



## Memorandum

To: State Referee Administrators  
State Youth Referee Administrators  
State Directors of Referee Instruction  
State Directors of Referee Assessment  
National Referee Instructors and Trainers  
National Assessors  
National Referees

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**Subject: *Sequential Infringements of the Law***

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Recent matches in the professional division have highlighted a basic principle of the Laws of the Game -- that a foul cannot be committed when the ball is not in play. Reduced to its most simple elements, this principle assists the referee in deciding what action to take if an infringement of the Law occurs after play is stopped. Because such action cannot be a foul, the referee must deal with it as misconduct and remember that the restart has already been determined based on what stopped play in the first place.

This concept, however, depends on understanding when and under what circumstances the ball is not in play and the role of the assistant referee.

- Law 9 states that the ball is out of play when it leaves the field, across the touch line or goal line, or when the referee stops play
- ***USSF Advice to Referees*** (9.1) explains that the referee has stopped play at the moment the decision is made, not when it is announced by some signal (e.g., a whistle)

Accordingly, the decision to stop play marks the beginning of the stoppage and the time between the decision to stop play and the announcement of this decision is included in the period of stoppage. Any infringement during this period is therefore misconduct and plays no part in determining the correct restart.

Particularly with infringements of Law 11 (Offside), however, it is the assistant referee who is most likely to have given the initial signal that a violation may have occurred. Under the Laws of the Game, this information is subject to the decision of the referee. If the referee accepts the information, then the offside has been called and is considered to have occurred when the assistant referee gave the original signal. Anything happening after the assistant referee's signal must be dealt with as misconduct.

This is exemplified by a situation in which the original flag signal for offside by the assistant referee is not initially seen but a subsequent apparent foul is whistled by the referee. If the referee becomes aware of the assistant referee signal prior to restarting play and if the original signal is confirmed by the referee, the subsequent apparent foul must be handled as misconduct rather than as a foul and the restart would be an indirect free kick for the defense (for the offside violation) no matter what action the referee has taken regarding the misconduct (caution or sending off).

Of course, these matters need to be included in the pregame briefing of the officials. Further, keeping the assistant referees in better view during play will reduce the likelihood of embarrassingly extended delays in becoming aware of their signals.