

# Guidance to Referee's Football Championship 2026

## Document 2

9<sup>th</sup> April 2026

This document explains how certain football rules will be applied in all inter-county games. These points were covered at the pre-championship seminar, where a review of the league regarding officiating were covered.

They are **additional guidance only**. All existing rules in the Rule Book still apply in full.

The aim is to give teams clear information on what referees have been agreed to do, and to support open communication between teams and match officials.

It is the intention to continue to communicate after Referee's seminars to update teams on instructions and discussions of the National Panel.

At the recent football Championship Referees Seminar, held last weekend with the SCPR Chairperson, Liam Keane and Seamus Kenny.

### Rule 5.42 Delay Fouling

During the review of the league in particular incident at the end of the Division 2 League final.

It was agreed that in that incident:

- A Black card was correct, but
- The ball should also have been moved forward 50 meters under Rule 5.42

#### Rule 5.42 states:

*Notwithstanding any other provision in these Rules, where a foul is committed for the purpose of delaying play, the penalty shall, (in addition to being cautioned or ordered off, where appropriate) be a free kick 50m more advantageous than the position where the foul occurred – up to the opponent's 13m line. However, the opponents of the team conceding the foul may*

*(a) Take a free kick from the place where the foul occurred*

*(b) Take a Solo and Go, immediately, from that position*

*(c) Take a free kick from outside the 40m arc though the application of this Rule would otherwise result in a free kick from inside the 40m arc.*

From now on, if the referee decides that a foul has also delayed the game, the ball should be moved forward 50 metres, as well as any other punishment (such as a black card or free) that applies.

## The referee shall signal this penalty by extending either arm sideways.

Players who are claiming the kick out mark free are reminded that they must put up their hand to indicate they are availing of free kick. Rule 2.12 (i)(a). If they do not and stand stationary longer than the time needed to take four steps maybe penalised for overholding.

## Technical Fouls

The following technical fouls were discussed,

**Rule 4.1** To carry or overhold the ball

**Rule 4.2** (a) To throw the ball, (b) to handpass the ball without: (i) it being fisted or (ii) it being struck with an open hand with a definite underhand striking action. (to be aware especially when the players are coming around to player in possession).

## 4/3 Structure

A team will not be penalised for a 4/3 structure breach before the ball is kicked from a kickout, 45, or free kick. There was a discussion around the implementation of the rule and incidents that occurred.

### Please note the following rules around the mark:

**Rule 2.14** for the exceptions to be invoked all conditions should be met.

**Rule 4.35** it is specific regarding the act of carrying, receiving or intercepting the ball, these are the only incidents where a free is from the halfway line

**Rule 4.36**, is for all other incidents regarding breaching 4 v 3

## Aggressive Fouls

A reminder that if a player strikes or attempts to strike an opponent to the head or face or if they interfere with or apply any form of restraint to the neck or throat area of an opponent, this constitutes behaviour which is dangerous to an opponent and should be treated as a Category III Infraction, as adopted by Central Council on 18 January 2025

Referees have a responsibility to **protect players**, and these types of actions will be dealt with firmly

Players are responsible for the contact they make and must be aware of their **duty of care** to opponents.

Discussion around the additional black card rule, in denying a goalscoring opportunity by pulling the opponent jersey.

There was also discussion on: The **additional black card rule** for **denying a clear goal-scoring opportunity by pulling an opponent's jersey**.

## Advantage

**2.13** When a Foul is committed, the Referee may allow the play to continue if the Referee considers that this presents the **potential of a goal scoring opportunity or another advantage to the team offended**. (Time and space would be considered an advantage)

The Referee shall signal that advantage by raising an arm upright and shall allow the advantage to run by maintaining that arm in the upright position until it becomes clear that no advantage has accrued. Referee should verbalise when Advantage on or Advantage over

## Dissent

Evidence of players showing dissent - a reminder that it is a 50m penalty if a player shows dissent with the Referee's decision to award a free to the opposing team.

In the case of a team with dual captains, or if the captain is replaced only one player should be nominated as the captain on the field.

### Discussion was around the following

1. **Rule 6.8 – Only the Captain Speaks to the Referee.** Only the team captain is allowed to speak to the referee about decisions. This should be communicated to all players. Players who ignore this may be penalised.
2. Rule 6.7. Team officials (managers, selectors, etc.) can be penalised for misconduct on the sideline under this rule
3. **Disruptive Conduct – Dissent (Rule 6.7(c)(ii))**, If team official commits any of the mentioned infractions, **immediately before the start of the game or during half-time**, the game will (re)start with a **13m free** to the opposing team

## Injured Players

### 1.5 Injuries

(a) Injuries: General - Play shall not be stopped for injury to a player, except in exceptional circumstances to enable a seriously injured player to be treated on the field or removed from the field of play. All other Injuries shall be treated off the field of play. An injured player shall leave the field at the nearest point.

The player may at a break in play, and only with the referee's permission, return to the Field of Play at the centre point of either sideline.

It is the Referee who decides whether a player is seriously injured, and he will consider the circumstances around the incident to adjudicate.

Teams are encouraged:

To have the medical team speak with the referee **at least 20 minutes before the game,**

To agree how injuries will be managed and ensure clear understanding on both sides, in the interest of player welfare.

#### Player Treatment and Return to Play

If play is stopped for an injured player and they are treated on the field, they will normally be asked to leave the field and may return at the next break in play.

If the referee believes the injury is serious, the player will not be asked to leave the field.

Teams should use this guidance to prepare players, team officials, and medical staff so that everyone understands how referees have been instructed to apply the rules.

## Match Day Regulations

### Half – Time: Rule 3 – Time

3.3 An interval, not exceeding ten minutes, shall be allowed at half-time, following which the teams shall change ends.

Exception:

In Inter-County Senior games, the interval shall consist of a maximum of fifteen minutes.

The discussion regarding Match Day regulations and ensuring that Management teams are in their designated areas outside the pitch enclosure. It is noticeable that there are increasing numbers at pitch side the regulations should be followed.