

ENFORCING THE REQUIRED DISTANCE

If the referee decides to delay the restart and to enforce the required minimum distance, he must quickly and emphatically indicate to the attackers that they may not now restart play until given a clear signal to do so. Under these circumstances, an attacker who restarts play without a signal should be verbally warned and, upon repetition, be cautioned for unsporting behavior. An opponent who moves closer to the spot of the kick (from any direction) before it is taken must be cautioned and shown the yellow card if the referee has delayed the restart to ensure that the opponents are at the minimum distance.

If one or more opponents fail to respect the required distance before the ball is properly put into play, the referee should stop the restart to deal with this infringement. The free kick must be retaken even if the momentum of play causes the ball to be kicked before the referee signals. The infringement plus the referee's decision to deal with it cancel any apparent restart regardless of a delay in announcing the decision. However, referees are also expected to consider whether the infringement on the minimum distance was trifling (had no effect on the freedom of the attackers to restart) and, if so, to refrain from issuing a caution and to allow play to proceed.

The referee is expected to deal with opponents who fail to respect the required distance, even in situations in which they were induced to do so by attackers appearing to put the ball into play, but where the ball was not kicked (touched with the foot and moved).

An attacking team which chooses to take a free kick with an opponent closer than the minimum distance may not thereafter claim infringement of the distance requirement, even if the ball is kicked to the infringing opponent, who thereby is able to control the ball without moving toward it. In such a case, the referee cannot caution the opponent who has not remained the required distance from the ball.