

## WSC Soccer Rule Explanation:

This document is in three parts:

- **The Rules of Soccer 101** - This is for parents of first graders entering the program and provides a very basic overview of the rules.
- **The Rules of Soccer 106** - This discusses the rules of 6v.6 soccer and is intended for the parents of children about to start playing in travel leagues or tournaments.
- **The Rules of Soccer 201** - This is for the parents of children about to start playing 11v.11 soccer and discusses four of the calls that are most frequently misunderstood from the sidelines.

### **The Rules of Soccer – 101:**

Soccer is basically a simple game -- you try and kick the ball into the goal, and the team that kicks it into the goal more often wins.

In second grade, the game really does come down to this. The referee's main job is to make sure that the game is started properly or restarted properly if the ball goes out of play.

Each half is started by a place kick, plus play is restarted after each goal by a place kick. The ball is placed in the center of the field. Opponents have to be 10 yards away, marked by a white circle. The kicker has to kick the ball forward, at least 2 feet, before his team mates can kick it. At that point, the ball is in play -- the ball can go in any direction and it's fair game for the defenders.

If the ball goes over the line down the side of the field (the "touchline"), the team that didn't kick it out gets to throw it back in. For a legal throw, both feet must be on the ground, behind the line or on the line and be thrown with both hands equally, starting from behind the thrower's head.

If an attacker kicks the ball out over the end line (the "goal line"), the restart is a goal kick. The ball is placed anywhere in the goal box (the box six yards out from the edges of the goal) and is kicked out as far as the kicker (who may be the goal keeper or a defender) can or chooses to kick it.

No attacker can kick the ball until it's gone outside the penalty box -- that's the second box, 18 yards out from the edges of the goal, which also marks the area where the goal keeper can handle the ball. (S)he can venture outside the penalty area but must play like any other player outside the penalty area and cannot use their hands.

If a defender kicks the ball over the goal line, the attackers get to take a corner kick. The ball is placed where the touch line meets the goal line, and an attacker kicks it towards the goal, where their team mates try to head the ball or kick the ball into the goal. Corner kicks are a significant scoring opportunity.

The rest of the rules of soccer are about what you can't do.

You can't kick or trip an opponent (2 offenses with the feet), jump at, violently charge or charge from behind or push an opponent (3 offenses with the body), hold, push, strike an opponent (spitting at an opponent is a special form of striking) or handle the ball (4 offenses with the hands.) These are called the penal offenses and if a player commits one of them, the referee will award a direct free kick to the other team.

At a direct free kick, all the opponents must be at least 10 yards away and the ball can be kicked directly into the goal. If a penal offense is committed by a defender in their own penalty area, there is a penalty kick instead of a direct free kick.

In a penalty kick, it's one on one. The ball is placed 12 yards from the goal and all other players -- attackers and defenders -- have to be outside the penalty (18 yard) box and behind the ball. The goal keeper has to stay on the goal line until the kick is taken. A penalty kick usually results in a goal.

There are four sets of less serious offenses called the non-penal offenses. These are: dangerous play (playing in a manner that could hurt an opponent, for instance, continuing to try to play the ball when the player is lying on the ground), shoulder charging an opponent when the ball is not within playing distance, obstructing the opponent -- deliberately getting in their way without trying to play the ball, charging the goal keeper when he has possession of the ball.

In addition, there are restrictions on goalkeepers -- they can't take more than four steps before throwing or kicking the ball to a team mate, and if a team mate kicks the ball back to him, they're not allowed to pick it up, but must play it with the feet (They can pick a ball that is headed or chested to them by a team mate.) The penalty for a non-penal offense is an indirect free kick, in which the ball must be touched by another player -- team mate or opponent -- after it is kicked before it goes into the goal. The referee signals that a free kick is indirect by holding one arm straight up and keeping it up until the second touch on the ball.

The final rule is off sides, described in the advanced rules article.

Certain offenses can involve a further punishment in addition to a free kick. For entering or leaving the field without the referee's permission, repeated rule violations, dissent or ungentlemanly conduct, a player receives a caution, indicated by the referee holding up a yellow card.

For violent or serious foul play, foul or abusive language or receiving a second caution, a player will be sent off, indicated by a red card. The player's team then has to play one short for the rest of the game.

Obviously, this has been a summary of the rules -- the truth and nothing but the truth, but not the whole truth. Want to learn more? Become a referee!

### **The Rules of Soccer – 106:**

The rules are slightly different for six v six play, for the younger players. Obviously, the field and the goal are much smaller and the penalty area is 13 yds. out from the goal line and goes the full width of the field.

