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## Referee Programs

**U.S. Soccer Referee Week In Review - Week 5**

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.

**U.S. Soccer Referee Week in Review  
Week 5 – ending April 27, 2008**

**A LOOK BACK – ISSUES AND RESULTS – WEEK 5****Bench Behavior**

**Issue:** Referees need to do a better job to address bench decorum/behavior.

**Result:** Gamesmanship by coaches, in particular, continues to be noticed in the games and officials continue to find reasons not to deal with it. Fourth officials must be more aware of their surroundings and more active in intervening when bench personnel (players included) do not follow guidelines. Awareness and intervention will lead to preventing further incidences. When bench personnel move within or leave the technical area to voice their displeasure with the referee or another player, the fourth official must move toward the personnel and intervene. Presence and proximity is critical. Bench personnel do not have the right to leave the technical area for any reason. If this occurs, depending upon the severity, the fourth official should issue a stern warning. Upon repetition, the offending individual should be dismissed.

**Added Time**

**Issue:** The appropriate amount of additional time was not provided.

**Result:** Our focus on ensuring the amount of additional time indicated eliminated the issue. Remember, if the referee team indicates three minutes, the referee must play a minimum of three minutes. If you need to play a significant amount over the stated time, an effort should be made to communicate the added time to the fourth official and each bench.

**Risk Taking/Flow vs. Game Control**

**Issue:** Control Management should not be jeopardized when risk taking and game flow are utilized.

**Result:** Referees, this week, ensured all games were played in a safe environment. As evident by the continued reduction in fouls per game, you are providing games with fewer stoppages. However, there are still opportunities for referees to inject more flow into the games by applying advantage in cases where the game does not need a whistle. The Week 5 Commentary below will address these opportunities under the discussion of "Advantage."

**WEEK 5 OVERVIEW**

Week 5 resulted in many positive efforts by the officiating teams. Assistant referees were "spot-on" with offside decisions. In fact, we will see a top class decision by an Assistant Referee that leads to a goal despite the protests and despite the fact, at first glance, it looks as though the decision was incorrect. Referees continued to exhibit the ability to manage the trifling/minor fouls without allowing game control to be negatively impacted. Foul count, per game, continues to remain low with only 24.4 fouls called per game this past week.

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

## WEEK 5 COMMENTARY

### Offside

After 5 weeks of play, it is evident that Assistant Referees (ARs) have adjusted their application of offside and are now focused on “wait and see” as well as giving the benefit of doubt to attacking soccer. Keeping the flag down can also aid in game flow and this will be the focus of this week’s offside commentary. As you will see below, world-class offside decisions require focus, positioning, patience, and courage.

#### Video Clip 1: Kansas City at Toronto (55:02)

This is a first class decision. In this clip, the referee team allows a goal that, at first glance, looks offside. However, replays clearly indicate that a defender attempted to clear the ball (thus playing it) and the ball rebounds off another defender to an attacker who is 2-3 yards offside position. Conviction in decision and focus by the AR allows a team to take a 1-0 lead. This is not an easy call that is complicated by the following factors that the officiating team must process, in a split second, in order to make a decision:

- **Who last “played” or “touched” the ball?**  
The defending team in two instances – on the clearance and on the rebound.
- **The proximity of players.**  
The AR must be positioned correctly to have a clear view as to who last played the ball. Because there are so many players near the ball, the decision is more complex. Total focus is required to correctly identify who last touched or played the ball.
- **The speed of the play**  
Tight space leads to less time to make decisions and increases the speed of the ball. Hence, the need to be focused and prepared for the unexpected. Also, holding the flag and taking an extra moment to make the decision gives you additional time to consider the entire phase of play.

#### Video Clip 2: Chivas at Galaxy (25:48)

This clip is an example of the AR raising the flag too fast. In this case, the ball is well over the top of the defense and on its way to the goalkeeper. The AR has the ability to delay the call while running with the attacker or ball. If the attacker discontinues his run, game flow would be enhanced by keeping the flag down. If the AR sees that the attacker will continue his run and beat the goalkeeper to the ball (or believes there could be a collision between the attacker and the keeper), then after chasing the ball a short distance, the AR may raise the flag. Remember, apply the “wait and see” principle.

#### Video Clip 3: Chivas at Galaxy (15:30)

Another example of the rhythm and flow of the game being interrupted by an early offside flag. The AR must survey the situation before deciding to raise the flag. Once the service is made the following characteristics should convince the AR to allow the play to continue:

- The service is behind the defense.
- The white shirted attacker (in the offside position) stops his run indicating he is not participating, not intending to play the ball.
- The goalkeeper has a clear, unimpeded, and unchallenged path to the ball.

**Note:** *Should the offside attacker decide to challenge for the ball, the AR is empowered to raise a delayed flag.*

#### Video Clip 4: Houston at Columbus (21:10)

This clip shows proper execution as it relates to the AR holding the flag. The offside attacker shows by his actions (moving away from the ball) that he is not participating in the play. Therefore, the AR makes the right decision to keep the flag down and continue with play thereby avoiding interruptions.

