



Field Umpiring



Spirit of the Laws



The control of a football match and the discernment of free kicks and decision-making obligations is governed by the application of the "Spirit of the Laws", of which there are four codified inside the Laws of Football and seven others which apply to specific acts of play. The four general spirits are that free kicks shall be awarded so as to:

ensure that a match is played in a fair manner - Law 15.1.1 (a). This spirit is self-evident and obvious in a sporting contest.

provide to a player, who makes obtaining possession of the ball his sole (meaning "prime") objective, every opportunity to do so - the Laws aim to give precedence to "ball players" in most situations, but see the fourth spirit below - Law 15.1.1 (b).

protect players from injury - this spirit is particularly applicable in "grey areas" in charging situations as well as reportable incidents - Law 15.1.1 (c).

reward players executing correct tackles that have the result of causing the player with the ball to dispose of the ball incorrectly, contrary to the Laws - Law 15.1.1 (d).

The further and specific spirits of the Laws relating to specific acts of play are:

General Play Contests - the player whose prime objective is to contest the ball or bump or shepherd an opponent shall be allowed to do so.

Tackling Player in Possession - the player with the ball, once tackled legally, shall be given a *reasonable* opportunity to kick/handball the ball, unless he has had a prior opportunity or dived onto the ball, in which case he must dispose of the ball immediately.

Diving on the Ball - if a player dives on the ball or pulls it underneath himself, he must dispose of the ball immediately, once he is tackled legally.

Marking Contests - the player whose prime objective is to contest the ball shall be permitted to do so.

Umpires should look for separate acts of play - e.g. a nudge out prior to contesting the mark is a separate act of play wherein the player has not made contest for the ball his prime objective - his prime objective was to remove his opponent from the contest.

Rucking Contests - the player whose prime objective is to contest the ball shall be permitted to do so. Umpires should look for shepherding, holding or pushing - these acts can be seen to be depriving the opponent of a fair opportunity to contest the ruck. Therefore, the shepherd, hold etc., shows that the prime objective of the infringer was to remove the opponent from the contest, not contesting the ruck duel.

Advantage Plays - the ball should be kept in motion at all times if possible and, hence, if a free kick (not a mark!) is awarded and the play is continuous and to the advantage of the free kicked team, then the play is not to be stopped but allowed to continue

50 Metre Penalties - shall be awarded in situations where a player unduly delays play or unduly encroaches over a mark after a mark or free kick has been awarded.

Visual Signaling

Visual Signaling is a vital part of the umpiring technique. It forms, however, only one part of one of the most important aspects of umpiring: communication. Visual Signaling is used as an indicator to the players, other umpires and, mostly, to the crowd of an umpire's decision. However, the umpire must always use his voice in signaling all decisions (and "non-decisions") in a loud and clear voice and in an appropriate tone. Often, the whistle will also be used. Visual signaling is effectively a back up to the voice signaling.



Start of the Quarter/Time On

The Umpire holds the ball aloft in an erect hand, being the hand to which the whistle is not attached. The umpire will also whistle in this action (see next photo)

This movement is used at the start of a quarter and also to resume play after time is off (when the ball is in possession of the Umpire, such as at a bounce).

Ordinary Time On/Off (Without the Ball)

The Umpire holds the arm aloft, being the arm/hand to which the whistle is not attached. He blows the whistle contemporaneously, giving both a visual and sound signal to the timekeepers

This signal is given to start a period of time in which time is not counted, when the Umpire considers a stoppage in play is undue and time otherwise would be wasted.

The same signal is given to indicate the conclusion of the time off period (occasionally, without a whistle, if the umpire is of the opinion that the blowing of the whistle could confuse



players and cause them to stop an action of play).



Advantage Play

Signaled when, after a free is paid, play is continuous and to the advantage of the team infringed against. The signal indicates that play need not stop and the flow of play may continue.

Signaled in a cricket bowling action with either arm depending on the side of play on which the umpire is positioned. The "cricket bowling" action is optimally repeated three times clearly and at moderate speed. Voice signal such as "Play On!" or "Advantage" should also be called out.

Play On

The most often seen signal on the ground! The signal given when the umpire considers the circumstances of play require a clear indication of his "non-decision" in a sequence of play. The umpire raises both arms in the air. One strong signaling motion should usually suffice, accompanied by a loud, crisp and clear call of "Play On!"



All Clear - Goal

Signaled by the Umpire to the Goal Umpire, along with a voice call to the same effect, when a goal is scored and no infringements of the Laws observed.

Two hands are raised to the face, close to but slightly away from the face, at the width of the cheeks (not so close as to block the umpire's face or the sound of the call coming from the mouth and not so extravagantly wide - about cheeks' width)

All Clear - Behind

Signaled by the Umpire to the Goal Umpire, along with a voice call to the same effect, when a behind is scored and no infringements of the Laws observed.

One hand (the one without the whistle) is raised to the width of the cheek, close to the face to signal the behind to the umpire.



All Clear - Field Umpire in Doubt as to Score

Signaled by the Umpire to the Goal Umpire, along with a voice call to the same effect ("All Clear!"), when a score is observed and no infringements of the Laws observed, but when the Field Umpire is unsure of the score.

