Guidance on the Application of Football Rules

Throw in and start of the Game.

If a player moves from the sideline or 45m line before the referee has thrown in the ball to start or restart the game by awarding a free kick to the opposition from the middle of the half-way line. If opposition players foul simultaneously, the referee will start/restart the game again as normal

Rule 4: For a Player to move from the sideline or 45m line before the Referee has thrown in the ball to start the game or to restart it after half-time or extra-time.

Penalty: Free kick from the mid-point of the half-way line.

Where opposing Players foul simultaneously, the Referee shall re-start the game as set out in Rule 2.1 (Set Play)

Two Point score.

All converted shots from outside the arc count as two-point scores provided no other player from the same team as the shooter touches it after it is kicked. If the goalkeeper or member of defending team touch the ball it is still considered a two-point score.

4 v 3 Structure.

During play, a team must have at least four players (which may include the goalkeeper) in their half of the field and at least three outfield players in the opposition half of the field.

A breach of this rule does not occur where the player(s) who would otherwise cause the breach:

- (a) has done so unintentionally
- (b) is within 4m of the halfway line
- (c) is not interfering with play or an opponent
- (d) is not interfering with an opponent
- (e) is not gaining an advantage

- If a player crosses the halfway line in the act of carrying, receiving, or intercepting the ball and leaves less than 3 up in the opposition half the penalty is a free kick to the opposition on the point where the player crossed the halfway line.
- If a defending team withdraws too many players back and fails to keep three in the opposition half the penalty will be a free kick on the offending team's 20m line.

If an attacking team pushes too many players forward and fails to keep four players in their own half the penalty will be a free kick on the offending team's

- If a player crosses the halfway line in the act of carrying, receiving, or intercepting the ball and leaves less than 3 up in the opposition half the penalty is a free kick to the opposition on the point where the player crossed the halfway line.
- If a defending team withdraws too many players back and fails to keep 3 in the opposition half the penalty will be a free kick on the offending team's 20m line.
- If an attacking team pushes too many players forward and fails to keep 4 players in their own half the penalty will be a free kick on the offending team's 20m line.
- The team that is awarded the free will have the option to bring the ball out to the 40m arc to attempt a two point score
- A team that has a player ordered off or sin binned must maintain the 4 vs 3 structure.

Disruptive Conduct.

'Disruptive conduct' by team officials will be penalised by giving the opposition a free on the 13-metre line.

Where the infraction occurs immediately before the start of the game or during the half-time interval, the game shall start or restart with such a 13-metre free.

Player deliberately advances the ball.

If a player advances the ball deliberately from the place where a free or side line kick should be taken or takes a sideline from a position not outside the boundary line, then a free is awarded to the opposition. Previously a throw-in was awarded in these situations.

Sideline Officials.

Sideline officials, where neutral have the power to bring to the attention of the referee any foul play or infraction of Rule by a team official.

Additional Black Card Rule.

Deliberately denying a goal-scoring opportunity by pulling an opponent's jersey has now joined the list of cynical behaviour infractions which are penalised with a black card and a penalty.

- Did the offence occur close to the sideline or 25m from sideline or within semi-circle arc?
- Was there a clear pathway to the goal for the attacker?
- How many covering defenders were in position?
- Have the defenders adequate time to get into a covering position?
- Would the team in possession have opportunity to get a clear kick at goal?
- In football, it can be a goal scoring opportunity for the team in possession of the ball rather than the individual in possession solely.

Note: The black card/penalty for cynical behaviour infractions where the player is denied a goalscoring opportunity now also applies at club level as well as inter-county senior, U20, minor, and junior level.

Black Card infraction and advantage is awarded to the team in possession.

When a Category II infraction (cynical behaviour) is committed, the Referee may allow the play to continue if the Referee considers that this presents the potential of a goal scoring opportunity or another advantage to the team offended. If no advantage is accruing to the team offended, the referee will take the ball back to the point of the Category II infraction and the offender shall be shown a Black Card.

50m Advantage for Tactical Fouling.

The 50m advancement for Tactical Fouling is 'in the direction of the goals'. As such, a 50m advancement taking the free kick inside the arc can be taken back outside it at the point of entry.

Head High Tackle and Neck Restraint Guidelines.

A reminder that if a player strikes or attempts to strike an opponent to the head or face or if they interfere with or apply any form of restraint to the neck or throat area of an opponent, this constitutes behaviour which is dangerous to an opponent and should be treated as a Category III Infraction, as adopted by Central Council on 18 January 2025.

Goalkeeper Pass Back Rule.

Players can only pass the ball back to their goalkeeper if they are both inside the large rectangle of their own goal.

Kick Out.

Kick-outs must travel beyond the 40m arc and the 20m line. If the ball is played within the arc by a defending player, it is a free to the opposition from where the ball is played. Taking the ball back outside the 40m arc is not an option. Players are permitted to take up position inside the 40m arc once they are 13m from the placement of the kickout. An attacking team's player is permitted to play the ball inside the arc if intercepted post the kickout.