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Referee Programs

2009 Referee Week in Review - Week 10



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.

Week In Review

Week 10 – ending May 24, 2009

WEEK OVERVIEW

U.S. Soccer's 2009 Directive on the "Game Management Model" emphasizes player safety and 100% misconduct at the forefront of managing games. Referees must direct matches so that the "beautiful game" can thrive while ensuring a safe and entertaining environment for spectators and players. Game flow should never be emphasized over ensuring the safety of players. Match officials should work to eliminate brutality and violence and ensure that misconduct situations are handled according to directives.

Out of the seven games played this week, there were two games that featured six yellow cards each and another game that had a single caution. This broad range is indicative of the physical nature of two of the contests and the referee's attempt to ensure players were protected. Two red cards were issued for "contact above the shoulder" when the ball was out of play. Both send offs were correct as they were deliberate and endangered the opponent's safety.

This past week also marked the U.S. Soccer Development Academy Spring Showcase in Sarasota, Florida. Over 125 referees participated during four days of games between the nation's top youth soccer clubs. In conjunction with the Showcase, U.S. Soccer conducted a National Assessor training event with 15 National Assessors that resulted in approximately 100 formal assessments being completed. Additionally, U.S. Soccer's four full-time officials were in attendance offering advice and guidance to fellow referees. Interviews with Paul Tamberino (Director of Referee Development) and some of the Showcase's participating referees can be seen on ussoccer.com's [Studio 90](#).

In addition to the available video, several Showcase referee participants offered their perspective on the event in U.S. Soccer's "Official Take" Referee Blog. Check out their comments and insight at: <http://ussoccer-referees.blogspot.com/>.

WEEK 10 COMMENTARY

Contact Above the Shoulder: Law 12

This week, two examples of excellent application of U.S. Soccer's 2009 Directive on "[Contact Above the Shoulder](#)" are provided. Referees correctly use the "tool vs. weapon" criteria to send two players off for making deliberate contact with an opponent in the head and facial area. One of the instances involves a head butt while the other involves unnecessary contact with the back of an opponent's head.

Video Clip 1: Chivas USA at Kansas City (68:00)

The first clip is an excellent example of the referee identifying a player who uses his head as a "weapon" to make contact with the facial region of an opponent. The use of the forehead, in this case, not only puts the opponent's safety in severe danger but it may also lead to serious injury depending upon where contact occurs. Head butting an opponent must be punished with a red card for violent conduct as the act demonstrates **excessive force** and **brutality**. Remember, FIFA's "Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees" states that "a player is guilty of violent conduct if he uses **excessive force** or **brutality** against an opponent when not challenging for the ball."

In addition to red carding the player for violent conduct (using his head to strike the opponent), the referee may choose to caution a player for unsporting behavior if he believes this player was the instigator or caused the situation to escalate. This decision must be made based upon the referee's feel of the situation at the moment and what he believes is required to maintain game control. This decision can be aided by asking yourself:

- Does the player need the card? or Does the game need the card?

Prior to the head butt, at the start of the clip, the referee decides that there is no foul committed on the player who is eventually sent off. In order to better make this decision, the referee should position himself in a location that gives him a better view of the challenge. First, the referee should attempt to get wider. This broader view will improve the visual perspective as the challenge is committed. Also, the wide angle of vision ensures that no players can cross into his line of vision to the ball and challenge and possibly obscure his view of the challenge.

Referees must be active by constantly moving their feet and moving before the ball or as the ball moves to ensure they are able to maintain the optimum angle of vision.

ARs or fourth officials who clearly see the act of violent conduct (the head butt) should not hesitate in communicating with the referee and conveying the incident as they observed it. ARs and raise the flag to get the referee's attention while the fourth official can move down the touchline and converse with the nearside AR and then request that the AR get the referee's attention.

Video Clip 2: Los Angeles at Dallas (25:12)

This situation begins with a player withholding the ball from an opponent who should have possession of the ball on the throw-in restart. The withholding of the ball is a classic warning sign of impending trouble. "Week In Review 8" has a "contact above the shoulder" red card situation that begins with delaying the restart by withholding the ball from the opponent. At the time, match officials were urged to recognize and prevent potential retaliation or unnecessary contact when a delaying the restart warning sign exists.

As the ball leaves the field for a throw-in, the player who last touches the ball (and who is not entitled to the restart) picks the ball up and prevents the opponent from taking immediate possession and potentially putting the ball into play quickly in the attacking third of the field. A quick whistle on the part of the referee and/or voice intervention may be able to deflect player actions or, minimally, make them psychologically cognizant that the referee is aware of the tactic and is going to take action. This prompt whistle and/or prompt word is the mark of a proactive official. In this case, the assistant referee (AR) can also utilize verbal intervention.

