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## Referee Programs

### 2009 Referee Week in Review - Week 8



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 8 – ending May 10, 2009**

#### WEEK 8 OVERVIEW

Week 8 featured several exciting and difficult matches in which the referee needed a strong presence to set the tone early. Referees were challenged to adjust to the game based upon the temperature, atmosphere and conduct of players in the match. The referee's ability to "feel" the game and sense the atmosphere of the game was vital.

As we stated last year, "The game is the best teacher, learn from it and adjust during and after." Like teams, referees must adjust their tactics and strategies as the game unfolds. This adjustment comes from the "feel" the referee needs to obtain based upon specific outcomes throughout the match and even, at times, before the match. However, flow and risk taking must be put aside when game control and player safety is in question. Referees must possess the ability to "bring the rope in" (increase their impact/effect on the game by slowing the game down and calling more fouls) as the temperature of the game heats up. This is an "art" that comes with experience and awareness.

Referees must be able to recognize when a game is moving toward the "edge" and take the action needed to bring it back and to maintain control.

#### WEEK 8 COMMENTARY

##### Offside and the "Wait and See" Principle: Law 11

In multiple versions of last year's "Week In Review," the principle/concept of "wait and see" was introduced as a mechanism to help assistant referees (AR) get offside decisions correct. When there are close offside decisions, ARs can wait to see if there is participation, interference or if a player has gained an advantage from being in the offside position. The terms "interference" and "gaining an advantage" are both from the Laws of the Game and often require time to decide.

By utilizing the "wait and see" technique, an AR can gain valuable time (split seconds) to decide if an attacker who was in an offside position, at the moment the ball touches or is played by one of his team, is involved in "active play." The additional "wait and see" time gives the AR the ability to decide if the offside player has:

- "Interfered with play"
- "Interfered with an opponent"
- "Gained an advantage by being in that position"

##### Video Clip 1: New Jersey at Chicago (62:44) – WPS

This clip provides a great example of the "wait and see" concept in practice. A focused and alert AR holds the offside flag until it is clear that the offside player "interferes with play" by playing or touching the ball that has been passed/touched by a teammate. When two players have the opportunity to play the ball and one of the two players was in an offside position at the time the ball was played/touched by a teammate, the AR must delay calling offside (raising the flag) until such time as:

- The offside player plays/touches the ball; or
- It is clear that the only player who will play the ball is the offside player; or
- The AR believes there is a chance of a collision or injury to a goalkeeper or other player if the decision were delayed.

The AR appropriately waits to see which player (the offside positioned player or the player coming from an onside position behind the second-to-last defender) "interferes with play" by touching the ball. Once the offside player touches the ball, the AR should stop his run and raise the flag to indicate "interference" by the offside player.

The AR can use the field markings to assist with making the initial onside or offside position decision. Often times, grass cuttings or other markings can assist with determining the position of players when the pass is made. The freeze frame shot provided in the clip shows three attacking players with opportunity to advance and play the through pass. However, only one of the three players (the one in the middle) is in an offside position ("nearer to the opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent").

In situations like this, the AR must “wait and see” which of the three players plays/touches the ball and then make the offside decision. The AR must continue his run with the play until it is time to make the decision.

Remember, it is **NOT** an offense to be in an offside position. The offside offense occurs once there is “interference with play,” “interference with an opponent” or an “advantage has been gained from being in an offside position.”

### **Mass Confrontation and Contact Above the Shoulder: Law 12**

Often times, game disrepute (normally aggressive and unsporting action amongst two opposing players) leads to mass confrontation (aggressive action amongst three or more opposing players). When mass confrontation exists, players often feel at liberty to use their hands and arms to make intimidating contact to an opponent’s facial and neck area.

For 2009, U.S. Soccer has issued 10 Directives to guide officials in the management of their games. The directive on “Contact Above the Shoulder” often times goes hand-in-hand with the directive on “Game Disrepute and Mass Confrontation” as player behavior in mass confrontation and game disrepute situations often includes violent conduct (using the hand/arm as a weapon against an opponent).

In situations of mass confrontation, U.S. Soccer recommends the forming of the “Triangle of Control” (refer to the 2009 Directive on “Game Disrepute and Mass Confrontation” for a visual of the triangle). This triangle provides officials with the best vantage point to observe the actions of the group of players involved in a mass confrontation event. Officials should refrain from getting caught in the middle of the confrontation or from getting too close as this impairs vision and perspective and may lead to missing critical incidents requiring misconduct.

The “Contact Above the Shoulder” directive deals with contact made above the shoulder during dead ball situations. Because “contact above the shoulder” during dead ball situations normally involves premeditated and deliberate contact, it cannot be tolerated and player’s who do make such contact **must be issued a red card** for violent conduct.

Actions aimed at the face of an opponent, while the ball is out of play, must be dealt with severely REGARDLESS OF THE FORCE USED if the actions are:

- Deliberate
- 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

When managing mass confrontation, match officials must also be cognizant of the instigator (the player who initiates/causes the confrontation) as well as the “third man in” (the player who has or may cause the situation to escalate). U.S. Soccer directives require that the “third man in” be cautioned for his actions unless the actions are violent conduct and therefore require a red card.

Preventative refereeing mode is critical in situations of game disrepute and mass confrontation. Match officials must recognize the flash points or warning signs and act immediately. Physical and auditory (verbal and/or whistle) presence is imperative.

