

The York Cubs FC

Parent referees course

Mini-soccer handbook supplement



Containing the Mitchell League rule variations and practical guidance for parent referees



The winning goal in the semi final of the Rawcliffe Tournament - York Cubs v Heworth - 14th May 2006

THE MITCHELL LEAGUE VARIATIONS OF THE LAWS OF MINI SOCCER

Please refer to the Mini soccer handbook for the principle laws of the game and use this guide in conjunction with it.

Law 1 – THE PLAYING AREA

Rule variations

The penalty area may be marked with a semi-circle. The radius of this should be 9 yards and the penalty spot should be within the penalty area.

Goals of the correct size (12'x6') must be used and nets must be fitted.

Corner posts and flags must be used. They must be of a flexible material and at least 1.5m or 5 feet in height so that players cannot come into accidental contact with the ends. Home made or wooden posts are not permitted.

In the light of a previously reported fatal accident goals must be checked by the referee before play commences to ensure that they are safe and adequately anchored so as to prevent them toppling forward or otherwise collapsing.

Practical guidance

The overall pitch size is a *recommended and not mandatory*. If the team managers are content to play on an oversize or undersize pitch then the game should take place. It is however not permitted to play mini soccer on an 11-a-side pitch. If either manager refuses to play on a mini-soccer pitch which apart from the size is correctly marked, it is a matter you should ask them to refer to the League committee, there and then by telephone. As a parent referee you should not get into an argument over whether a game (which otherwise may be played in a safe environment) should be abandoned because of the size of the playing area.

Similarly this goes for whether the pitch is clearly marked. There will be occasions when plans break down and cones have to be used to mark the touchlines and the penalty areas. Again if both managers agree to this you should not refuse to allow a game (especially a friendly) to take place because of this particular breach of the rules.

Some clubs will use corner posts and flags and some will not. Be relaxed about their use (especially in friendlies) but if they are used, ensure they are plastic and have no sharp surfaces. If posts but no flags are in place that generally means that the club is trying to comply with the rules but someone has nicked their flags (or they have blown away). Accept the good intentions and allow the game to proceed.

Corner quadrants are not usually marked (for which see guidance under LAW 17 below)

Some clubs have a penalty area with a radius of less than 9 yards, and the penalty spot is on the edge of the area or just outside it. Sometimes a pitch is marked with a rectangular penalty area (as per the original FA mini soccer requirements). Be relaxed about the markings of the playing surface and allow the game to be played provided it is safe to do so.

Goal safety is much overlooked but crucial to providing the safe playing environment that is your responsibility as a referee. If the goals appear to be unsafe you must insist that they be made safe before starting play. If you allow a game to take place when the goals are patently unsafe you are risking an accident. If the goal was to topple over it could seriously injure or even kill a child.

Also you should ensure that the pitch is free of any extraneous articles which may cause injury (eg glass, drinks cans, wood etc). It is particularly important that you check the playing surface before a game where the pitch is open to abuse by the public. This includes checking for dog mess or other pollutants and ensuring that someone (you don't have to do it!) removes it before play starts.

Sometimes the extraneous articles are placed at the side of the pitch by coaches (eg drinks bottle holders). Ensure these moved away from the touchlines so that a player cannot come into contact with them if he accidentally overruns the field of play.

LAW 2 – THE BALL

Rule variations

For under 7s and under 8s a size 3 ball must be used. For under 9s and under 10s a size 4 ball must be used.

Practical guidance

Everyone knows this is the rule and it should be followed. Check the ball before play. It should be correctly inflated so that it feels firm without feeling too hard. The home team has the responsibility to provide the ball for each match although the away team may provide a ball if the home team cannot produce one which is suitable. Check the ball before starting play to make sure that the surface is not torn, which could cut a player when he comes into contact with it, for example, by heading it.

LAW 3 – NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Rule variations

For under 7s and under 8s the game shall consist of 6 players on each team including the goal keeper.

For under 9s and under 10s the game shall consist of 7 players on each team including the goal keeper.

Substitutes: A Club may at its discretion and in accordance with the Laws of the Game use three (3) substitute players in any match. For youth football – for teams in the under 16 age group and below – a player who has been substituted himself becomes a substitute and may replace any other player at any time, subject to the substitution being carried out in accordance with Law 3 of Association Football.

