



Premier League and Pro Ref Competition Guidance Handbook

Season 2026/27



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Premier League Principles

Season 2026/27

- Maintain high threshold for penalising challenges – not every contact is a foul – while protecting player safety
- Maintain high threshold for VAR intervention – ‘Referee’s Call’ will stand unless, in the opinion of the VAR, based upon the evidence readily available, that call is a clear and obvious error
- More efficient application of VAR, including improved use of Semi-Automated Offside Technology, to reduce VAR delays
- Continue focus on in-stadium VAR experience
- Continue robust approach to improving participant behaviour on-field and in technical area
- Maintain stronger measures to reduce time-wasting and disruption tactics



1

VAR

Refereeing with VAR

Guidance

The 'Referee's Call' will stand unless, in the opinion of the VAR, based upon the evidence readily available, that call is a clear and obvious error

- VAR is not in place to re-referee incidents
- Clear evidence is required to meet the high threshold for subjective interventions, taking into account what football expects
- Consistency of VAR is enhanced by applying a high threshold for intervention

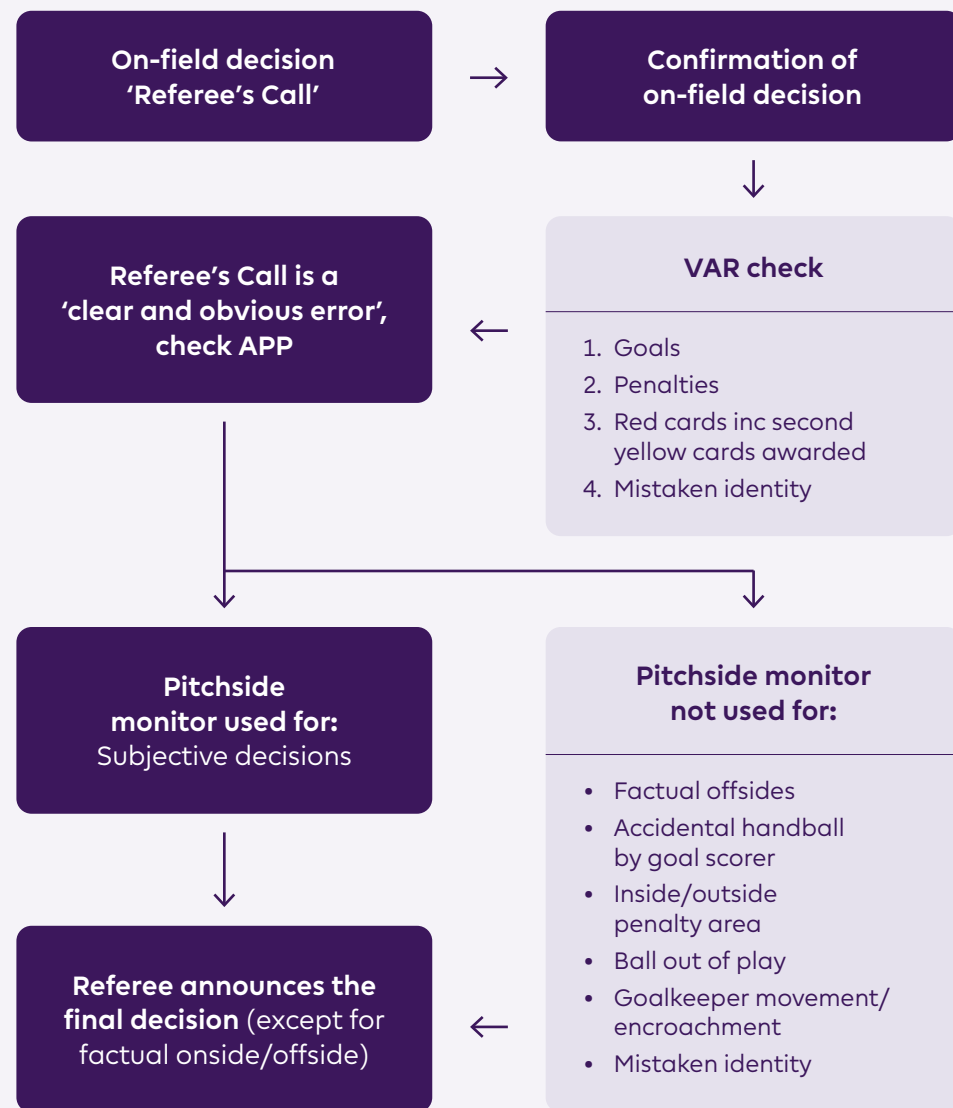
What VAR cannot do

- Achieve decision-making perfection
- Stop the debates about subjective calls
- Check restarts
- Recommend a review of the Referee's decision without checking the attacking possession phase (APP)
- Provide access to the live Referee/VAR audio to spectators or for broadcast





Decision-making process



Semi-Automated Offside Technology (SAOT)

- Semi-Automated Offside Technology will continue to reduce delays to VAR checks for close onside/offside decisions
- SAOT graphics will be shown on giant screens in stadiums and on broadcast
- SAOT will not be used for clear offside decisions
- The VAR will have the option to manually draw lines as a back-up to the SAOT system if required. This process may be necessary in complex 'edge cases', for example where several players block the view of the ball



Attacking Possession Phase (APP)

The APP is limited to the phase of play that leads directly to:

- A goal
- Penalty incident
- Possible red card for a denial of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity
- A second yellow card awarded for stopping a promising attack or denial of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity



Subjective

- No time limit or number of passes
- Not necessarily when the attacking team gained possession

Other considerations

- Ability of the defence to reset
- Momentum of the attack

VAR update

Second yellow cards

- VAR protocol extended to allow the review of second yellow cards awarded that are clearly incorrect
- VAR cannot review possible second yellow cards that have not been awarded on-field
- High threshold for intervention – the 'Referee's Call' will stand unless the second yellow card awarded is clearly and obviously incorrect
- The VAR will review the APP prior to second yellow cards awarded for:
 - stopping a promising attack
 - denial of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO)



Second yellow cards

Considerations

- Following a first yellow card, any subsequent foul will not always result in a second caution
- Referees should judge each foul following a caution independently, whilst also considering whether the player is persistently offending
- Clear yellow card offences should be sanctioned on-field, no matter whether the player is already cautioned



VAR update

Attacking team offence before the ball is in play

VAR protocol extended to allow the review of an attacking team offence that occurs before a corner kick or free kick is taken, when there is then a direct impact on:

- A goal being scored
- A penalty kick awarded to the attacking team
- A red card given to a defender for DOGSO
- A second yellow card given to a defender for DOGSO, or stopping a promising attack

VAR may intervene when the attacking offence:

- Starts before the ball is in play
- Has the potential to be a red card
- Has a direct impact by:
 - affecting the ability of the defending team to prevent a goal being scored
 - helping the attacking team to score or create a goal-scoring opportunity

If an offence has occurred, the appropriate disciplinary action is taken and the corner kick or free kick will be retaken.