### **Video Clip 2: Los Angeles at Seattle (11:07, second half)**

This is a complicated clip and requires officials to think on multiple levels and be able to evaluate multiple actions by multiple players while ensuring U.S. Soccer’s directives are followed. In this clip, once the referee whistles for the foul, he must deal with:

1. Actions aimed at delaying the restart
2. Game disrepute
3. Mass confrontation resulting from the game disrepute
4. The “third man in”
5. “Contact above the shoulder”

In order to correctly decipher the totality of actions, the involvement of each member of the referee team is required. In this and similar cases, teamwork will lead to more informed decisions on the part of the referee. Let’s address each of the points above:

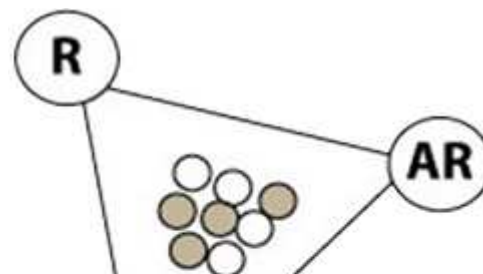
#### **1. Actions aimed at delaying the restart**

As soon as the referee sees that a player on the defending team (the team committing the foul) gets possession of or attempts to gain possession of the opponent’s ball, the referee must immediately impart himself on the situation with his presence and a whistle. A warning sign is the player pulling the ball away from the opponent with his foot as the attacker approaches. Recognizing this leads to preventative work. Urgency in response and movement (the referee cannot walk to the situation) to the delaying player may act to defuse the situation and prevent opponents from attempting to dispossess the defender of the ball. The warning signs of impending issues are there because the free kick is in the attacking third of the field and the defending team wants to slow the restart to get players goal side of the ball. The actions of player No. 16 (white jersey) **must** be punished with a yellow card for delaying the restart of play. This player is the instigator and this must be recognized by the officials.

#### **2. Game disrepute**

The player’s actions aimed at delaying the restart escalate into game disrepute because an attacking player attempts to get possession of the ball and makes contact with the instigator. This, in turn, leads to a scrum and multiple players involved (mass confrontation). As mass confrontation ensues, the referee should back away, the near side AR should observe and the far side AR should enter the field to provide another set of eyes. These actions form the “triangle of control” and provide the best vantage point for the officials to ensure the proper misconduct can be administered.

#### **3. The “third man in”**



As the situation evolves, it becomes evident that player No. 18 (white jersey) is the "third man in." This player's aggressive actions and his eagerness to assert himself into the scrum, increases the aggressiveness of the situation. This player must be cautioned for unsporting behavior.

4. **"Contact above the shoulder"**

In response to the actions of the "third man in," No. 7 (green jersey) strikes the opponent with his right arm/hand contacting him above the shoulder in the neck and facial area. This action meets all the criteria listed above (deliberate, intended to intimidate, potentially inciting further action on the part of opponents, etc.) and thus must be considered violent conduct and a red card issued.

Identifying players who persist in dissenting the decision is important but secondary to dealing with the perpetrators and retaliators. In this clip, the referee cautions a player for his dissent which is exhibited both verbally and visually (through his physical persistence and interference with the referee).

A key part to ensuring the correct misconduct is administered should be teamwork. Once the situation has defused and the players channeled to neutral areas, the referee should consult with the other members of his team and evaluate the whole situation prior to deciding what misconduct to mete out. This is key and ensures that all the culprits are identified and the appropriate actions taken. In this situation, the referee should not rush to show cards but should seek input from the ARs and the fourth official and then make the best possible **team-based** decision.

**Violent Conduct: Law 12**

One form of violent conduct occurs when excessive force or brutality is used against an opponent when not challenging for the ball. In addition, violent conduct can occur while the ball is not in play (dead ball). When a player is on the ground and an opponent hovers over him or runs over him, the referee must interpret this as a potential warning sign. As such, he should maintain visual contact and must not be too quick to follow the ball. When a player is on the ground, opponents can use this as an opportunity to send a message by stepping on or kicking them. Some players believe they can disguise or hide their actions from referee detection especially when the ball has left the immediate area. Hence, their comfort level goes up and they feel they can take a risk as their actions will go undetected.

**Video Clip 3: San Jose at New York (58:22)**

In this clip, the referee calls a foul and immediately starts his movement toward the spot of the foul. As an opponent runs over the top of the player that has been fouled, he deliberately runs his foot across the player's face. This is 100% misconduct and must result in the player being sent off for violent conduct (ball out of play and no challenge for the ball). The one-sided score and the time of the match cannot influence the referee's decision.

The referee must "feel" the potential for this type of action given the warning signs mentioned above. This violent conduct occurs near the fourth official. The referee, sensing a problem (the injured player's reaction is also a warning sign), should make eye contact with the fourth official or hold the game up so that the two can consult. If the fourth official is not immediately consulted but is certain that he saw the act, he must contact the referee and provide the appropriate information so that the referee can have the player sent off.

**Looking Forward – Week 9**

"Feeling the game." In multiple "Week In Reviews," the term "feel" is used as it has been used this week. Match officials must possess the ability to recognize the flash points or warning signs in the game and based upon these signs, adjust their approach to game control, discipline, foul discrimination, imparting of personality and all other factors under the referee's control. As the temperature of the match rises, so must the influence of the referee. The referee must adjust his tactics and strategy by quickly changing the tone and frequency of the messages (verbal, visual, foul selection, etc.) he is sending. The referee must "pull the game in" by imparting a bigger presence and by finding more effective ways to send appropriate messages until the players understand the message(s) and modify their behavior.

The **safety of the players is paramount** and must be at the forefront of the referee actions. As the intensity of the game rises resulting in player safety being jeopardized, the referee must effect change and must continue to find the most effective and efficient way to change player behavior in a fair and consistent manner. A referee who has imparted his personality and "drawn the line in the sand" early in the game may face fewer challenges as the game progresses.

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