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Referee Programs

U.S. Soccer Referee Week in Review - Week 17



The ussoccer.com Referee Week in Review is designed to address the issues facing referees at all levels by using video highlights from professional games as well as the U.S. National Teams. Written by U.S. Soccer Director of Referee Development Paul Tamberino and U.S. Soccer Manager of Assessment and Training Brian Hall, the Referee Week in Review will highlight specific areas of focus and current U.S. Soccer initiatives designed to improve performance and aid in the development of officials across the country.

Referee Week In Review Week 17 – ending July 20, 2008 WEEK 17 OVERVIEW

Five MLS matches were played in Week 17. Interestingly, each game resulted in a tie. Foul count was down with an average of 22.8 fouls per game called as compared to the more than 25 fouls a game whistled in recent weeks. Additionally, a red card was issued to a substitute warming up.

Week 17 also saw the completion of the inaugural U.S. Soccer Development Academy Finals Week in Carson, Calif. Paul Tamberino, Alfred Kleinaitis, Brian Hall, Herb Silva and Dick Triche were in attendance providing daily game analysis and mentoring through the eight days of competition. Joining the U.S. Soccer Referee Department staff were full-time professional referees Baldomero Toledo, Terry Vaughn, Jair Marrufo and Ricardo Salazar. As a result, the 11 participating invited referees were given the opportunity to referee very competitive games in a professional environment and were presented the opportunity to interact with current MLS and international referees.

- *On the ussoccer.com web page, you can listen to weekly podcasts highlighting the main issues from the "Referee Week in Review" document. On the ussoccer.com homepage, look mid page for the tab that says "Podcasts."*

WEEK 17 COMMENTARY

Substitute Cautioned and Sent Off

This past week a substitute warming up was first cautioned and then sent off (red carded) for improper behavior. The Laws of the Game specifically empower the referee to caution or send off any "player, substitute, or substituted player." In each case, the referee must show the yellow or red card. A unique situation arose in the game, in which a substitute who was warming up behind the goal line but near the senior assistant referee (AR) became verbally involved with the AR.

Substitute players are held to the same standard as players regarding conduct despite being off the field. Consequently, they may be cautioned or red carded. The Laws give the referee the power to caution a substitute or substituted player if he commits any of the following three offenses:

- Unsporting behavior,
- Dissent by word or action, and
- Delaying the restart of play.

Note: substitutes and substituted players cannot be cautioned for the four (of seven) other offences for which players can receive a yellow card.

Video Clip 1: Real Salt Lake at Chicago (73:50)

This clip shows a substitute player who is cautioned for dissent and then given a straight red card for "using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures." Notice the substitute players warming up behind the goal line as play is in progress. This is the designated area at this stadium for substitutes to warm up. Despite being in front of the sign boards, the subs are not permitted to approach the field or the AR to express their opinions, dissent, or become involved in any interaction with any active player.

Watch at 73:59 as the AR signals to the referee to caution one of the substitutes warming up. Although the clip does not show it, the referee displays the yellow card to the sub after cautioning the defender for the foul. The referee's initial focus is on the two players involved in the foul as this is the situation that has the opportunity to escalate. Hence, the referee only deals with the substitute after he has dealt with the other two players and he is certain that the initial situation has been resolved. Once the referee feels the first situation is resolved, he can turn his attention to the act of the substitute and caution him, based upon the information received from the AR, for dissent by word and action. At the time the caution is issued, the referee warns the player that further misconduct will result in him being sent off.

Just over a minute later, as play is being restarted from the spot of the foul, the AR gets the referee's attention by wiggling his flag overhead and calling him over. At this time, the referee approaches the AR and is advised to red card the player for using offensive, insulting or abusive language. Refer to "Referee Week In Review 14" for a set of standards officials can utilize to define dissent and abusive language: public, personal, and provocative. (***Click on this link to refer to "Week In Review 14" for further information***) The referee correctly displays the red card and motions to the player to leave the area around the field of play.

Note: it is not recommended that a referee leave the field of play to display a card to a substitute or a substituted player. Referees should attempt to remain on the field of play as substitutes may not enter the field without your permission and the boundary lines create another visual barrier between the referee and the substitutes.

