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## Referee Programs

### U.S. Soccer Referee Week in Review - Week 30



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 30 – ending October 19, 2008**

#### WEEK 30 OVERVIEW

Heading into the final week of MLS regular season competition, seven games remain with five teams vying for the last three playoff positions. As the five teams jockey for these three final berths, the emotion and importance of the games will certainly be exhibited on the field. Players and teams will be fighting for their post-season lives and this will translate to added challenges and increased scrutiny of officials.

Referees cannot take any chances in their mental and physical preparation for the final weekend. As was the case this past weekend, every challenge and every tackle will be executed with additional intensity and fire. Emotionalism played a critical part in multiple yellow and red card situations. Referees must be cognizant of the emotional aspect and take a proactive role in helping players channel their energy in a positive manner.

For the most part, in week 30, referees did a good job identifying the emotionalism that exceeded the boundaries of acceptable behavior and surfaced as dissent and/or disagreement with the referee's decision, thereby warranting a caution or a strong verbal admonition. Below, in "Week 30 Commentary," two examples of referees correctly dealing with the emotionalism of the game will be examined. Additionally, an excellent example of preemptive work by an assistant referee (AR) will be provided as a model for preventative officiating that results in a positive ending to a potentially volatile situation.

- *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 30 COMMENTARY

##### Assistant Referee Intervention

ARs have the responsibility to read the temperature and atmosphere of the game similar to the referee. ARs should "feel" situations in the game and be prepared to intervene with a flag and/or with positive presence (physical or even verbal) when the situation requires. Often times, ARs are closer to volatile situations than the referee and, therefore, better equipped/positioned to prevent escalation. This scenario of being better positioned is not reserved only for the ARs. Fourth officials may also be more strategically placed to intervene in situations that flair up in front of the bench area. Such intervention by ARs and fourth officials must be tempered and used only in situations in which the referee's presence will not be there in time to address the immediate needs of the game. It is critical that officials not overreact but, at the same time, be prepared to intervene should the moment call for the positive use of presence aside from the referee's.

##### Video Clip 1: Dallas at Real Salt Lake (59:34)

In this clip, the volatile situation occurs approximately 10 yards from the AR and in his immediate quadrant. Consider not only the location of the incident to the AR but the following additional factors that lend themselves to AR intervention:

- The referee is a much greater distance from the two players;
- The physical contact between the two players does not resolve immediately and will, most likely, not be resolved on its own; and
- The intensity, environment and atmosphere of the game on the field. The game has playoff implications; a single goal separates the two teams and frustration levels of players may be high.

The intervention by the AR prevents game disrepute (two players negatively involved with each other) from escalating to a situation that would require the referee to issue cautions for unsporting behavior. Concurrently, the ARs preventative work is able to ensure the situation of game disrepute does not escalate into a scenario of mass confrontation (more than two players involved) that is much more difficult to manage/control.

The AR takes the following positive steps that result in a beneficial impact on the game:

- Quick and prompt intervention. AR gets there before it escalates.
- Positively uses his presence to separate the players.
- Channels one of the players away from the "hot spot" and into neutral space.

Overall, the prompt work by the AR prevents the referee from having to issue two cautions for unsporting behavior. The situation called for intervention and the AR responded with positive actions that contributed to the control of the game.

### Referee Preventative Work

Two separate situations involving preventative work by the referee will be examined. In each of the following two video clips, the referee times his intervention appropriately in order to ensure the actions of two players are controlled and the action of a coach in the technical area is addressed to ensure the coach will not have to be dismissed from the game for irresponsible behavior.

Preventative versus reactive techniques pay dividends when utilized. This is especially true at this time in the season given the potential for player/team frustration, the drive to make the playoffs and the need to win at all costs. "Week In Review 28" ([click on this link to access](#)) also addressed the positive aspects of preventative officiating. In many ways, refereeing is like playing chess, the referee must always think two or three moves ahead. This can only be done through anticipation and "reading the game" by identifying the warning signs that develop as the game script develops. It is key to remember that warning signs do not only surface during a match. Warning signs can, in fact, be noticeable before the referee blows the first whistle. For example: the attitude conveyed by players/coaches, the business-like manner in which players/teams warm up, as well as the result and experiences of the previous game(s) between the two opponents. These warning signs provide information and notice to the referee crew and can provide insight into the attitude and approach of the teams/players. Referees must be able to use the warning signs to heighten their awareness so that they can be used to positively influence and anticipate outcomes later.

#### Video Clip 2: New England at DC (85:55)

A coach of a side that is losing 2-1 is frustrated with an official's decision. The coach who can be seen at the bottom of the clip is demonstrative and verbal in his displeasure. In this case, the referee has the presence of mind to remain composed. The fourth official also does a good job of moving (in a non-confrontational manner) toward the coach to lend his support to the referee. Without over reacting, the referee takes control of the situation and uses his presence (movement toward the bench and his physical stature) to convey a very clear and firm message that future similar behavior will not be tolerated.

