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Referee Programs

U.S. Soccer Referee Week in Review - Week 32



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 32 (Playoff Week 1) – ending November 2, 2008

WEEK 32 (Playoff Week 1) OVERVIEW

After 31 weeks of grinding regular season competition, the MLS playoffs finally kicked off. The four conference semifinals resulted in three draws and one 1-0 victory. These results demonstrate the tightness and defensive approach that we have seen in each playoff matchup. No team hit the back of the net more than once.

With the parity exhibited in the first set of matches, officials can expect the second and deciding game of the home and away series to be a difficult challenge. The deciding game may also test the officials' ability to efficiently and effectively manage the "kicks from the penalty mark" should the match go beyond regulation and the 30 minute mini-game. As a consequence, this "Week In Review" will provide an overview of the standard procedures governing such an occurrence.

In all four of this past week's games, there were many emotional moments, hard challenges and increased intensity. This atmosphere was often fueled by the home field advantage and the need to pick up a win due to the advantage. For the most part, referees were able to ensure their intensity and energy matched or surpassed that of the moment and the game. With a few exceptions, there were consistent decisions that facilitated fair and entertaining soccer while ensuring that 100 percent misconduct situations were handed appropriately.

This "Week In Review" will conclude with an overview of the training opportunities provided to referees by way of the three U.S. Soccer Development Academy Showcases to be played between December 2008 and June 2009.

- *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 32 (Playoff Week 1) COMMENTARY

Offside: Disallowing a Goal

With every decision being scrutinized during this time of year (playoff time), accuracy becomes even more paramount. Consequently, AR attentiveness to ensure proper positioning and an ARs ability to utilize the "wait and see" technique becomes increasingly critical and a vital part of the ARs repertoire.

In order to get critical decisions correct, ARs must work hard to ensure that they have a clear view of the ball, at the time it is played/passed, as well as the second-to-last defender and furthest most attacker. The best way to accomplish this is by being square to the field and by utilizing side stepping (side-to-side movement) as much as possible. With shoulders square to the field, ARs are able to have a broader perspective and wider angle of vision. In other words, ARs can simultaneously observe the pass of the ball by the attacker as well as the movement of the defensive offside line in relation to the furthestmost attacker who is in the offside or onside position.

Video Clip 1: Chicago at New England (75:50)

If a decision is made to disallow a goal for offside, it must be spot on especially given the direction (give the benefit of doubt to the attack) ARs have been provided throughout the season. ARs have been and are encouraged to keep the flag down in cases where it is **not** clear that the attacker is in an offside position.

In this clip, the attacking team serves a ball from the left flank (approximately 35 yards from the attacker in the penalty area). This distance makes the ARs task more difficult because it requires a wide angle of vision (greater peripheral vision) to cover the distance/space between where the ball is passed and the intended attacking target. Adding to the complicated decision is the fact that there are three defenders staggered in a line across the field with five to ten yards of space between each of them. This "open space" makes the judgment difficult yet makes the importance of the ARs alignment with the second-to-last defender that much more important. Any slight movement by one of the defenders or misalignment on the part of the AR will skew or negatively influence the offside decision. Hence, the importance of ensuring the correct position. The attacker who heads the ball into the goal, is a body's length past the second-to-last defender and, thus, in an offside position. Now, the AR must determine if the attacking player becomes involved in "active play" as defined in Law 11 – Offside.

As the slow motion, offside line and freeze frame indicate, the AR makes a correct decision by disallowing the goal. In accordance with Law 11, the goal scorer is in an offside position at the "moment the ball touches or is played by one of his team" because he was involved in "active play" by "interfering with play" by playing or touching the ball played/touched by his teammate.

Despite the fact that a seemingly critical goal was disallowed, the AR made the right determination.

Handling the Ball: A Good "No Call"

A lot of attention has been placed on defining "handling the ball" (handballs) in multiple "Weeks In Review." The most recent, "Week In Review 27" ([click on this link to access](#)), continued to provide further clarification to assist officials in the quest to develop consistency in the application of this aspect of the Laws of the Game. "Making yourself bigger" has been the most reviewed component of handling the ball.

- **Making yourself bigger**

This refers to the placement of the arm(s)/hand(s) of the defending player at the time the ball is played by the opponent. Should an arm/hand be in a position that takes away space from the team with the ball and the ball contacts the arm/hand, the referee should interpret this contact as handling. Referees should interpret this action as the defender "deliberately" putting his arm/hand in a position in order to reduce the options of the opponent (like spreading your arms wide to take away the passing lane of an attacker).