Offside: Gaining an Advantage

Video clip 2 is a classic example of a player who is in an offside position being declared offside for "gaining an advantage by being in that position." A player who is in an offside position at the time the ball is played by a teammate is considered to be gaining an advantage by being in that position when he "plays a ball that rebounds to him off a goalpost or the crossbar having been in an offside position or playing a ball that rebounds to him off an opponent having been in an offside position." In other words, an attacker (in an offside position at the moment the ball is played by a teammate) must be declared offside if they play a ball that has rebounded off any part of the goal or the goalkeeper (in this case).

Video Clip 2: FC Dallas at Colorado (86:25)

Off a long throw in, the ball lands around the penalty mark and is poorly cleared to the top of the penalty box by the defending team. At this point, an attacker drives a shot that the goalkeeper is unable to hold. The ball rebounds from the goalkeeper and it is then kicked into the goal by a teammate of the attacker. The referee, based upon appropriate advice from the AR, correctly disallows the goal for offside.

ARs must be alert and be able to quickly identify attacking player positions when play is around the penalty area. This is especially true as there is very little reaction time for ARs as the penalty area is normally very congested with bodies moving in a multitude of directions. Additionally, the speed at which the shot takes place provides additional complications as it gives very little time for the AR to make a mental note of player positions. An experienced AR is able to take a snapshot of defending and attacking player positions at the moment the ball is shot. This snapshot gives the AR a frozen image of player positions until the next phase of play.

Given the requirements of the Law 11 – Offside, the ball rebounding off the goalkeeper or goal does NOT constitute a new phase of play. Consequently, the AR must keep the same snapshot that he took at the initial shot on goal as the rebounding of the ball does not nullify an offside position that existed at that time.

Of special interest is the position of a second offside attacker at the time of the shot. This player, to the goalkeeper's left, may also be declared offside if the AR and referee believe that this player's offside position "interfered with an opponent" by preventing the opponent from playing or being able to play the ball by clearly obstructing the opponent's line of vision or movements. The opponent that would be "interfered with" in this clip is the goalkeeper. Look at the attacker's position at the time of the shot. The attacker is not only in an offside position but he may be judged to be in direct line of the goalkeeper's vision of the ball as it is shot. If this is the case, this player could also be considered to be offside and may be punished for being offside.

Penalty Kick Management

Management of restarts is a critical component of a referee's job description. Referees must work diligently to get the game restarted as quickly as possible as the enjoyment for the spectators is negatively impacted when the ball is not moving. In addition, when the ball is out of play, players tend to focus their attention on the referee and the opponent instead of chasing/playing the ball. The result can be many extracurricular activities and increased frustration levels of the players. Therefore, it is vitally important that referees possess the skill to get the game restarted quickly at any stoppage.

Video Clip 3: San Jose at TFC (66:50)

The referee awards a penalty kick. It takes the referee over two minutes to have the kick taken. The official takes too much time explaining his decision and managing the players. Then, at the taking of the kick, players encroach and no action is taken. Watch as players from both teams encroach prior to the taking of the kick. Given this, the kick must be retaken.

The referee has made his decision and must not allow so much discussion and dissent. The referee must find a way to send a message through stronger body language or a caution for dissent, that the players that he has allowed to engage him must cease their actions. Penalty kicks, just by their very nature, are contentious events. However, the referee must be prepared for some dissent but he must also be prepared to "draw his line in the sand" and ensure that penalty kick is taken in a reasonable time and without undo distractions to the team taking the kick.

WEEK 18 FOCUS**Preparation and Participation**

Referees, ARs and Referee Inspectors working MLS games will be attending a three day seminar in Dallas, Texas, starting July 24, 2008. The objective of the seminar is to prepare officials for the second half of the professional league season. Participants have been sent a CD containing the topics and associated video clips for discussion. The seminar is set up to be an interactive session led by Paul Tamberino, Alfred Kleinaitis, Brian Hall, Herb Silva and Joe Guest (Canadian Soccer Association).

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