Note: this means that a player may come off the field, be substituted and then come back into the game. However the substitutions must be carried out in accordance with Law 3.1

Practical guidance

Sometimes players will not have sufficient players. The minimum number of players for under 7s & under 8s is 4 and the minimum for under 9s & under 10s is 5. There is no obligation where one team cannot field the required number of players for the opposing team to field the same number.

The procedure to be adopted for allowing substitutions is governed by the complexities of Law 3 (for which see the Laws of the Game file on the CD). However no-one ever follows the procedure to the letter in mini soccer (you will see why when you read the law). All you need to know is that Law 3 boils down to the following obvious points:

- Substitutions are only allowed during a break in play (ie the ball is out of play either because the referee has stopped play or because the ball is off the field of play)
- The referee must be informed and give their consent to the substitution
- The play does not restart until the substituted player has left the field (ie to avoid the team making the substitution from having more players on the field than they are allowed)
- Once a player has been substituted he himself becomes a substitute and may come back on in accordance with this guidance

You will sometimes hear a manager refer to this as “rolling subs”, which means players may ‘roll off’ and ‘roll back on’ the field (although not literally) provided they do so in accordance with the laws of the game.

Strictly speaking a team manager may substitute a player whenever he/she decides to do so but remember that you have control over what happens on the field. Time wasting is not allowed and if you are sure that is what is motivating repeated substitutions late-on in a game the offending team are leading 1-0, then do not give permission, or alternatively make it obvious to everyone that you have stopped your watch and no advantage is being gained.

LAW 4 – PLAYING EQUIPMENT

Rule variations

Where there goalkeeper’s shirt colour is, in the opinion of the referee, so similar to the opposing teams shirt colour that confusion is likely to arise, he shall have the authority to cause the goalkeeper to change his shirt to a colour which distinguishes him/her from the opposition. Note: team managers have the colours of each team in their introduction pack. It is their

¹ For which see the guidance section for this law

responsibility to ensure their goalkeeper's kit is distinguishable from the opposition's shirt colour.

Practical guidance

Week in, week out there are colour clashes on the field of play, and not just with goalkeeper shirts matching those of the opposition. One practical response to this is to take a couple of bibs to games with you (you can bet the opposing coach won't) so the keeper can wear a different colour. The alternative is to ask the team manager to cover the keeper's shirt with a training jacket or something similar. Sometimes turning the shirt inside out would work! It is usually possible to solve the problem but it is your responsibility to make sure that there is no confusion likely to result from a goalkeeper wearing a strip similar to the opposition.

In cold weather your thoughts will turn to child protection and you would want to be sure that players, especially the goalkeepers, are warm enough to play. If a child is shivering uncontrollably in a game **you** must do something about it even if it means a break in the game for them to warm up. Usually the team manager will take the lead in equipping his team but it is not to be taken for granted.

If you see any child wearing jewellery (particularly watches and ear-rings) have them removed. Injuries can be caused by jewellery.

Any player not wearing shin pads (including keepers) must be removed from the field of play until they are worn under the socks, which must be pulled up.

LAW 5 – REFEREES

Rule variations

There are no Mitchell League variations of this rule

Practical guidance

The referees authority

When you referee a game of football, whether you are qualified referee or a parent referee, you are invested with the authority of the Football Association, who will back you and the decisions you make, provided you behave reasonably. This means that if a difficult decision has to be taken then you must take it, if after considering all the practical alternatives there is no other choice. This does not mean that taking the difficult decision is the only way of dealing with a problem (as you will see when dealing with LAW 12 below) but you need not be wary of taking them where there is no other choice.

Injuries

In professional football a practice grew up of players kicking the ball out of play when an opponent had suffered a minor injury so as to stop the game. Grotesquely (though not surprisingly) this act of sportsmanship became corrupted by players pretending to be injured when the other side was in an advantageous situation. In mini soccer the referee has control over when to stop the game. Bearing in mind that you are dealing with children it is not

acceptable to have a child down and obviously distressed and play carry on around him. There are hardly any serious injuries in mini-soccer but there are lots of times when a player takes an accidental whack and collapses into a tearful heap. This is not gamesmanship; the child is hurt and the game should be stopped.

