

I have an interesting video that perhaps demonstrates one of the nuances in determining a hand ball decision by a referee.

NFHS defines a hand ball as follows, page 56, “A player shall be penalized for deliberately handling, carrying, striking, or propelling the ball

with the hand or arm.” The only clarity included with rule 12 section 2 article 1 is “For the purposes of determining handling offenses, the upper boundary of the arm is in line with the bottom of the armpit.”

That clarity was introduced in the FIFA/USSF Laws of The Game a few years before it made its way into this year’s NFHS rulebook. Other FIFA/USSF “clarity”

has been presented over the past several years. Not all of it is written into the NFHS Rulebook. I am going to cite one of the FIFA/USSF hand ball clarifications:

IFAB/FIFA language:

Following this clarification, it is a handball offence if a player:

deliberately touches the ball with their hand/arm, for example moving the hand/arm towards the ball.

touches the ball with their hand/arm when it has made their body unnaturally bigger. A player is considered to have made their body unnaturally bigger when the position of their hand/arm is not a consequence of, or justifiable by, the player’s body movement for that specific situation. By having their hand/arm in such a position, the player takes a risk of their hand/arm being hit by the ball and being penalized; or

scores in the opponents’ goal:

directly from their hand/arm, even if accidental, including by the goalkeeper; or

immediately after the ball has touched their hand/arm, even if accidental.

Traditionally, the specifics we as officials have used to define for ourselves how to call hand ball have derived from the more precise (albeit sometimes confusing) USSF/FIFA clarifications per the IFAB Laws.

NFHS has a bit more “gray area” than FIFA/USSF but, to its rulebook editor’s credit, it is simple.

Keeping all of these things in mind, I’d like to share this video and perhaps spark some internal reflection about how as an official one approaches the call of hand ball. Please watch and just THINK ABOUT IT.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1axgEoh_FQf9PkTk7mFnUJYrs7eRkaYR9/view?usp=sharing