



Close

Referee Programs

U.S. Soccer Referee Week in Review - Week 29



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 29 – ending October 12, 2008

WEEK 29 OVERVIEW

Of seven games this past week three ended in one goal victories exemplifying the competitiveness of the playoff push. Maybe even more indicative of the “will to win” attitude of the players and teams is the fact that of the 29 yellow cards issued, 86.2% were issued in the second half. The 29 cautions represent an average of 4.14 per game up from the season average of 3.26. Only four cautions were given by referees in the first half of play. Realizing that their playoff hopes ride on the outcome of the game, players are raising their intensity level since the result of the game is often decided in the final minutes of play.

With two weeks of games remaining and three playoff places up for grabs, every decision by the referee crew will be under the microscope and scrutinized thoroughly. For this reason, the last three “Week In Reviews” have focused on the physiological and psychological preparation of the referee team. The goal has been to ensure the officials’ mentality is prepared for the player and team mentality as the regular season comes to its dramatic and intensely contested close.

- *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 29 COMMENTARY

Referee and Assistant Referee Cooperation

This past week provided two contrasting examples of assistant referees (ARs) faced with situations requiring their involvement. Interestingly, both cases involved a handling offense. Since July, a lot of attention has been given to helping officials define “handling.” Two different examples of handling fouls occurred over the weekend. Both, however, fall under the guidelines previously presented (most recently in “Week In Review 27”). ([click on this link to access](#))

Based upon the concepts provided in the prior “Week In Reviews,” the idea of a defender “making himself bigger” in an attempt to take away the options of the opponent with the ball has become a significant component in defining handling. The Laws of the Game, Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct, also instructs referees to send-off a player for handling when the player “denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to a goalkeeper within his own penalty area).” This handling offence is a less frequently seen example of denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity (DOGSO) that has been previously addressed in “Week In Review 25” ([click on this link to access](#)) and others.

Video Clip 1: Colorado at Galaxy (86:45)

This clip provides a fantastic illustration of an AR becoming involved in a critical decision because the game and the referee needed it. Under the framework provided in “Week In Review 11,” ARs were asked to think about the following question prior to raising the flag: “If I raise the flag, do I interfere with the referee, and if I don’t raise the flag, do I fail the game?”

The “Week In Review 11” framework asked ARs and fourth officials to consider two factors as they answered the aforementioned question:

- **Does the referee have a clear view of the incident?**

Was the infraction such that the referee can clearly see the play and make the decision? Where is the referee positioned? Is he close enough to the play to make the decision on his own? If you answer, "no, the referee did not see it" then you can consider the next question.

- **Did I clearly see the infraction?**

If there is any doubt as to what you saw, leave the decision to the referee unless the referee looks to you for assistance because he also senses there is an issue. If this is the case, then you need to balance your participation based upon your "gut" feeling and how committed you are to the other questions you must answer.

If the referee does not have a clear view but you did, the incident necessitates your involvement. This is what occurs in this clip. First, the AR determines that the referee did not clearly see the "making himself bigger" infraction (handling) due to the fact that the handling occurs on the far side of the referee. Secondly, the AR has decided that he clearly observed the action and it requires his raising the flag to draw it to the referee's attention. This is a correct decision especially considering that it will result in a penalty kick.

Note: Depending upon the referee's and/or ARs view of the "big picture" of the game and his interpretation of the outcome of the service/shot before it was handled, the referee may decide to caution the defender for unsporting behavior.

Video Clip 2: DC at Houston (75:12)

A deliberate handling of the ball by the goalkeeper outside the penalty area is the focus of this clip. A 40 to 45 yard pass has been made that is mis-trapped by the defender. As a result of the faulty control, the ball ends up at the feet of an attacker. The goalkeeper has charged outside of the penalty area to close down the attacker. The attacker, however, gets to the ball before the keeper and touches the ball over the goalkeeper's head. As the goalkeeper (the last defender) goes down, he "makes himself bigger" by extending his arms above his head to prevent the ball from getting behind him thereby using his arms to take away the attacker's space/options.

Unfortunately, the referee team misses the handling offense by the goalkeeper that should have resulted in a red card for DOGSO and a free kick. Several items may have been done to increase the likelihood that the referee team gets the call correct.

- **Referee's position**

Starting with the throw-in, the referee begins too close to the touchline. By starting further to the center of the field, the referee would have a better view of the play as it progresses and, ultimately, of the handball. Because his starting position is so close to the thrower, as a result of the 40 to 45 yard service, he is immediately in a deficit position. The referee's position only allows him to see the back of the attacker whereas a wider position would enable him to have a better perspective (side on view) of the goalkeeper and his contact with the ball. As the play builds, the best view is between the attacker and the defender on the left (the space between these players gives a clear angle of vision of the offense) which could have been facilitated with a wider starting position beginning at the throw-in.

- **ARs position**

The AR is trailing the play by several steps. This is an unfortunate result of the long pass. By trailing play, the ARs view is not optimal. He is forced to look through the right defender and, as a consequence, the ARs view of the contact with the ball may be obstructed. A more level view, if possible, would provide the AR with a better chance of observing the handling offense by the goalkeeper. In similar cases, ARs must possess keen sprinting ability in order to close down the distance between the ARs position and the play.

