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# Law 12 - Fouls & Misconduct



**U.S. Soccer Federation Referee Program  
Entry Level Referee Course  
Competitive Youth Training  
Small Sided and Recreational Youth Training**



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# Law 12 Overview

**The Law 12 is separated into two parts. The first part is about fouls and the second part deals with misconduct.**

## **❖ Fouls**

- **Direct free kick fouls (DFK)**
- **Indirect free kick fouls (IFK)**

## **❖ Misconduct**

- **Cautionable offenses**
- **Sending-off offenses**



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# Part 2 – Misconduct



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# Misconduct

**Unlike the specific requirements for a foul, misconduct can occur at any time, including before and after the game, on or off the field, while the ball is in play or not, committed by persons other than players, and not necessarily against opponents.**

**The referee has the authority to take action against players guilty of misconduct.**

**The referee's authority to take disciplinary sanctions begins from the moment they arrive at the field and continues until they leave.**

# Misconduct

**The yellow card is used to communicate that a player or substitute has been cautioned.**

**The red card is used to communicate that a player or substitute has been sent off.**



**Usually, only players or substitutes may be shown cards. However, local rules of competition may allow cards to be shown to coaches and team officials in some instances.**





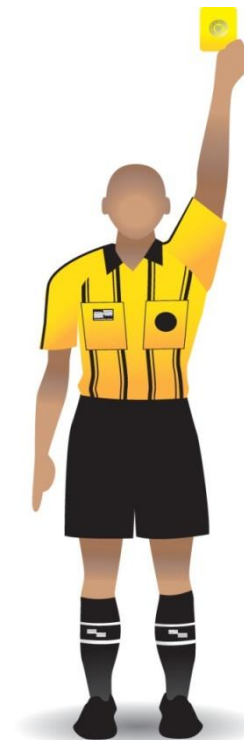
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# Cautionable Offenses



**There are only seven (7) reasons to caution players, however, there are many more actual causes, which will be discussed.**

**A good way for officials to remember the seven cautionable offenses is with the acronym **FEDDD UP.****





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# Cautionable Offenses

A player is cautioned and shown a yellow card if they commit any of the following seven (7) offences:

- **F**ails to respect required distance
- **E**nters or re-enters field without permission
- **D**eliberately leaves field without permission
- **D**issent by word or action
- **D**elays the restart of play
- **U**nsporting behavior
- **P**ersistently infringes the Laws of the Game



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# Yellow Card

**Failure to Respect the Required Distance** – Opponents are required to yield the required distance when play is restarted with a free kick, throw-in, or corner kick.

- Referees (and ARs) should be proactive by having presence and being vocal as needed.
- Often, just telling the defenders to move back is enough to prevent a caution.
- Referees, however, should not interfere with a team's desire to take a quick restart.



Referee report code **(FRD)**





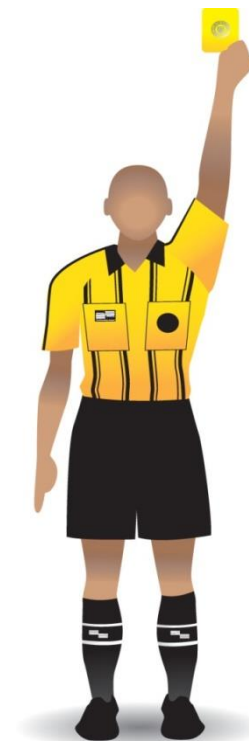
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# Yellow Card

## **F**ailure to Respect the Required Distance –

- ❖ 10 yds from corner arc ( 8 yds U-12 and younger)
- ❖ 10 yards from opponent's free kick (8 yds U-12 and younger)
- ❖ 2 yards from opponent's throw-in





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# Yellow Card

**Entering or re-entering without permission** is when a player or substitute comes onto the field-of-play without the permission of the referee.

This can happen at the start of play if a player arrives late, or during play if the player is off the field to correct an equipment issue or receive medical treatment.

If, after leaving the field of play without the referee's permission, the referee must caution the player for entering the field w/o permission.



