

Background

There is a growing unfair trend of attackers tactically fouling defenders (holding, pulling, pushing, blocking etc.) **before the ball is in play at attacking free kicks and corner kicks** in a way that leads to a goal-scoring opportunity or penalty-kick situation. The on-field match officials often have great difficulty in identifying these offences at corner kicks and attacking free kicks because:

- a **significant number** of attackers and defenders are inside or close to the penalty area
- players are spread over a **large area** and are moving in different directions
- **many players** are holding/pushing each other

Under the current video assistant referee (VAR) protocol, the **VAR can intervene** if the offence is a potential **direct-red-card offence relating to violent conduct, spitting, biting or extremely offensive, insulting and/or abusive action(s)** or if it **continues as/after the kick was taken**. However, as there were **inconsistencies** in VAR intervention, The IFAB has approved a trial whereby the VAR can also intervene when an attacking-team offence occurs **before the ball is in play** and, **immediately after the offence**, a **goal is scored**, a **penalty kick** is awarded or a defending-team player commits an offence punishable by a **red card** for denying a goal or an **obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO)** or by a **second yellow card** for DOGSO or for stopping or interfering with a promising attack (SPA).

Protocol

If an attacker commits an offence before the ball is in play at an **attacking free kick** or a **corner kick** and the on-field match officials do not identify the offence, the **VAR may intervene** and recommend an '**on-field review**' (OFR) when the offence:

- is a potential **sending-off** relating to violent conduct, spitting, biting or extremely offensive, insulting and/or abusive action(s); and/or
- **continues** as/after the ball is kicked; and/or
- occurs **after the referee's signal** (hand/arm and/or whistle) for the kick to be taken and the offence has a **direct and immediate impact** by:
 - **helping the attacking team** to score or create a goal-scoring opportunity; and/or
 - **negatively impacting** the ability of the **defending team** to prevent a goal being scored; and/or
 - resulting in the **defending team** conceding a **penalty kick** and/or committing a **red-card DOGSO** offence or a **second-yellow-card DOGSO/SPA** offence

If, after an **OFR**, the referee decides that an offence occurred, the appropriate **disciplinary action** is **taken/cancelled** and the **kick is retaken** (as per Law 8), except if the **offence continued as/after the ball was kicked**, in which case a free kick is awarded to the defending team.

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