



To: National Referees
National Instructors
National Assessors
State Referee Administrators
State Directors of Instruction
State Directors of Assessment

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Subject: The Status of Players Who Are Sent Off

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In a recent World Cup match, several players who had been sent off were seen to be still within the stadium walls and arguably within the area of the field. This has raised questions as to the practical result of being “sent from the field.”

The Laws of the Game provide that players, substitutes and substituted players who are sent off for misconduct are required to leave the field. There is no further indication of what this means, what someone who has been sent off may or may not do thereafter, or what authority the referee has regarding this person. Except as may be otherwise noted, the term “player” hereafter is intended to include substitutes and substituted players.

Referees must keep in mind the following four basic principles:

- The purpose of “sending off” a player is to ensure that this person no longer takes any further part in the match (sometimes referred to as being “out of sight, out of sound”).
- “Leaving the field” is generally interpreted as meaning “the area of the field” and is therefore not limited to its formal boundaries (touch lines and goal lines). Accordingly, technical areas and team benches are to be considered within the area of the field.
- With the exception of youth players where continued adult supervision might be needed, players sent off are expected to have no further contact or involvement with their team.
- The *rules of competition* may define, for any given facility or match location, where players who are sent off are required to go. To the extent such rules are not inconsistent with these principles, they should be followed.

Based on the above principles, referees should note the following guidelines for specific situations that may arise:

- In the absence of more restrictive *rules of competition*, the referee has the authority to define “the area of the field” and to require players who have been sent off to exit this area. The referee is encouraged to use existing features which clearly demarcate the area of the field (e.g., fences, walls, ropes).
- A player who has left the area of the field but who remains in or returns to the facility (e.g., sits in the stands or spectator area) should not continue to wear the team’s uniform.
- The referee, with the assistance of the fourth official and the assistant referees, is encouraged to enlist the aid of competition authority officials, facility managers, and on-site security staff to enforce these requirements.
- A youth player who is being allowed to remain with the team or any player who is out of the area of the field but still within the general facility cannot continue to commit misconduct since the most serious penalty allowed by the Law (send off) has already occurred.
- Further inappropriate conduct by a player under these circumstances may, depending on the severity of the behavior, result in the referee suspending or terminating the match. Under all circumstances, full details must be included in the match report.