

## **HANDLING OF THE BALL**

One of the most misunderstood calls is the deliberate handling of the ball (sometimes mistakenly referred to as a 'handball').

### **ILLEGAL HANDLING**

When the referee determines a ball has been deliberately handled (except by the goalkeeper within their own penalty area), the whistle is blown to stop play and a direct free kick is awarded the other team (a penalty kick is awarded if the foul occurs within the offender's penalty area).

### **WHAT CONSTITUTES DELIBERATE HANDLING**

Handling is called when the ball is deliberately touched by any portion of the hand, arm, or side of the shoulder. Contact with the top of the shoulder is not considered handling unless the referee determines the shoulder is being used to purposefully direct the ball.

### **WHEN HANDLING IS NOT ILLEGAL**

When contact with the ball is unintentional or when a player positions their hands or arms in a self-protecting position, this is not a foul. As a general rule, if the ball goes to the hand, there is no foul; if the hand goes to the ball, there is a foul. The referee must be sure that the contact was deliberate to call this foul.

### **CLARIFYING YOUR RULING**

Quite often younger players unfamiliar with this rule will stop playing in assumption that the referee is about to call a foul. If you determine there is no infraction, this is a good time to announce, "KEEP PLAYING, NO FOUL", or "KEEP PLAYING, ACCIDENTAL" while waving play forward. This will at least let the players know the referee has seen the incident and has made a definitive ruling. The referee can also take this time to remind players that play only stops when the referee blows the whistle.

### **GOALKEEPER LIMITATIONS**

Generally, the goalkeeper is allowed to handle the ball within their penalty area. When the ball is outside the penalty area, the goalkeeper's special status is no longer valid and they will be called for a handling foul resulting in a direct free kick. This includes when the goalkeeper carries the ball from inside to beyond the penalty area.

### **GOALKEEPER HANDLING INFRACTIONS**

There are four goalkeeper infractions that result in an indirect free kick. The goalkeeper may not handle the ball once they have released control of the ball; the goalkeeper also may not hold the ball for more than six seconds (though discretion should be exercised when young players are involved; sometimes a verbal reminder of this rule is appropriate). Also, the goalkeeper may not handle the ball when their teammate either throws a throw-in to them or deliberately kicks the ball to them (from the ankle or below). Goalkeepers are allowed to handle passes initiated from their teammates' heads, chests, or knees and may also play any teammates' passes with their own bodies or feet. However, when the goalkeeper kicks such a pass to their own hands, this is an infraction.

### **INTERESTING FACT**

Deliberate handling is the only one of the ten fouls resulting in a direct free kick that is not committed against the opponent.