My own preference is to allow the immediate phase of play to resolve [10 to 20 seconds or so, so as not to deny a goal scoring opportunity] and then (1) to tell the player in possession to kick the ball out of play for a throw in. Then the game is stopped and the child receives treatment. Alternatively (2) the game may be stopped (make a mental note of where you have stopped the play and which team was in possession when you stopped it). When the play is restarted do so by a throw-in in the case of (1) which goes unopposed to the team that was in possession before the ball was put out of play, or an unopposed drop ball or (2) in the case of an unopposed drop ball, to the team that was in possession. Explain to the players what you are doing and why you are doing it so that they know when they are permitted to challenge for the ball. Take care to be scrupulous over the way in which play is restarted so as not give unfair advantage to the team that was out of possession when the play was stopped.

Important note: when a player goes down injured you should be aware that to stop the play immediately may give rise to a grievance either (1) because it appears that you have given a foul when you may not have done so (and no-one will then be able to follow why you are now re-starting play with an unopposed drop ball) or (2) because it denies a goal scoring opportunity to a team when they have done nothing wrong. Therefore it is very important first to assess quickly what is happening on the field, and then, when play is stopped to explain so that everyone can hear, why you have stopped the play and how you intend to re-start.

The exception to this is where there is obviously a serious injury or the possibility of a head injury. **In either case you are required to stop play immediately.**

Only give a decision if you are sure of it

It is one of the fundamental rules of refereeing football that the benefit of any doubt goes to the defending team. Therefore if you think the ball may have crossed the goal line you would not give a goal because you were not sure of it. Another example might include contact in the penalty area. Unless you were sure the contact amounted to a foul (for which see LAW 12) you would allow play to continue rather than give a penalty.

In some case you can ask for help. If you are unsighted when a ball goes out of play the spectators will tell you (usually honestly) which team was the last to touch it. Say something like, "I couldn't see – which way did it go out?". The spectators will usually appreciate your honesty and it sets the tone for how you conduct yourself as a referee. You can only do this for minor decisions: was it a corner or a goal kick? Whose throw-in? etc. You would not ask the spectators whether it was a free kick or not, or whether it was handball: some decisions are for you only as the referee.

Changing your mind.

A careful evaluation of the facts before making a decision should mean that the occasions when you think you have given the wrong decision are rare. If you have made a big decision and there is protest from the sidelines if and only if you think on reflection that you might be wrong you are permitted to

change your decision provided that play has not re-started and you have not ended the game.

If you have given a decision and you are no longer sure it was the right one take a moment to think about the decision and then think about whether you should ask both team managers what they think. You may find a disarming degree of honesty and the team manager who might otherwise have taken advantage of a decision they knew was wrong may be more inclined to be honest when you are asking them what they think.

Sometimes it does happen that on reflection everyone agrees what the right decision should have been, but it is wise avoid all of this by taking a moment to be sure about the big decisions before giving them. An away team who have been given a penalty will not take kindly to the referee changing their mind in favour of the home team. There is obviously less likelihood of a 3-way meeting on the touchlines resolving the correctness of giving a penalty than there will be over a free kick on the half way line.

Unauthorised entry onto the field of play
See example below under Law 9

LAW 6 – ASSISTANT REFEREES

This law is unlikely to have any relevance to matches in the Mitchell League.

LAW 7 - THE DURATION OF THE MATCH

Rule variations

For under 7s and under 8s the game shall consist of two halves of 10 minutes each

For under 9s and under 10s the game shall consist of two halves of 15 minutes each

Practical guidance

Time keeping

Usually you will be responsible for keeping time yourself. You are strongly advised to use a stop watch so that it can be shown how long you have played. If you do not have a sports watch available, some mobile phones will have a countdown or stop watch facility. More incidents are caused by a referee apparently allowing too much time at the end of the game for the home team when they are losing than with any other grievance. It can be avoided by using proper kit

Use common sense when calling time at the end of each half. There is nothing more infuriating than a referee who blows the whistle just as a team have a goal scoring opportunity, and the potential for discontent and even disorder cannot be underestimated if the match has been a close affair up to that point. When your watch is about to indicate time, prepare to blow your whistle when the current phase of play has been resolved. This does not mean you have to wait for the ball to go out of play and it does not matter if you overrun time by 30 seconds or so. Blow the whistle during a relatively unimportant phase of play.