As you watch the following clip, keep in mind the following items from the definition above:

- Where is the placement of the defender's arm/hand at the time the ball is played by the **opponent**?
- Does the arm/hand of the defender take away space from the **team with the ball**?

Video Clip 2: Chicago at New England (63:30)

Clearly, the ball strikes the defender's arm. Hence, the referee is faced with a decision as to whether to penalize this contact or not. Even though the contact occurs in the penalty area, the area on the field in which the contact occurs cannot influence the referee's decision.

The key to determining this call is found in the answer to the two questions provided above.

- Where is the placement of the defender's arm/hand at the time the ball is played by the **opponent**?

It is important to note that the last person to play the ball is the player himself, NOT an opponent. The ball comes off the defender's head to make contact with the arm.

- Does the arm/hand of the defender take away space from the **team with the ball**?

The defender is NOT taking away space from the team with the ball since the defender is the last person to touch/play the ball. Because he is the last to touch/play the ball, he cannot be taking away space from the opponent. The defender's arm position does not take a passing lane away or an opportunity away from his opponent.

Because the ball is last touched/played by the defender himself and the defender is not taking away space from the opponent, the defender has NOT made himself bigger and, therefore, there is no handling offense.

Foul Needed

Referees must possess the ability to differentiate and evaluate the challenges that are fouls from the fair challenges in which the player either goes down to draw the foul or attempts to simulate a foul. A referee's ability to identify the differences becomes even more vital in the "danger or red zone" of the field. The "danger or red zone" is the area that extends approximately 35 yards out from the goalmouth. This is the area in which attackers look to create contact or exaggerate contact in order to gain their team a free kick restart and an opportunity to score. With so many goals being scored directly from free kicks in this area or generated from restarts in the "danger zone," attackers look for opportunities to "create" a foul. Hence, referees must be on heightened awareness and be close to the play in order to differentiate the fair challenges from the foul challenges.

Referees and AR should be on the alert for "tactical" fouls in the "danger zone" as defenders look to prevent opponents from getting behind them or look to prevent clear opportunities to score via the run of play. As recent as "Week In Review 22" ([click on this link to access](#)), criteria relating to the identification of tactical fouls was provided. Defenders are often forced into making a decision: "Is a foul and free kick in

the danger zone a better risk than allowing the attacker to get behind me?" The answer to this question guides the defender's course of action.

Video Clip 3: Chivas USA at Real Salt Lake (34:10)

This clip shows a referee who is close to a challenge made by a defender on an attacker with the ball some 22 yards out from goal (in the "danger zone"). Two defenders attempt to tackle the ball away from the opponent. Failure to win the ball on the part of the defender(s) could lead to a shot on goal by the attacker as no other defender is around the ball for 10 yards and the attacker is moving toward the middle of the goal.

When viewed on the replay, it is clear that the second defender challenges/tackles for the ball with his left leg but misses the ball and contacts the attacker thereby causing the attacker to lose possession of the ball. The defender's careless challenge deliberately prevents the attacker from advancing into a more strategic position. Just being positioned close to play is often not enough. Referees must also read or "smell" the play and prepare their mind by anticipating the defender's actions without prejudging.

A foul for a careless challenge is warranted in this situation. A yellow card is not required. However, the referee can use his judgment to determine if, based upon the "big picture," a yellow card (for unsporting behavior) to the defender is needed because he has determined the foul to be "tactical" in nature. The decision to caution or not is left, in this case, to the referee's judgment and feel for the situation and the game.

Kicks from the Penalty Mark

Whenever playoffs begin, officials must review and refresh their knowledge of overtime procedures to ensure their application and implementation cannot be questioned. In addition, officials should review all related procedures in their pregame planning sessions. Once again, the focus should be on reviewing roles and responsibilities as well as ensuring parameters involving record keeping are clearly defined.

Regardless of the level and the type of competition, it is good practice for officials assigned playoff games requiring a winner to review the October 14, 2004 U.S. Soccer position paper entitled, "Kicks From the Penalty Mark (Updated)" ([click on this link to access](#)). This position paper highlights the main focus points and potential areas of contention evolving around the kicks from the penalty mark procedure.

Here are a few of the critical elements:

- **Only the players on the field at the end of the match or at the end of any extra time can participate. This includes any player temporarily off the field to correct equipment, for treatment of an injury, or to correct bleeding or blood on the uniform.**

Referees working games with unlimited substitutions must ensure a procedure is formalized with the fourth official and/or bench side AR to ensure that, at the final whistle, no players enter the field from the bench area and no players who were on the field at the end of the game leave the field (these are the players that can partake in the kicks from the penalty mark). Officials must prevent the intermingling of players. Recommendation: at the start of the last overtime period, the officials should write down the numbers of the players starting the half on the field of play. As substitutions occur, the officials can cross out the player's number leaving the field and replace it with the number of the player replacing him. This should then provide a formal list of who was on the field at the conclusion of the overtime and, in the event of intermingling of players, the referee team has the list of eligible players.