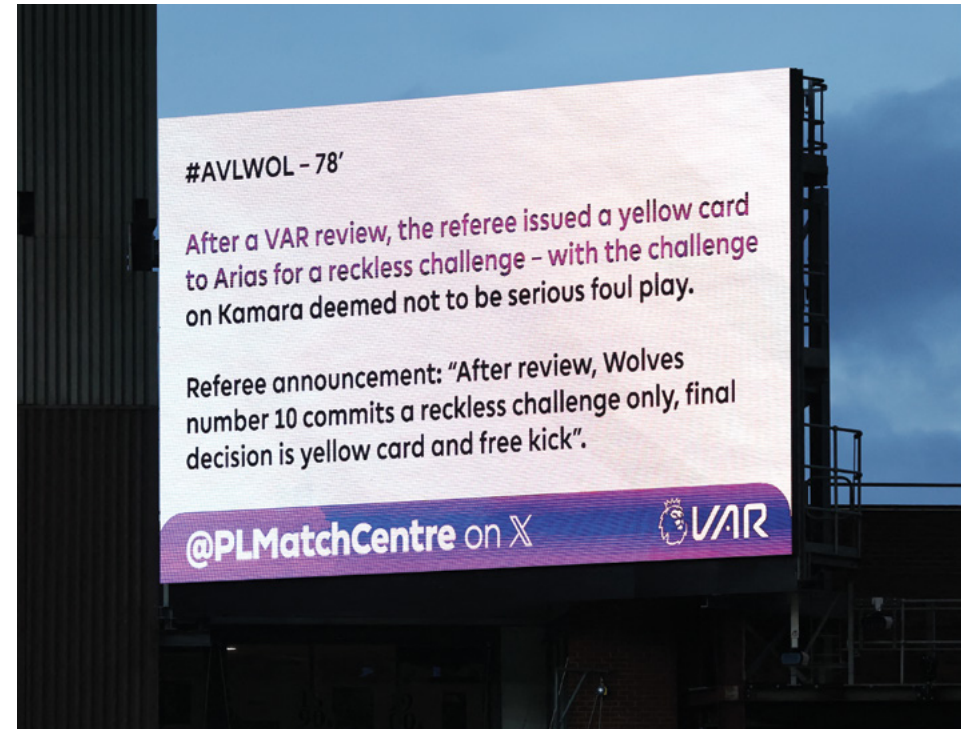
Referee announcements

Guidance

Referees will make an announcement following all VAR reviews (overturned and retained), except factual offside/onside decisions



Premier League Match Centre X account



Premier League Match Centre provides factual updates in-match to clarify key incidents, decisions and operational matters via the @PLMatchCentre account on X.

Posts include factual explanations of refereeing

decisions, including the involvement of the VAR in the decision-making process.

@PLMatchCentre enhances the in-stadium VAR experience, improves fan education and aligns communication to the 'Referee's Call'.

2

Participant Behaviour Charter

Purpose of the Charter

- Shared responsibility across all participants and stakeholders to protect and promote positive image of the game
- To promote positive behaviour, deliver a long-term culture change and proportionately deal with unacceptable behaviour
- Appropriate FA regulatory powers
- Empower Match Officials to take appropriate disciplinary action
- Captains take responsibility for the behaviour of team-mates

Core principles:

Respect

In your every action and interaction

Protect

Your reputation, the reputation of your role and the reputation of the game

Fairness

Promote positively through your contribution to the game

PARTICIPANT BEHAVIOUR CHARTER

CORE PRINCIPLES

RESPECT - IN YOUR EVERY ACTION AND INTERACTION

PROTECT - YOUR REPUTATION, THE REPUTATION OF YOUR ROLE AND THE REPUTATION OF THE GAME

FAIRNESS - PROMOTE POSITIVELY THROUGH YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE GAME

FOCUS AREAS

ON-FIELD

'CAPTAINS ONLY' APPROACH

- Recognises the important relationship between the referee and captain
- Additional management tool for referees to explain important decisions
- Captains are responsible for helping to direct their team-mates away from the referee
- Normal interactions between all players and the referee are still allowed

CONFRONTATION

-  Running towards a match official to confront
-  Confrontation / invasion personal space
-  Clearly visible disrespectful action directed towards a match official
-  Intrusive physical contact with a match official
-  Discriminatory behaviour/language, aggression, offensive language/gestures

SURROUNDING

-  Two or more players confronting a match official – yellow card and report to FA

TECHNICAL AREA

PRE-MATCH BRIEFING

- Manager / head coach expected to attend and participate

CONDUCT IN THE TECHNICAL AREA

- Managers, coaches and other technical area occupants must behave in a responsible manner
- Comply with the maximum number of staff and substitutes permitted by the competition
- Must not use technology to challenge any decision by the match officials
- Must remain within your own technical area during the match
- Must not enter the pitch to confront any match official at half-time or full-time

COACHING

- Only one person is permitted to stand at the front of the technical area and coach during the match
- A second person may stand but must remain very close to the technical area seating
- All conversations between the two standing must happen close to the technical area seating
- All other technical area occupants should remain seated



LOVE FOOTBALL. PROTECT THE GAME.



Regulatory

Participant Behaviour Charter

- Participant Behaviour Charter replaces Technical Area Code of Conduct
- Dismissed Technical Area occupants not permitted to take a seat in the stand, or return to the field of play post-match, or conduct post-match media obligations
- FA Standard Charges to include touchline bans for confrontational behaviour towards Match Officials
- Automatic 1 match ban after 3 Technical Area Cautions
- Cut-off for sanction for receiving the third caution of the Season after the 32nd Premier League fixture
- Any touchline ban includes prohibition from being on the touchline or field of play before or after the match – but can fulfil media obligations
- Technical Area policy covers numbers and behaviour – FA E20 charge for non-compliance
- Financial penalties proportionate and reflect financial reality targeting serious and repeat offenders
- Technical Area cautions contribute towards the multi-player misconduct total – 6 or more in one match resulting in financial penalty
- Mandatory refereeing courses for Scholars to improve players' education and insight into officiating





Regulatory Public comments

- Pre-match comments about Match Officials may be subject to disciplinary action even when the Match Official is not specifically named. This includes references to the VAR
- Post-match comments which criticise or disagree with the decisions of a Match Official are permitted but must be done in a respectful manner. Any comments which are not, or imply bias, question the integrity of a Match Official or are personal or offensive may be subject to disciplinary action
- Personal or offensive comments may include repeated negative or inflammatory comments regarding a Match Official's performance
- The above also applies to social media comments and covers all participants, including Clubs
- Sporting sanctions may apply to players and managers for media comment breaches

3

Updates for Season 2026/27

Holding

Approach

Strong mandate for the on-field officials and the VAR to recognise and penalise clear holding actions that:

- Have clear material impact, and/or
- Are non-footballing holding actions that have no place on the football pitch