**Referee report code (E)**



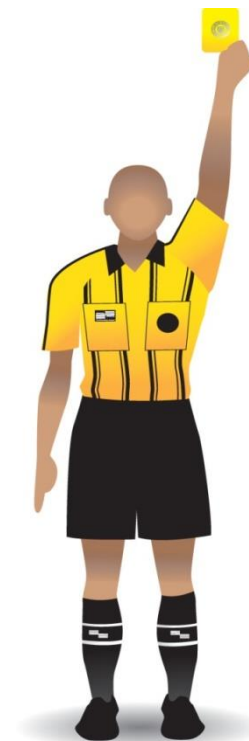
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# Yellow Card

**Deliberately leaving without permission** is when a player leaves the field without the specific or implied permission of the referee.

It does not refer to players who's momentum during play causes them to temporarily leave the field.



Referee report code **(L)**



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**When player leaves field to gain advantage**

- **Allow play to continue**
- **Issue caution at next stoppage**
- **Caution, if team gains a tactical advantage**

**Trifling, if not done to gain unfair advantage**



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**Players often leave the field for unsporting reasons, i.e. to create an unfair offside situation.**

**If this happens, the player should still be considered to be on the field for the purpose of determining the offside position of an opponent.**

**The referee should allow play to continue, so as to not take the advantage away from the attacking team.**





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**The player who deliberately left the field without the referee's permission should then be cautioned at the next stoppage.**

**If a player does leave the field for some other reason without the referee's permission to do so, and this results in gaining a tactical advantage for their team, the player has committed misconduct and must be cautioned and shown the yellow card.**



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**Where it is apparent to the referee that the player leaving the field without permission has not done so to express dissent or to gain an unfair advantage, the referee can consider this to be a trifling breach of the Laws of the Game.**



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**Some trifling examples of this might include changing shoes, replacing a damaged jersey or drinking water during a stoppage.**

**A verbal warning to the player should be sufficient in such circumstances.**

**However, if that player then re-enters the field without obtaining the referee's permission, then the caution should be given.**



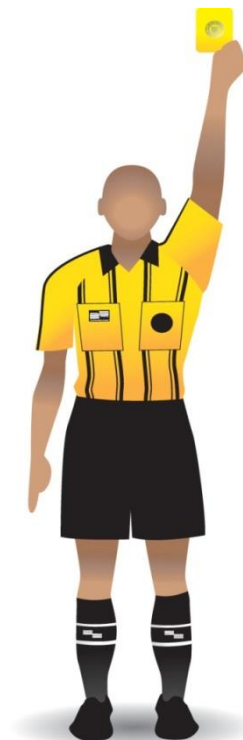
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# Yellow Card

**Dissent by word or Action** – is verbal or non-verbal action that disputes or argues with any decisions by the referee, ARs, or fourth official. Referees must deal with dissent because it:

- questions the authority of the referee,
- reduces the flow of the game,
- reduces the enjoyment of other participants and spectators, and
- can spread and potentially lead to bigger problems if not dealt with.



Referee report code **(DT)**



# DT

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**Referees need to be proactive and set firm expectations that dissent will not be tolerated.**

**Please note that team captains have no special status or privileges under the Laws of the Game, but they do have a degree of responsibility for the behavior of their teammates.**





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**A player who is guilty of dissent by protesting (verbally or non-verbally) against a referee's decision must be cautioned.**

**Note that this does not apply to any type of offensive, insulting, or abusive language or gestures. These actions are sending-off offences and will be covered later in this presentation.**



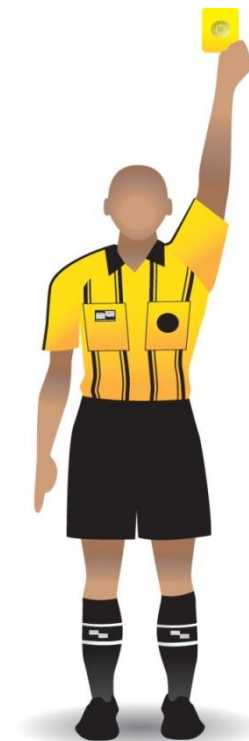
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# Yellow Card

**Delaying the restart of play** –  
some common ways players delay a restart  
include:

- Kicking or carrying the ball away
- Excessively delaying throw-in or free kick
- Delaying substitution process
- Deliberately touching the ball after play stops
- Free kick from wrong position



Referee report code **(DR)**



# DR

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**Referees must caution players who delay the restart of play.**

