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Referee Programs

2009 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.

Week In Review

Week 5 – ending April 19, 2009

WEEK 5 OVERVIEW

This we will look at several examples of referees correctly applying [U.S. Soccer's 2009 Referee Program Directives](#).

This week's summary is highlighted by a game deciding penalty kick in which the referee correctly applies the 2009 Handling Directive. In addition, an assistant referee (AR) provides an excellent example of intervening in a situation of game disrepute that is proactive as well as preventative.

Overall, referee teams managed games that were not only difficult in nature but had many challenging decisions. Each week, examples of increased teamwork and communication between officials has been applied as match officials, like the teams, are getting into game rhythm and improving their performances.

WEEK 5 COMMENTARY

100% Misconduct – Reckless Tackle: Law 12

Two examples of reckless tackles will be analyzed. The first example of 100% misconduct is from a WPS game while the second is from a MLS game. One of the foundations or characteristics of the attacking game is speed. Players, particularly attacking players, often possess quickness and speed. This may provide issues for opposing defenders and often times is the basis for tackles, reckless challenges and tactical-type fouls. Defenders, who are beat, must find ways to slow their opponent and are often willing to take the chance that they may be punished (for misconduct) as a result of their actions. However, the alternative of not fouling often is an attack toward the goal.

Referees must be aware of several warning signs that defenders may attempt to slow or stop an attacker by fouling. Some of the warning signs include:

- **Speed of the attacker:** The attacker's pace is faster than the defender's.
- **Space behind the defender or defense:** There is lots of space behind the defender for the attacker to advance the ball and create an opportunity to goal.
- **One-on-one situations:** There are no players supporting or covering the defender in his attempt to close down or slow down the attacker.

As play develops, referees and ARs (often times speed is utilized down the flanks or in the wide channels of play) need to anticipate potential actions by defenders to slow the attack. Recognizing these warning signs will aid referees in positioning themselves proactively, prior to the defender's challenge/action, so that they have a better perspective of the incident. Also, it may aid the referee by increasing his presence and thereby preventing a foul by a defender – a well positioned referee will be in the defender's vision and may cause the defender to second guess their actions.

Video Clip 1: [New York at Chicago – WPS \(24:47\)](#)

In this clip, the defender commits a reckless challenge that should be punished by a yellow card for unsporting behavior. The foul has all the elements of a cautionable tackle and is committed for tactical reasons.

As the clip is viewed, consider the elements and warning signs listed above. The speed and skill of the attacker puts the defender in a position of having to foul in order to eliminate the potential for a dangerous attack. The defender's reckless tackle prevents the attacker from getting behind the defense and into the penalty area where the opportunity to service a ball across the goalmouth exists.

Watch how the tackle is committed. First, the defender initially makes contact with the outside leg of the attacker and does not go through the attacker's body to commit the foul. Second, the tackle is **not** committed with excessive force nor is the opponent in danger of being injured. Hence, a caution for unsporting behavior is sufficient.

Video Clip 2: [Real Salt Lake at New York \(47:52\)](#)

A well positioned referee (close proximity and unobstructed view) correctly decides that the tackle is reckless and cautions the defender for

unsporting behavior. Despite the fact that the defender stays on his feet to complete the challenge, he nevertheless comes in late and makes the challenge when the ball is not within playing distance. Referees must be aware that players **do not have to** leave their feet in order to commit reckless fouls as is the case in this video clip.

Game Disrepute: Law 12

The management of game disrepute is vital in overall match control as it often escalates into mass confrontation which is difficult for referee teams to control. The 2009 Directives includes a document entitled "[Game Disrepute and Mass Confrontation](#)". This directive provides a definition of game disrepute and mass confrontation as well as listing many warning signs of impending game disrepute.

Remember, game disrepute usually involves two opponents and occurs during a dead ball situation when aggressive behavior is exhibited toward an opponent in an attempt to provoke them. Players normally exhibit disrespect and their actions detract from the enjoyment of the game. Often times, game disrepute is caused by a trigger issue that can usually be identified by one or more of the warning signs.

Video Clip 3: [New England at D.C. United \(73:30\)](#)

Several warning signs of impending game disrepute are evident in this clip: two players moving at speed toward the touchline/signboards where the safety of the opponent is at risk (zone of contact), the ball is not playable and the level of contact is above the norm for such a challenge. In this game, the two players involved in the game disrepute have had prior exchanges and this must be recognized by the officials.

Not only does the AR assist the referee by signaling a foul but the AR "feels" the situation and exhibits positive preventative techniques. The quick and immediate intervention by the AR, by interposing his body in a constructive/positive manner, defuses the situation and prevents the players' actions from escalating and drawing in other players which could potentially result in mass confrontation. In this case, the AR became the "third man in" and his actions deterred the situation from escalating. Note, officials must be careful when interposing their body between players in a manner that may result in contact.

The referee follows the directive to "punish uniformly" by cautioning both players. Both players should be cautioned for unsporting behavior but the game should be restarted with a direct free kick in favor of D.C. United (black jerseys) as the New England player committed a foul to stop play.

Handling the Ball: Law 12

This year, several new guidelines have been introduced to assist match officials with making a determination as to whether a handling offense has occurred. This criteria or framework can be reviewed as part of the [2009 Referee Program Directives](#). Officials have been provided three (3) new guidelines to use to assist in deciphering whether to penalize a player for handling the ball:

1. **Making yourself bigger**

Did the player make his/her body bigger? Did the hand or arm take away space and passing lanes from the opponent? Did the player use the hand/arm to occupy more space by extending his/her reach? Was the hand/arm used as a barrier?

2. **Unnatural position**

Is the arm or hand in a position that is not normal or natural for a player performing the task at hand?

3. **Did the player benefit?**

After considering the two criteria above, the referee should also consider the result of the player's action by asking:

- Did the defender's action (handling of the ball) deny an opportunity (for example, a pass or shot on goal) that would have otherwise been available to the opponent?
- Did the offending player gain an unfair tactical advantage from contact with the hand/arm which enabled him to retain possession?

In other words: **Did the player benefit** by putting his hand/arm in an "unnatural position?" The referee needs to be able to quickly calculate **the result of the player's action** to determine whether a hand ball offence has been committed.

Video Clip 4: [Toronto at Dallas \(81:49\)](#)

With the score 2-2 and approximately eight minutes remaining, the awarding of a penalty kick for a handling offense is never an easy decision for the referee. It takes courage and a well positioned official to make this game critical call.

The referee correctly awards a penalty kick for handling because he has determined all three of the criteria listed above are evident. The defender "makes himself bigger" by taking away the space the attacker needed to flick the ball up and by the defender. The defender's extended arm was used to extend his reach and occupy more space.

The defender's arm is also in an "unnatural position." The referee makes the determination that the arm/hand does not need to be in that position or extended so far from his body. In other words, the referee decided that the extended position of the arm was not normal or needed for the task facing the defender. As a result of the extended arm and the contact with the ball, it is evident that the player benefited from putting his arm in the position.

Looking Forward – Week 6

Continued focus on preventive refereeing as exhibited this week in the game disrepute situation significantly contributes to improved game control and ensures the "temperature" of the match remains at a controllable level where the players are respecting the game, the opponent and the officials. Match officials must work to be cognizant of the warning signs that develop throughout a game. This requires all officials to connect situations together despite the fact that they may have occurred sporadically or at a much earlier time. Officials must build a database throughout the game and be able to recall key issues as the game requires.

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