Definitions

Material impact

The ability of the opponent to play and/or challenge for the ball

Non-footballing action

An action that is clearly not an attempt to challenge for or play the ball

Extremeness of action

The degree to which a holding action is a non-footballing act

Mutual holding

Both players are making similar and simultaneous actions to engage and compete

☑ Considerations

- Only focusing on the opponent (not looking at the ball)
- Making no attempt to play or challenge for the ball
- Holding an opponent with both arms
- Sustained and/or impactful holding of an opponent or their clothing

Blocking

☑ Considerations

- 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
- For Law 12 offences (fouls) a clear action that results in contact and impacts the ability of the opponent to play/challenge for the ball foul should be penalised
- For Law 11 (offside) an offence should be penalised when:
 - a player moving from, or standing in an offside position interferes with the movement of an opponent towards the ball and impacts the ability of the opponent to play/challenge for the ball
 - a player who is standing in an offside position clearly obstructs an opponent's line of vision and that position impacts the ability of the opponent to play/challenge for the ball



Challenges on the goalkeeper



✓ Considerations

- 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
- Maintain the same high threshold for penalising contact for a foul

Threshold

Penalise when:

The attacker impacts the ability of the goalkeeper to play or challenge for the ball by:

- Making a clear action to interfere with the arms of the goalkeeper
- Making a clear action with no intention to play or challenge for the ball

Allow play to continue where:

- An attacker and goalkeeper both move into the same space to challenge for the ball

Hair pulling

Approach

Referee's professional judgement used to interpret hair pulling actions in a similar way to striking and serious foul play

VAR threshold for intervention – no red card/red card given as a clear and obvious error

✓ Considerations

- Clear and deliberate action to pull opponent's hair with excessive force and/or brutality = red card (violent conduct)
- Clear action to hold or pull the opponent's hair without excessive force and/or brutality = yellow card (unsporting behaviour)
- Making negligible or accidental/inadvertent contact with an opponent's hair is not usually an offence



Managing momentum

Injuries, including head injuries

When play is stopped for a suspected injury (including a head injury) or a player requests treatment when asked by the Referee:

- The Referee will signal for the doctor/physio to enter the field to assess the player. The player must then leave the pitch
- If the doctor/physio does not enter the field to assess the player, the Referee will still instruct the player to leave the pitch
- The player will then remain on the touchline for a minimum period of 1 minute after the match has restarted. This will apply whether or not the doctor/physio assessed the player on-field
- Return to the pitch requires the Referee's permission



Players are still required to leave the pitch when:

- Play is stopped for a suspected injury, and the player then indicates that they do not require treatment

Players are not required to leave the pitch when:

- A goalkeeper and an outfield player collide and require attention
- Players from the same team collide and require attention
- Where an injury is the result of an offence for which the opponent is cautioned or sent off
- Player injured will take a penalty kick

IFAB trial

Goalkeeper injuries

IFAB®

A deterrent against goalkeeper injuries being used to break momentum or enable tactical briefings mid-game

If play is stopped for a goalkeeper injury, a selected outfield player must leave the pitch and remain on the touchline for a minimum of 1 minute after the match has restarted

When play is stopped for a goalkeeper injury:

- The Head Coach has 10 seconds to select an outfield player and inform the Fourth Official
- The countdown begins when the Referee signals for medical staff to enter the pitch
- The Referee will instruct the selected player to leave the field at the nearest point on the touchline
- If the Head Coach has not selected a player after 10 seconds, the Referee will instruct the Captain (or nominated outfield player if the goalkeeper is the Captain) to leave the pitch
- Return to the pitch requires the Referee's permission



IFAB trial

Goalkeeper injuries

The 10 second countdown will still apply if:

- Medical staff do not enter the pitch when signalled by the Referee
- Play is stopped for a suspected injury, and the goalkeeper then indicates that they do not require treatment

Exceptions – outfield player not required to leave the pitch when:

- The goalkeeper is injured as the result of an offence for which a free kick is awarded
- The goalkeeper and an outfield player have collided and need attention
- A severe injury has occurred, or the goalkeeper is bleeding





Throw-ins and goal kicks 5 seconds countdown

Referee to use a '5-second' countdown for unfair delaying of the taking of throw-ins and goal kicks.

If play has not restarted after the countdown, the restart will be reversed and a throw-in or corner kick will be awarded to the opposing team

- Referee decides when the count starts – professional judgement of an unfair delay
- Referee does not have to wait for a player to have possession of the ball to start the five-second countdown
- The countdown can also be started if the player deliberately causes a delay by:
 - slowly retrieving the ball
 - taking up an incorrect position at a throw-in
 - putting the ball in an incorrect position at a goal kick

Players should not be penalised if they are in the process of throwing/kicking the ball as the Referee reaches the end of the countdown.

Yellow card awarded only if a player causes an excessive delay after the restart is reversed.

Substitutions

10 seconds countdown

'10-second' time limit for players leaving the pitch when substituted.

Countdown starts when substitution board is shown.

If the outgoing player exceeds 10 seconds to leave the pitch, the incoming substitute will be prevented from entering and play will restart.

Incoming substitute can only enter the pitch at the first stoppage of play after 1 minute

Exceptions (as determined by the Referee):

- Substitution due to injury
- Safety/security considerations
- Substitution procedure for U18 players

More than one substitution:

- All players being substituted must be off the field of play within 10 seconds of the substitution board being shown for the final substitution





Substitution procedure for U18 players

In line with safeguarding protocols, any U18 player being substituted in a first team match may go directly to the halfway line, and not have to leave the field of play by the nearest point on the boundary line.

U18 players are highlighted by an asterisk (*) on official Premier League Team Sheets.

Process:

- The team making the substitution will verbally inform the Fourth Official that the player leaving the pitch is U18
- The team making the substitution will highlight the player is U18 on the substitute card given to the Fourth Official
- Fourth Official to inform Referee that the player being substituted is U18
- Fourth Official informs the opposition technical area that the player is U18 (expectation management)
- Substitution process followed and completed

Substitutes warm up protocol



- No more than five substitute players of each Club can warm up at the same time
- The warm up should be conducted to the left of the Technical Areas, opposite Assistant Referee 2

Substitutes Warm Up Coach

Each Club may nominate one member of the Club's first team coaching staff to act as a 'Substitutes Warm Up Coach'. This individual will be permitted to access the touchline during the match for the purpose of assisting substitute players with warm up exercises only.

The Substitutes Warm Up Coach must be a member of the first team coaching staff who is already named as one of the seven staff permitted on the trainers' bench; or who is not listed on the trainers' bench and will be located in the Club's overflow seating.

Throughout the match, the Substitutes Warm Up Coach must:

- Remain as the same named individual on the Team Sheet
- Only assist substitutes players with their warm up exercises and engage in no other activities
- Not communicate any instructions to on-field players, either verbally or in writing
- Not react to any on-field decisions made or not made by the Match Officials
- Not use any additional equipment e.g. cones, balls etc.

The substitute and the Substitutes Warm Up Coach should wear the bib colour confirmed on the Match Day Information Sheet.