By taking this action, the referee has "drawn his line in the sand" and has set the standard for conduct going forward. The burden is now placed on the coaching staff to modify their behavior to acceptable standards. The referee, by positively addressing the situation, has made everyone aware that he has recognized unacceptable behavior and, by conveying this, he has placed the responsibility for modification on those involved. These actions are not only positive but preventative because they convey a message regarding reasonable expectations. If the referee had ignored the coach's actions, he would have sent a message to both technical areas, the players and the spectators that it is acceptable to visually and verbally dissent the decisions of the officials. Like this referee, it is imperative that officials do not over react but should find the right personality and solution that matches the game situation and the moment. In this case, the referee chose the most effective preventative course of action given the game.

#### Video Clip 3: Columbus at New York (81:30)

As this clip plays out, start by watching the bottom left corner of the screen. Observe the two players who, off-the-ball, are involved in game disrepute as defined in "Week In Review 6." ([click on this link to access](#)) As defined, game disrepute:

- Usually involves at least one player and sometimes two or more opposing players going at each other in an aggressive manner. The actions of the players bring the game into disrepute. Usually the ball is dead (out of play). Players feel at liberty to have a "go" at each other because they don't have to chase a live ball. These are volatile situations. Because the ball is dead, a specific foul cannot be called but that should not inhibit the referee from taking appropriate action.

This situation meets all the requirements of game disrepute. The ball is out of play, two players are going at each other aggressively and their actions bring the game into disrepute.

Immediately upon recognizing the situation, the referee and fourth official proactively move toward the scene. The voice, whistle and presence of the officials immediately catch the attention of the players resulting in the settling of the incident. Once the players are separated, the referee can be seen quickly consulting with the fourth official and then cautioning both players for unsporting behavior. The referee felt that the yellow cards were necessary given the "big picture" of the game (what had occurred previously, the temperature of the match, the players involved, etc.).

It is important to note how the referee continues to have a controlled conversation with another player after showing the yellow cards. The referee does not turn his back to this player but allows the conversation to continue given it was done in a disciplined, non-threatening

manner. Calm, controlled conversations like this can lead to the opening of lines of communication in the game between the referee and the match participants.

### **Contact Above the Shoulder: Violent Conduct**

Another deliberate act by a player to make contact with the opponent's face occurred in week 30. Once again, the actions of the player place the opponent in an indefensible position and endanger the opponent's safety. When a player's safety is endangered (as multiple prior "Week In Reviews" have defined), the referee must consider a red card. The action exhibited in this clip mirrors situations displayed in clips from previous "Week In Reviews."

Referees must use diligence in recognizing player actions that meet the criteria established for red cards involving contact above the shoulder. As a refresher, the following criteria was presented in "Week In Review 26" ([click on this link to access](#)) in order to assist officials with making correct contact above the shoulder decisions:

- **Is the safety of the player endangered?**

Consider where the contact is made: above the shoulders, the facial region in each of these cases.

Consider what is used to make the contact: a solid object (forearm or palm of the hand).

Consider the consequences of a solid object connecting with a soft object: injury, broken jaw, broken nose, blackened eye (results of such contact in earlier games this season).

After consideration of these factors, it is clear that the safety of the opponent is endangered and, hence, a red card is mandated for such situations. In addition, the idea of "excessive force" is important. Contact with a solid object (forearm or hand) with a soft object (the face) can be interpreted as "excessive force" as the amount of force necessary to injure the opponent is significantly less. Also, consider that when contact above the shoulder is initiated, players do not have the opportunity to defend themselves; as a result, the player receiving the contact is extremely vulnerable.

### **Video Clip 4: Dallas at Real Salt Lake (21:14)**

Following the definition above and found in other "Week In Reviews," the contact above the shoulder and in the facial region of the opponent portrayed in this clip should be dealt with as violent conduct (red card). In watching the deliberate slap to the opponent's face, ask yourself the following:

- Was contact to the face necessary?
- What was the player's intent?
- Why not a push to the chest?
- Why did the player go for the facial region when a greater area of the opponent's body is exposed and easier to contact?

Contact in the facial region of the body is not necessary, not justifiable and is not defensible by the receiving player. It is done to intimidate, send a message and to potentially injure the opposition by endangering the player's safety. Watch as the player's head goes back with the contact. For these reasons, a red card is warranted.

In watching the clip, several other areas of instruction arise. First, the AR does a good job indicating the handling offense by the defender who has "made himself bigger" by positioning himself with his arms extended out and taking away portions of the passing lane.

