

Law 12 is changing. The IFAB have agreed new wording for denial of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO) offences in the penalty area. *David Elleray* explains what it's all about.

The 130th AGM of The IFAB in Cardiff on 5 March 2016 approved a major revision of the Laws of Game to take effect from 1 June 2016. One important change relates to the disciplinary sanction for some 'denial of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity' (DOGSO) offences committed in the penalty area.

The main reason for the change is that a penalty kick is an excellent opportunity to score a goal. So when a penalty kick is awarded, it 'restores' the goal-scoring opportunity that was 'lost'.

Therefore, the punishment of the player should not be as severe as the punishment for a DOGSO committed outside the penalty area. The red card is deserved for DOGSO outside the penalty area as a free kick is not as good a scoring opportunity as a penalty.

This means, Law 12 has been changed. As a result, DOGSO offences in the penalty area where the defender is penalised for an offence which was an attempt to play the ball or challenge the opponent for the ball, will lead to the player being cautioned (yellow card) rather than sent off (red card).

However, The IFAB does not want to encourage unfair play. So for DOGSO offences inside the penalty area which are not an attempt to play the ball or challenge the opponent for the ball, the offending player will still be sent off (red card).

The 'new' wording for DOGSO offences is:

Where a player denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by a deliberate handball offence the player is sent off wherever the offence occurs.

Where a player commits an offence against an opponent within their own penalty area which denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the referee awards a penalty kick, the offending player is cautioned unless:

- The offence is holding, pulling or pushing or
- The offending player does not attempt to play the ball or there is no possibility for the player making the challenge to play the ball or
- The offence is one which is punishable by a red card wherever it occurs on the field of play (e.g. serious foul play, violent conduct etc...)

In all the above circumstances, the player is sent off.

In practical terms, what does this mean?

Handball

- For all handball DOGSO offences, there is **no change**.
- Deliberate handling of the ball is not part of a 'normal' attempt to challenge an opponent for the ball so for all DOGSO handball offences (inside and outside the penalty area) the player will be sent off (red card).

Holding, pulling and pushing

- An offence where the defending player is penalised for holding, pulling or pushing will still be sanctioned with a sending-off (red card) as these offences are not part of a fair challenge of an opponent for the ball.

Not attempting to play the ball and No possibility to play the ball.

An offence where the defending player is penalised by the referee for an offence where:

- It was clear that the player did not attempt to play the ball or
- It was clear that the player did not have the chance/possibility to play the ball will still be sanctioned with a sending-off (red card) as these offences are not a fair challenge of an opponent for the ball.

Non-DOGSO offences

Offences such as serious foul play and violent conduct must still be sanctioned with a sending-off (red card) in the penalty area as they are not affected by the change in the DOGSO wording. >>

Summary

The change in the DOGSO wording in Law 12 does not mean that every DOGSO offence in the penalty area is sanctioned with a caution (yellow card).

The reduction from sending-off (red card) to caution (yellow card) is only intended for DOGSO offences in the penalty area which the referee decides are a clear attempt to play the ball or challenge an opponent for the ball.

Where this is not the case (and especially for the offences mentioned) the sanction remains a sending-off (red card).

All DOGSO offences outside the penalty area are sanctioned with a sending-off (red card) as there is no change in the Law for these offences. /

Chelsea's Thibaut Courtois was sent off for this DOGSO challenge on Manchester City's Fernandinho. Next season, similar challenges might mean only a caution if it is deemed a clear attempt of the ball.

