



Welcome to this sixty seventh 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!



**LEGEA**

Use the trailing eye rather than slavishly following the ball, for instance taking a second look to the Assistant Referee or retaining visual contact with the original challenge whilst aware of the next phase of play. In order to detect late challenges and retaliation just keep an eye on a challenge for the extra second or two. Potential late challenges can sometimes be spotted in advance and usually involve seeing the player making the challenge taking a long run up and you think “I’m not sure if they are going to get there in time”. Detecting such late challenges and retaliation ensures justice is done and is a great way of enhancing or maintaining match control.

## ***Assessing the Legality of Tackles***

"I got the ball, ref!" has been a response to a whistle for a slide tackle foul since the early days of football. Often misunderstood, challenges on the ground require the referee to read the game and the players to properly manage a match. For the purposes of this article, I'll define ground challenges as a tackle or slide tackle against a player with the ball.

Until removed from FIFA Laws in 2008/2009, the wording, "tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball, making contact with the opponent before touching the ball," as a direct free kick foul, caused confusion on the application of the law. Was incidental contact included? Did trifling and doubtful contact count? How about the contact initiated by the attacker at the completion of the tackle?

The International Football Association changed Law 12 to simply read, "tackles or challenges an opponent" in a manner that is careless, reckless or using excessive force, leaving the determination to the referee. They added sanctions as serious foul play for excessively dangerous tackles. Nothing in the laws provides sanctions for challenges on the ground.

Determining if a foul occurs requires the referee to be observant before, during and after the tackle. Judging the challenge must include: the defender's proximity to the play, the attempt to play the ball, the ability to play the ball, force used in the challenge and any ulterior motive or malicious intent of the defender.

Before the tackle, the proximity to play and any ulterior motives must be assessed. Was the defender executing the slide tackle coming from a great distance to tackle the ball or is the attacking player the tackler's objective? The direction of the tackle from the front, side or rear also needs to be observed. Tackles from the rear and some from the side are blind to the player with the ball, resulting in a different reaction by that player. Slide tackles from the front and some from the side are in the view of the player with the ball, and that player may be able to avoid contact or evade the tackle.

During the ground challenge, assessing the ability of the defender to play the ball, force used and the reaction of the player with the ball are important to the referee. Contact with the ball is irrelevant to the referee's judgment on this potential foul or misconduct. Contacting ball or not is unimportant; rather, the result of the tackle and contact with the player with the ball is the primary factor in the determination. Simple actions such as "studs up" or clearly contacting the legs of the attacker with the lead or both legs are easy in determining that a foul has occurred. Difficulty in making the judgment is the result of contact by the back leg of the tackler on the player with the ball after the front leg leads a fair challenge. Some of the contact may be incidental, trifling or may have no impact on the player with the ball's ability to continue to remain in control. Generally, the higher the contact on the player with the ball's legs the more likely a foul and some degree of misconduct occurred. Frequently, referees will see an attacker fail to lift their legs or step over the defending tackler and fall. In that situation, the referee must judge if the attacking player could have and should have avoided the contact. If not avoidable, no foul.

Slide tackles from the rear offer additional assessments by the referee. Frequently, the attacker will fall with less contact by the tackler. The referee must determine if the tackler's actions reached the level of "careless, reckless or with excessive force." The mere fact that the tackle was from the rear does not constitute a foul. Tackles from the rear should be regarded with suspicion and draw close inspection.

### ***Phase 1***

After the initial challenge, the referee must determine if there was a fair challenge, then a foul or if two fouls were committed by the tackling player. The fair/foul scenario is the event that most often receives the "I got all ball, ref!" response. That may be true, but the action after the clean tackle must be sanctioned. Getting the ball does not eliminate the possibility of a foul. Clearing the ball with the front foot and taking out the Achilles tendon with the back leg is clearly a foul. Likewise, if, after a clean tackling of the ball by a defender with a slide tackle, the attacker falls to the ground, there may or may not be a foul. The two-foul situation may be a careless tackle followed by a trip. Here, which foul is called is of little consequence since the resulting restart is the same,

but which foul is recognised by the official can make an important difference to decisions about misconduct. The quicker the whistle, the less likely further problems will result.

### **Phase 2**

After determining that a foul has been committed, the referee must assess if the actions elevate to reckless or excessive force. Misconduct often accompanies illegal ground challenges and must be judged based on several factors.

Before, during and after the sequence of a challenge on the ground with potential misconduct, the referee must be mindful of the players and the game situation. The possible malicious intent of the player executing the challenge is important. Past history in this (or other known) game, skill level and circumstances of the given situation are important to evaluating intent. Most frequently, slide tackles from the rear are a result of a defender being beaten by the attacker. That immediately makes the defender more aggressive. Ground challenges from the side or front are often the result of defence in depth where the first defender has failed to stop the attack or through balls to an unmarked attacker. That will result in challenges and tackles initiated a greater distance from the attacking play. Those challenges are frequently done with greater speed and less control by the tackling player. Results of the challenge and injury to the attacking player must be considered by the referee. Often those situations will result in potential serious injuries from the reckless play and excessive force. Boots, studs-up and hard contact with the Achilles area will almost always result in misconduct in addition to the foul. Referees must also be prepared to sanction dives when the attacking player falls to the ground to draw a foul after a fair challenge. Match score, distance from the goal and time during the match will also affect the speed, force and tackler intent during those situations.

Referees must judge the challenge on the ground without the emotion of the “I got all ball” mentality and the reaction of both players and spectators. The factors covered provide the referee with guidelines to make the right call at the right time, keeping the game fun, fair and safe.

***Based on an article in “Referee” (Magazine – Referee Enterprise, Inc.) and my personal experience.***

## **Consistency**

Consistency is applying all of the Laws, for all of the match, over all of the field. You are not being consistent an offence outside the penalty area but ignore it inside the area – handball is a classic example of this. You are not being consistent if:

- You caution or penalise a player for an offence late in the match when you have ignored these offences up until now.
- At a free kick you allow to stand over the ball in the middle third, but insist on them retreating 9.15 metres when the free kick is near the penalty area
- You allow defenders in their own half to throw the ball in 5 metres forward of where it went out, but do not allow attackers to do the same thing near their opponent’s goal. Similarly, the laws do not say that defenders get additional distance when a foul is committed against them.

Consistency is about fairness. It’s about ensuring that the Laws are applied the same way for all players regardless of their position or ability.

## **Active Member of the Month**

Congratulations go to Sam Kelly who is the Active Member of the Month for March 2019. Sam got the highest points for his all-round performance during March for his dedication to training, attending the general meeting and doing well in the monthly LOTG Quiz. He was awarded a \$50.00 Caltex Voucher for his efforts at the April General Meeting. Well done Sam.



## 2018-2019 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.

A new format has been introduced, in our Newsletter, for testing your knowledge of the LOTG. 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 current 2018/2019 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 LOTG Quiz Answers: 1 - D; 2 - C; 3 - B; 4 - D; 5 - A; 6 - C; 7 - C; 8 - A; 9 - B; 10 - B.

## Important Dates

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2019 – Trivia Night at the Bankstown Sports Club, 8 Greenfield Parade, Bankstown NSW 2200, starting at 7.30 pm

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2019 - General Meeting at the Bankstown Sports Club, 8 Greenfield Parade, Bankstown NSW 2200, starting at 7.30 pm

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019 - General Meeting at the Bankstown Sports Club, 8 Greenfield Parade, Bankstown NSW 2200, starting at 7.30 pm

Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2019 - General Meeting at the Bankstown Sports Club, 8 Greenfield Parade, Bankstown NSW 2200, starting at 7.30 pm

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