As bad as the referee who prevents a goal by being pedantic about timekeeping is the referee who seems determined to play on until the home side score an equaliser. If you are going to add on time for stoppages (see below) let the players know that you have added on time. If you stopped your watch for 2 minutes in a 10 minute game to deal with an injury indicate this when you re-start play by telling the players that you have done it. Addressing the players in a loud enough voice also informs the spectators (and the potential source of trouble) also.

For under 9s and under 10s it is permissible for the second game in a fixture to be reduced to 10 minutes per half provided both managers consent.

Football is a game of two equal halves

In the Mitchell League last year there was an incident where a referee forgot under 9s was a game of two 15 minute halves (it was 10 minutes at under 8s and he just forgot) and compensated for his error by playing 20 minutes in the second half. This caused real problems because the home team were 3-1 down after 15 minutes of the second half but scored twice between 15 and 20 minutes to draw the match. I have some sympathy for the referee but he had no authority to play a second half of 20 minutes duration. In that situation he should have accepted that he had made the wrong decision in the first half by playing too few minutes and not compounded the error by making the wrong decision in the second half and playing too many. A match may accidentally end up as a game of unequal halves but it cannot be designed for that to happen.

Stoppages

There was also another incident (at a York Cubs game) where the referee stopped the watch every time the ball went out of play. Apparently he played 23 minutes of a 15 minute half. The score was 0-1 to the visitors after 15 minutes in the half, and 3-3 after his 23 minutes. The rule which comes out of that example is that the watch should only be stopped for an injury or for deliberate time wasting, and in each case the referee should make it quite clear to the players (and in a voice that the spectators can hear) that he/she has done so. That way everyone can follow why a game has apparently over-run the its allotted time.

Finally this: if you stop the watch remember to start it again after the stoppage. It is surprisingly easy to forget and embarrassing when it happens.

LAW 8 - THE START AND RESTART OF PLAY

Rule variations

There are no Mitchell League variations of this rule

Practical guidance

Before the start of the game invite the team captains to participate in the tossing of a coin (remember the coin – it is easy to forget). The captains particularly like this ritual and responsibility. The team which wins the toss chooses which end to attack in the first half. It is a common myth that the winner of the toss gets to decide whether to kick off or change ends

(although most children believe that winning the toss gives them the kick off).

When about to start the game count the numbers on each team (you will be surprised to learn that at least once per season a team prepares to start a half with too many or too few players on the field), then ask both goalkeepers to signal that they are ready. Then blow your whistle to start the game.

A goal may be scored directly from the kick off.

For free kicks, kick-offs, corners and restarts after a goal has been scored the nearest opponent must be at least 5 yards away when the ball is first played. If opponents encroach within 5 yards the kick must be retaken.

LAW 9 – BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY

Rule variations

There are no Mitchell League variations of this rule

Practical guidance

See above for stopping play when a player is injured and the process of re-starting play afterwards.

Where a spectator (usually but not always a child) prevents the ball from going out of play a referee is expected to use common sense. Even though, within the laws of the game, the ball remains "in play", Law 5 (above) provides the power to stop the match for any "outside interference". It is recommended that the referee stop play and offer an unopposed dropped ball to the team which would otherwise have been awarded a throw in.

LAW 10 – METHOD OF SCORING

Rule variations

There are no Mitchell League variations of this rule

Practical guidance

A referee should signal a goal clearly by saying "goal" and pointing an arm in the air away from the goal and in the direction of the half way line.

The younger the age group the more likely you will be faced with a scrum on the line. You must be sure the whole of the ball has crossed the whole width of the line before a goal may be given.

Special attention must be paid to the goalkeepers in circumstances where they have attempted to make a save but an opponent has nevertheless played the ball into the goal. The rule of association football is where the goalkeeper has the ball *under his/her control* it is not lawful to play it out of the goalkeeper's possession. In practical circumstances this means where a

goalkeeper has a hand on the ball *and* has stopped its motion, if an attacker then kicks it away from the keeper's possession, this is a foul and play should be stopped. There is nothing more guaranteed to upset a young goalkeeper than signalling a goal when he/she thinks they have the ball under their control and an attacker nevertheless kicks it out of their hands.

