



Excerpts from “Tackling Tackles”

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Among all the decisions referees are called upon to make, the one given the least thought and made the most automatically is the tackle from behind. First, we cannot consider playing the game where this tackle is totally outlawed, otherwise any player fearing a tackle would simply turn his back on the opponent and make a tackle illegal. Next, we must realize that the challenger for the ball from behind must be traveling at a slightly greater speed than the player in possession. Let’s now consider the possibilities:

1. The tackler plays the ball first. His opponent will always fall over, falling over the foot and lower leg, which are now where the ball was. THIS IS FAIR UNLESS you think there was a REAL danger to the opponent – that more force was used than was necessary to get the ball. If you think this is the case, then you award an Indirect Free Kick for Dangerous Play. You cannot award a Direct Free Kick for Tripping, since the ball was played first.
2. It is normally extremely difficult to judge intention when the tackle is launched. Don’t try to! If the tackler touches his opponent’s body, leg, or foot first, it is a Direct Free Kick. If it was done with rather more force than is reasonable, a yellow card. If it was done in what one might call a vicious way and clearly endangered the opponent, then a red card.

So, please, no automatic decisions but assess every tackle carefully. Another tackle where referees tend to decide automatically is the two-footed tackle, which by definition has to be a jump. If the two-footed jump is for the ball, it is FAIR – unless the jump lands on the ball just as the opponent’s foot is kicking it. This could be dangerous, and if you think it is, then give an Indirect Free Kick. But a two-footed tackle is not AUTOMATICALLY unfair.

You Make the Call

The defense is taking a goal kick. The ball is kicked toward a defender positioned outside the Penalty Area (PA), up field from the 18yd line, near the touchline, rather than downfield. An attacker, positioned outside the PA beyond the 18 yd line, enters the PA and crosses the PA toward the ball. What should the referee do?

Law 16 governing the goal kick describes as a part of the procedure, “opponents must remain outside the PA until the ball is in play.” The ball is in play when it leaves the PA. If the opponent (attacker) enters the PA prior to the ball leaving the PA AND gains an advantage in doing so, the referee should blow the whistle and have the kick retaken. If no advantage is gained, in the interest of keeping the game moving – allow play to continue. If the opponent enters the PA after the ball leaves the PA, no call – allow play to continue.

