

The Ball and The Hand

The Law

Law 12

A direct free kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following four offences:

- tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball, making contact with the opponent before touching the ball
- holds an opponent
- spits at an opponent
- handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within his own penalty area)

What do we need to consider?

- Ball to Hand or Hand to Ball?
- Does the player use his hand or arm to intentionally touch the ball?
- Are the player's hands or arms in a 'natural' position?
- Does the player try to *avoid* the ball striking his hand or arm?
- Is the player *able* to avoid the ball striking his hand or arm?

Ball to Hand or Hand to Ball?

A player who moves his hand or arm, so that the ball can hit them, is guilty of deliberately handling the ball.

If the ball comes onto the hand or arm then the referee has to ask whether the hand or arm was in a natural position. A natural position is one that corresponds to the action that the player was taking at the time.

Avoidance

Does the player try to prevent the ball from striking his hand or arm?

What chance does the player have of avoiding the ball? Consider the closeness of the player and ball and the speed with which the ball is travelling.

Intentional v deliberate

The offence is deliberately handling the ball; that is, moving the hands or arm so that there will be contact made with the ball.

Deliberate is only slightly different than intentional.

Intentional says, "I wanted to use my hands to play the ball."

Deliberate says, "I moved my hands so that they would play the ball, whether or not I

actually wanted to handle it."

Intentional requires that the referee read the player's mind to figure out why she handled the ball.

Deliberate only requires the referee to see that she handled it. ¹

Protection

Players in a defensive wall often place their hands over sensitive parts as protection. This is alright as there is no deliberate action to move the hands to where the ball is. At other times, moving the hands or arms to protect yourself against an approaching ball is not allowable. It then becomes a deliberate action to play the ball with the hands and so a free-kick offence.

What doesn't matter

It is irrelevant what happens to the ball after the contact with the hand or arm. The offence occurs with the contact and is not mitigated or worsened by subsequent actions. Advantage needs to be considered of course, but that doesn't change the offence.

Punishment

The correct punishment for deliberately handling the ball is a direct free-kick, or if it is committed by a defender in their own penalty area, a penalty kick. A caution is not always required. The offence must have something more to it than just the handling of the ball. Breaking up an attacking move by deliberately handling the ball would justify a caution. Attempting to prevent a goal by deliberately would earn a yellow card. A red card would follow actually preventing a goal.

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