

10/14/2015

To: All Referees in the State of Idaho under USSF Jurisdiction

From: Peter Stilling, State Director of Referee Instruction

Subject: Goal Keeper Safety

Goal Keeper safety has been and will always be a paramount importance as it falls under our primary purpose for doing our jobs as referees and that is to maintain the safety of the players. Goal Keepers are unique by their position because of the legal use of their hands within their own penalty area. Although most Goal Keepers are very fearless in doing their jobs, they can be quite vulnerable in the application of said job. This is especially true with proportionality to the age and/or technical capability of the Goal Keeper. It is expected and strongly encouraged that Goal Keepers of a younger age and especially those that are playing in recreational/non-competitive leagues be protected the most. As the Goal Keepers start to get older, bigger, stronger, faster, more technical and more tactical; it would be prudent for the referee to allow a little more contact between Goal Keepers and field players as long as that contact is within fair play according to FIFA Laws of the Game.

There is, however, has an opposite side to this coin. There has been a long standing false belief that all contact with Goal Keepers is entirely forbidden. This is purely mythology and could not be further from the truth. Goal Keepers are allowed to make and receive physical contact and no foul to either party has occurred.

However, there are times when a Goal Keeper cannot be specifically challenged. In short, those times are when the Goal Keeper has possession of the ball. The Goal Keeper is to be considered in possession of the ball if he or she has as little as one finger upon the ball and the ball is pinned against the ground. The links below will go into great detail explaining this. I would encourage you to read those references.

From the 2015-16 FIFA Laws of the Game Interpretations, Page 122:

<http://idahosoccerrefs.org/wp-content/uploads/2015-16-Laws-of-the-Game.pdf>

From the 2014 (most recent publication date) of the USSF Advice to Referees, Page 47:

**12.B.4 Goal Keeper Possession of the Ball**

<http://idahosoccerrefs.org/wp-content/uploads/2013-14-Advice-to-Referees-022714.pdf>

Original Statements from the Idaho State Director of Referee Instruction to further clarify the application of the Law: A Goal Keeper that is in the process of making a save, that is to say, has leaped into the air or has dived in some particular direction is now at the mercy of physics and gravity. Although this Goal Keeper may not have contact with the ball at this time, contact is most likely inevitable and thus the referee should be mindful and sensitive to this fact. As well, the Goal Keeper may not yet have control of the ball as per the references above but due to the fact that the Goal Keeper has committed themselves to a flighted path in the air it thus puts them in more danger should they be challenged regardless of the challenge being fair or not. I would prefer to see the referee and assistant referees err on the side of safety and give benefit of the doubt to these goal keepers that are in

flight regardless of the exact status of contact with the ball or control of the ball. Is this to say I am telling you that you must call every call for and in behalf of the Goal Keeper when a fair challenge is made? Absolutely not. If an attacking player clearly and cleanly gets the ball and makes no unsafe contact with the Goal Keeper it would be unfair to the attacker to assess a foul against him or her. This would be considered excellent soccer and should be highly encouraged.

In conclusion, remember to take into consideration age and technical ability of the players you are officiating. The younger they are, the more protection they should be afforded. We as referees are ambassadors to the game and the more fun we make the match for the players the greater chance they will sign up and come back next year.

Yours in Officiating,

Peter Stilling  
Idaho SDI