### Advantage Application

The ability to apply the advantage is a hallmark of a top-class referee and AR. Application comes from a “feel” for the game and the ability to have patience in the application of the laws. A great advantage is a sight to behold and enhances the beauty of the game. This season, our referee teams have been on the winning end of four advantages that have resulted in goals. However, referees are still playing it “safe” with some decisions that are clearly candidates for holding the whistle and seeing if an effective attack materializes. Remember, you can always come back after applying a “wait and see” mentality. As you watch the 3 clips below, consider the “**4 P Principle**” of Advantage Application:

- **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.

**Note:** *This principle will be further introduced at the Mid-Season Pro Seminar.*

#### Video Clip 5: New England at Dallas (71:46)

This advantage illustrates a dream call for a referee. Instead of stopping play for a foul, the referee holds his decision to see if the attacking

team retains possession of the ball in open space. The referee even delays signaling advantage until he is certain it has materialized. This is the only goal of the game. This is refereeing!

**Video Clip 6:** Houston at Columbus (9:38)

The referee takes a risk in this application of advantage because there are two successive applications in a relatively rapid fashion. First, there is a defensive hold that is aimed at stopping the progression of the attacker (into open space) who has just laid the ball off. The second is a challenge from behind that sends another attacker to the ground. Last week the idea of "sequential fouls" was addressed but this is a safe risk as the fouls were not endangering the opponent and the totality of the actions occurred in rapid succession meaning you can also come back quickly and penalize one of the fouls.

**Video Clip 7:** Houston at Columbus (58:30)

In contrast to the previous 2 clips, this is an example of the referee failing to read the play, read the players involved, hold his whistle, and apply the "4 P Principle." The attacker is clearly held and impeded; however, the referee must recognize his skill level and strength on the ball. Having assessed this, the referee would be taking a reasonable, calculated risk by holding the whistle to see if advantage materializes. Look at the frustration level of the attacker off the ball as the whistle is blown. This would be a safe call as no one is around the player receiving the passed ball. If need be, the referee can play advantage and come back to address the concerns of the player who was fouled. This would be a good opportunity to inject personality into the match by letting the fouled player know you saw what happened and talking to the player committing the foul. Looking at the "4 Ps," there is the concept of skill, possession, potential, and closeness to goal. In other words, little risk.

- A potential factor influencing the referee's missing the advantage application is his positioning. From the throw-in, the referee is positioned too tight to the touchline. The referee needs to be positioned so that he has a broad view/perspective thereby ensuring he can see the player's options and the potential next phase of play. Position yourself so you can see where the ball can go.

**Video Clip 8:** San Jose at New York (44:40, second half)

Over involvement by ARs has been a repeated issue. This is clearly the case in this video clip. This is an obvious case that cannot be missed at the professional level. All the elements of the "4 Ps" are present. Not only are the "4 Ps" present but the AR and referee must have a sense of what has occurred previously in the game and know the player(s) in question. In this game, the attacker has gotten the ball behind the defense on previous occasions and has shown his quickness, agility, and strength. So, as the play develops in front of the officials, they should be able to pull from their databank of game/player history and react appropriately.

**The message:** ARs keep the flag down/delay your signal and referees should feel empowered to over-rule the AR and do the right thing by allowing play to progress. Misconduct can always be dealt with at the next stoppage of play.

- Note the timing of the ARs flag. It is after the attacker has managed to position himself goal side of the shirt pulling defender. With his quickness and strength, he is a strong candidate for breaking away. If he doesn't, then a late whistle is appropriate.
- There is considerable space behind the defense for the attacker to progress with the ball; hence, a flag is denying a credible and dangerous attack into the front third of the field.
- There is numerical advantage. There is only 1 defender close enough to close down on the attacker and he is 15-20 yards away marking ANOTHER opponent. There is plenty of time for the fouled attacker to keep effective possession and have a numeric advantage to goal.
- The attacker maintains control of the ball as he breaks away from his opponent.

### Definitive Yellow Cards

We will examine 2 classifications of yellow card offenses (both unsporting behavior) that occurred last week:

1. Tackles
2. Tactical

It is important to note that players **must not feel that the "first foul" in the game is free.** In other words, because the game is relatively young or the player has just entered the game, players must not feel they can commit fouls that endanger the safety of the opponent or are "reckless" in nature and go unpunished. Do not allow players to be exempt from misconduct regardless of the time of the game or how long they have been in the game. 100% misconducts must be given.

1. Tackles

In the case of Tackles, there are 3 video clips that provide examples of fouls that must be sanctioned with a caution.