**Some common tactics used at the competitive youth level include:**

- **Purposely taking a free kick from the wrong position with the sole intention of forcing the referee to order a retake.**
- **Kicking the ball away, carrying it away or grabbing it away from an opponent after the referee has stopped play.**



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- **Excessively delaying the taking of a throw-in or free kick or appearing to take a restart but suddenly leaving it teammates to take.**
- **Delaying leaving the field of play when being substituted.**
- **Provoking a confrontation by deliberately touching the ball after the referee has stopped play.**
- **Appearing to take a throw-in, but suddenly leaving it to a team-mate to take.**



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# Yellow Card

## **U**nsporting Behavior –

Here are some (but not all) UB reasons a player or substitute must be cautioned:

- Committing one of the DFK fouls in a reckless manner.
- Changing places with the goalkeeper during play or without the referee's permission.
- Committing any DFK or IFK foul for the tactical purpose of interfering with or breaking up a promising attack.







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# Yellow Card

## Unsporting Behavior –

- Committing simulation by attempting to deceive the referee by faking injury or pretending to have been fouled.
- Verbally distracting an opponent during play or at a restart.
- Using a deliberate trick to pass the ball to their own goalkeeper with their head, chest, knee, etc. in order to circumvent the Laws, whether or not the goalkeeper touches the ball.





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# Yellow Card

## **U**nsporting Behavior –

- Holding an opponent for the tactical purpose of pulling the opponent away from the ball or preventing the opponent from getting to the ball.
- Making unauthorized marks on the field of play. Typically committed by goalkeepers.
- Playing the ball when they are walking off the field of play after being granted permission by the referee to leave the field during play.





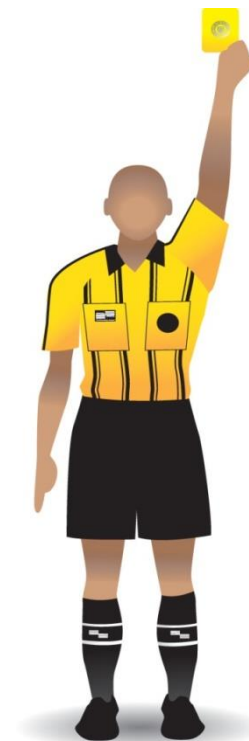
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# Yellow Card

## Unsporting Behavior –

- Tactical foul to break up promising attack
- Handling for tactical purposes
- Whether successful or not, handling the ball in an attempt to score a goal
- Handles the ball in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent a goal
- Acting in a manner which shows a lack of respect for the game.



Referee report code **(UB)**



# UB

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**In addition, there are certain goal scoring celebrations that are also cautionable offenses.**

**While it is permissible for a player to demonstrate their joy when a goal has been scored, the celebration must not be excessive.**

**Reasonable celebrations are allowed, but the practice of choreographed celebrations should not be tolerated when it results in excessive time-wasting . Referees are instructed to intervene in such cases.**



# UB

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**A player must be cautioned if, in the opinion of the referee, he or she commits any of the following:**

- **Carries the celebration into and among the spectators.**
- **Makes are provocative or inflammatory gestures**
- **Removes their shirt or covers their head with the shirt**
- **Covers their head or face with a mask or other similar item**



# UB

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**Leaving the field of play to celebrate a goal is not a cautionable offence in itself but it is essential that players return to the field as soon as possible.**

**Referees are expected to act in a preventative manner and be practical when dealing with the celebration of a goal.**



# UB

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## **U**nsporting Behavior

- **Excessive celebration of a goal**
  - **Makes gestures which are provocative, derisory or inflammatory**
  - **Celebrates among spectators**
  - **Removes shirt or covers head with shirt**
  - **Covers head or face with other item**





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# Yellow Card

## **Persistent Infringement** –

is when a player repeatedly commits fouls or certain other infringements.

There is no specific number of infringements that defines PI, but if a player (or team) persistently violates the Laws, they should be warned and then cautioned if they soon thereafter commit another foul.



