

# Ask a Soccer Referee

## Answers to Laws of the Game

### And Practical Refereeing Questions:

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As of February 23, 2000, all replies to technical questions posted in this column will have been coordinated with and approved by the U. S. Soccer Federation's National Program for Referee Development.

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#### **WHAT IS A FAIR CHARGE?**

Your question:

I am confused by what is termed "shoulder charging." I understand that as two players approach a ball they may intentionally lean into each other and push off with their shoulders, and that this intentional contact is permitted. My daughter's club coaches this, and I have never seen a referee call it as illegal. Nevertheless, I can not find anything in the laws that says it is ok. On the contrary, it would appear from the laws to be illegal. Why is this legal, and what are the limitations on it?

#### **USSF answer (March 26, 2002):**

The only instance in which a charge would be punished under the Law is one in which the player charges an opponent carelessly, recklessly, or with excessive force.

Although you will have to search very hard to find it written anywhere, the world accepts a fair charge of the opponent if the players make contact shoulder to shoulder, with the charging player's arms in at his side, while both players have at least one foot on the ground. The charging player may not use excessive force. At the youth level, particularly in the early teenage brackets, where players of the same age may experience growth spurts differently, a "best effort" at a should-to-shoulder charge is accepted.