



Close

## Referee Programs

### U.S. Soccer Referee Week in Review - Week 33



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 33 (Playoff Week 2) – ending November 9, 2008**

#### WEEK 33 (Playoffs Week 2) OVERVIEW

The second games of the MLS conference semifinal series were completed this past weekend. Even though three of the four games were played after ties in the opening of the two game series, the matches consisted of attacking play and an average of three goals per game, a surprisingly high number considering the defensive stature most teams take in the playoffs. Officials put additional focus on preparing for overtime and the potential for kicks from the penalty mark to determine a winner in this round of games but it was not needed in any of the matches.

Throughout the season and into the playoffs, it has been stressed that referees not let their guard down and remain focused for the entire 90 minutes and any "stoppage time." This focus and concentration paid dividends as referees were able to prevent acts of player frustration from creeping into the game when the outcomes of certain games were becoming evident.

For the most part, playoff referees were able to establish presence and use their personality to influence player behavior and to channel player actions in a positive direction. There were many positive examples of referees who managed the game with more than just their whistle. This positive focus on the part of officials led to games filled with attacking and creative play while mostly void of negative tactics which destroy the enjoyment of the game for spectators.

- *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 33 (Playoff Week 2) COMMENTARY

##### Dissent: The Referee's Authority Questioned

Dissent, both verbal and visual, has been an issue this season in MLS. Referees, at all levels, need to take a common sense approach to dealing with players and personnel in the technical area who feel at liberty to question the decisions of game officials. Constant bickering, protesting and arguing bring the game into disrepute and ruin the entertainment value of the game by moving the focus of the game from the play to the dissenting player and the referee.

First and foremost, referees need to attempt to squelch dissent early in the match by positively addressing the situations where dissent may arise or before the situations arise. Early recognition and early attempts to address protesting players will send a message that will hopefully resonate throughout the remainder of the game. Issuing yellow cards for dissent early in the match is not necessarily the answer as these early cards can handcuff the referee later. However, early action by the referee to use his presence and personality to communicate his tolerance level and dissatisfaction to the dissenting player and the other game participants can be very effective in "drawing the line" and setting the tone for future player actions.

Referees should attempt to send early messages regarding dissent and not ignore players and team personnel who protest. If these messages are not effective in controlling the bickering, the referee should then consider cautioning players for their dissenting behavior. Remember, referees are not required to initially warn players prior to cautioning for dissent if the player's actions are not manageable or immediately bring the referee's authority into question.

##### Video Clip 1: New York at Houston (16:30 – second half)

Not only does this clip provide an example of the referee correctly dealing with visual and verbal dissent that questions his authority but it also shows a correct decision to award a foul to the attacking team. Let's first address the foul decision.

In this clip, the attacking player has pace and is moving with the ball. He is approached on both sides by defenders. The defender on the right makes a legal slide tackle to dispossess the attacker of the ball. In fact, this defender is successful in contacting the ball in a manner that is fair. This defender (approaching from the right) cleanly takes the ball off the right foot of the attacker. Contact is first made with the ball and the defender does **not** go through the attacker to get to the ball. This is a fair challenge.

However, the defender streaking in from the left makes no challenge for the ball and throws his upper body into the attacker in order to deny the attacker's track to the ball. This upper body charge is intended to run the fast attacker off the ball and prevent him from getting by. No play on the ball is made by this defender. The only contact is with the attacker's body. Hence, the referee is correct in awarding a foul in favor of the attacking team. The fact that the defender from the right legally plays the ball does not void the responsibility of the other defender (approaching from the left) to also make a fair challenge.

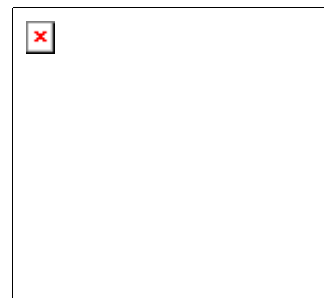
In terms of the dissent, watch the body language and the facial expression of the defender who is cautioned for dissent. The player's actions convey aggressiveness toward the referee and question his authority. The aggressive and visual nature of this dissent preclude the referee from dealing with it any other way other than with a caution. The player's actions have taken the focus off the game and put it on the player and referee thereby bringing the game into disrepute.

Players who physically move toward the referee in an aggressive manner and need to be restrained by other players are strong candidates for yellow cards for dissent. The player in this clip first waves his arm toward the referee immediately following the foul call and then moves toward the referee's body space. This is accompanied by strong verbal comments that can be seen by the spectators and other players. Failure to deal with this type of action, negatively impacts the referee's authority on the field of play. This player must be cautioned and shown the yellow card for dissent by word or action.

### Flow: Fair But Hard Challenge

"Week In Review 18" unveiled the diagram to the right. This diagram is intended to provide the framework for game management at all levels. Referees are being encouraged to find the right mix of game "flow" by taking calculated "risks" without jeopardizing the overall "game control." "Flow" is the ability of the referee to recognize the trifling, minor and insignificant challenges that do not endanger the safety of the opponent nor negatively affect overall game/player control.

