

Three Myths of Youth Soccer

By James Smith

If I were King, the following three phrases would disappear

Hand ball

High kick

You can't play the ball on the ground

If we cannot get this right, how can we possibly go on to 'Offside' and 'Advantage'. Let's look at each phrase.

1. Hand ball

Within the first 10 minutes of any Saturday youth match – these two words can be heard all over town. At least it shows that the spectators are watching, albeit that they have no clue as to what they are yelling about. The easiest part of eliminating it from their usage is that the words 'hand ball' do not exist in the Laws of the Game. If you're going to yell anything – say 'handling'.

The technical side of the law:

LAW 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

- *Handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within his own penalty area)*

For this exercise, the 'hands' are from the outer shoulder to the finger tips. It is not a violation of the laws for the ball to strike the 'hands' – but it is a violation to strike the ball with the 'hands'. So, ask yourself, who played what, the hand or the ball. Simple – now let us move on.

2. High kick

Another easy term to get rid of, because it also does not exist in the laws. So how did our spectators know that it is wrong to have your boot up around an opponents head? Easy, it's **dangerous**, someone could get hurt. Common sense can figure this one out. It is equally dangerous to put your head down near an opponent's boot.

The technical side of the law:

LAW 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

- *Plays in a dangerous manner*

The act becomes an offense only when an opponent is adversely and unfairly affected. Again, a simple concept, if the boot is up high and no opponent is adversely affected – there is no law violation.

3. You can't play on the ground

Another case where it could be considered dangerous if an opponent is adversely and unfairly affected or the player is putting himself into a dangerous situation. It is not an offense to play in a dangerous manner if an opponent is not affected. Playing in a dangerous manner when only a teammate is around is not a foul. Fouls may only be committed against an opponent.

Players may play the ball on the ground – but not in a dangerous manner.

Sidebar

A great example of the correct application of ‘handling’ was by the referee, Sonia Denoncourt in the 2001 Olympic Gold Medal match in Australia.

USA is playing in overtime against Norway tied 1 -1. Norway is on the attack, coming up through the middle of the pitch. A long lofted ball is sent into the penalty area which comes off of USA’s Joy Facwett’s head towards goal. Norway’s Dagny Mellgreen is running at goal – the ball hits her outstretched arm and falls right to her boot for a shot that slots past Siri Mullinix for the ‘golden goal’. Game, set, and gold medal to Norway.

Did the ball strike the ‘hand’? **Yes.**

Did the ball then fall favorably to Mellgreen’s boot? **Yes.**

Did she deliberately ‘handle’ the ball? **No.**

Well done Sonia!

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