Referee report code **(PI)**



# PI

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**Referees should be alert at all times to players who persistently infringe the Laws.**

**In particular, they must be aware that, even if a player commits a number of different offenses, they must still be cautioned for persistent infringement.**



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**Because there is no specific number of infringements that defines persistent or the presence of a pattern, the referee should warn a player who appears to be heading toward this form of misconduct.**

**Once warned, that player should be cautioned if they soon thereafter commit another foul.**

**This is entirely a matter of judgment and must be determined in the context of effective game management.**



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# Yellow Cards & Substitutes

**Of the seven (7) reasons to caution for players on the field, there are only four (4) that apply to substitutes and substituted players.**

**A substitute or substituted player is cautioned if they commit any of the following three offenses:**

- **Dissent by word or action**
- **Unsporting behavior**
- **Delaying restart of play**
- **Enters or re-enters the field without referee's permission**



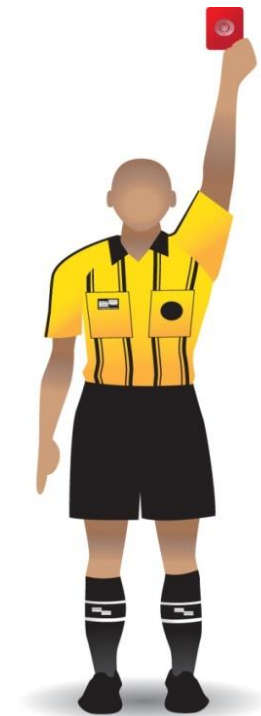
# Red Card



# Red Card

**A player is sent-off and shown a red card if they commit any of the following seven (7) offenses:**

- 1) Serious foul play**
- 2) Violent conduct**
- 3) Uses offensive, insulting or abusive language or gestures**
- 4) Spitting at an opponent or any other person**





# Red Card

- 5) Denies an obvious goal scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the opponents goal by an offense punishable by a free kick**
- 6) Denys the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball - this excludes the goalkeeper with their own penalty area**
- 7) Receives second caution in the same match**







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# Red Card

**According to the Laws of the Game, a player or substitute, who has been given a red card and sent off, must leave the vicinity of the field of play and the technical area.**

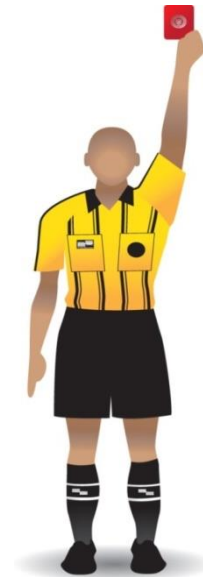
**However, some leagues and events may allow sent off individuals to remain at the field, so it's important for referee to know the local rules of competition.**

**If this isn't specified by the local rules of competition, it is recommended youth players remain with their team and an adult team official, as long as they act responsibly.**



## Serious Foul Play

- Must meet criteria for a foul
- Excessive force or brutality against opponent when challenging for the ball
- Tackle that endangers safety of opponent
- Challenge for ball that endangers safety of opponent



Referee report code (SFP)



# SFP

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**In order to issue a red card for serious foul play, all of the criteria associated with a foul must be present.**

**This means that it must be committed by a player, against an opponent who is a player, on the field, and while the ball is in play.**

**If any of these criteria have not been met, that doesn't mean that a red card isn't justified, it just means that the misconduct would be reported for another reason.**



# SFP

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**A player is guilty of serious foul play if he or she uses excessive force or brutality against an opponent when challenging for the ball when it is in play.**

**Any tackle or challenge that endangers the safety of an opponent must also be sanctioned as serious foul play.**



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**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 and endangering the safety of an opponent is guilty of serious foul play.**

**Advantage should not be applied in situations involving serious foul play unless there is a clear opportunity to immediately score a goal.**



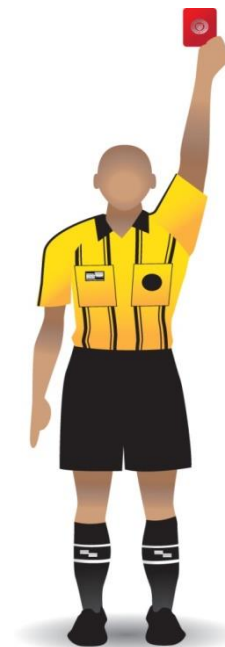
# SFP

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**The referee must send off the player guilty of serious foul play when the ball is next out of play.**

**A player who is guilty of serious foul play should be sent off and play is restarted with a DFK from the position where the offense occurred or a penalty kick, if the offense occurred inside the offender's penalty area.**



