

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

From: Alfred Kleinaitis  
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Subject: Mass Confrontation

Date: March 14, 2003

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The referee's ability to maintain composure in the face of dissent from a player is magnified when he becomes the focus of dissent and challenge from several players simultaneously. For the purpose of this guidance, a "mass confrontation" is defined as the concerted actions of three or more players from the same team who are disputing a decision while surrounding the referee or hindering or forcing movement by the referee. Such situations bring the game into disrepute, are inherently intimidating, and create a strongly negative public image.

The Laws of the Game provide adequate tools to deal with dissent on an individual level, but mass confrontations add a dangerous element calling for special measures involving all members of the officiating team. Instances of mass confrontation are significant events that transcend the sum of the individual acts of misconduct which the referee must handle.

**Referee**

- Attempt to assess the likelihood of a mass confrontation and move out of the area where it would probably occur.
  
- Distinguish between those players who are actively and aggressively increasing the tension and those who, though physically nearby, are clearly trying to reduce tension.
  
- Pay particular attention to those who instigate the confrontation, those who join it from the immediate area, and those who move a considerable distance in order to participate in the confrontation.
  
- Consult with the assistant referees and the fourth official before taking disciplinary action.
  
- Assess the appropriate punitive measures individually and, if a player is to be sent off, ensure that this occurs before moving on to other players who are to be disciplined.
  
- Ensure that all cards for misconduct are displayed and recorded before play is restarted.

#### Assistant Referees

- Both assistants move along the touchline to a point as near as possible to the confrontation and, if necessary, prepare to enter the field for a better viewing position.
- The nearer assistant should concentrate fully on the confrontation and attempt to identify the instigator(s) while the farther assistant concentrates on players who join the confrontation from a distance.
- The senior assistant (on the bench side of the field) should additionally monitor persons coming from the bench into the field to participate in the confrontation, but this assistant's primary objective remains monitoring the confrontation itself.
- After the confrontation has ended, both assistants should be ready to provide information to the referee regarding the identities of persons they observed and the role each such person played in the confrontation.

#### Fourth Official

- The fourth official assists the referee at all times.
- The fourth official's primary task in a mass confrontation situation is to observe and record the behavior of persons (substitutes and team officials) in the technical areas.
- After the confrontation has ended, the fourth official should be ready to provide information to the referee regarding the behavior of persons whom he has observed. If any relevant behavior involved violence and was not observed by either the referee or the assistant referees, the fourth official must be ready to include such observations in his report.

The referee's game report must list and describe separately any instances of mass confrontation in addition to the actions the referee took to handle individual misconduct that may have been part of the confrontation. Individual misconduct is clearly the responsibility of the referee and must be handled during the match in accordance with standard procedures. Competition authorities reserve the right to administer supplementary discipline to players involved in mass confrontations who may have escaped the attention of the officiating team.

Officials should not rely on the right of any competition authority in this regard but instead make every effort to properly administer justice for misconduct at the time it occurs.