LAW 11 - OFFSIDE

In mini soccer there is no offside

LAW 12 - FOULS & MISCONDUCT

Fouls

Rule variations

Law 12 as it refers to fouls is repeated here as amended (Mitchell League variations in italics)

A direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences in a manner considered to be careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- Kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
- Trips or attempts to trip an opponent
- Jumps at an opponent
- Charges an opponent
- Strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- Pushes an opponent

A *direct* free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences:

- Tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball, making contact with the opponent before touching the ball
- Holds an opponent
- Spits at an opponent
- Handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within his/her own penalty area)
- Prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his/her hands
- Commits any other offence, not previously mentioned in Law 12, for which play is stopped to caution or dismiss a player

An *indirect* free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a goalkeeper, inside his own penalty area, commits any of the following four offences:

- *takes more than six seconds while controlling the ball with his hands before releasing it from his possession*
- *touches the ball again with his hands after it has been released from his possession and has not touched any other player*

- *touches the ball with his hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a team-mate (note: a keeper still commits an offence under this law if he touches the ball with his foot after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a team-mate and then picks the ball up)*
- *touches the ball with his hands after he has received it directly from a throw-in taken by a team-mate.*

An indirect free kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player, in the opinion of the referee:

- plays in a dangerous manner
- impedes the progress of an opponent (note: this used to be called obstruction)

In the case of an indirect free kick awarded for any offence committed by a team in their own penalty area the kick shall be taken from a point on the D (or penalty area) nearest to where the offence took place.

Practical guidance

In essence this is a simple rule. If something looks like foul play then it will be a foul within the meaning of the rules. It is not necessary to commit to memory every possible technical offence. The areas which need attention in the Mitchell League mini soccer are indirect free kicks. In all practical circumstances these are only awarded when either (1) a goalkeeper picks up a deliberate back pass (the “no back-pass” rule) or when a player has his feet high and close to another player’s head or upper body but does not make contact (the “high feet/dangerous play” rule).

The second simple rule of thumb for referees is that you should be *sure* that foul play has been committed before awarding a free kick to the opposing team.

The meaning of “Tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball . . .”

It is not an offence to make physical contact with an opponent and you will see several examples where players use their bodies legitimately to shield the ball from an opponent.

A ‘tackle’ is the process of depriving a person of possession of the ball.

“Possession” could be defined as having direct influence over the ball’s movement even though the ball may not be physically close. Therefore a person could be in possession of the ball even though they have played it 10 yards in front of them and are chasing it as it moves.

Therefore when a player who is not in possession of the ball attempts to tackle an opponent to gain possession of the ball it is an offence to make contact with the opponent before making contact with the ball. If this happens in the penalty award a penalty, otherwise you award a direct free kick.

Intention generally not relevant

Most instances of foul play can be committed accidentally and the intent of the offending player is irrelevant.

Handball

The exception to this is rule handball, where the touching of the ball with the hand or arm must be deliberate. This is not always easy to decide as it is rare for a child to pick up a ball or deliberately stick out an arm to stop it. Where a child could have avoided the contact and then obtains a benefit from the handball in being able to control the ball to their advantage, I would consider that is pretty good evidence that the handball was deliberate. Where the ball is hit with force and simply hits the hand or arm I would consider that to be accidental.

The penalty kick

Most new referees feel very nervous deciding whether an offence has or has not been committed in the penalty area because of the consequences of giving or failing to give a penalty kick. To overcome this you should, when evaluating whether foul play has occurred, disregard for a moment the consequence of the decision. If the conduct would have been a foul on the half way line it is still a foul in the penalty area. If you are sure it was foul play give the penalty. If you are not sure shout "play-on" and keep the game going. You won't please everyone but you will have applied the rules correctly and done the job properly.

Indirect free kicks

Many young players will have difficulty with the concept of an indirect free kick so you will have to explain it to them. Simply say to the player taking the kick, "It is indirect which means it has to be touched by another player before you can score a goal". Technically you should also raise your hand until such time as the ball has been touched by another player (any player, whether on the same side or an opponent, so a deflection counts for these purposes) but that it for the benefit of the spectators more than for the children.

If a goal is scored directly from a free kick (ie whilst your hand is still in the air) you must disallow the goal and award a goal kick to the opposing team.