- **An injured goalkeeper may be substituted if the team has not used its maximum allowed substitutions permitted under the competition rules. Under no circumstances may a field player be substituted after any extra time is over.**

If unlimited substitutions are allowed in the game, the goalkeeper may be replaced by any of the named substitutes. However, the goalkeeper leaving the game is no longer eligible to participate.

- **The team whose captain wins the coin toss decides which team will kick first.**

The team winning the coin toss gets to decide whether to kick first or second.

- **Players who are waiting to kick or who have already kicked are required to be in the area of the center circle. No other persons are permitted on the field.**

Coaches and substitutes or substituted players are not allowed on the field during the procedure. They are required to remain in their technical areas.

- **The referee selects the goal toward which kicks will be taken. However, the referee should consult with the competition authority to determine if any additional information should be taken into account in deciding this matter (e.g., television or other video recording needs).**

Based upon weather conditions, the field conditions and other factors, the referee has the authority to choose the best goal to conduct the kicks.

- **If a team finishes the match and any extra time with fewer players than the opposing team (due to injury or misconduct), the**

captain of the opposing team must select and identify for the referee those players who will not participate in kicks from the penalty mark. In other words, the team must "Reduce to Equate" so that the kicks from the penalty mark procedure begins with teams having an equal number of players.

Although the captain is designated as the individual to select the player who will not participate, the referee must use common sense based upon the level of play. Often times, this decision occurs before the first kick of the kicks from the penalty mark is taken and is made by the coach as opposed to the captain.

U.S. Soccer Development Academy Showcases

The U.S. Soccer Development Academy, U.S. Soccer's new national team training and development program, consists of the top U-15/16 and U-17/18 clubs from across the country. U.S. Soccer is using the Academy as a platform to develop and identify up-and-coming players, coaches and referees. The Development Academy is the first step in the Pro Identification Track for referees. A number of referees were identified in last year's events for further development.

A new Academy season has recently kicked off. As part of the Academy's competition, U.S. Soccer conducts national Showcases (over four-days) in which each of the 148 Academy teams (from 74 select clubs) participate. The first such Showcase for the new season is in Lancaster, California from December 5-8. This Showcase will provide an opportunity for referees from across the country to take part in high quality games featuring Academy teams from across the country. Additionally, the Lancaster Showcase will feature the Under-17 National Teams of the United States, Brazil and Australia.

U.S. Soccer National Referee Staff will be present along with several national assessors and referee inspectors, including Paul Tamberino, Alfred Kleinaitis, Herb Silva, Brian Hall, Dave McKee, Alan Brown and Dick Triche. Concurrently, referees working MLS games and several U.S. Soccer Professional Referees will be attending the event to officiate games as well as mentor and assist referees with development.

Referees will be observed in the games and some will receive individual feedback in addition to general instruction sessions. Training sessions are held before and during the showcase. Each training session covers topics geared to enhance your referee education and development. Training sessions are also open to interested non-participants.

Some of these areas may be:

- Flow and risk taking
- 100% misconduct situations
- Game control
- Establishing presence

If you would like to participate in the Academy Winter Showcase please contact Dick Triche, Manager of Assignment, at:

rtriche@ussoccer.org

The following is a list of the 2008/2009 Development Academy Showcases. Referees interested in participating in any of the first three Showcases (the Winter Showcase, Spring Showcase or Playoffs) should contact Dick Triche.

- Winter Showcase – [Lancaster National Soccer Center](#) (Lancaster, Calif.) – December 5-8, 2008
- Spring Showcase – [Sarasota Polo Club](#) (Sarasota, Fla.) – May 22-25, 2009
- Academy Playoffs – Bryan Park (Greensboro, N.C.) – June 26-29, 2009
- Academy Finals Week – Home Depot Center (Carson, Calif.) – July 11-18, 2009

Note: Top performing referees during the Academy season will be selected for eight days of training and officiating at the Academy Finals Week.

PLAYOFF WEEK 2 FOCUS

Finishing Strong

Officiating teams must recognize that the upcoming games are single elimination. There **will** be a loser and a team whose season ends. Referees must remain focused and must **concentrate past the last whistle until the teams have safely left the field**. Anticipate issues/problems. Manage player behavior to prevent frustration from being exhibited on the field.

Finally, ensure all overtime procedures are clearly discussed in the pregame meeting with each member of the referee team. Efficiency and correctness in application must be the focus.

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