



100% Misconduct: Tactical and Red Card Tackles
2009 Referee Program Directives
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Tactical Fouls: The Definition

Tactical fouls are primarily fouls that don't necessarily endanger the safety of an opponent but are committed either to break down a promising attack or to gain an advantage in attack. These fouls are often considered minor because they normally don't involve hard, physical contact. Because of this "soft" classification, they often go unpunished as officials do not recognize the tactical implication and the attacking advantage that is being denied. Shirt pulling or using their body to make contact with the opponent and impede their progress are frequent examples. Tactical fouls are not only an illegal challenge but where the foul interferes with a promising attack it should be considered as unsporting behavior. Here are some characteristics of tactical fouls:

- **Usually in attacking end of the field.**
Defensive players commit the foul because they acknowledge that the attacking team will have a credible opportunity to go-to-goal with a high degree of effectiveness. It normally involves speed of the attack.
- **Numerical advantage.**
Committed by defenders to prevent an attacking team or player from gaining a numeric advantage – not to be confused with denying a goal scoring opportunity.
- **Time to defend.**
Tactical fouls are committed to give the defending team time to get goal-side of the ball. In other words, to give the defending team (as opposed to the attacking team) time to get a numeric advantage between the ball and the goal.
- **Prevent the ball and/or player from advancing.**
Normally, committed to prevent the ball and/or attacking player from getting into space behind a defender or behind the defense. This assists in developing a numeric advantage. It is the "if the ball gets by, the player doesn't or if the player gets by, the ball doesn't" theory. Look for open areas of space that the ball would normally be played into or where an attacking player would run into if they were to receive the ball. This would be behind a defender, into space and normally in the attacking half of the field, often within 35-40 yards of the goal.

- **The defender knows he is beat.**
Defenders commit this foul because they know they have been beat by the attacker. Look for one vs. one situations: for example, an attacking player along the touchline going by his defender into space (normally along the wing) to set up a cross or to cut in toward the goal.
- **Minor nature of the challenge.**
Normally do not involve hard, physical contact.

These are just a few of the characteristics of tactical fouls. Work on training your eye to distinguish them. Ask yourself, “Why did the player commit the foul here?” Often times the fouls occur in the wide channels of the field, so it is critical that assistant referees also be aware of these characteristics and provide the referee with appropriate assistance.

Players work very hard to hide tactical-type fouls and make them difficult for the referee to identify. Tactical fouls are also labeled as “gamesmanship,” as they are designed to cheat the game and/or disrupt attacking play. Often, these fouls seem so minor that the referee fails to recognize the reason the player is committing the foul.

Tactical fouls require a yellow card for unsporting behavior.

Red Card Tackles

The Laws of the Game (Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct) provide for three (3) types of challenges that escalate in terms of severity: from careless (simple foul) to reckless (caution) to using excessive force. Of the three, “using excessive force” requires the referee to red card the player.

1. Careless

“The player has shown a lack of attention or consideration when making a challenge or that he acted without precaution.” In other words, the player has not exercised due caution in making a play. Normally exhibited as a miscalculation of strength or a stretch of judgment by the player committing the foul. **No disciplinary sanction is required.**

2. Reckless

“The player has acted with complete disregard to the danger to, or consequences for, his opponent.” Clearly outside the norm for fair play. **A caution is required.**

3. Using Excessive Force

“The player has far exceeded the necessary use of force and is in danger of injuring his opponent.” The challenge places the opponent in considerable danger of bodily harm. **A red card is required.**

Red card tackles usually involve combinations of the following components:

- Speed of play and the tackle
- Intent
- Aggressive nature
- Position of the tackler – in particular, his legs (height of the tackler’s leading leg and the follow-up action by the tackler’s trailing leg)
- Opportunity to play the ball
- Atmosphere of the game