

Referee Education

Thursday, September 27, 2018 8:30pm CST Conference Call

Computer Required with Internet Access

Topic: Applying the Rules as Written

At all times referees are expected to apply the rules as written. It is understood that in every game there will be situations where the referee's intervention will not be required, but when the referee is evaluating a situation in order to determine whether to whistle a foul or to withhold the whistle, proper application of the rules as written does not include the expectation that referees will choose to ignore a violation of the rules in order to "punish bad offense." For example, for a referee to observe a situation where an offensive player not holding the ball is being held, sunk, or pulled back and not whistle the foul because in their judgement a pass was a little too high or a little too far away, is incorrect. In this situation it is incumbent on the defending player to demonstrate that he or she is not committing a foul, or else the referee should call the foul.

Nowhere in this PoE does it suggest that applying the Rules as written equates with calling every infraction in the pool. What the PoE does say quite clearly is that, subject to the Advantage Rule, it is incorrect for a referee to ignore an exclusion foul because in his or her judgment to do so would be rewarding bad offense. This happens most frequently at the Center Forward position when the entry pass is less than perfect and the referee chooses not to whistle a clear exclusion, and then indicates that in his or her judgment the pass was too high or too far away from the Center Forward (*Show the signals used by referees*). Let's take a look at a couple of situations to illustrate this point.

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First the referee must be aware of the Advantage Rule which permits the referee to withhold a whistle if to award a foul would be to the advantage of the offending team. Likewise, the Advantage Rule sets the expectation that the referee will award the appropriate foul when it will "advantage the offensive team." It is the latter statement that the referee ignores when he or she chooses to not call an exclusion such as in these clips. Calling the exclusion without the ball certainly "advantages the offensive team," so calling the exclusion when it occurs is correct. If no call is made inevitably the physicality in these situations escalates, frequently resulting in an offensive foul when the Center Forward becomes frustrated.

Of equal importance is the fact that the Center Forward Defender can avoid this exclusion by demonstrating that he or she has chosen not to commit a foul. In other words, "it is incumbent on

the defending player to demonstrate that he or she is not committing a foul, or else the referee should call the foul.” Let’s take a look at a couple of situations to illustrate this point.

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This same pattern plays out on the perimeter when the offense is attempting to create an advantage situation and the defense commits an exclusion foul that the referee chooses not to call because in his or her judgment to do so would be rewarding bad offense. More will be said about this issue in Point of Emphasis #4, Applying the Rules on the Perimeter, and Point of Emphasis #5, Applying the Rules to the Women’s Game. Due to the suit holding in the women’s game, applying the rules as written is especially difficult on the perimeter.

As was the case at the Center Forward position, if the defender chooses not to foul, then no-call is appropriate.

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What this PoE has done is to make it incumbent on the defense to show they are NOT fouling; otherwise if the defender is preventing the offensive player from even attempting to play the ball by holding, sinking, or pulling back the offensive player we will never know whether it was a playable pass or not. Therefore the referee should apply the Rules as written and exclude the defender. This PoE shifts the responsibility of making this judgment from the referee to the defensive player: if it’s a bad or unplayable pass, don’t foul.

One other unintended consequence of this expectation that defenders need to show that they are not fouling is that it will make it easier for the referee to see when the offensive player is committing a contra foul. Again, let’s look at a couple of examples at the Center Forward position.

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