

Subject: Youth Soccer Insider: Red card? How to call DOGSO

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Red card? How to call DOGSO

By Randy Vogt

Denying an obvious goalscoring opportunity (DOGSO) is a red-card offense. This rule, part of Law 12: Fouls and Misconduct, is to prevent the defense from fouling to destroy their opponents' most dangerous scoring opportunities and takes into account handling the ball and fouling an attacker moving toward the goal by an offense punishable by a free kick or penalty kick. It's obviously a very important decision for the ref to determine DOGSO as the team would then be playing short and the sent off player would be suspended.

Let's take handling the ball first. This obviously does not apply to a goalkeeper within his or her own penalty area but applies to the keeper who comes out of the penalty area to deliberately handle the ball or a field player who deliberately handles the ball on a shot that was going into the goal.

Two decades ago, a field player would deliberately handle the ball to prevent a goal and just receive a caution. The number of goal-preventing deliberate handling offenses declined when this was added to the list of send-offs.

Please be aware that it is not a send-off, just a direct kick foul, when a keeper makes a save inside the penalty area and his momentum takes the ball outside the area while still holding it.

Should a defender (not the goalkeeper) deliberately handle the ball that winds up going into the goal anyway, you allow the goal and caution that defender for unsporting behavior.

Now let me write about an attacker moving toward the opponent's goal fouled by a defender. A 2002 U.S. Soccer position paper to help guide the officials in this very important decision required four elements for an obvious goalscoring opportunity before the foul becomes a red card offense. They are



described as the four D's:

- **Defenders:** Not counting the player committing the foul, there is at most one defender between the foul and the goal. That other defender is generally the goalkeeper. The keeper committing a foul can be sent off for this offense as well.
- **Distance to the ball:** The attacker must be close enough to the ball to continue playing it at the time of the foul.
- **Distance to the goal:** The attacker must be close enough to the goal to have a legitimate chance to score. So being in or near the opponent's penalty area is more likely to be an obvious goal-scoring opportunity than the attacker being in the team's defensive half of the field.
- **Direction:** The attacker must be moving toward the opponent's goal at the time of the foul, not toward a corner flag or away from the goal.

Referees officiating with AR's can look to them for guidance as the assistant will often have a better view if all 4 D's applied. The AR could signal hand on chest (caution as the yellow card is kept there) or hand on back pocket of shorts for DOGSO (send off as the red card is often kept there).

Now here's the dilemma when I wrote "[Preventive Officiating](#)" as it's a guide mainly for youth soccer referees. We need to use some common sense when applying DOGSO to the *youngest ages* in youth games. My young cousins play youth soccer and they and their parents know that they will be sent off and suspended if they deliberately try and hurt an opponent. They have no understanding at all of the four D's. For a 7-year-old who is the last defender (besides the keeper) and accidentally trips an opponent, the game could best be served by blowing the whistle and keeping your cards in your pocket. Same deal with a young keeper who comes outside the penalty area and deliberately handles the ball. Most likely he does not realize what he did.

Should anybody question why no red card was given for a foul of an attacker going toward goal, if you can find a reason that one of the 4 D's did not apply in some way, you can respond like that. It happened to me as an AR for a boys U-12 State Cup final between two rival teams. Yellow was winning 2-0 with 12 minutes left to play. The yellow keeper punted the ball and the second-to-last defender on white deliberately handled the ball at the halfway line. The yellow coach yelled for a red card. The ref came to me for advice and I told him that it was a yellow card offense for unsporting behavior and not DOGSO as two of the four D's did not apply. The two D's that did not apply were distance to the goal (foul committed at halfway line) and distance to the ball (attacker was 10 yards away from ball).

The yellow coach went ballistic upon seeing a yellow card and only calmed down a bit when I explained why DOGSO did not apply. The State Youth Referee Administrator was watching and he agreed that this was not DOGSO. Yellow wound up winning 2-1. If white had come back to win the game, the yellow coach would have blamed me but it was the right decision.

(*Randy Vogt has officiated over 9,000 games during the past three decades, from professional matches in front of thousands to 6-year-olds being cheered on by very enthusiastic parents. In "[Preventive Officiating](#)," he shares his wisdom gleaned from thousands of games and hundreds of clinics to help referees not only survive but thrive on the soccer field. You can visit the book's website at www.preventiveofficiating.com.*)

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