



To all national football associations  
and confederations

Circular no. 26

## Law 11 – Offside

Clarification of the guidelines to distinguish  
between ‘deliberate play’ and ‘deflection’

Zurich, 27 July 2022  
SEC/2022-C394/bru

Dear Sir or Madam,

Following a number of high-profile situations and based on the expectation that a player who is clearly in an offside position should not become 'onside' on all occasions when an opponent moves and touches the ball, The IFAB and FIFA, after discussions with football stakeholders, have clarified the guidelines for distinguishing between 'deliberate play' and 'deflection'.

The relevant part of Law 11 states as follows (emphasis added):

**2. Offside offence**

*A player in an offside position at the moment the ball is played or touched by a team-mate is only penalised on becoming involved in active play by:*

*(...)*

- *gaining an advantage by playing the ball or interfering with an opponent when it has:*
  - *rebounded or been **deflected** off the goalpost, crossbar, match official or an opponent*

*(...)*

*A player in an offside position receiving the ball from an opponent who **deliberately plays** the ball, including by deliberate handball, is not considered to have gained an advantage, unless it was a deliberate save by any opponent.*

No change to Law 11 is necessary but, to reflect football's expectation, the guidelines for distinguishing between 'deliberate play' and 'deflection' are clarified as follows:

*'Deliberate play' is when a player has control of the ball with the possibility of:*

- *passing the ball to a team-mate; or*
- *gaining possession of the ball; or*
- *clearing the ball (e.g. by kicking or heading it).*

*If the pass, attempt to gain possession or clearance by the player in control of the ball is inaccurate or unsuccessful, this does not negate the fact that the player 'deliberately played' the ball.*

The following criteria should be used, as appropriate, as indicators that a player was in control of the ball and, as a result, 'deliberately played' the ball:

- The ball travelled from distance and the player had a clear view of it
- The ball was not moving quickly
- The direction of the ball was not unexpected
- The player had time to coordinate their body movement, i.e. it was not a case of instinctive stretching or jumping, or a movement that achieved limited contact/control
- A ball moving on the ground is easier to play than a ball in the air

We would be grateful if the clarification of the 'deliberate play' guidelines, which does not constitute a Law change, could be drawn to the attention of your match officials and football stakeholders. Clips of '**deliberate play**' and '**deflection (not "deliberate play")**' can be found here:

<https://red.fifa.com/play/collection/13010/Law11-Offside:deliberateplayanddeflection?cld=16&itemId=12995>

Thank you for your attention. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or enquiries.

Yours sincerely,  
The IFAB



Lukas Brud  
Secretary

Cc: FIFA