Officer – 2025

As we approach the end of the football season, here are FIVE key messages I want to convey to every match official:

1. **Every decision matters**—especially in high-stakes matches. Maintain consistency and apply the Laws of the Game with confidence and fairness.
2. **Maintain high standards** in your positioning, communication, fitness, and teamwork.
3. **Stay focused.** Big decisions often come in critical moments. Don't drop your guard late in the game.
4. **Be a team of officials** – support and communicate with your fellow referees. Be united in decision-making and appearance.
5. **Manage the pressure** – Finals bring emotion and tension. Players, coaches, and fans may push limits. Remain composed. Use your authority wisely. Don't escalate – manage.

Remember, without you, football doesn't happen. Be proud of your commitment, your growth, and the challenges you've overcome this season. Whether it's your first year or your fifteenth—you are making a difference.

**Our next Practical Training Session is on Monday
25 August from 6pm – 7.30pm at Saunders Oval,
Ballina.**

**Mark Carter, Regional Referee Education &
Development Officer from NNSW Football will lead
our training session.**

**A sausage sizzle will follow the session.
Please bring your flags, whistle and cards.**



The Ref's Report

A Newsletter for the Match Officials in Football Far North Coast

FOOTBALL



Q1. Which of the following does not automatically result in a direct free kick?

- A. A player spits at someone
- B. A reckless tackle
- C. Attempting to kick an opponent
- D. A verbal insult

Q2. A substitute enters the field during play without the referee's permission and interferes with an opponent. Decision?

- A. Indirect free kick + yellow card
- B. Direct free kick + red card
- C. Direct free kick or penalty + yellow card
- D. Direct free kick or penalty + red card

Q3. The referee signals advantage after a reckless challenge but the attacking team immediately loses the ball. What should happen next?

- A. Play continues
- B. Referee brings it back and cautions
- C. Caution only if the team asks
- D. Indirect free kick

Q4. Which of the following offences must be punished with a direct free kick even if committed accidentally?

- A. Accidental handball by a goalkeeper outside the area
- B. Holding an opponent's shirt
- C. High foot with no contact
- D. Sliding tackle that wins the ball but with excessive force

Q5. A defender attempts to stop a goal by deliberately handling the ball, but the ball still goes into the goal. What is the correct decision?

- A. Goal, no further action
- B. Goal, and yellow card for unsporting behaviour
- C. Goal, and red card for DOGSO
- D. Goal, and no card as the attempt failed



Upcoming Match Officials Training

The August practical training session is coming up on **Monday 25 August from 6pm – 7.30pm at Saunders Oval, Ballina**. A sausage sizzle will follow the session.



Please make the effort to attend this session and the remaining future training session this season. Future session for your calendar:

- **Monday 22 September – Online Session**

Please bring your whistle, flags and cards to our practical session on 25 August.



When is a Goalkeeper in Possession of the Ball?

According to the FIFA Laws of the Game (2024/25 edition), a goalkeeper is considered to be in possession of the ball when any of the following conditions are met:

A goalkeeper is considered to be in control of the ball with the hands when:

1. The ball is between the hands or between the hand and any surface (e.g., the ground or the goalkeeper's own body).
2. The ball is held in the outstretched open hand.
3. The ball is trapped against a surface (e.g., the ground or post) with the hand or hands.

Note: It is also considered possession if the goalkeeper has touched the ball with any part of the hand or arm while holding it or bouncing it.

Opponents must not challenge the goalkeeper when they are in possession as defined above.



What Opponents Cannot Do:

- Attempt to kick the ball when the goalkeeper is in possession.
- Try to kick or block the ball while the goalkeeper is in the act of releasing it (e.g., during a drop-kick, throw, or roll).

Spotlight on Excellence: Alireza Faghani

This edition of *The Ref's Report* puts the spotlight on one of the world's most respected and accomplished referees – **Alireza Faghani**. Now proudly officiating under the Australian flag, Faghani's career offers valuable lessons for referees at every level of the game. He was appointed to officiate the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 final between Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain. This was Faghani's second time refereeing a Club World Cup final, having previously officiated the 2015 final. He has also officiated at two FIFA World Cups (2018 and 2022) and the 2016 Olympic men's football final.



Why did you start refereeing?