As part of this formula, officials are now being called upon, more frequently, to differentiate between hard but fair challenges and those challenges that are careless, reckless or executed with excessive force. This is not an easy dichotomy for officials to dissect but the ability to differentiate between the hard/fair challenges from those that are, minimally, careless is a skill in and of itself. This skill is developed over time as more experience is gained in the application of "flow" and "risk taking." As this talent is learned, officials should be careful and ensure that they are taking **calculated** "risks." In other words, risks that they feel comfortable with and that they are certain will not negatively affect game control as well as risks that the players and game will accept at that moment.



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

Even at the professional level, the idea of "flow" is not always interpreted correctly. At times, officials take too many risks and, at other times, they play it too safe. Herein lies the skill of finding the right mix. In this clip, the referee calls a foul that should not be called at the professional level (this decision may have been influenced by the referee's poor angle of vision). It is a hard/fair challenge. It is a challenge intended to win/play the ball and, in fact, does. By calling this foul, the ball is out of play for over 30 seconds which negatively impacts the entertainment value of the game for the spectators.

Despite this being a hard challenge, it is executed in fair fashion. The tackler cleanly plays the ball and the attacker then falls over the defender's foot. The tackler's challenge is not careless and is intended to win the ball. Notice that the challenge is initiated from the side so the likelihood of winning the ball, playing the ball first and not making initial contact with the opponent is very high. Also, watch the tackler's feet especially on the replay from behind the goal. The feet are on the ground (not raised and the cleats are not exposed), targeted for the ball not the opponent. Consequently, this is the type of challenge that is a good candidate for "flow." This is a hard but fair challenge.

### Managing the Technical Area: A Preventative Approach

Ask, Tell, Remove. This step concept for dealing with behavior in the technical area was introduced in "Week In Review 11." In summary, "Ask, Tell, Remove" incorporates the following steps relative to dealing with personnel in the technical area:

- **Ask**

If a situation arises where there is irresponsible behavior, you are to **ASK** the person(s) to stop.

- **Tell**

If there is another occurrence where there is irresponsible behavior, you are to inform that person that the behavior is not permissible and **TELL** them to stop.

- **Remove**

If the non-accepted actions continue, you must **REMOVE** that person immediately.

**Note:** The above steps do not prohibit a referee from having someone removed immediately if the improper behavior is excessive.

It has been stressed that referees need to take more responsibility for actions in the technical area and not leave the management of this area solely to the fourth official. Referees should take **ownership** of managing technical area decorum by taking proactive steps to send appropriate messages especially at the "tell" stage of the process. At the "tell" stage, the referee can transfer responsibility for future conduct onto the coach. This is the referee's opportunity to clearly (for all to see) "draw his line in the sand" and set the stage for what is acceptable behavior or not.

### **Video Clip 3: Kansas City at Columbus (50:20)**

The referee in this example utilizes the "tell" step to proactively send a message to the coach regarding conduct in the technical area. The referee sends a clear message: "Continued behavior will result in your being dismissed." As a result of the referee's action, the burden of future conduct/behavior is placed on the coach. The referee chose a visual and effective means to get his point across.

The referee has **accepted responsibility** for the situation and has not left the burden of bench decorum solely on the fourth official's shoulders. By doing this, the referee sends a stronger "tell" message than one sent only by the fourth official.

Notice in the clip how the fourth official moves down the technical area to lend his support to the referee as the referee addresses the coach. The fourth official's presence acts as a support mechanism should the situation require his intervention and also shows solidarity on the part of the referee team.

Should the irresponsible behavior in the technical area persist, the referee can then move to the "remove" stage and dismiss the non-playing personnel. Remember, only players, substitutes and substituted players can be shown a red or yellow card. Other team personnel are "dismissed" from the game for irresponsible behavior. This removal/dismissal is accomplished by the referee indicating the person being dismissed and then pointing to the dressing room while telling them they are being dismissed for "irresponsible behavior."

## **PLAYOFF WEEK 4 FOCUS**

### **One and Out**

With a single elimination game remaining and the MLS Cup finalists to be determined, officials can expect high intensity and highly emotional match ups in each Conference Final. Preparation and team work will be vital to managing these exciting and "do or die" games. Officiating teams should take extra time to prepare themselves and to review all critical game situations to ensure the crew is best prepared to work together to get the most out of their group and individual efforts. Focus on getting the call correct, regardless of who makes it!

## **MLS REFEREE AND ASSISTANT REFEREE OF THE YEAR**

This week the MLS Referee and Assistant Referee of the Year were announced. This honor goes to the season's top officials as voted on by MLS referee colleagues, coaches, players and general managers. Congratulations to the following officials who were recognized for their on field excellence during the 2008 season:

**Jair Marrufo**, 2008 MLS Referee of the Year

**Kermit Quisenberry**, 2008 MLS Assistant Referee of the Year

Prior to and immediately after officiating the playoff match between New England and Chicago, U.S. Soccer interviewed full-time referee Marrufo to get his perspective on the playoff assignment. This insightful interview can be read by clicking on this link ([http://centercircle.ussoccer.com/fullStory.jsp\\_5-11239433.html](http://centercircle.ussoccer.com/fullStory.jsp_5-11239433.html)).

*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\\_11304962.html](http://www.ussoccer.com/articles/viewArticle.jsp_11304962.html)

[Top](#)

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