4

Officiating guidance

Decision-making principles

Guiding principles

- Contact is an acceptable part of football – not every contact is a foul. Not every foul is a yellow card
- Consider level of contact and consequence (impact)
- Contextualised decision making – consider the defender's actions and attacker's actions (motivation)
- Emphasis on protecting player safety

Considerations

- Does the defender make a challenge?
- Is the ball played? By whom?
- Who makes the contact?
- Does the attacker instigate contact?

Actions of defender

Actions (motivation)
of attacker

Degree of contact

Consequence of contact



Effective playing time

Allowance for time lost



Allowance is made by the Referee in each half for all playing time lost in that half through:

Substitutions

Assessment and/or removal of injured players

Wasting time

Disciplinary sanctions

Medical stoppages permitted by competition rules, e.g. 'drinks' breaks (which should not exceed one minute) and 'cooling' breaks (ninety seconds to three minutes)

Delays relating to VAR 'checks' and 'reviews'

Goal celebrations

Any other cause, including any significant delay to a restart (e.g. due to interference by an outside agent)

Effective playing time

Calculation of additional time

Accurate calculation of additional time in line with IFAB guidance to enhance effective playing time.

Incident	2026/27 approach
Goal	Added time clock to start after 30 secs
Substitution	Exact time (play stopped to restart)
Injury	Exact time (play stopped to restart)
Penalty kick	Exact time (award to restart)
Delaying restart/time wasting (e.g. 'ceremonial' free kicks, goal kicks)	Referee to make allowance based on match events
Red card	Exact time (red card shown to restart)
VAR check/review delays restart	Exact time

Note: No double counting of time from a VAR check/review.

Effective playing time

Delaying the restart

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Caution (yellow cards)

A player is cautioned if guilty of:

- Delaying the restart of play
- Failing to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a dropped ball, corner kick, free kick or throw-in

Threshold for a yellow card

Referees will be empowered by the game to take a robust approach to dealing with clear/deliberate actions that are impactful in delaying the restart of play e.g. interfering with the ball which clearly delays the restart of play.



Goalkeeper 8 seconds

Law 12.2

IFAB®

A corner kick is awarded if a goalkeeper controls the ball with their hand(s)/arm(s) for more than 8 seconds before releasing it

Goalkeeper has clear control of ball

A goalkeeper is in control when:

- Holding the ball in hands/arms
- Ball is held between any surface
- Holding the ball on an outstretched open hand(s)
- Bouncing it on the ground
- Throwing it in the air

8-second count down starts

The Referee will count down from 8 seconds, using a raised hand for the final 5 seconds.

Exceeds 8 seconds = corner kick

If the goalkeeper exceeds 8 seconds, the Referee will award a corner kick on the side of the field nearest to the goalkeeper.





Goalkeeper 8 seconds

Refereeing practice

Referee decides when the count starts – sensible application

The count starts when the goalkeeper is in full control of the ball and completely unobstructed by any opponent

If the goalkeeper is starting to release the ball as the count down ends, do not penalise

If during counting process an attacking player pressures or prevents the goalkeeper releasing the ball, an indirect free kick against the attacking player will be awarded



Simulation

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A player must be cautioned for unsporting behaviour if they attempt to deceive the Referee, e.g. by feigning injury or pretending to have been fouled (simulation)



Approach

- Strong mandate to deal robustly with actions intended to deceive the Referee
- Where there is a clear action to deceive a yellow card is expected

Threshold

- Clear attempt to deceive the Referee
- Clearly no contact by defender or attacker clearly instigates contact
- Obvious exaggeration of minimal contact
- Clearly feigns injury (as an attempt to get opponent a yellow or red card)
- Clearly exaggerates contact to attempt to get opponent a yellow or red card

Handball

Interpretation

Principles

- 'Less is more' approach
- Not every touch of a player's hand/arm with the ball is an offence
- Hand/arm position should be judged in relation to body movement in that particular situation
- Players are not expected to move with their arms by their side or behind their back



Interpretation

- A very clear deflection that results in a significant change in trajectory of the ball should carry greater weight than arm position when considering a handball offence
- However, touching another body part before contact with the arm does not automatically mean a handball cannot be penalised

No handball offence:

- Justifiable position/action
- Supportive arm
- Player plays ball onto own arm
- Clear change of trajectory when touched by same player
- Played by a teammate
- Close proximity

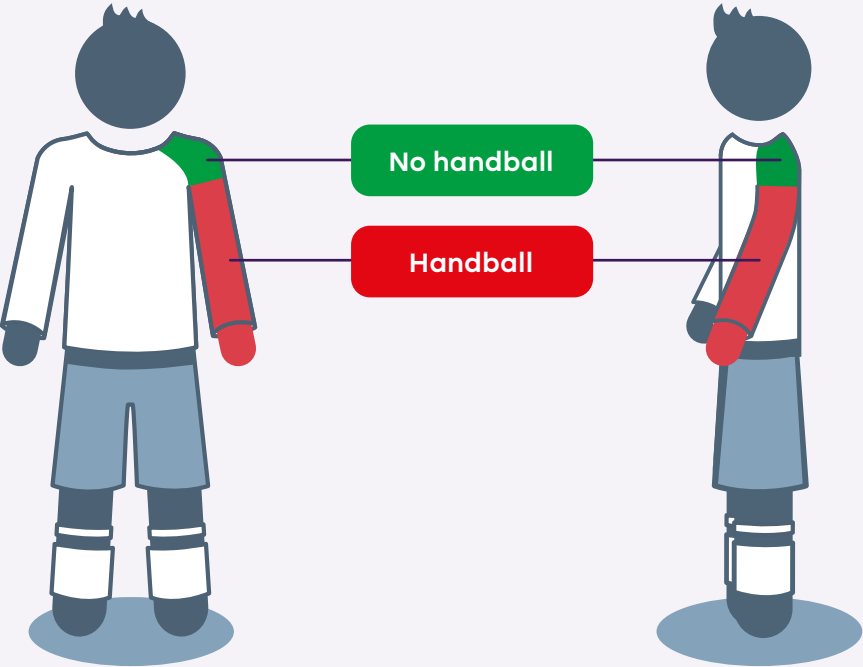


Handball offence:

- Deliberate movement of arm away from body
- Deliberately leaning to block the ball with the arm
- Clear additional arm movement
- Arm position makes body bigger and is unjustifiable