"I actually started as a player, but after some injuries and guidance from my father—who was also a referee—I gave officiating a go. It didn't take long before I saw how much I enjoyed the mental challenge, the need for sharp decisions, and being a part of the game from a different angle."

What has your path to the top been like?

"It's been demanding but incredibly rewarding. I started in local leagues in Iran, progressed through national competitions, and eventually officiated in AFC and FIFA tournaments. Moving to Australia and continuing my refereeing here with the A-League and international fixtures has kept pushing me to grow. The key? Commitment, learning from every game, and staying humble."

How do you stay motivated at the highest level?

"Self-discipline and reflection. You must treat every game—no matter the level—with respect and professionalism. I also remind myself that I have a responsibility to represent referees everywhere with integrity. Motivation also comes from mentoring younger officials and seeing the next generation develop."



What advice do you have for referees—especially those just starting out?

"Be patient with yourself. Early on, you'll make mistakes. That's normal. Learn from them. Seek feedback, study the Laws of the Game, and watch experienced referees. But above all, stay committed. Confidence comes with consistency."

What are your future goals in refereeing?

"To keep contributing at the highest level I can, but also to give back more through mentoring. There's a real opportunity here in Australia to build a strong refereeing culture and produce world-class officials. I want to be part of that legacy."

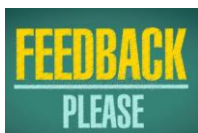
Alireza Faghani's Three Best Pieces of Advice for Match Officials

1. **Respect every match.** Whether it's juniors or elite level, treat every game like a final. That mindset sets the tone for your performance and your growth.
2. **Never stop learning.** Even with a World Cup on your CV, there's still more to learn. Stay curious. Review your matches. Ask questions.
3. **You are part of a team.** Support your fellow referees. Communicate clearly. Back each other during tough moments and celebrate your successes together.



As we move toward the finals of Season 2025, let Alireza's example remind us of what is possible in this role—with focus, integrity, and perseverance. For those just starting, remember: *the whistle in your hand has the power to shape the game—for the better.*

As always, if you need support, feedback, or advice—please reach out. Let's finish strong.



Do you have any suggestions for helpful articles in the next edition of 'The Ref's Report'? If you do, please email me your suggestions – referees.coach@ffnc.net.au

I am trying to make each edition of the newsletter helpful and stimulating. I hope you are enjoying the newsletter. Some feedback would help me!



How can I assist you?

As your Match Officials Development Officer this year, I would love to know how can assist you to improve your refereeing. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me for support - referees.coach@ffnc.net.au or 0477317798

What would you do?

A player reacts to a spectator taunting from the sideline. The player leaves the field of play to react to the spectator, then returns angrily, removing their shirt in a further show of anger.

Decision – Caution the player (Yellow card) for leaving the field of play without your permission, and a second caution (Yellow Card) for removing their playing shirt. Immediately issue a Red card (two cautions in the same match) and send the player from the field of play, and from the technical area.

Answers: Test Your Knowledge of the Laws (Page 2)

Q1 - Correct: D – A verbal insult

Explanation: Verbal offences are punished with a **caution or sending-off**, but the restart is an **indirect free kick** unless other misconduct occurred.

Q2 - Correct: D – Direct free kick or penalty + red card

Explanation: This is **outside agent interference** and **denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity** or **serious misconduct**.

Q3 - Correct: B – Referee brings it back and cautions the offender

Explanation: If no advantage results and the foul was cautionable (reckless), the referee should stop play and caution.

Q4 - Correct: D – Excessive force means serious foul play

Explanation: Even if the ball is won, **excessive force = serious foul play = direct free kick and red card**.

Q5 - Correct: B – Goal + yellow card for unsporting behaviour

Explanation: If a goal is scored despite a **deliberate handball to deny a goal**, the attempt is still **unsporting behaviour**, but **not DOGSO** because the goal was not denied



Encroachment at a Penalty Kick (Law 14) – FIFA Laws of the Game Summary

Encroachment occurs when players (other than the kicker and goalkeeper) enter the **penalty area**, **penalty arc**, or move **closer than 9.15 m (10 yards)** from the penalty mark before the ball is kicked. Referees must judge if encroachment **affected the outcome** of the penalty.

