

Law 11 - Offside

Clarification of the guidelines to distinguish between 'deliberate play' and 'deflection'

Ahead of the new season, The IFAB and FIFA have clarified the guidelines for distinguishing between 'deliberate play' and 'deflection'.

This follows a number of high-profile situations where an attacker who is clearly in an offside position has been considered 'onside' following the movement and action of a defender in touching the ball.

This short document details the clarification and considerations that match officials will use in practical interpretation of offside situations where a defender touches the ball.

Law 11 Offside, states that:

A player in an offside position receiving the ball from an opponent who deliberately plays the ball, including by deliberate handball, is not considered to have gained an advantage, unless it was a deliberate save by any opponent.

The guidance for match officials in interpreting the Law will now include the following advice:

'Deliberate play' is when a player has control of the ball with the possibility of:

- *passing the ball to a team-mate; or*
- *gaining possession of the ball; or*
- *clearing the ball (e.g. by kicking or heading it).*

If the pass, attempt to gain possession or clearance by the player in control of the ball is inaccurate or unsuccessful, this does not negate the fact that the player 'deliberately played' the ball.

Practical interpretation - 'deliberately played'

Where a defender makes a clear action to play the ball e.g. kicking, tackling or heading, and this results in control the ball, the defender is considered to have 'deliberately played the ball' and the attacker receiving the ball should not be penalised for being offside (unless it is a save i.e. clearly preventing the ball entering the goal)

Considerations for determining 'control of ball'

Whilst this judgement is subjective, for the purposes of determining 'control of ball', the clarification from The IFAB and FIFA provides the following considerations:

- *The ball travelled from distance and the player had a clear view of it*
- *The ball was not moving quickly*
- *The direction of the ball was not unexpected*
- *The player had time to coordinate their body movement, i.e. it was not, a case of instinctive stretching or jumping, or a movement that achieved limited contact/control*
- *A ball moving on the ground is easier to play than a ball in the air*

Practical interpretation - 'deliberately played' ('deflection')

Where a defender clearly makes an instinctive reaction and touches the ball e.g. stretching or jumping, and there is no control of the ball, this should be interpreted as a 'deflection'

Considerations for determining 'deflection'

- *The ball travelled from short distance and/or the player does not have a clear view of it*
- *The ball was moving quickly*
- *The direction of the ball was unexpected*
- *The player had limited or no time to coordinate their body movement, i.e. clearly a case of instinctive stretching or jumping, or a movement that achieved limited contact/control*

Further guidance from The IFAB, can be found here:

<https://red.fifa.com/play/collection/13010/Law11-Offside:deliberateplayanddeflection?cld=16&itemId=12995>

Summary

Whilst the judgement as to whether or not an attacker in an offside position should be penalised remains a subjective judgement, this clarification is intended to provide greater clarity for interpretation of deliberately playing the ball, resulting in outcomes that are in line with game expectation.