

To: All Coaches, Referees  
From: Mark Horst  
Date: 9/23/08

RE: Handball Rulings

In these first few weeks of the season we've had quite a few instances of confusion and unhappiness regarding handball rules from both the coach and fan perspective. Please read and understand this explanation. If you have questions please contact me.

In order to clarify the rules and eliminate confusion for all concerned I am instructing the referees to call handballs according to FIFA rules which make no mention or ruling regarding "handballs". The direct rule as shown below in the third bullet refers to "handles the ball deliberately...".

A direct free kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following three offences:

- holds an opponent
- spits at an opponent
- handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within his own penalty area)

There is no reference in any soccer rule to handballs and in fact, my research indicates that most referees, coaches, players, and fans do not understand what constitutes a handball. This results in confusion and inconsistency. FIFA has made it easy; the ball must be handled **DELIBERATELY** by the player (*in the opinion of the referee*) to constitute a foul. This applies to the forearms, upper arms and shoulders as well unless those parts of the body are used purposefully to redirect the ball. In other words, the same rules that apply to the hands apply to the arms.

- Protecting ones face or body with arms or hands held close is not a handball
- Balls kicked directly at another players hands or arms is not a handball
- Touching the ball while running with arms or hands in a normal running position or even away from the body is not a handball unless it is touched **DELIBERATELY**
- A ball that bounces up and hits the arm or hand is not a handball

If in any of these cases or even situations not mentioned, the player attempts to use the hands or arms to consciously/deliberately redirect the ball then it would be called a handball.

If an accidental touch of the ball results in retaining possession of the ball or even scoring a goal it is **STILL NOT A HANDBALL**. Advantage only applies when referring to determining if a player is to be called for an offside infraction.

**Remember – "The player plays the ball...the ball doesn't play the player".**

Please help your players, parents, and fans understand the rules. This will take pressure off of both you and the referees and make the games more enjoyable for all.

Thanks for your cooperation.