- **Referee and AR contact: eye and/or electronic flags**

If the referee and AR sense or "smell" an offense but are not 100 percent certain, eye contact must be made. Such eye contact would be confirmation that both officials have a "gut" feel that an offense has occurred and therefore the referee can feel more confident that a whistle is required. Another tool is the signal or beeper flags. ARs with these electronic flags should use them to beep the referee to indicate that they feel an infringement has occurred but that they are not 100 percent. Therefore, without committing the referee to a decision by raising the flag, the AR can send a message about his "gut" feeling.

- **Recognition of the warning signs**

In this case, there are a few warning signs that a handling offense has occurred:

- The manner in which the ball continued forward albeit at a changed trajectory. If the ball would have hit a solid, hard object like the goalkeeper's feet, it may have popped up or just stopped. In this case, the pace of the ball is reduced but it continues forward which is the likely result from it striking a softer, more flexible surface like the goalkeeper's hands.
- The reaction of the defender on the left. He initially starts to reach for the ball but then stops after the ball hits the keeper's hand.
- The reaction of the two attacking players. It is immediate and they point to their hands.

Any of these warning signs alone may not be sufficient to call a foul but if the officials "smell" an infraction, these signs may help to direct the decision.

Offside: Unusual but True

This week an important but relatively infrequent offside situation arose. This unusual situation conveys the importance of ARs and referees always thinking through the Laws of the Game and being prepared for issues that do not normally test officials.

Officials must be ready to deal with the unexpected and be ready to deal with the infrequent. This is part of preparation. Officials must constantly be a student of the game and constantly review all aspects of the game regardless of how minor or how infrequent. The following clip provides an example of an AR decision that must be made rapidly despite their rarity.

Video Clip 3: Columbus at Chicago (12:08 – second half)

The first infrequent offside decision to be reviewed is one that comes off a goal kick. Law 11 – Offside, states:

There is no offside offense if a player receives the ball directly from:

- A goal kick
- A throw-in
- A corner kick

In this game, the goalkeeper takes a long goal kick in which a defender jumps up to head but does not connect. The ball then bounces to an attacker who was in an offside position at the time the goal kick was taken. However, pursuant to the Law, this offside positioned player cannot be declared offside because he received the ball directly from the goal kick. Even if the ball had last been played or headed by the defender who misses the ball, the offside player could not be declared offside as this would be considered the same phase of play and another attacker has not played or touched the ball after the goal kick.

In other words, the attacking team gets a “free pass” off a goal kick until the ball is played or touched by another attacker. At this time, the next phase of play begins and players in offside positions can now be judged to be offside if they are involved in active play by:

- Interfering with play; or
- Interfering with an opponent; or
- Gaining an advantage by being in that position.

Long goal kick situations are becoming a common occurrence in the game as players (especially goalkeepers) become more skilled at taking long goal kicks. Goal kicks no longer reach just the halfway line. Players are now skilled and strong enough to send goal kicks well into the attacking half of the field thereby creating additional offside judgments for ARs.

Encroachment at the Taking of a Penalty Kick

Attacking and defending players want to get an edge at the taking of a penalty kick. In the event of a save or rebound, players want to be in a strategic position to play the next ball. Consequently, they will try to be one step ahead of the opponent.

“Week In Review 9” first addressed the issue of encroachment at the taking of a penalty kick. Remember, on August 1, 2007, a U.S. Soccer position paper, “Violations of Law 14 (The Penalty Kick),” was published outlining the outcomes of various violations relating to Law 14 (**[click on the link to view the position paper](#)**). This position paper reviews the scenarios facing a referee relating to violations by the kicker, other attackers, defenders and the goalkeeper.

Video Clip 4: Toronto at Dallas (91:15)

The referee has awarded a penalty kick and prior to whistling for the kick to be taken the referee has ensured that all players are properly positioned, the kicker has been identified to the goalkeeper and the defending goalkeeper is stationed correctly on his goal line. The referee, in this case, takes a good position so that he can observe the actions of all the players (goalkeeper, kicker, and potentially encroaching players). The referee’s position is wide enough so that no player is behind him yet close enough that his presence is felt by the players at the top of the penalty area.

Despite his efforts, a player on the attacking team clearly encroaches (enters the penalty area) after the whistle is blown but before the penalty kick is taken and the ball is in play (kicked and moves forward). The referee must await the outcome before deciding upon the appropriate action.

In this clip, a teammate of the kicker encroaches several yards into the penalty area prior to the kick being executed. The referee correctly awaits the outcome which was a goal. Since a goal was scored and an attacking player encroached, the referee must order a retake of the penalty kick. When the kick is retaken, the same **or a different player** may take that second kick.

WEEK 30 FOCUS

Game Preparation and Planning

Referees, ARs and fourth officials need to plan their games. Time must be spent covering every item. “Attention to detail” is the operative phrase. Referee teams cannot leave anything to chance. Time must be spent prior to the game (over dinner, over lunch, over breakfast and in the locker room) planning for the game to ensure that every potential incident is covered. Time must be spent discussing critical situations

and making sure the officiating team gets the call correct. Take time to make the correct call. Take time to convey necessary information. Failing to plan, produces a plan to fail.

Preparation will be a key factor in the officiating team's overall success. Go into the game with knowledge and with a comfort zone that ensures each official is on the same page and feels comfortable about the importance of their contribution to the game.

ussoccer.com is the official website of U.S. Soccer, the governing body of soccer in the United States

*If you are unable to click on the above links, copy and paste this URL into your browser:
http://www.ussoccer.com/articles/viewArticle.jsp_10584067.html

[Top](#)

© Copyright US Soccer Federation 2001-2007. All rights reserved.