The Umpire places his hands behind his back quite clearly and calls out the signal.

All Clear Behind - Touched - Off Hands

The umpire signals to the goal umpire that the ball has been touched and cannot therefore be scored as a goal. The ball is touched when, after being kicked by an attacking player, it touches any other player's body, other than an attacking player's leg under the knee - it is not touched, if the ball touches an umpire or an official.

The umpire taps three times, palm to back of hand, just under mouth level, whilst calling out "Touched!" to the goal umpire.





All Clear Behind - Touched! Hit the Post

The umpire confirms with the goal umpire that the score is all clear and that the score is a behind as a result of hitting the goal post. The umpire taps three times to the inside of an erect forearm.

Field Umpire Retains Play

Signal given primarily to the no. 2 field Umpire to indicate that the Umpire at the time intends to retain control of the play. Should be used in the "grey" areas when play could possibly be handed over or where there is no distinct clearing kick or handpass to allow the relinquishing of the play, with tapping of the breast clearly done in a repeated manner on the side of the chest more visible to the no. 2. This signal is helped more so by a loud call of "Mine" for the no. 2's assistance.



Tap Through

Signal given by the Umpire, when, in a set kick control situation, particularly deep on a forward flank or pocket, he desires to retain the set kick control and wants the no. 2 to run forward to be ready to umpire play at the drop of the kick that follows.

The signal is given by tapping on the buttock, the one more visible to the no. 2, repeatedly and clearly. The signal is enhanced by its early implementation - that is, as early as possible, as the Umpire runs into the set kick control, not after he has already arrived there!

Ball Up

Signal given to indicate that a ball up is to take place.

Umpire firstly blows his whistle then crosses his arms across his chest, running quickly (not ambling!) to the point of play where the ball up is to take place.

**Throw in**

Signal to the boundary umpire both to acknowledge his call that the ball is out of bounds and asking him to throw the ball back in. Signal is given by two hands being swept from the upper chest region towards the face, with hands bending at the wrists, accompanied by the voice call of "Throw it in please!"

Free or Mark Direction Indication

Indication given after both the whistle and the type of free kick indication to signal the way in which the kick is to go. Note: there is no signal for a mark.

The signal is given to the opposite way in which the team awarded the kick is going. The arm signal is effectively a derivation of a pointing action, signaling who has the mark or free.

An outstretched arm is pointed in the opposite direction of the team awarded the kick's goal.





Push in the Back

Indicates a free kick for push in the back. A clear thrusting motion with both arms away from the pectorals fully outwards is made. One strong, clear and sustained thrust is enough. The fully extended arms should be held for a moment or two to allow people to observe the decision made.

As usual, a voice call at the same time enhances the signal.

Incorrect Disposal

Commonly called "Dropping the Ball" (of which there is no such Law in football!), this signals the decision of the Umpire that the player with the ball has disposed of it in an incorrect manner or, alternatively, having been legally tackled, has not disposed of the ball correctly. The Umpire bends forward slightly and then makes a wide and exaggerated sweeping action with both arms, starting in the middle and extending outwards. Hands should stay on the horizontal plane.



High Tackle

Signals a free kick for a high tackle. The Umpire taps his shoulder with his hand (the opposite shoulder to the tapping arm, not the same!). This tapping action is done clearly, firmly and decisively three times.

Holding the Man/Incorrect Tackle

Signal given for an incorrect tackle or when a player is being held illegally (with the exception of a high or low tackle for which separate signals are used).

Umpire grabs at his shirt with both hands, near his waist and clearly pulls on it (but not pulling it out of his shorts) in a three-pull motion to indicate the hold.

**Throwing the Ball**

Signal given to indicate that a player has thrown the ball. Alternatively, this signal may be given with one hand in a scooping underhand motion. Preferably, however, the signal shown here should be used.

Trip/Low Tackle

Signal to indicate trip or low tackle.

The umpire reaches down and taps his ankle with the arm on the same side as the leg tapped. This is difficult to perform more than one without losing balance, so one clear tap in a firm, obvious way suffices.





"Kicking in Danger"

A misnomer because there is such a rule, the title is that used by football fans but it is technically an incorrect title.

Umpire pays free when an indiscriminate kick likely to cause injury is done and may also report if done deliberately and the kick connects with a player.

Umpire signals free with a kicking motion with his leg.

Run Too Far

Signal given to indicate that the player with the ball has run more than 15 metres without bouncing the ball or disposing of it.

Umpire makes circular motion with wrists in an away from body circular rotation.



Illegal Shepherding

Umpire spreads arms out wide, like a bird, to signal an illegal shepherd.

Incidents happen when a shepherd takes place on a player more than 5 metres from the ball or can be seen in ruck contests or marking contests.

Blood Rule

Indicates that a player is either bleeding or has blood on his body or uniform and must leave the ground immediately for attention and simultaneously indicates that a replacement player may enter the ground.

Arms crossed above the head, like so.



End Quarter/Full Time

Signal indicates end of the quarter.

The Umpire (or, indeed, no. 2 may in certain circumstances) raises his arms above his head in fashion indicated, after having given a good firm blow of the whistle.