Secondly, a caution is correctly issued to the defending player for delaying the restart of play. The defender interposes his body in front of the attacker with the ball thereby preventing him from putting the ball into play quickly. The defender not only makes one attempt to interpose his body but he does it a second time.

Thirdly, the AR does an effective job of intervening and getting to the scene after the first bump (body contact of the two players). The AR can hope that his action is a deterrent. The AR is also close enough to observe the contact above the shoulder.

Sensing the AR has also potentially observed the contact above the shoulders, the referee should strongly consider consulting with the AR prior to deciding upon the official, formal action. By consulting with the AR, a "team" decision will result. Plus, additional time can be used to consider all the options and for the referee team to replay the action in their minds. Empowerment of the referee team begins in the locker room but is executed on the field during the heat of the match. Referees should focus work on recognizing those situations where it is wise to consult with the AR or the fourth official prior to pulling a card.

In clear situations like this, officials cannot let the time of the game, the participants, or the importance of the game be factors in the decision to refrain from sending the player off for violent conduct.

### **Dissent**

The Laws of the Game (Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct) list "dissent by word or action" as one of the seven cautionable offenses. Each referee has a different definition of dissent. The context of how the dissent is defined can also change based upon how it is

exhibited/delivered in a game and from game to game.

FIFA's 2008/2009 "Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees" provides the following guidance for officials:

**"A player who is guilty of dissent by protesting (verbally or non-verbally) against a referee's decision must be cautioned.** The captain of a team has no special status or privileges under the Laws of the Game but he has a degree of responsibility for the behavior of his team."

Referees must utilize common sense when deciding to caution players for dissent. Yet, referees cannot allow players to consistently question their decisions and, ultimately, their authority. Visual dissent is often considered a bigger threat to the referee's authority than verbal dissent because it is much more public and therefore has a larger audience.

#### **Video Clip 5: Chicago at Toronto (29:45)**

The referee makes a decision that the player disagrees with. The player directs his disagreement and protest at the referee in a visual and manner by waving his hand/arm at the referee in public disgust and disagreement. Such action, questions the referee's authority and the referee is justified in cautioning the player for dissent by action. The referee must make a determination given the game and the manner in which the dissent is delivered whether a yellow card is warranted or whether another method (like a severe verbal reprimand) of managing the situation will deliver the same results. However, referees cannot allow players to question the authority of any member of the referee team without addressing the player involved.

#### **100% Misconduct Plus Advantage**

Following an ongoing theme throughout the MLS season, a foul that represented a 100 percent misconduct situation occurred this past week. This situation is a reminder that referees are encouraged to take action (yellow or red card) when 100 percent misconduct situations arise. These (100 percent misconduct) are situations that require a caution or red card despite the score, the time of the match, the implications of the card or match and the players involved.

#### **Video Clip 6: Dallas at Real Salt Lake (76:15)**

An attacker, with the ball, goes at a defender. As the attacker passes the ball, the defender trips him to prevent him from getting behind him. The referee correctly applies advantage as the ball goes to the left winger who has a clear and effective path ahead of him. As the ball goes out for a corner, the referee clearly identifies the defender and immediately cautions him for unsporting behavior. The ability to identify advantage situations involving misconduct but ensuring that giving the advantage does not lead to retaliation is an important component of a professional referee. Referees must be able to determine if an advantage exists. In "Week In Review 5," ([\*\*\*click on this link to access\*\*\*](#)) the **"4 P Principle"** of Advantage Application was introduced to help referees identify solid candidates for taking a risk and applying advantage:

- **Possession of ball:** control by team or player.
- **Potential for attack:** ability to continue a credible and dangerous attack.
- **Personnel:** skill of attackers, numerical advantage.
- **Proximity to opponent's goal:** closeness to goal.

It is clear, in this clip, that all 4 P's exist and the referee took a calculated risk by allowing play to continue. Given there was misconduct involved, the referee must also assess the potential reaction of the fouled player and his team. If the referee believes he can apply the advantage without any ramifications, then he should do so. If the referee feels retaliation is eminent and a quick caution will prevent problems, then the referee can stop the play to issue the yellow card.

Note: It is recommended that advantage not be applied in cases where a red card is warranted unless an **immediate and clear** scoring opportunity exists.

## **WEEK 31 FOCUS**

### **Finishing Strong**

The last seven games of the regular season are upon us. With five teams competing for the last three playoff berths, officials will be challenged and tested. Focus and concentration for the entire 90 minutes of the match will be paramount. Guard against becoming too comfortable despite the success you have had thus far in the game. Be ready and leave no detail uncovered. The energy and intensity of the games will need referee teams to direct, lead and orchestrate with the primary focus of prevention and positively influencing outcomes. Send appropriate messages early so that they resonate in the final minutes of the game.

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