As many of you SHOULD know by now, there as been a change by FIFA to the interpretations of Law 11 (Offside) regarding what now constitutes Interfering with Play, Interfering with a Player, and Gaining an Advantage.

To simplify these in the context of these new interpretation of Law 11, the following definitions apply:

• “Interfering with Play” means playing or touching the ball passed or touched by a team-

mate. They key here is simply “did the attacking player in an Offside Position touch

the ball”? A touch IS required to declare a player Offside by Interfering with Play. If

the player did not touch the ball, then they cannot be declared Offside in this context.

• “Interfering with a Player” means preventing an opponent from playing or being

able to play the ball by clearly obstructing the opponent’s line of vision or challenging

an opponent for the ball. The key here is that an attacking player in an Offside

Position has blocked an opponent’s line of sight/path to the ball while challenging for

the ball. Proximity to the ball is important here!

• “Gaining an Advantage” means an attacking player in an Offside Position plays the

ball:

i. that rebounds or is deflected off the goalpost, crossbar or an opponent

ii. that rebounds, is deflected, or is played from a deliberate save by an

opponent having been in an offside position.

Always remember that an attacking player in an Offside Position who receives the ball from an opponent who has deliberately played the ball (except from a deliberate save), is NOT considered to have gained an advantage.

Also, being in an Offside Position alone is NOT an infraction of Law 11. Just because a player is an Offside Position does NOT always mean that he has an impact. For example:

• if the ball is on the right-hand side of the field and an ‘offside’ player in the centre

of the field moves into a new attacking position they are not penalized unless this

action affects an opponent’s ability to play the ball

• where a player tries to play the ball but does not touch it as it is going into the goal

without affecting an opponent, or in situations where there is no opposition player near,

they should not be penalized

The main change to Law 11 interpretation is now there must be a “clear attempt” on the part of a player regardless if that player is an attacker or defender. The point of this change is to make clear the difference between what should be considered “accidental” (deflections or rebounds) and what is “deliberate” (play, challenging, or saves) regardless of the success of the action.

Now, let’s clarify a few points of the new interpretation:

• ‘clearly attempts’ – this wording is designed to prevent a player who runs towards

the ball from quite a long distance being penalized until the player gets close to the ball

or the player has made a deliberate attempt to intercept the ball and has made contact

with the ball. It does not matter if the ball went where the player indented it to go!

The ONLY thing that matters is that the attempt was deliberate and there is contact

with the ball (no matter how slight).

• ‘close’ is important so that a player is not penalized when the ball goes clearly over

their head or clearly in front/behind/past them and the player cannot touch the ball at all.

Proximity to the ball is required.

• ‘impact’ applies to an opponent’s ability (or potential) to play the ball and will

include situations where an opponent’s movement to play the ball is delayed,

hindered, or prevented by the offside player. Bad decisions on the part of an

opponent not equal impact!

• “gaining an advantage by being in that position” means playing a ball:

i. that rebounds or is deflected to the player off the goalpost, crossbar or an

opponent when in an offside position

ii. that rebounds, is deflected or is played to the player from a deliberate save by

an opponent (ex: Goal keeper) having been in an offside position

To sum it all up:

1. An attacking player in an Offside Position touches a ball last played or touched by a teammate is Offside.
2. An attacking player in an Offside Position who blocks the line of sight or path of an opponent to the ball is Offside.
3. An attacking player in an Offside Position who challenges for the ball and causes an opposing player to react ins Offside.
4. An attacking player in an Offside Position who receives the ball from a deflection, rebound, or deliberate save is Offside.
5. An defending player who makes any deliberate action to intercept the ball and makes contact with the ball is considered to have played the ball and any opposing layer who receives the ball is considered Onside.

It is strongly suggested that all center referees make sure to have and detailed discussion about these new interpretation with the AR’s so that confusion is limited. You should also view the video clips that can be found at the PRO Referee site regarding these changes. The web site is:

<http://www.proreferees.com/news-pro-training-camp--offside-discussions.php>

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me through the LISRA office or on the Ask John forum found on the LISRA website.

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