



SERIOUS RULES INFRINGEMENTS 'IN THE LAST MINUTE'

IHF Confirmation of Official Interpretation

A number of questions have been raised from national federations regarding this rules change that was introduced in 2005. Despite the official IHF interpretations that were issued at that time, it appears that some incorrect and unintended practices have emerged.

The **purpose** of the rules change and the **limited scope** of the rules change must be kept in mind. **First**, the purpose is to discourage the cynical and unsportsmanlike actions that had become increasingly common in situations where a player knew that it was critical to prevent the opponents from scoring one more goal, and where he knew that the consequences of doing something that led to a 'red card' were negligible. **Second**, the only change in the rules was to introduce a reporting requirement (with an expectation of further punishment after the match) in the situations we wanted to discourage (see the last paragraph of Rule 16:8 in combination with Clarification 6:g. **Third**, going back to the definition of the relevant situations, it was never intended that this new reporting would apply 'in the last minute' in every match. It is to be reserved for those situations where, as the rules indicate, it is known and understood that a goal for the opponents would create a tie or a win or, in those few situations where this is relevant, there would be a deciding change in the goal difference for a competition.

Starting with the last point, in other words, it applies when one knows that one team will be 'knocked out' in a cup game, or win/lose one more point in a league game if a goal is scored. This can then also apply in the second one of two home/away games where the total goal difference decides, and it can apply in the last round in league competition, where it is known that, apart from the points, a specific goal difference will affect the ranking.

Regarding the nature of the rules change, the only thing new is the reporting after a red card in the prescribed situation. It has never been suggested that the judgment as to whether and when a red card should be given is to be changed.

In situations where the ball is NOT in play (a player trying to execute a throw-off or a goalkeeper-throw, or collecting the ball in order to take a throw-in or free-throw), it is easy. Here there is absolutely no excuse for the opponent to interfere, and if it happens in a 'last minute situation' with the potential for a 'deciding goal', the cynical intention is obvious, and the action must be considered to be seriously unsportsmanlike. In other words, a 'red card' is clearly justified, not because of the degree of physical action but because of the circumstances and the effect.

By contrast, if the ball IS in play, one must be careful not to begin to think that rules 8:3 and 8:5 suddenly change in the last minute of the game or because of the result. If the player's action corresponds to a 'progressive foul' under rule 8:3, then it is to be punished under 8:3, typically with a 2-minute suspension. But if the player's action does correspond to rule 8:5, so that a 'red card' would be warranted at any time during the game, then of course it is to be given also 'in the last minute'. And if, furthermore, the match result is such that a potentially deciding goal could be prevented through the serious foul, then the reporting requirement applies together with the 'red card'. But we do not want to create a situation where a player who commits a progressive foul as a normal part of his defensive work should suddenly be given a 'red card' and a further punishment.

Finally, it must be remembered that if a player fails in his intentions, or rather misjudges player positions etc, so that the referees decide that, legitimately under the rules, the action warrants a 7-meter decision, which means that a goal scoring chance for the opponents is being restored, then there can still be a red card given under 8:5, but the red card shall NOT be reported for further action.

Again, all the above is to be seen as a confirmation or further clarification of the correct interpretations that were offered in 2005. It does not constitute any change at this time!

IHF/PRC, October 2007