## Violent Conduct

**Uses or attempts to use excessive force or brutality against:**

- an opponent when not challenging for the ball
  - a teammate, team official, match official, spectator or any other person
- regardless of whether contact is made.**



**Referee report code (VC)**



## Violent **C**onduct

- By a player, who when not challenging for the ball, deliberately strikes an opponent or any other person on the head or face with the hand or arm is guilty of violent conduct ... **unless the force used is negligible.**





# VC

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**In the rare occurrence where advantage is applied the referee must send-off the player guilty of violent conduct when the ball is next out of play.**

**Referees are reminded that violent conduct often leads to mass confrontation and other problems, therefore they must be proactive and timely when dealing with violent conduct misconduct.**

## **A**busive **L**anguage

- **Personal**
- **Public**
- **Provocative**
- **Zero tolerance for remarks or actions that are discriminatory or racist**



**Referee report code (AL)**



# AL

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**This sending off offense is for the use of **offensive, insulting or abusive** language and/or gestures.**

**The referee should judge offensive, insulting, or abusive language according to the specific words or actions used, the extent to which the language can be heard by others beyond the immediate vicinity of the player, and whether the language is directed at officials, opponents, or teammates.**



# AL

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**In other words, the referee must recognize language that is personal, public, and/or provocative.**

**In evaluating language as misconduct, the referee must take into account the particular circumstances in which the actions occurred and deal reasonably with language that was clearly the result of a momentary emotional outburst, so long as it's not directed at other players.**



# AL

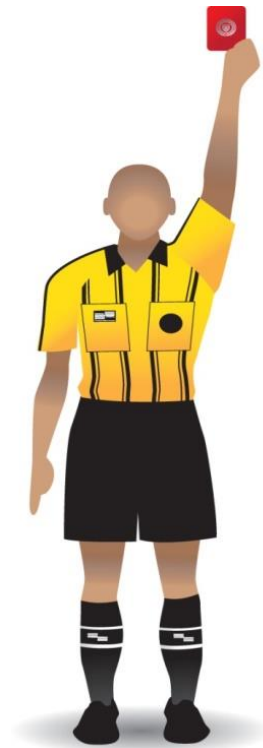
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**Referees should not inject personal opinions as to the nature of the language when determining a course of action and should adopt a zero tolerance policy for any language that is discriminatory or racist in nature.**

## **S**pitting at anyone

- Can also be a foul
- If not a foul, still misconduct



**Referee report code (S)**





# S

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**Spitting at an opponent or any other person is another sending off offense.**

**Spitting at an opponent is also listed as a DFK foul provided all of the criteria associated with a foul are present.**

## Denying Goal Scoring Opportunity with Hand

- When a player denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity by a deliberately handing offense, the player is sent-off wherever the offense occurs
- Does not apply to the goalkeeper within own penalty area



Referee report code (DGH)

## Denying Goal scoring opportunity with Foul

- Deny an obvious goal scoring opportunity by free kick or penalty kick foul
  - Defenders
  - Distance to goal
  - Distance to ball
  - Direction of play



Referee report code (DGF)



# DGF

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**In order for a player or substitute to be sent off for denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity by an offense punishable by a free kick or a penalty kick, the following four (4) elements must be present:**

- 1) Defenders ... the location and number of defenders between the attacker and the opponent's goal ... usually not more than one defender, between the foul and the goal, not counting the defender who committed the foul.**



# DGF

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- 2) Distance to goal ... keeping in mind the closer the play is to the goal, the more likely it is an obvious goal scoring opportunity.**
- 3) Distance to ball ... the likelihood of the attacker keeping or gaining possession of the ball at the time of the foul.**
- 4) Direction of play ... the attacker must be moving toward the goal at the time the foul is committed.**



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**If any element is missing, there can be no send-off for denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity.**

**Further, the presence of each of these elements must be deemed by the referee as obvious in order for the send-off to be appropriate.**

# DGF = UB

## Denying Goal scoring opportunity with Foul

When a player commits a offense against an opponent **outside** the penalty area which denies an obvious goal scoring opportunity the offending player is sent-off for DGF.



When a player commits an offense against an opponent within their own penalty area denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity ... AND ... the referee awards a penalty kick, the offending player is cautioned for UB ... **UNLESS** ...





