



To: National Referees
National Instructors
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State Referee Administrators
State Directors of Instruction
State Directors of Assessment
State Directors of Coaching

From: U.S. Soccer Referee Education Resource Center

Subject: **Penalty Kicks and Misconduct – Hiding Behind the Yellow Card**

Date: October 4, 2011

A troubling pattern has been observed in recent years regarding the issuance of cautions for actions occurring in a team's penalty area which result in the giving of a penalty kick. Too often, it appears that cautions are being given solely because the penalty kick was awarded.

It is clearly contrary to both the letter and spirit of the Law to assume that any foul which results in a penalty kick must also involve misconduct. A penalty kick must be given on its own merits as clearly and concretely defined in Law 14 – a direct free kick foul committed by a defender inside that defender's penalty area.

Referees have apparently adopted the practice of cautioning any defender whose foul produced the penalty kick on the apparent assumption that some misconduct must have been committed. In the absence of a send-off offense (e.g., "denied goal by handling" or "interference with an obvious goal-scoring opportunity"), the defender's foul must have therefore involved cautionable misconduct. Showing a card in these circumstances, regardless of the color, does not make the penalty kick more justifiable.

Based on the referee's independent review and judgment, a foul for which the restart will be a penalty kick may truly need a caution and, if so, the yellow card must be shown, but do not hide the penalty kick decision behind the yellow card.