1. If the Attacking Team Encroaches

- **No Impact** (ball goes in anyway, or encroaching player doesn't interfere):
 - Goal stands
- **Impact** (player distracts keeper, scores from rebound, etc.):
 - Retake the kick if a goal is scored
 - Indirect free kick to the defending team if no goal

2. If the Defending Team Encroaches

- **No Impact** (player doesn't interfere or block):
 - Goal stands
- **Impact** (player clears ball, distracts kicker, etc.):
 - Retake the kick if no goal
 - Goal stands if the ball goes in



3. If Both Teams Encroach

- Regardless of impact:
 - Retake the penalty

4. Goalkeeper Encroachment (e.g., comes off line too early)

- **No Impact** (ball goes in):
 - Goal stands
- **Impact** (save made or ball hits post/crossbar):
 - Retake the kick
 - Warning or yellow card for repeat offences

IFAB

**PRACTICAL ADVICE
FOR MATCH OFFICIALS**

Which players may take part in kicks from the penalty mark?

Answer – Only the players that are on the field at the conclusion of the match. No interchange player (from the technical area) may take part in the penalties. If one team has less players than their opponent, then the team with more players must reduce to the number of their opponent.

From Steve Mackney – General Manager, Football Far North Coast

Gear for Match Officials

Umbro is the official supplier of (1) Referee Jerseys (2) Referee Shorts (3) Referee Socks, in addition to having other items that can be purchased online.



The link shown below is available by use of the password **Referees*NNSW**

<https://umbroteamwear.com.au/collections/northern-nsw-referees?page=1&shpxid=9ca57bd9-5b58-4d45-953e-515e2eb5012d>

Although FFNC has historically held a small supply of items in stock, (mainly items purchased from Umbro) and sold at a discounted rate to FFNC match officials, an assessment has been made to substantially rely on individual match officials to make their own purchases from Umbro beyond 2025. There are several reasons for this decision, most notably, because FFNC is no longer structured to easily respond to the periodic requests to purchase items, sort orders from Umbro and respond to the various layers involved with holding stock. Most gear can be readily purchased online by individual match officials specific to their own needs. Northern NSW Football has lobbied FFNC for several years, to convince us that match officials should secure items by purchasing direct from Umbro and I reluctantly now concede that this is the logical way to proceed.

Match Officials can anticipate information in due course offering a 'super buy' to clear various current stock, but FFNC makes it known that purchases of shirts, shorts, socks and whistles beyond 2025, will now be the responsibility of each individual to initiate online from Umbro.

Football Far North Coast will still aim still to order items such as rain jackets and caps, however match officials will need to order these in advance, rather than relying on FFNC to have immediate stock beyond 2025. Please refer to page 33 of the 2025 Match Officials Handbook that outlines the range of items that are available.

General comments about gear:

Boots – There are still some match officials wearing 'white' or coloured boots, when officiating. Please purchase black (or substantially black) boots and please ensure that they are cleaned after each day of officiating.

Socks – Keep them pulled UP. Use tape if required, noting that it is NOT a good look when match officials have socks around their ankles.

Shirts – Please tuck your shirt in when officiating. I realise that some of the Umbro shirts are not as generous in length that they could be, but I have seen too many match officials officiating with shirts out, when they could (and should be) tucked in.

Green Shirt (i.e. First Year) Match Officials are welcome to start wearing the BLACK shirt, beyond this season or in circumstances where you have been officiating since the start of the 2025 season.

Umbro has Red, Blue and Yellow referee jerseys that can be purchased. It is NOT compulsory for a match official to purchase any/all of these colours. The BLACK shirt is the standard colour and is the colour that at least both AR's should wear unless ALL THREE match officials have the same alternate colour (except where a Green Shirt match official is appointed).

Caps – The ONLY cap that is acceptable to be worn when officiating, is one that is badged as being Football Australia or Football Federation Australia.

Polo Shirt – Take pride in your appearance when arriving and leaving a venue. There was a time when every match official would arrive wearing long black slacks, match official polo shirt and clean covered footwear. Thongs, shorts and 'party shirts', tells the football community that match officials are not serious about their role.

Summary

The role of being a match official exists as a VERY important part of the image that we want to demonstrate as being within this region. Sometimes it is the little things that show others that 'we', as a collective, take pride in what we do. Each match official also has an obligation to uphold the standards (and values), that reflect the 'badge' that you should be proud to wear, every time that you step forward to officiate.

It is expected that each match official who is appointed for a finals match, will lead by positive example, so I thank you each in advance of the last weeks of season 2025.