

CYO Soccer 101
A Brief Explanation of Some of the Point of the Beautiful Game

Soccer, or football as most of the world refers to it, is by far the most popular game of the global community. This was on fine display at this summer's World Cup in Brazil. In the US, though, it has only recently made its way into the mainstream. For those that are new to the game, welcome. Like most activities, the more we understand the rules and subtleties, the more we enjoy the game. Below you will find a brief explanation of some of the rules and some of the modifications used by CYO.

Hand Ball

The basic directive is that the hands cannot be used in soccer, with the exception of the goal keeper. But what if the ball strikes a player in the arm? This is a bit of a gray area and different officials will judge it differently. The basic idea is the if the ball strikes the arm, it is NOT a hand ball, but if the arm strikes the ball it IS a hand ball. There are three things a referee has to consider in a very short period of time: distance the ball traveled (did the player have time to move the arm out of the way), the placement of the arm (was the arm in a natural athletic position or was the player trying to gain an advantage), and the pace that the ball was struck (again, was there time to react). Seems like an easy concept, but can be a difficult judgment call.

Offsides

Another relatively simple concept, but a difficult call to make. The rule is that a player on his or her attacking half of the field must have two opponents or the ball between her/himself at the point in which a play or pass is made. In other words, if a player is dribbling the ball, she cannot be offsides. The key is the time of the pass. Once a pass is made, the attacking player can run behind the defender and not be offside. The official must judge when the pass was made and the position of the second to last opponent and the attacker. Given the size of a soccer field an official may not be able to see all three of these elements at once. This is why professional games include assistant referees. For CYO, there simply are not enough officials in the area to cover all the needs. A final element of confusion for many is the concept of "off to on". This means that a player was behind the second to last opponent when the ball was played but has come back to the ball and receives it in front of the second to last opponent. Since the point of the pass is the determinant factor, this play is offsides.

Official Time

For many new to soccer, there is always the mystery of how the official determines the end of the game. This is because soccer is a game with a running time clock. The official, though, has the discretion to add time for injuries, substitutions, return of play for goals scored, and time wasting. Generally speaking this leads to a minute to three minutes added to each half, but if the official believes more is necessary, it can be more. Many officials will also honor what is known as "the last attack" and give the team in possession as time begins to run out one last chance. Not, though, that this may not always be the case and ought not be expected.

Advantage

One of the concepts that makes soccer the beautiful game is its flow. Many sports can be slowed down by fouls, even if a foul is to the disadvantage of the team in possession – think of basketball where teams foul on purpose to lengthen the game and put an opponent on the free throw line. Soccer tries to avoid this through the concept of advantage. If a player is fouled, but it is to the advantage of the team in possession to not make the call, then play continues. The official can wait to see if advantage materializes

and if it does not, make the call for foul. This can cause some confusion because there seems to be a little bit of a delay. An example of advantage might be that an attacking player passes the ball to a teammate, but a defender sticks out his arm. The ball, though, deflects to another teammate of the attacker who shoots and scores. It would be a disadvantage to the attacking team to call hand ball and so the goal would be allowed to stand. One final note, if the foul is worthy of a yellow card, advantage can still be given and the official can issue the yellow card on the next stoppage of play.

Modifications for CYO

Substitutions

In the official laws of soccer teams are only allowed three substitutes for the entire game and once a player comes off, cannot return to action. This simply does not make sense in youth soccer, especially a league like CYO that focuses on participation. As such, we allow unlimited substitutions. It used to be the case where you had to wait until your team had a throw-in or goal kick, but nowhere in the laws of the international game, does a team have this requirement. As such a few years ago, CYO went with substitutions being allowed for either team as per the standards of the international laws with the notable exception that unlimited players can go on in an entry and that a player can re-enter as many times as the coaching staff decides. Please note that an official can deny a substituting opportunity if the request is deemed to waste time or deny an advantage to the opposing team. All substitutions must be acknowledged and affirmed by the official.

Slide Tackling

This has been a controversial rule in CYO, but was made to ensure the safety of all athletes. It is a reality that there are wide variances in ability between the players. Slide tackling is a complex maneuver that poses potential injury risks if mistimed. As such, it was deemed prudent to make the maneuver illegal for CYO soccer. Please note, though, that sliding itself is not banned. A player could slide to save a ball from going out of play if there is no other player immediately challenging for the ball

Charging the Goalkeeper

No other position is as exposed to potential collision injury than a youth goalie. Judgment is not as precise as it will be as the player matures, and a goalkeeper will often be on the ground diving after a ball to make a save. To limit this exposure, charging the goalkeeper is illegal in CYO. CYO uses the National Federation of High Schools interpretation of possession of the goalkeeper as having one hand in control of the ball. Until the hand is in control, though, the goalkeeper is not afforded more protection than other players. In other words, if a goalkeeper decides to try to dribble a ball around a player and is legally challenged and has the ball taken, there is no foul. Likewise if a player legally goes for a header and there is legal contact with the goalie and a goal is scored, there is no foul. In other words, not all contact with a goalkeeper is illegal, but there is a higher standard of protection once a goalkeeper has control of the ball.