

Know the Laws! Penalty Kick

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Referees must read and understand the Laws of the Game to do their job properly. That they do not always do that, even at the highest levels of the game, was made clear in a World Cup qualifying game on September 3, 2005, where a referee made an extremely critical "technical" error that led to FIFA ordering the game to be replayed in its entirety, despite the fact that the winning team was the one that protested the referee's inaccurate decision. The protest was raised because the winning team wanted the game to be replayed from the moment of the error, when they should have been awarded a retake of a penalty kick. The reason was that the protesting team, Uzbekistan, wanted the extra goal in the away game against Bahrain to pad its goal difference, which is used to determine standings in the preliminary stages. The referee's error was critical, one that could cost Uzbekistan a place in the 2006 World Cup. Neither team has ever qualified for the finals of the World Cup. The winner will play the fourth-placed team from CONCACAF for the right to go to Germany for World Cup 2006.

In the game, the referee awarded a penalty kick to Uzbekistan in the 38th minute, with Uzbekistan already leading 1-0. The Uzbek player took the kick and the ball entered the goal; however, the referee decided that one of the Uzbek's teammates had entered the penalty area before the kicker had taken the kick. The referee ruled that the goal would not be scored and ordered an indirect free kick for Bahrain.

After an Uzbek protest, FIFA ruled on September 6 that the referee had made a "technical error" in disallowing the Uzbek goal and then awarding Bahrain an indirect free kick when an Uzbek player entered the penalty area before his teammate kicked the ball, which entered the goal. The correct call would have been to have the penalty kick retaken. FIFA ordered that the game would have to be replayed in its entirety.

All of this occurred because the referee apparently did not fully understand one of the two simple changes to Law 14 for 2005-2006. **Referees must study and know the Laws to call the game correctly to avoid such critical errors!**

What must the referee do to call Law 14 correctly?

1. The referee must look to see who infringed the Law—whether it was the kicking team or the defending team.
2. The referee must consider what the outcome of the kick was. In other words, whether the ball entered the goal or did not enter the goal.
3. The referee applies the following guide in making the decision:
 - a. If an attacker (including the kicker) infringed the Law and the ball entered the goal, the penalty kick is retaken. If the ball did not enter the goal, the referee awards an indirect free kick (from the place where the infringement occurred). (Please note that this change occurs twice in Law 14, under infringements by the kicker and infringements by a teammate of the kicker.)

- b. If a defender (including the goalkeeper) infringed the Law and the ball entered the goal, the goal is awarded and the restart is a kick-off. If the ball did not enter the goal, the penalty kick is retaken.
- c. If both an attacker and a defender infringed the Law, the penalty kick is retaken.

Elsewhere in this issue of Fair Play you will find the June 13, 2005, USSF position paper on penalty kicks. It contains an easily understood chart that shows how to make the correct decision.

And, just in case you wondered what happened to Bahrain and Uzbekistan, the ending was predictable: In the first game, played in Uzbekistan, the teams tied, 1-1. In the second game, played in Bahrain, the teams once again tied, 0-0. By virtue of the goal they scored in the away game, Bahrain advanced to the World Cup finals in Germany. All because of a major error by a referee!