Playing the advantage

Where a player has committed a foul the opposition should have the benefit of any advantage. Usually this means they have a free kick. But let's say there is a foul committed on a striker who then gets up and plays the ball into the goal. In fairness the goal should stand because you should not allow the offending team to have the advantage of their foul play. But there is a problem here. If you blow your whistle immediately after the foul all of the players will stop, because technically the play has been stopped. If the striker then scores the spectators and players will complain that it was after you had stopped play. Technically they would be correct.

We get around these competing problems by playing the *advantage rule*. It takes a little experience to know when to play it and when not but I would recommend that if the foul takes place in a position where there is no possibility of an *immediate* goal scoring opportunity then play should be stopped and the free kick awarded. If there is a possibility of a goal scoring opportunity then the referee should shout "play the advantage" and see what happens. If within the next 10 seconds the offended against team obtain any advantage (a shot at goal, retention of possession in a favourable position on the field) then allow play to continue and shout "play on". If they do not obtain any advantage within 10 seconds, stop the play, bring the ball back to

the position where the offence occurred and award the free kick. If the offence occurred in the penalty area award a penalty.

The no back pass rule

It is not an offence for a goal keeper to pick up the ball after it was last played by the feet of a colleague. It only becomes an offence if you are sure the ball was *deliberately passed to him/her*. Usually you can spot this (and it generally only occurs in the older age groups) because a player passes to the keeper, who then panics as an opponent rushes towards him, and he picks up the ball. It is obvious. Any less obvious than this and it is probably not a deliberate back pass.

It is important to note that if you do award a free kick against the goal keeper it is (1) indirect and (2) taken from the edge of the penalty area at the point nearest to where the offence occurred.

Coaches should know that the back pass is prohibited in mini soccer but there are still some who claim not to be aware of it when you first penalise their keeper. It is a good idea to mention it to them at your meeting with them before the kick off.

Tackling an opponent from behind

This is not permitted and if the tackle comes directly from behind (ie so the opponent could not see it coming) this is a foul regardless of whether contact is made with the ball first. You will not see many tackles from behind in junior football and almost all are from the sides or the front. However if you do see one you should penalise it and explain to the player why they are not allowed to tackle in that manner.

LAW 12 - FOULS & MISCONDUCT

Misconduct - Cautionable offences and sending off-offences

Rule variations

There are no Mitchell League variations to this part of Law 12

Practical guidance

Cautioning or sending off is a serious step and one which, in mini soccer should be reserved for the most serious incidents. If you caution or send a player off you will be required to report the matter to the League for disciplinary action to be taken.

You should use your common sense knowledge of children of this age to decide whether an action is intended or merely the result of over-enthusiasm or naïve recklessness.

Apart from the most obvious examples, which would include fighting or deliberately taking revenge on a player by violent conduct, the power to caution or send off should be exercised sparingly. There are many offences, some comparatively trivial for which a player may be cautioned and there is nothing more guaranteed to raise the temperature on the touchline than a team have one of their players cautioned (or even sent off) for an offence which may be against the rules but is not particularly culpable.

In 4 years of refereeing mini-soccer I have never seen an incident bad enough to warrant a sending off and only even *heard* of one incident, so although this is a serious issue it is highly unlikely to ever arise in any game in which you are refereeing; but if it does there are some alternative ways to deal with the incident to reduce the temperature of the game.

Alternative solutions

If a player commits a serious foul, is abusive, is constantly breaching the rules, or is guilty of unsporting behaviour then it would be appropriate to speak to the player during a break in play to warn him about his conduct. Try to speak to the child at a place on the field where they are away from their own team's spectators and warn them that if the behaviour occurs again you will either caution them or ask their coach to take them off (it is usually the latter threat that carries more weight). Children react differently to being told off and some will be sullen. I would suggest that you only escalate the action if the response is obviously abusive or insolent, or otherwise challenging to your authority.

If you need to take the matter further because of the reaction, then carry through the threat by asking the player to follow you to the team manager. Then explain to the manager why you have rebuked the player and the player's insolence in response. Then tell the team manager that if the original conduct is repeated you will caution the player or send him/her off. Do not get into an argument with the team manager as the player will think he has the manager's support. If the conduct is repeated carry through the threat and caution or dismiss.

