

FIFA World Youth Championship Netherlands 2005 to pioneer use of offside rule clarifications

The FIFA World Youth Championship set to be played in the Netherlands between 10 June and 2 July 2005, will be the first opportunity to see the practical application of the changes made at the 119th Annual General Meeting of the International Football Association Board, held on 26 February in Cardiff, Wales, with respect to the laws relating to offside, unsporting behavior and players' equipment.

"Law 11, which relates to offside, has not changed in essence. The competition will see the new interpretations of the law as approved by the IFAB at their meeting in February in Wales," explains Fernando Tresaco Gracia, Netherlands 2005 Referees Coordinator.

For more information on the offside law, refer to the flash animation. (available on the web site listed below. *ed.*)

The text approved by the IFAB with regard to deciding whether or not a player is actively involved in play clarifies the three issues of interfering with play, interfering with an opponent or gaining an advantage by being in an offside position. The text says the following:

- Interfering with play means playing or touching the ball passed or touched by a team-mate.
- Interfering with an opponent means preventing an opponent from playing or being able to play the ball by clearly obstructing the opponent's line of vision or movements or making a gesture or movement which, in the opinion of the referee, deceives or distracts an opponent.
- Gaining an advantage by being in an offside position means playing a ball that rebounds to him off a post or crossbar or playing a ball that rebounds to him off an opponent having been in an offside position.

"In essence, what it means is that if an attacking player is in an offside position, but not interfering with an opponent, the referee must wait until he touches the ball before penalizing him for being offside. We want the referee's assistant to wait a little longer before deciding if the player in the offside position is actively interfering with play," says Tresaco Gracia.

If the attacking player in an offside position is running towards the ball and touches it, only when contact with the ball has been made should the assistant raise his flag. If contact is not made, then play should continue.

"However, if a player's position interferes with an opponent, preventing him from reaching or playing the ball, or results in impaired vision for a goalkeeper or defender, the referee need not wait until said player touches the ball before sanctioning the offence," he clarifies.

The doubt has also been removed as to the question of whether or not a player is gaining an advantage from an offside position when a team-mate's shot rebounds off an opponent and falls to a player in an offside position. In such instances, play must be stopped.

"We believe that with these clarifications, there will be much more uniformity in the application of a norm that has caused quite a lot of confusion. Now it's much clearer," the Refereeing Coordinator says.

From these clarifications, it can now be seen that if an attacking player in an offside position is not interfering with an opponent, or in the line of sight of a goalkeeper, and not touching the ball, a foul is not committed.

editor's comment: he only thing different in this interpretation and what has been taught in Area K is that if a player from an offside position runs toward the ball, he is not to be sanctioned until he touches the ball.

This article and the flash animation are available at:

<http://www.fifa.com/en/comp/index/0,2442,107252,00.html?comp=WYC&year=2005&articleid=107252>