

To: Chair, State Referee Committees
State Referee Administrators
State Youth Referee Administrators
State Directors of Referee Instruction
State Directors of Referee Assessment
National Referee Instructors and Trainers
National Assessors

From: Alfred Kleinaitis
Manager of Referee Development and Education

Re: Positioning at Free Kick Restarts

Date: October 26, 1999

In accordance with current instructional guidance from FIFA and CONCACAF, the United States Soccer Federation adopts the following advice to referees regarding positioning for a free kick restart taken close enough to the opponent's goal that a score might result.

When a free kick restart has been awarded within scoring distance of the opponent's goal, the officiating team has three important areas of concern at the taking of the free kick:

- Fouls and misconduct committed in the "wall"
- Offside infringement
- Whether a goal is scored

It is important that these areas of concern be specifically and thoroughly discussed during the pre-game meeting of the referee and assistant referees. The referee and lead assistant referee must be able to take their respective positions with a minimum of hesitation based on their pre-game discussion and their assessment of the circumstances of the free kick.

The referee must select the area of concern which has the **highest priority under the particular circumstances** of the restart based on location, observation of prior free kicks, the nature of the foul or misconduct which produced the restart, and other factors. This will normally mean that the referee takes responsibility for monitoring the behavior of players defending against the free kick and of any attackers attempting to include themselves in the "wall" (see USSF Memorandum on "Misconduct by Attackers at a Free Kick," January 26, 1999). The lead assistant referee would therefore take a position appropriate for judging if a goal is scored.

This leaves the issue of an offside infringement to be covered. Since any attacker in an offside position at the taking of a free kick would have to be somewhere between a defensive "wall" and the goal line, either the referee or the lead assistant referee could assume responsibility for this area of concern. Which official will do so must be addressed in the pre-game, along with a mutual understanding of any signal used by the referee to indicate his decision on the matter.

Among the factors to be taken into account in deciding which official will cover offside infringements arising from a free kick within scoring distance of the opponent's goal are:

- Whether one or more attackers are part of the defensive "wall" (particularly if there has been prior evidence of problems)
- How close a potentially offside position attacker is to either the "wall" or the goal line
- How likely is the scoring of a goal as a result of the free kick

Normally, if there is a possibility of both misconduct in the "wall" and an offside infringement, the referee should focus on the former and direct the lead assistant referee to take a position to judge offside. Under these circumstances, the lead assistant referee must be prepared to move quickly downfield to judge the validity of a goal.