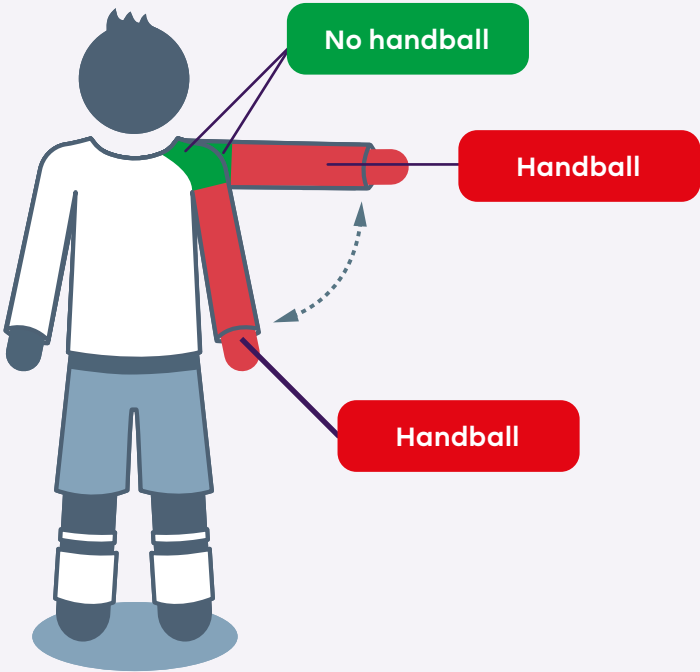
Handball Definition



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Definition of the hand/arm

For the purposes of determining handball offences, the upper boundary of the arm is in line with the bottom of the armpit



Handball

Accidental handball before a goal is scored

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It is an offence if a player scores in the opponents' goal:

- Directly from their hand/arm, even if accidental, including by the goalkeeper
- Immediately after the ball has touched their hand/arm, even if accidental

Following an accidental handball by an attacker:

- If a goal is then scored by a teammate, the goal should be awarded
- If the ball is clearly moving towards and enters the goal but is touched/played by a defending player, the handball should be penalised
- If the ball is clearly moving wide of the goal but is touched/played by a defending player and a clear own goal occurs, the goal should be awarded



Goal kick and subsequent handball

Following the award of a goal kick by the Referee;

- When the ball is stationary within the six-yard box and is kicked by the goalkeeper or a teammate of the goalkeeper, the goal kick will be viewed as having been taken
- If following the taking of the goal kick a player deliberately touches the ball with their hand or arm this will be given as handball, resulting in a penalty (if the player handling the ball is a teammate of the goalkeeper and is in the penalty area) or an indirect free kick (if the player handling the ball is the goalkeeper)



Offside

Delaying the flag

Delaying the flag/whistle for an offence is only permissible in a very clear attacking situation when a player is about to score or has a clear run into/towards the opponents' penalty area.

If the Assistant Referee delays a flag for an offence, they must raise the flag if the attacking team scores a goal,

is awarded a penalty kick, free kick, corner kick or throw-in, or retains possession of the ball after the initial attack has ended.

In all other situations, the Assistant Referee should decide whether or not to raise the flag, depending on the requirements of the game.

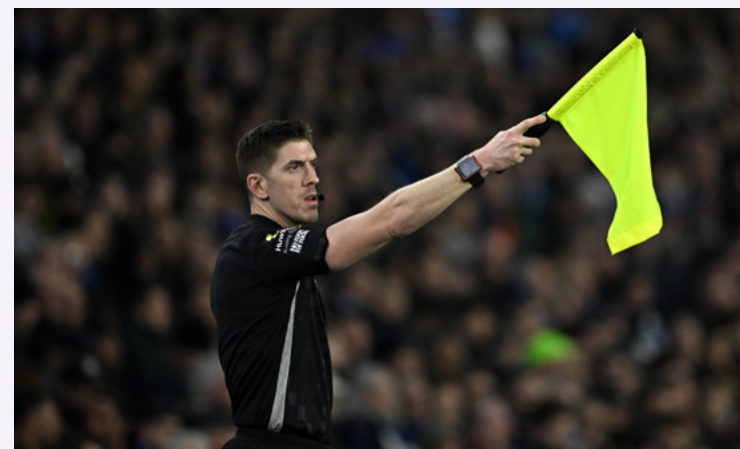
Delay

Clear opportunity to score or very obvious attacking phase and tight judgement for onside/offside.



No delay

- Play clearly going out to the wing
- Possible attack – not a clear and immediate one
- Assistant Referee is certain that attacker is clearly in an offside position, and they could not call it incorrectly



Offside

Deliberate play



IFAB and FIFA guidelines for distinguishing between ‘deliberate play’ and ‘deflection’:

‘Deliberate play’ is when a player has control of the ball with the possibility of:

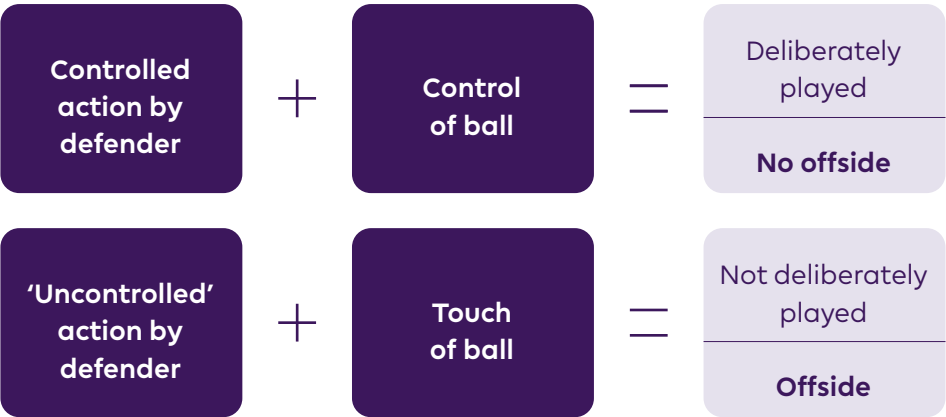
Passing the ball to a teammate; or

Gaining possession of the ball; or

Clearing the ball (e.g. by kicking or heading it)

If the pass, attempt to gain possession or clearance by the player in control of the ball is inaccurate or unsuccessful, this does not negate the fact that the player ‘deliberately played’ the ball

Practical interpretation – ‘deliberately played’



Considerations for determining ‘uncontrolled action’ (not deliberate play)

- The ball travelled from short distance and/or the player does not have a clear view of it
- The ball was moving quickly
- The direction of the ball was unexpected
- The player had limited or no time to coordinate their body movement, i.e. clearly a case of instinctive stretching or jumping, or a movement that achieved limited contact/control

Offside Interference

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A player in an offside position at the moment the ball is played or touched by a teammate is only penalised on becoming involved in active play by:

Interfering with an opponent by:

Preventing an opponent from playing or being able to play the ball by clearly obstructing the opponent's line of vision or

Challenging an opponent for the ball or

Clearly attempting to play a ball which is close when this action impacts on an opponent or

Making an obvious action which clearly impacts on the ability of an opponent to play the ball



Serious foul play

IFAB®

Serious foul play is punishable by red card

A tackle or challenge that endangers the safety of an opponent or uses excessive force or brutality must be sanctioned as serious foul play

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 or endangers the safety of an opponent is guilty of serious foul play

✓ Considerations

- Speed
- Force
- Intensity (combination of both speed and force)
- Control
- Point of contact
- Extent of contact – full/limited, studs/side/top of boot

‘Careless’ challenge

Lack of attention or consideration when making a challenge or acts without precaution.