The hustle shown by the AR moving to the spot of the "contact above the shoulder" is good work. However, because he must come from a long distance the voice becomes the most effective initial tool to prevent the unnecessary contact.

The "contact above the shoulder" occurs during a dead ball situation when there is no challenge for the ball. This makes the contact premeditated and deliberate. Despite the defender's actions to withhold the ball and, thereby, delay the restart (which must be cautioned) the attacker cannot make contact with the opponent in the head and/or facial region. Pursuant to the 2009 Directive "Contact Above the Shoulder", the referee is required to judge the force used by the player in making contact with the opponent's head. Depending upon the referee's judgment of the intent and the force used, the referee may red card the player for violent conduct.

In this clip, the referee correctly judges that excessive force was utilized and that the intent was to "send a message" to the opponent. The intent can be evaluated using criteria:

- Deliberate and/or premeditated
- Intended to intimidate
- Endangering the safety of an opponent
- Insulting and/or offensive in nature
- Potentially inciting further action on the part of opponents
- Done in a provocative, inciteful manner

Careful evaluation of the contact shows that the criteria mentioned above is evident in the contact and, therefore, the referee is correct in deciding the contact should be punished by a red card.

Not only should the player making "contact above the shoulder" during a dead ball situation be sent off (violent conduct) **but the referee must caution the opponent for delaying the restart for his actions to withhold the ball from the player whose team should have the ball on the ensuing throw-in restart.**

Managing the Technical Area

Bench decorum and managing behavior in the technical area has been a focal point for two seasons. In order to provide official guidance to officials, U.S. Soccer published the 2009 Directive "Managing the Technical Area." The directive provides proactive suggestions for officials and contains examples of what should and should not be said to personnel in the technical area by match officials.

Taking ownership of behavior in the technical area, by the referee, is one of the key recommendations in the directive. The directive recommends the following technique be followed by referees:

- Take ownership of the issues (don't leave it on the shoulders of the fourth official): on a stoppage in play, communicate with the coach as the situation escalates. State your expectations and hold the coach responsible.

Given that the referee has the final authority, the referee is best positioned to send the strongest message regarding behavior in the technical area. Bench personnel know the referee has the immediate authority to deal with irresponsible behavior. Hence, when the referee uses the "ask, tell, remove" process, it carries much more weight than another official.

Early recognition of improper bench behavior/decorum and early intervention to prevent its escalation is highly recommended. Match officials must put the burden of behavior and behavior modification on the head coach. Based upon the type of conduct displayed, the referee must choose the appropriate response. The referee may begin at the "ask" stage or the referee may decide to initiate the process at the "tell" stage given the severity of the behavior. In certain circumstances, the referee may invoke the "remove" stage. The removal stage should be utilized when the behavior (language or actions) is deserving of immediate dismissal for irresponsible behavior.

Video Clip 3: Real Salt Lake at DC United (87:22)

As you watch the clip, look at the bottom left side of the screen for the visual action of the coach. This visual disagreement is accompanied by verbal disagreement.

The referee follows the directive and takes ownership of the coach's negative, dissenting behavior. By taking ownership, the referee sends the strongest of messages in the "ask, tell, remove" process. The referee "tells" the coach that further negative behavior will result in his being dismissed for irresponsible behavior. This is **proactive** and **positive** work on the part of the referee.

The fourth official presence is necessary to support the referee and to act as a deterrent if the coach decides to continue his outburst. The fourth official's action in this clip is a good example of teamwork.

Taking ownership of the coach's behavior is an effective method of people management as the referee places the burden of managing technical area behavior on the coach. By taking ownership, the ultimate decision maker (the referee) sends a message that carries more weight than that of the fourth official and/or AR.

Once the referee has communicated with the coach, the fourth official needs to take responsibility to ensure the coach maintains responsible behavior in the technical area. If the coach or any other technical area personnel fail to follow the referee's "tell" warning, then the fourth official is required to notify the referee to have the person exhibiting irresponsible behavior dismissed/removed.

Remember, the Laws of the Game require that substitutes and substituted players within the technical area must be shown the red or yellow card by the referee depending upon the extent of their behavior if the referee is to take disciplinary action. All non-playing personnel (coaches, administrators, trainers, etc.) will be dismissed without showing a card. They should be told by the referee that they are being dismissed and that they must leave the technical area. The referee's post-game report must specify the reasons substitutes and substituted players have been yellow or red carded as well as the reasons non-playing personnel have been dismissed. Non-playing personnel are always dismissed for "irresponsible behavior" but the specifics behind their behavior must be detailed in the post-game referee report.

Looking Forward – Week 11

Heat and humidity are on the rise. Match officials must take preventative action to prepare for the change in game conditions. Training routines and nutritional habits need to be enhanced to address the game conditions associated with heat and humidity. Referees must prepare themselves so that lack of being acclimated to the changing weather conditions does not impact their mobility, stamina and fitness.

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