



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

CC: State Directors of Coaching

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Subject: Advantage and Obvious Goalscoring Opportunities
Chivas USA at New England Revolution
UEFA Champion's Cup, Arsenal versus Barcelona

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Recent matches have caused considerable debate regarding the practical interpretation and application of advantage in obvious goalscoring opportunity situations. Two clips are attached: one is from a match played on May 13, Chivas at New England Revolution, and the other is from the final of the UEFA Champion's Cup, Arsenal against Barcelona (May 17). The guidance below should not be considered a commentary on the actions of the referees in the respective matches – the clips are included only to provide a practical basis for responding to questions regarding the options available to a referee who has applied advantage to a foul which interferes with a goal or an obvious goalscoring opportunity.

Some general principles need to be recalled:

- Applying advantage is a decision of the referee, whereas calling out "Play on!" and swinging the arms upward (the verbal and visual signal) is only the announcement of the decision.
- A sequence of plays can occur so quickly in a match involving skilled players that the conditions for an advantage decision may pass before it is possible to signal the decision. Nevertheless, advantage has been applied if that was the referee's decision.
- The referee is expected to stop play within a short time (roughly, 2-3 seconds) after the foul if the advantage does not develop or does not continue.
- Advantage is a **team concept** and thus the advantage gained by a team when the referee decides not to stop play can be enjoyed by the player who was fouled as well as by any teammate of that player.

Given a foul judged to be an interference with a goal or a goalscoring opportunity and given the referee's decision to apply advantage, the following scenarios should be considered carefully:

- If the advantage does not continue, the referee is expected to stop play as soon as this is evident. The defender committing the foul must be sent off and shown the red card, and play must be restarted correctly (based on the foul and its location).
- If the advantage continues and the attacking team is able to score a goal (regardless of whether it was by the attacker who was fouled or by a teammate), the defender who committed the foul **may not be sent off** (since a goal was not prevented and the team's goalscoring opportunity was not interfered with successfully). The misconduct would be more appropriately categorized as unsporting behavior (tactical foul) warranting a caution and the showing of the yellow card. However, if the foul involved violent conduct or serious foul play, a red card must be given.

In the Chivas-Revolution clip, Twellman (Revolution #20) was fouled by Llamosa (Chivas #11) at the 39th minute. The referee applied advantage (though this is not evident from the clip). Several seconds later, the referee judged that the advantage had been lost (the foul slowed Twellman sufficiently that an opponent was able to catch up to and challenge him). The referee stopped play for the original foul and, prior to the restart, cautioned Llamosa. If the original foul had been considered an interference with an obvious goalscoring opportunity (all elements for this misconduct – the “4 Ds” – were present), the correct referee action would have been to send off Llamosa for “denied goal by foul” (DGF).

In the Arsenal-Barcelona clip, the referee stopped play after the Arsenal goalkeeper, Lehmann, fouled Barcelona's Eto'o at the 18th minute at the top of the Arsenal penalty area. Just after the whistle was blown, Barcelona teammate Giuly came streaking in from the right and struck the ball into the net. The goal was canceled and Lehmann was sent off. If the referee had allowed the advantage to develop, the offended team would have scored and, prior to the kick-off, Lehmann should have been cautioned. The goal, regrettably, was not valid because the referee decided the advantage had not continued and stopped play before the ball was struck into the net. Under these circumstances, the referee had no choice but to return to the original decision that a goalscoring opportunity had been denied – Lehmann was sent off and shown the red card.