

Practical Situations Guide for Young Center Referees

Ball Out over Touchline – Please do not worry about getting this call wrong – it happens from time to time, even for experienced refs. *Let your sense of hearing, your observation of how the ball acts, and what the players do guide your decision.* If you hear two “touches” of the ball -- assume a deflection by the second player. If the second touch sounds more like the thwack of shin guards coming together, then maybe there’s a foul instead of a throw-in. If you’re unsure of the last touch, wait a couple seconds. If one player goes to get the ball, and the opponent retreats, both players have told you which way to go. Assume that players facing in opposite directions are trying to play in the direction they are facing, and when the ball goes in that direction, assume that the player facing that way touched it last, UNLESS you hear or see the deflection.

Ball Out over End Line – Same situations as the touchline, but now the restarts are goal or corner kicks or special rules for really young age groups.

Free Kick restarts – Remember **it is the offending team’s responsibility to respect the proper distance** from the spot of the kick. The kick-taking team DOES NOT have to have them moved back. It’s one thing to commit the foul and slowly retreat to the proper distance; it’s another thing to run from twenty yards away to stand 2 yards from the ball. Warn once, then caution if it continues. If an encroaching player within 10 yards, actively contests and deflects the free kick, caution them, or if they kick the ball away after a whistle goes against them. This usually isn’t a problem with young rec players; just tell them where to be. Also remember 1) if a free kick rebounds directly off the goalposts, crossbar, referee or corner flag to the kick-taker and he/she plays it, it’s a double touch and a free kick now for the other team, 2) ball must be stopped (no roll) and 3) raise hand above head on indirect kicks.

Goalkeeper Handling when not allowed – Inside the Box = Indirect Free Kick (IFK), Outside the Box = Direct Free Kick (DFK). Outside the box, goalkeeper handling is never allowed, just make sure the ball is completely over the line, and if it’s close enough where you’re not sure, or don’t have a clear view of the line to see accurately, let it go. Just try to be in better position if it happens again. Inside the box, remember that the key aspects of a backpass that can’t be handled are 1.) teammate has clear possession of the ball before it’s passed and 2.) the pass toward the keeper is made with the foot. If a defender and attacker are running side-by-side to win a race to a ball played by anyone other than the same defender, and the defender toe-pokes the ball away from the attacker toward the keeper, the keeper may pick that up. Or a defender tries to clear an attacker’s shot on goal, but it deflects to the keeper – keep playing, no problem.

Fouls – look for players who are out-of-control (running into other people, etc.) and make sure that you see a kick, grab or push cause someone to fall down or lose the chance to play before giving the foul. Younger kids sometimes fall down for a number of reasons other than being fouled. If a player goes down and you haven’t seen an opponent action that might have caused it, allow play to continue unless you see signs of an injury, in which case you stop to check on them. In tackle situations, if the ball stops or changes direction, it’s a good indication that the defender successfully tackled, and if the attacker goes down afterwards, there is no foul and you should continue. I call out, “Tripped on the Ball!” if that’s what happened. If the ball keeps going in the direction of the attack, but the player goes down, it’s 99% that it was tripping. If you understand when to apply advantage, go ahead and yell “Play On”, and put both hands above your head pointing in the direction of the attack. If not, just call the foul and play from there. If a coach asks you about it in a respectful way, give him/her an honest explanation. If you know you should have played advantage but blew the whistle too early, just say “sorry, I should have played advantage” and it’s over. Get the restart going and get on with the game.

Finally, make sure that: **Kickoffs** go square or forward, not backwards (retake), no double touches by the kick taker (indirect for opponent), and that defenders don’t enter the center circle after your whistle but before the attackers play the ball (retake). **Goal Kicks** – no touches inside the box or on the line by either team (retake). **Corner Kicks** – be sure that CK kick-taker isn’t offside if the ball comes back to him/her.