**Video Clip 9:** Chivas at Galaxy (5:30)

Notice the time of the game, the referee correctly cautions the player for unsporting behavior despite the early time in the game. This type of tackle must be sanctioned as it is "reckless" and is done with complete disregard of the danger to, or the consequences for, the opponent. The fact that the player got some of the ball should not enter into the referee's decision because the defender went through the opponent (clear contact is made) to get to the ball. By issuing a caution in this situation, the referee sets the tone for the remaining 84 minutes of the match.

**Video Clip 10:** Chivas at Galaxy (79:37)

In this case, the player committing the foul has no intent to play the ball. This is evident by the lateness of the challenge and the location of the ball at the time of the challenge. Notice that the player disguises the exposure of his cleats in the challenge by using his upper body (freeze the view at 79:41). Failure to call this foul, leads to retaliation by the first attacker fouled. Referees must recognize these types of fouls and punish them with a yellow card.

**2. Tactical**

Tactical fouls is an area that requires more consistency in application. These are the type of fouls that don't necessarily endanger the safety of an opponent but are committed in order to either strip a team of an effective attack (like shirt pulling) or are committed to gain an advantage in attack. Players work very hard to hide these types of fouls and make them difficult for the referee to recognize. Some may call them gamesmanship but, in affect, they are fouls designed to cheat the game and/or disrupt attacking play. Often times, these fouls seem so minor that the referee fails to recognize the reason the player is committing the foul.

**Video Clip 11:** Colorado at Chicago (11:04)

Another foul committed early in the game. A foul that is designed to take away an opportunity for the attacking team to get the ball behind the defense. There is approximately 22 yards of space in front of the attacker, all in the penalty area. Referees must be aware of this. With the speed of the attacker, it does not take much for them to go down. If the referee blows the whistle with similar fouls, a yellow card must be issued. Notice that the player who commits the foul does not argue.

**Video Clip 12:** San Jose at New York (35:20)

Similar to video clip 11 but, in this case, the referee correctly issues a caution as the defender impedes the attackers advance. It is a tactical foul intended on destroying an attacking run with the ball.

**Video Clip 13:** Chivas at Galaxy (7:00)

Early in the game, the attacker is hoping to catch everyone off guard with a tactical foul aimed at gaining an advantage in the attack. The attacker is taking a risk that the offense will go unnoticed by the referee and AR. The assistance provided by the AR in a case like this is critical since it is a counter attack and the AR has a clear view of the action. The referee must punish this type of cheating with a yellow card. Although the offense is not committed against an opponent, it is an offence committed against the spirit of the game. The gravity of the offense can be measured in the result (not necessarily the action itself) should the offense not have been seen by the officiating team.

**Red Card Offenses**

The following two fouls are provided as examples of situations that warrant red cards being issued. Remember, key to correct interpretation is:

- Speed of play and the tackle
- Intent
- Aggressive nature
- Position of the tackler – in particular, his legs
- Opportunity to play the ball
- Atmosphere of the game

**Video Clip 14:** Real Salt Lake at DC (87:54)

Looking at the foul itself, this is serious foul play. The defender is beat and he uncontrollably lunges at the attacker from a long distance. The intent is not to play the ball but to stop the attacker and potentially injure him. The defender has an outstretched leg and sends the rest of his body sliding through the attacker. Look at the raised nature of the defender's tackling foot – high and late.

**Video Clip 15:** New England at FC Dallas (90:00)

This foul represents a red card regardless of the time or the score. This is a late tackle that uses "excessive force" and actually injures the opponent. Notice the speed of the tackler as well as the aggressive nature of the tackle (lunging with no opportunity to play the ball). The attacking player's ankle is exposed to the player's cleats. The defender's intent is to send a message to the attacker. Hence, the referee must send a message (red card) to the defender and the other players that such action is not permitted.

**SUMMARY**

This week there are many games in which one or three points earned by a team will make a significant difference – let alone earning no points. The table or standings are tight. With five to six games played per team, the games are becoming tighter. Defenses are starting to settle in; hence, scoring chances will be reduced. Therefore, every chance referees have to give a team a valid shot at goal may mean the difference between one or three points. Just like the goal scored due to a great no-call offside decision in [Video Clip 1](#) and like the advantage given that leads to the only goal scored in [Video Clip 5](#). This is refereeing!

**WEEK 6 FOCUS**

### Application of Advantage

Both referees and assistant referees need to coordinate efforts to allow the rhythm of the game or flow of the game to continue uninterrupted in cases where there is a clear and effective advantage in accordance with the guidelines provided by the "4 P Principle." Key to application is "feeling" the situations in which the game or the player needs the foul called AT THAT MOMENT.

Remember, you can always come back and deal with the offending player either by a verbal admonishment or a caution.

- **Referees:** Delay the whistle. Exhibit patience. Have a broad view of the field so you can see the player/team's options.
- **Assistant Referees:** Like with offside, delay the flag. Give the referee first crack at calling the foul. Review prior Week In Reviews regarding discussions on involvement.

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