Foul



‘Reckless’ challenge

Disregards the danger to, or consequences for, the opponent.

Yellow card



‘Dangerous’ challenge

Excessive force – using more force than is necessary.

Red card



Serious foul play

Considerations for contact on the achilles

- Full/direct contact on achilles
- High force and/or speed
- High intensity and/or high degree of danger
- Excessive force and/or endangers safety



Considerations when contact is made after playing the ball

- Controlled action to play the ball
- Available space into which challenge is made
- Awareness of and consideration for opponent
- Whether challenge is clearly reckless or involves excessive force/endangers safety



High foot challenges

A high foot challenge may be considered:



Careless

- Limited (indirect) contact
- Low force
- Low speed
- Low awareness of opponent
- Low degree of danger
- High degree of control
- Sudden drop in height by opponent

Free kick only

Reckless

- Limited or partial contact
- Low/medium force
- Low/medium speed
- Limited awareness of opponent
- Sudden drop in height by opponent
- High degree of control
- Low/medium degree of danger

Yellow card

Excessive force

- Full contact
- High force
- High speed
- High point of contact
- Clear line of sight to opponent
- Fully extended leading leg
- High degree of danger

Red card

Contact after a pass or shot towards goal

✓ Considerations

- Where there is contact following an attacker either passing the ball or taking a shot at goal, where this contact is inevitable or a consequence of momentum, play should typically be allowed to continue
- Where the contact is either clearly reckless (yellow card) or serious foul play (red card) then a penalty kick and appropriate sanction is the expected outcome



Stopping a promising attack

☑ Considerations

Speed

Player(s) clearly moving forwards with pace in their attack

Space

Clear 'green space' in front of attacker with the ball to progress into, pass or shoot, and/or 'green space' in front of other attackers who would likely receive a pass

Options/opportunity

Player with the ball has options to take on defender or has teammates to clearly pass the ball to

Yellow card

- Clear possibility of becoming a goal-scoring opportunity, and not simply every forward movement
- Blatant/cynical offences
- Possible DOGSO with consideration(s) missing



Denying a goal or an obvious a goal-scoring opportunity

☑ Considerations

- Distance between the offence and the goal
- General direction of the play
- Likelihood of keeping or gaining control of the ball
- Location and number of defenders and attackers



Offence committed outside the penalty area:

Red card

Offence committed inside the penalty area:

'Non-deliberate' foul (if the offence was an attempt to play the ball or a challenge for the ball)	— —	Penalty kick + Yellow card
'Non-deliberate' handball (e.g. makes body unjustifiably bigger)	— —	Penalty kick + Yellow card
'Deliberate' foul (e.g. holding, pulling, pushing, no possibility to play the ball etc.)	— —	Penalty kick + Red card
'Deliberate' handball (e.g. additional arm movement to make contact with the ball, deliberate movement of arm away from body)	— —	Penalty kick + Red card

Note: If the Referee plays advantage following a DOGSO offence and a goal is scored by the attacking team as a result, the player who committed the offence is not cautioned or sent off.



Violent conduct

✓ Considerations

A player when not challenging for the ball will be sent off if they:

Use or attempt to use excessive force or brutality against an opponent, teammate, team official, Match Official, spectator or any other person, regardless of whether contact is made

Deliberately strike an opponent or any other person on the head or face with their hand or arm, unless the force used was negligible

Make a clear forward movement with their head resulting in forceful contact with the head or face of an opponent or any other person, unless the force used was negligible

Clearly make forceful contact by holding or grabbing the throat/neck area, or gouges the eye of an opponent or any other person

Clearly and deliberately pulling the hair of an opponent with excessive force and/or brutality

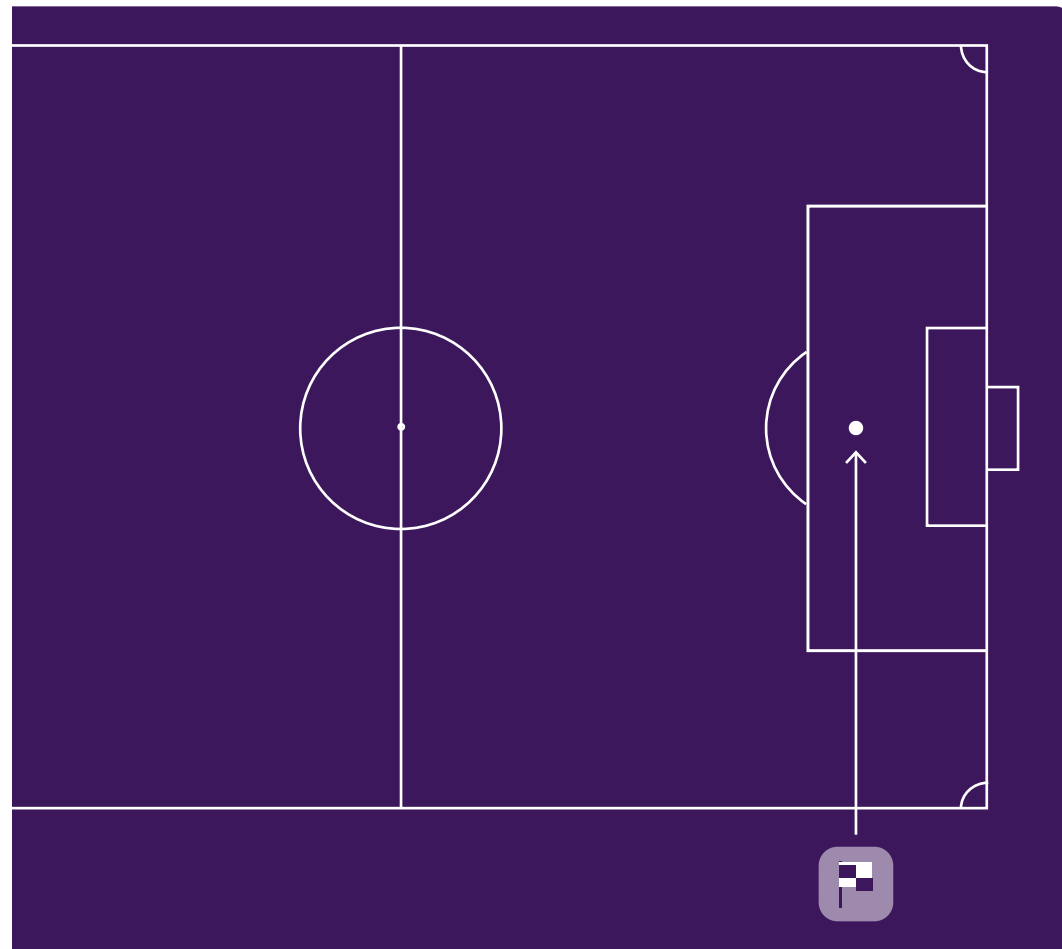
Penalty kicks

Positioning

IFAB®

When the ball is kicked, the defending goalkeeper must have at least part of one foot touching, in line with, or behind, the goal line

