

# MAKING THE OFFSIDE CALL

## Chatham Soccer League

Making the offside call is possibly the most mis-understood and feared task of referees. This summary and training exercise is intended to help you more easily understand, monitor, and call offside at any match level.

### WHAT IS OFFSIDE?

An offside infraction is simply a play by an attacking team to gain a tactical advantage over a defending team (i.e. an unfair attacking advantage.) For a player to be judged offside, he or she must meet 3 very specific criteria. 2 of these 3 are concrete and easy to judge; the 3rd is subjective, based on your observation. The key to a good offside call is knowledge of the law, correct positioning, and confidence. The result is a clear, crisp call that inspires confidence from everyone at the field.

### 3 “COMPONENTS” OF AN OFFSIDE INFRACTION

To be judged offside, a player MUST be:

- 1 – On the attacking half of the field (beyond the halfway line, and in his opponent’s half of the field.
- 2 – Closer to the attacking goal line than the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last defender AND the ball.
- 3 – Involved in play.

### WHEN IS THE OFFSIDE CALL JUDGED?

The judgment of offside is made at the moment the ball is last played (i.e. passed) by a member of the attacking team. If the player in question is onside when a team mate last plays the ball, his / her position when receiving the ball is irrelevant.

### WHERE IS THE OFFSIDE CALL JUDGED?

The offside call is judged at the location of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last defender. This is the position of the referee, who should remain stopped at that position, signaling offside, until play is stopped, waived off by the center referee, or the defense gains possession and moves beyond the calling referee’s position.

### ANY EXCEPTIONS?

Yes – there is no offside call on a Corner kick, a goal kick, or a throw-in. Once played by an attacker, however, Law 11 is once again in effect. Law 11 is enforced on free kicks, direct and indirect.

### ASSISTANT REFEREE ROLE:

The AR’s primary responsibility on the field is the offside call. The AR must move up and down the touchline between the goal line and the halfway line with either the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last defender or the ball, whichever is closer to the goal line, as this is the determining factor for offside. The referee must stay with the offside call, even if doing so means a foul or ball in / out of play call is missed.

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### WHAT IF THE INFRACTION IS TOO CLOSE TO CALL?

Reference advice to referees: The offside infraction that is too close to call should not be called – i.e. the advantage is given to the attacking team.

### ANY TIPS?

Yes –

- 1 - When the attackers are playing close to the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last defender, you must use your eyes AND ears. WATCH the positions closely and LISTEN for the ball to be kicked. Although it may seem strange at first, it is actually easy to do, and will help you on the “close calls.”
- 2 – Learn the “AR Shuffle”. Practice, and turn and run if necessary.
- 3 – If one player is blatantly offside (attacker standing at the 6 yard line, defenders at the halfway line), there is no reason to watch his or her position. You know he or she is offside – by position, and by involvement in play - if the player is at the 6, he or she is involved in play by interfering with (distracting) the keeper. Stay with the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last defender so you can watch for other calls (fouls, ball in / out of play, etc.)
- 4 – BE CONFIDENT. Your first judgment is usually correct. Once you make a call, stick with it. Don't listen to the sidelines. 50% of the people at the field will disagree with every call you make, either way. Don't let any side influence your judgment. Only the center referee can override, change, or call an offside that you do not call.
- 5 – Discuss offside as a referee team in your pre-game briefing. Ask your referee teammates about anything of which you are unclear, and determine how it will be handled as a team.
- 6 – Give clear signals. Learn, practice, and give correct, clear signals during the match. Doing so will increase everyone's confidence in your calls.
- 7 – Have fun. Don't let anyone at the field ruin your day. If necessary, the center referee can have misbehaved attendees removed from the field. Feeling good will actually improve your performance and enhance your focus. Smile and enjoy yourself!