



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

From: Alfred Kleinaitis
Manager of Referee Development and Education

Subject: **A Classic Offside Scenario**

Date: May 4, 2007

Offside is often the subject of spirited debates among players, team officials, referees, and spectators. This has been particularly the case in the last few years following the publication of several definitions from FIFA clarifying what it means to be interfering with play, interfering with an opponent, and gaining an advantage in violation of Law 11 (Offside). In support of these definitions, USSF has distributed several detailed memoranda (August 24, 2005, and April 18, 2007).

In a match played in Los Angeles on April 28, 2007, between LA Galaxy and Chivas USA, an incident took place which is a classic example of one of the most contentious issues in the offside decision – two attackers pursuing the ball, one coming from an offside position and one coming from an onside position. The incident also emphasizes the vital need for officials to avoid hasty decisions and to wait to see how the play develops.

In the 86th minute, Galaxy #24 (Sturgis) played the ball forward into space. At the time, Galaxy #11 (Jaqua) was in an offside position near the center of the field and his teammate, Galaxy #10 (Donovan), was onside well behind the second to last defender to Jaqua's right. Both attackers reacted almost immediately and began sprinting hard to the ball. Although Donovan started about three yards behind his teammate, he had pulled level with him within the next few strides. There is no indication that Jaqua interfered with any opponent.

In situations where an attacker is coming from an onside position and another attacker coming from an offside position, each with an equally credible chance of getting to the ball, it is imperative that officials withhold a decision until either it becomes clear which attacker will get to the ball first (even if this means having to wait until one or the other player actually touches the ball) or the action of the attacker coming from the offside position causes one or more opponents to be deceived or distracted.