If the goalkeeper saves the penalty and does not have at least part of one foot touching, in line with, or behind, the goal line at the moment the ball is kicked, the penalty must be retaken



Guidance

At a penalty kick the Assistant Referee will remain on the touchline and take a position in line with the penalty mark (the offside line)

VAR will be solely responsible for monitoring any goalkeeper encroachment at the taking of a penalty kick

Penalty kicks

Encroachment

IFAB®

Position

A player's position at a restart is determined by the position of their feet or any part of their body which is touching the ground except as outlined in Law 11 – Offside

If the player is airborne, their position is determined by the projected position of their feet if they were touching the ground

In practice:

When the ball is kicked, if a player has a foot on the penalty area line (which includes the 'arc') they are encroaching

To be penalised they must have a material impact on the outcome of the kick. e.g. a defender who encroaches clearly prevents a goal being scored, or impacts the ability of an opponent to play the ball

No impact = no offence



Penalty Area

Not encroaching

Penalty kicks

Encroachment



IFAB®

Encroachment with impact examples:

- Defender clearly distracts/impacts the kicker
- Attacker clearly distracts/impacts the goalkeeper
- Ball rebounds and the encroaching defender prevents a goal or goal-scoring opportunity
- Ball rebounds and the encroaching attacker scores, attempts to score or creates a goal-scoring opportunity

Outcomes of encroachment at penalty kicks

	Goal	No goal
Encroachment by an attacking player	If impact: penalty is retaken If no impact: goal stands	If impact: indirect free kick to defending team If no impact: no retake
Encroachment by a defending player	If impact: goal stands If no impact: goal stands	If impact: penalty is retaken If no impact: no retake
Encroachment by attacking and defending players	If impact: penalty is retaken If no impact: goal stands	If impact: penalty is retaken If no impact: no retake

‘Double touch’ penalty kicks

Law 14

IFAB®

If the penalty taker accidentally kicks the ball with both feet simultaneously or the ball touches their non-kicking foot or leg immediately after the kick:

- The penalty is retaken if a goal is scored
- If the kick is unsuccessful an indirect free kick is awarded

If the penalty taker deliberately touches the ball again before it has touched another player:

- An indirect free kick is awarded

Accidental
‘double touch’



Penalty retaken

Deliberate
‘double touch’



Indirect free kick





Inadvertent interference

Law 9.2

IFAB®

If, without intending to interfere with play unfairly, a team official, substitute, substituted or sent-off player or player who is temporarily off the field of play (injury, adjusting equipment etc.) touches the ball while it is still in play but when it is clearly leaving the field of play, this is penalised with an indirect free kick; there is no sanction

Inadvertent
interference

Indirect free kick
and no sanction

Clear/deliberate and
impactful interference

Direct free kick
(or penalty kick)
+
Red card if Manager/
Head Coach or other
technical staff

Dropped ball restarts

Law 8.2

IFAB®

If, when play was stopped:

- The ball was inside the penalty area, the Referee drops it for the defending team goalkeeper in their penalty area
- The ball was outside the penalty area, the Referee drops it for one player of the team that would have retained or gained possession (including from the restart if the ball would have gone out of play) if this can be determined by the Referee; otherwise, it is dropped for one player of the team that last touched it. The ball is dropped at its position when play was stopped

Play stopped with ball
inside penalty area

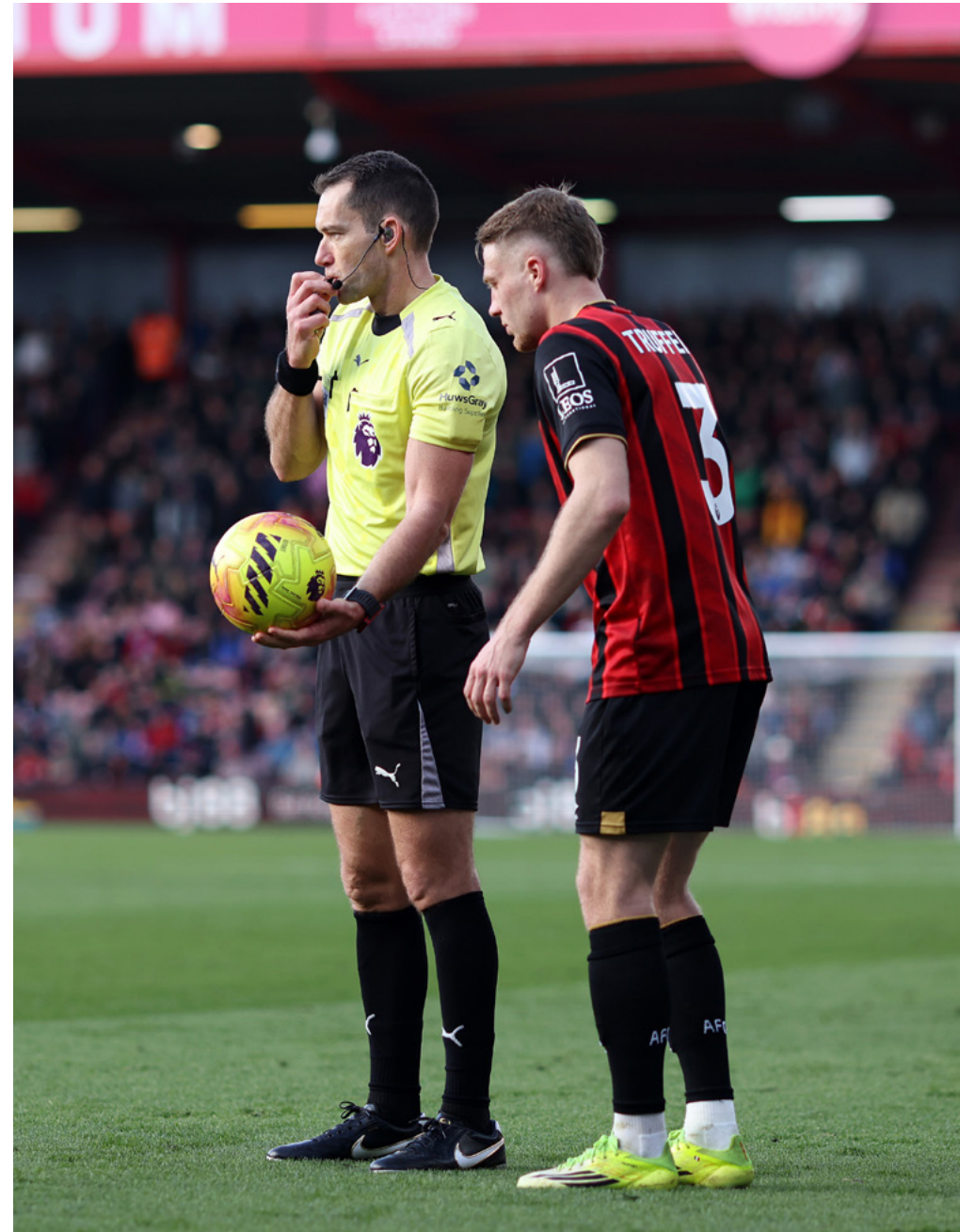


Dropped ball
to goalkeeper

Play stopped with ball
outside penalty area



Dropped ball, from stopping
point, to team that would
have retained or gained
possession



5

Match day protocols

Multiball protocol

The objective of multiball is to minimise interruption to the match when the ball goes out of play by ensuring that replacement balls are readily available to players if required.