# DGF

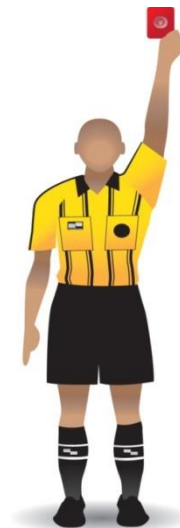


## Denying Goal scoring opportunity with Foul (cont.)

**... UNLESS ...**

The offending player is sent-off for DGF if:

- the offense is holding, pulling or pushing ... or
- the offending player does not attempt to play the ball or there is no possibility for the player making the challenge to play the ball ... or
- The offense is one which is punishable by a red card wherever it occurs on the field (e.g. SFP, VC etc.)



## **S**econd **C**auti**n** in same game

- Player or substitute who receives a second caution
- Procedure is to display cards in sequence, not at the same time
  - First show yellow card for second caution
  - Then show red card for sending-off offense





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- The second caution leading to the dismissal from the field can occur at any time during the match, including the half time interval, additional periods of play, and kicks from the penalty mark.
- The two cautions can be received at any time, including before, during, or after the match.
- Two cautions can be issued during the same stoppage.



**Referee report code (2CT)**



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# Misconduct Restarts

**In addition to knowing what actions should result in misconduct, referees must also know how to restart play after issuing a card.**

- ❖ If the ball is **out of play**, the restart is determined by the original reason for the stoppage.



# Misconduct Restarts

**Restart of play if misconduct occurs on the field of play while the ball is **in play** and a player commits an offense against:**

- **Opponent .... IFK, DFK or PK**
- **Teammate .... DFK or PK**
- **Substitute .... DFK or PK**
- **Substituted Player .... DFK or PK**
- **Team Official .... DFK or PK**
- **Match Official .... DFK or PK**
- **Any other person .... Dropped Ball**



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# Misconduct Restarts

**When the ball is **in play** and a player commits an offense outside the field of play:**

- **if a player leaves the field as part of normal play and commits the offense against an opposing player – restart is an IFK or DFK (determined by the offense) taken on the boundary line nearest to where the offense occurred.**
- **For DFK offenses, a penalty kick is awarded if this is within the offender's penalty area.**



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# Misconduct Restarts

**When the ball is **in play** and a player commits an offense outside the field of play:**

- **if the player is already off the field – restart is a dropped ball.**
- **if the player leaves the field to commit the offense - restart is an IFK from the position of the ball when play was stopped.**





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# Misconduct Restarts

**When the ball is **in play** and a player, substitute or substituted player throws an object at an opponent or any other person the referee must stop play. Keep in mind that this means any object including the ball.**

- ❖ If a player on or off the field throws an object at an opponent on the field of play – restart is a DFK (or PK) taken where the opponent was or would have been struck.**
- ❖ If a player on the field throws an object at any person outside the field of play - restart is an IFK.**



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# Misconduct Restarts

- ❖ If a substitute or substituted player throws something at an opponent on the field - restart is a IFK.
- ❖ If a substitute or substituted player play commits misconduct off the field – restart is a dropped ball.
- ❖ If play was stopped solely for misconduct committed on the field by a player against another player - restart is an IFK from the location of the misconduct.



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# Coaches

**Although the Laws of the Game do not permit team officials being shown cards for misconduct, if play is stopped for the purpose of dealing with a coach or other team official who is acting irresponsibly, play is resumed with a dropped ball from the location of the ball when play was stopped.**

**Local rules of competition as to the displaying of cards to coaches and team officials may be allowed in some instances.**



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# Review Question

**74. What should the referee do if a player commits persistent infringement?**

- A. Caution and show the player a yellow card
- B. Send-off and show the player a red card
- C. Verbally warn the player



# Review Question

**75. What should the referee do if a player tackles an opponent using excessive force?**

- A. Caution and show the player a yellow card
- B. Send-off and show the player a red card



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# Review Question

**76. What should the referee do if an opponent fails to respect the required distance during a throw-in?**

- A. Caution and show the player a yellow card
- B. Send-off and show the player a red card



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# Review Question

**77. What should the referee do if a player standing in his own penalty area, who has already been cautioned and who is not the goalkeeper, punches the ball away and denies an obvious goal?**

- A. Show the player a second yellow card and then issue a red card
- B. Issue a red card