First, there are no offsides. Second, the goal keeper can't punt, goal kick or throw

the ball beyond the half way line. Third, at place kicks, free kicks and corner kicks, opponents have only to be 8 yds. away from the kicker, not 10 yds.

The BAYS league (in which Winchester's girls play) has penalty kicks. The kick is taken from 8 yds. out.

There may be different variants of 6 v. 6 play in tournaments -- there is no standard set of rules.

### **The Rules of Soccer – 201:**

The four calls (or non-calls) that cause the most misunderstanding in soccer are: **handling; offside; charging; and the advantage** rule. Plus it's important to remember that the rule for the ball being out of play is the exact opposite of football. In soccer, the complete ball must cross the complete line for the ball to be out of play (or in the goal). Note that in soccer, what counts is where the ball is and it doesn't matter where the player is. The goal keeper could be flat on his face completely in the goal, and if he stretches forward and stops the ball with his finger tips when the ball's half crossed the line, it's not a goal. In football, if the player is touching the line or the edge of the ball touches the plane of the line, the ball's in touch (or a touch down.)

Finally in general comments, don't expect the game to be called the same way for your twelfth grader as your second grader. As the kids get older, more physical play is allowed, more intrusion of the arms into shoulder charges, a longer period to see if they're seriously hurt after they go down and so forth. At the younger grades, safety is the absolute first priority. At the older levels, safety is still a primary concern, but there's a presumption that the kids are tougher and to not unnecessarily interrupt the flow of the game.

### **Handling**

This is the correct name of this offense -- not hand ball as many spectators scream out whenever they see hand meet ball. The implication is that the contact has to be deliberate and the player has to have gained some element of advantage. If a ball is blasted at a player from three feet away and it grazes their hand or arm, the referee shouldn't award a foul, even if it's in the penalty area. The player had no opportunity to do anything deliberate. If the ball is blasted at the player from say ten or more feet away, the ref. will expect to see the player try to get their hand/arm out of the ball's way, and if they don't make any attempt may decide they committed an act of omission and award a free kick or penalty. Again, if the ball is kicked at a defender who is rushing at the attacker and the defender's hand or arm hits the ball going forward, the call will likely be made.

Flagrant use of the hands to stop a goal is an automatic red card.

### **Offside**

Offside is the most difficult rule to apply and call, particularly when the referee is doing the game by himself without official assistant referees. A player is offside if he is in the attacking half of the field, in front of the ball and nearer to the goal than the second last defender when the ball is passed to him by a team-mate, or if, in the referee's opinion, he is in an offside position and interfering with the play when the ball is passed to another player.

The key points that lead to fan misunderstanding are that the offense is when the pass is made, not when the ball gets there. Most fans follow the ball and so only see it when it arrives, by which time the attacker may have moved from being in an on-side position when it was played to being in an off-side position when it arrives. A player cannot be offside in their own half, on the first reception from a throw-in, from a goal kick or corner kick, if the ball is passed back to him by a team mate, or if the ball was last played by a defender.

The biggest change in the offside rule was after the 1990 World Cup. This change allowed a player level with the second last defender to be on side -- previously a player level with the second last defender was offside. This change, to a presumption of the player being onside from a presumption of being offside, produced a quantum change in the officials' mind and has contributed to significantly higher scores at the professional levels.

In the past few years, FIFA has instructed referees to not call offside when a player is in an offside position but is not participating in the play -- when the ball is shot on goal, right past a player in an offside position; when the ball is passed to a player on one side of the goal in an onside position and a player is in an offside position on the other side of the goal; if a defender intercepts the ball before it gets to a player in an offside position; if the player deliberately moves away from the ball or makes no attempt to play it and so forth.

### **Charging**

One of the most misunderstood rules involves charging. Two players are chasing the ball, struggling to gain control and one hits the other with his shoulder and knocks him off course. "Ref -- PUSH" goes up the cry from the sidelines. Wrong. Soccer is a game of limited physical contact and it is perfectly legal to charge a player, shoulder to shoulder, if both players are within playing distance of the ball and the charger doesn't use undue violence.

What is not legal is charging a player in the back, using the arms, charging the keeper when he has complete control of the ball or charging a player without attempting to gain control of the ball.

### **Advantage**

Finally, the advantage rule says that the ref. doesn't have to call a foul if to do so would penalize the team that has been fouled -- if say their player was tripped, but had got their pass off and a breakaway is in progress. The team wouldn't want to have play stopped for a free kick. The ref. should call "Play on" to show that he observed a foul and let the play continue.

Several years ago, FIFA changed the rules to allow the referee to allow play to continue for a few seconds and if an advantage for the team that was fouled that he expected to see develop didn't actually develop, blow the whistle and award the original call. Kind of like having your cake and eating it too.