There will be 15 match balls in use:

One ball in play	
One ball with the Fourth Official	
13 replacement balls distributed evenly around the pitch, including two behind each goal line.	
	

When the match ball goes out of play, players must either:

Retrieve the original match ball themselves to restart play, or;

Go to the nearest cone to collect a replacement ball themselves to restart play.

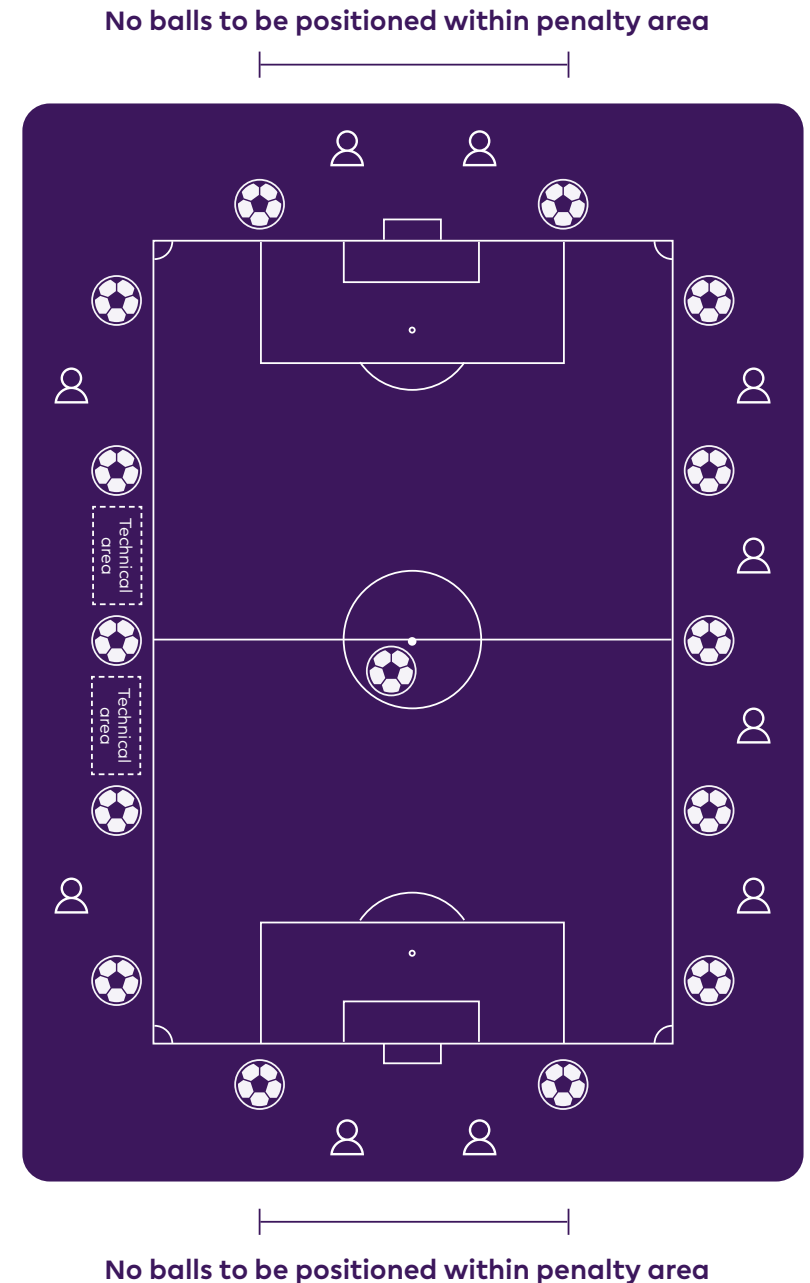
Ball Assistants are not permitted to provide a replacement ball, or return the original match ball, to any outfield players.

Ball Assistants located behind each goal are permitted to provide a ball only to the goalkeeper of the team who will restart play via a goal kick.



Multiball protocol

- The replacement balls and the Ball Assistants must remain in the same positions for the entire duration of each match
- The replacement balls located behind each goal line must be positioned in line with the 18-yard box
- Participants (including but not limited to players, substitutes, occupants of the technical area or any other Club personnel) must not interfere with the multiball system, the match ball or the replacement balls at any time
- It is not permitted for any participant to use a towel or any other item, including items obtained from spectators, to dry the match ball or the replacement balls
- The use of the multiball system will be managed by the Referee who can, if he/she deems it necessary, order that the multiball system be altered or deactivated, and a single ball system be implemented for the remainder of the match
- Any failure to follow the multiball protocol will be referred to the Premier League for further investigation and possible regulatory action under the Premier League Rules
- In the event that an additional ball enters the field of play during the match, the Referee will stop play only if the additional ball interferes with play. The Referee shall have the additional ball removed at the earliest opportunity (pursuant to Law 5.3 of the IFAB Laws of the Game)



Concussion substitutions

- Each team is permitted to use a maximum of one 'concussion substitute' per match
- A 'concussion substitute' may be made regardless of the number of substitutes already used
- When a 'concussion substitute' is used, the opposing team has the option to use an 'additional substitute' for any reason
- If a team decides to make a 'concussion substitute', the Fourth Official is informed by using a green substitution card



Pre-match warm up protocols

Unless otherwise mutually agreed between both participating Clubs and the League, the following procedures shall be adopted by players and officials.

The pitch must only be used for warming up or warming

down by players named on the Team Sheet plus an additional goalkeeper who, whilst not named on the Team Sheet, would have otherwise been eligible to participate in the match.

Pre-match warm up timings

Warm ups must commence no earlier than 60 minutes before kick-off for goalkeepers and 45 minutes before kick-off for outfield players

Warm ups shall not last for more than 45 minutes for goalkeepers and 30 minutes for outfield players

All players must be clear of the pitch 10 minutes before kick-off

Pre-match warm up activities

- All warm up activities must be completed in the areas of the pitch as directed by the Pitch Map produced by the Home Club
- Portable goals must be used for goalkeeping and outfield player drills
- The main goal area may be used for one single continuous period of 15 minutes, comprising:
 - a 10 minute period of use by goalkeepers only, plus
 - an additional 5 minutes with outfield players



Post-match warm down protocols

Warm downs must last no longer than 20 minutes

No footballs are permitted during warm downs

Warm downs must only take place in the areas of the pitch as directed by the Pitch Map produced by the Home Club

Warm downs must not take place inside either penalty area





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