



United States Soccer Federation

Position Paper

Extra Persons on the Field

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Extra Persons on the Field

Law 1 (The Field of Play) establishes an area bounded by two touch lines and two goal lines within which the game of soccer is played. Together with the ball and the players, the field is thus one of the most critical requirements of the sport. Inside and outside the field are virtually two different worlds and it is a potentially major violation of the Laws of the Game when persons enter the field who are not permitted to be there.

The purpose of this position paper is to summarize the various ways that extra persons may illegally be on the field, what the Law requires be done when this occurs, and what must be done in the special circumstances of a goal being scored while one or more extra persons are illegally on the field. The emphasis is on what to do when these things happen during play.

I. WHO COULD BE AN “EXTRA PERSON”?

- Players are those persons listed on a roster who are allowed inside the field when play is occurring.
- Substitutes are those persons who are listed on a roster as potential replacements for players and who must stay off the field (usually in the technical area).
- Persons other than players and substitutes fall into two categories – team officials or outside agents.
 - Team officials are persons officially associated with the team who are allowed to be in the technical area so long as they behave responsibly.
 - Outside agents are all other persons -- e.g., fans, spectators, passers-by, stadium personnel, and former players who have been sent off (shown the red card).

Law 3, along with its interpretations and guidelines, establishes the following:

- Players may be off the field temporarily in the normal course of play and, when this is the case, they may re-enter the field legally without the permission of the referee.
- Players who have received formal permission by the referee to be off the field or who have been ordered off the field by the referee (e.g., to correct equipment) may not re-enter the field except with the permission of the referee – a player who re-enters the field without permission has committed an illegal act and is an “extra person.”
- A player who is temporarily off the field, regardless of the reason, is still a player of record.

- Substitutes may not enter the field without the permission of the referee under any circumstances – a substitute who enters the field without permission has committed an illegal act and is an “extra person.”
- “Substitution” is the official process by which a substitute replaces a player with the permission of the referee. The substitute is now a player of record: the former player is now known as a “substituted player” and may not re-enter the field under any circumstances (in youth play, however, the former player merely becomes a substitute and may return but only through the substitution process). A substituted player who re-enters the field has committed an illegal act and is an “extra person.”
- The maximum number of players on the field is 11 (a smaller number may be set for younger players). Anyone on the roster whose presence on the field takes the team above the maximum number has committed an illegal act, even if it appeared that the substitution process had been followed, and is an “extra person.”

Law 5, with its interpretations and guidelines, establishes the following:

- One of the specific duties of the referee is to keep anyone off the field who does not have a legal right to be there. The assistant referees may legally be on the field, consistent with the referee’s pregame instructions.
- The referee is the only person under the Laws of the Game who can give permission for anyone to enter the field where a permission is needed.
- A team official who enters the field of play without the permission of the referee is an “extra person.” The team official has behaved irresponsibly and is subject to being dismissed from the field and its surrounding area.
- An outside agent cannot enter the field of play under any circumstances but doing so is not strictly an illegal act because such persons are not under the authority of the referee. An outside agent is, nevertheless, an “extra person.” Furthermore, the entry of one or more outside agents could be considered a form of disorder which, in addition to the removal of the outside agent, might result in the match being suspended or even terminated.

II. WHAT IS THE RESTART IF PLAY IS STOPPED FOR AN “EXTRA PERSON”?

When any player, substitute, team official, or outside agent enters the field illegally, the referee and assistant referees are obliged to take steps to correct the problem. Immediate action is required if any of these illegal persons interferes with play or players. With no interference occurring, the illegal entry may be so brief as not to be a problem or the referee may wait for the next stoppage to handle the matter.

In a well-run match, with careful attention paid to the substitution process and appropriate monitoring of the technical area, the appearance of any extra person on the field should be rare. Nevertheless, the referee and assistant referees must recognize when the problem occurs and what must be done. Often, the problem is relatively innocent, easy to fix, and sometimes even corrects itself when the person illegally on the field realizes their situation.

When interference has occurred and official action must be taken, the correction will depend on exactly who the extra person is and what, if anything, the person did while illegally on the field.

A. Restart If An Extra Player Is Discovered On The Field

Who Is The Extra Person?	Restart If Play Is Stopped Solely For The Extra Person
Player	Indirect Free Kick (where Ball was when play was stopped)
Substitute	Indirect Free Kick (where Ball was when play was stopped)
Team Official	Dropped Ball (where the ball was when play was stopped)
Outside Agent	Dropped Ball (where the ball was when play was stopped)

If the presence of the illegal extra person is discovered at a stoppage already called for some other reason or if the extra person enters at such a stoppage, the restart is determined by the Laws of the Game covering that other reason.

Special rules apply to locating an indirect free kick or a dropped ball if play is stopped while the ball is inside the goal area (see Law 8 for dropped balls or Law 13 for indirect free kicks). A player is cautioned for re-entering the field without permission, a substitute is cautioned for unsporting behavior, a team official may be admonished or expelled from the field, and an outside agent can only be removed by the proper authorities (or the match may be suspended or even terminated if the intrusion is considered serious).

If a player re-enters the field illegally and then commits an offense (e.g., foul and/or misconduct), the restart is determined by the offense (direct free kick, penalty kick, or indirect free kick where the offense occurred) rather than the restart noted in Table A. The caution for illegal entry is still given: if the offense itself warrants a caution, then the referee may give a second caution, followed by a red card for the second caution. If the offense warrants a red card directly, it is given instead of the yellow card. If a substitute enters the field illegally and then commits misconduct (a substitute cannot commit a foul), the restart is as described in Table A and either a second caution is given (followed by a red card for the second caution) or a red card is given directly.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF AN EXTRA PERSON IF A GOAL IS SCORED

The problem becomes more contentious and more difficult to resolve when an extra person is discovered following the scoring of a goal because, in addition to taking care of the intruder, additional questions arise regarding the proper restart and the status of the goal.

There are two critical questions to be answered in determining the proper response to the presence of an extra person on the field following the scoring of a goal:

- Was the presence of the extra person discovered before the kick-off restart or only afterward?
- Who is the extra person (player, substitute, team official, or outside agent)?

B. Action To Be Taken If A Goal Is Scored With An Extra Person On The Field

Who Is The Extra Person?	When Was The Extra Person Discovered?	
	Before Kick-Off Restart	After Kick-Off Restart
Player (Team Scored Against)	Goal Counts	Goal Counts
Player (Scoring Team)	No Goal	Goal Counts
Substitute (Team Scored Against)	Goal Counts	Goal Counts
Substitute (Scoring Team)	No Goal	Goal Counts
Team Official (Team Scored Against)	Goal Counts	Goal Counts
Team Official (Scoring Team)	No Goal	Goal Counts
Outside Agent	No Goal	Goal Counts

In all cases where the goal counts because a kick-off has occurred, the restart is based on whether the extra person is discovered at a subsequent stoppage or if, having discovered that an extra person was on the field illegally, the referee stops play solely for this reason. In the first case, the restart is based on why play was stopped (i.e., why did the referee stop play or under what circumstances did the ball leave the field?). In the second case, the restart is directed by the guidelines in Table A.

Table B assumes that the extra person, regardless of category, did in fact (in the opinion of the referee) interfere with play or with players. In all cases where the goal is disallowed, the restart is a goal kick by the defending team.

Note: This position paper involves a change to parts of Advice to Referees 3.20 which were published prior to October 1, 2010. The current edition of Advice to Referees on the U.S. Soccer website has been updated accordingly. Questions regarding this position paper should be directed to your association's State Director of Instruction.