Where a player starts fighting or behaves violently then I would seriously consider sending the player off. If you decide to do so you might want to consider an intermediate step first (but whether you do is a matter for your own judgement). An alternative way of dealing with it is to explain to the team manager that you are intending to dismiss the player and ask him/her voluntarily to remove the player for the rest of the game. If the team manager refuses then dismiss the player. You have made the threat conditionally, the alternative has been rejected and you now need to maintain authority by carrying through the threat. If however the coach agrees to your suggestion it is up to you whether you allow a substitution. Obviously, if a player is dismissed he cannot be replaced.

Record keeping

If you caution or dismiss a player write a brief report of what happened as soon as possible after the game has finished. Pass this on to your own club's team manager and he will give it to me for submission to the League.

LAW 13 – FREE KICKS

Rule variations

There are no Mitchell League variations of this rule, except that the Mitchell League allows indirect free kicks (see above).

Practical guidance

The difference between direct and indirect free kicks and the position of free kicks is dealt with in the section on foul play.

LAW 14 – THE PENALTY KICK

Rule variations

There are no Mitchell League variations of this rule.

Practical guidance

Sometimes you cannot see the penalty mark. If this is the case make 8 paces from the middle of the goal line and place the ball at that point.

Specifically tell the penalty taker to wait for your signal to take the penalty. Often you will have signalled for a penalty and then have to deal with the consequences of the foul which preceded it. A player may be injured and crying and require attention. In the meantime the player taking the kick will be nervous and might become over-excited. If he/she takes the kick before you have signalled you must order the kick to be re-taken.

Encroachment into the area when all the players are behind the kicker (as they should be) is comparatively rare because the area is so small. It is also comparatively rare for a keeper to move off his line. The keeper is allowed to move laterally along the line before the ball is kicked but not move forward.

Remember that you must always add on sufficient time at the end of the game for a penalty to be taken or re-taken, regardless of the time showing on your watch.

LAW 15 – THE THROW IN

Rule variations

There are no Mitchell League variations of this rule.

Practical guidance

The throw in is one of the more difficult techniques to master and you will find children of all ages lifting their feet or failing to deliver the ball from behind their head. The younger the child the more patience is necessary, even to the extent sometimes of demonstrating how to do it. You will rarely, if ever, give a foul for an incorrect throw in at under 7 and under 8. At under 9 and under 10 it may be a question or warning first and eventually awarding a foul to the other team if there are repeated infringements. Usually however the fair response is to make them take the throw again, this time correctly. Sometimes, particularly at under 10, good players will subvert the rule because they can throw further on a small pitch by lifting up their feet than they can by conforming to the correct procedure. If they are doing it deliberately for advantage they should be penalised if they have ignored several warnings.

Often a throw in is taken down the line and it never actually comes into play. Remember that the throw in is taken from outside the playing area (even if both feet are on the line) and the whole of the ball must cross the touchline

in the air for the ball to be in play. In this situation simply order the throw to be re-taken from the same place.

LAW 16 – THE GOAL KICK

Rule variations

There are no Mitchell League variations of this rule.

Practical guidance

The ball is not in play until it comes out of the penalty area. Therefore if a player touches the ball in the penalty area the kick is re-taken.

Normally you would not need to blow your whistle to give permission for the kick to be taken. Allow the player to get on with it in their own time.

LAW 17 - THE CORNER KICK

Rule variations

There are no Mitchell League variations of this rule.

Practical guidance

Sometimes corner flags will not be used even though they should be (see Law 1). There is no requirement for corner quadrants in mini soccer and where they are absent it is the duty of the referee to ensure that a player taking the corner places the ball within 3 feet of the goal line and the touch line. Experience has shown that children attempt to place the ball as far from the goal line as will allow them to shoot directly at goal. This is against the spirit of the rules and the 3 feet max distance should be enforced.

A goal can be scored directly from a corner and many children will try it. If the ball however goes directly behind the posts the correct decision is to award a goal kick to the opposing team as the ball was on the field of play and then was kicked out.

With older children the penalty area may become a little boisterous at times. Watch out for holding and elbowing (both of which occur more frequently than you would expect in under 9s and under 10s) and be quick to award a foul against the attacking team when you see it. Punish any *blatant* example of this behaviour by a defender with a penalty kick.