

Summary R&D Decisions for 2006

1. U17/2 Protest

The subject match was played to completion with a result of Team A 1 – Team B 0. The committee reviewed written reports of the match by the referee, match assistant referee, and team officials of both teams. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 27 September, 2006.

All parties stipulate that the assigned referee crew consisted of two men: one center referee and one assistant referee. At the request of the referee, a third member of the crew was chosen by the home team (Team A) to serve as a club linesman. Team B's complaint asserts a violation of NCSL Rule VII: *Game Procedures: When the Referee is Missing* (NCSL R&P Manual, 2006-2007, p. 24), in that neither the referee nor Team A obtained the Coach B's signature to signify that he was aware that an affiliated parent was serving as a member of the referee crew. Further, Team B asserts that the misapplication affected the outcome of the match because a goal which would have tied the match at 1-1 was disallowed by the assigned center referee, who called Team B for off-side on the play. This play occurred at the end of the pitch being served by the Team A parent.

The referee's written report states that prior to the match, in the presence of both team managers, he requested that Team A provide a volunteer "linesman". He also states that the Team B's manager did not object. He instructed the Team A volunteer to limit his calls to ball in and out of play only, which meets the definition of a "club linesman" as defined in the USSF Referee Administrative Handbook. Team B contended at the hearing that this was not made clear to her at the pre-game meeting.

The referee reported the Team A club linesman complied with his instructions throughout the course of play. The report received from the assigned assistant referee supports the statements made by the referee.

At the hearing, it was established that the club linesman was dressed in street clothes, and served the entire match on the same touchline. Team B's protest notes that on the play in question, "Candidly, it is unclear whether the [club linesman] raised his flag or not." The statements submitted by both the referee and Team A indicate the club linesman only signaled direction during the match.

Team B's protest fails on two counts. First, the rule cited by Team B is not applicable to volunteers serving as club linesman, wearing street clothes and limited in authority to signaling ball in and out of play. The rule is specific to the case where the "referee" and/or "assistant referee" is a volunteer who is an immediate family member of a player on one of the teams. In this case, two neutral assigned officials served as "referee" and one "assistant referee" with the Team A volunteer acting as a club linesman. Therefore, the requirement to note on the match card the agreement of both coaches via initials is not applicable. Second, the off-side call made by the referee is a judgment call, and may not be protested. (NCSL Rule XI: *Protests and Appeals*, p. 31). Therefore, Team B has not met the burden of proving that the match was affected by a misapplication of FIFA Laws of the game.

Decisions of the R&D Committee:

1. The protest is denied. The match result stands as played.
2. Team B forfeits the \$200 protest fee.

2. U17/4 Misconduct/Violent Conduct Following Match

The match was played to completion with a score of Team A 5 – Team B 0. Statements were received from all parties. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 25 October 2006.

Following the match, Player A and Player B became involved in an altercation. Reports indicate that there were several episodes of "trash talking" which occurred during the match, and which continued after the final whistle. Player B made a disparaging remark to Player A, regarding the legal status of his presence in this country. Player A took offense and spit towards Player B (reports conflict as to whether Player A was actually successful in this attempt.) The referee took notice and issued a red card to Player A for spitting. Player B made an overt show of his appreciation of this occurrence; Player A reacted to this by chasing Player B down and striking him in the face. At this point, other teammates restrained the players and the incident ended.

The committee notes the principal elements of this incident were stipulated to by all parties.

Player A stated that he became very upset at the remark made by Player B and after the spitting incident, he did indeed chase down Player B over a distance with the intent to strike him in the face. Player B admitted in a letter of apology that he was "generally angry because our team lost badly." He further stated that although he is "not a racist person" he "was willing to

say anything to make Player A angry” and noting that the “large majority of Team A was Latino, a racist comment came out of my mouth before I even knew it...I know what I said was stupid and tasteless, and I think I am as much to blame for being punched as you are.”

The committee looks for guidance on appropriate sanctions in previous R&D decisions and publications of national and international panels. The FIFA disciplinary Code takes a hard line on both offenses committed by these players. The Code specifies sanctions of 2-4 matches for physical assaults, depending on the severity of the assault. In cases defined as Offensive Behavior and Racism, the Code specifies sanctions of 2-5 matches.

The Committee views any untoward behavior following the completion of a match in a very negative light. Generally, the match officials are limited in their ability to handle such situations, and may not even be present at the time the incident occurs. There have been several cases of these types of incidents escalating to more widespread altercations, frequently involving players, coaches and affiliates. The committee is pleased that the leadership of these two teams were able to contain and diffuse the altercation without further escalation.

At the hearing, both players took responsibility for their actions, and both apologized to the other verbally and in writing. The committee was impressed with the conduct of both players and the response of the team representatives and guardians who were present at the hearing. This was taken into account and carried weight during the deliberations on sanction.

Decisions of the R&D Committee:

1. In addition to the suspension already served for the red card issued by the referee, Player A is suspended for the next five NCSL League matches. One of these match suspensions will be commuted to probation upon successful completion and documentation of the first four sit outs. The terms of this probated suspension require that Player A not receive any NCSL match ejection in calendar year 2007. Violation of this probation will result in the suspension becoming immediately active. Successful completion of this probationary period will annul the remaining sit out.
2. Player B is suspended for the next four NCSL League matches. One of these match suspensions will be commuted to probation upon successful completion and documentation of the first three sit outs. The terms of this probated suspension require that Player B not receive any NCSL match ejection in calendar year 2007. Violation of this probation will result in the suspension becoming immediately active. Successful completion of this probationary period will annul the remaining sit out.

3. U16/1 Inappropriate Team/Affiliate Conduct

The subject match was terminated in the 62nd minute a score of Team A 2 – Team B 0. The committee reviewed written reports of the match by the referee, and team officials of both teams. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 14 June, 2006.

The teams were positioning for the kickoff restart following the second Team A goal. There is no dispute that at this point “trash-talking” and taunting gave rise to a red card issued to Player B and as he was leaving the pitch, he became involved in an altercation with Player A in response to a taunt issued by Player A. Reports conflict as to the sequence of events which follow, however it is probable from the preponderance of the evidence that, at some point, Player B approached Player A who responded with a push away, at least once or possibly twice. Player A was also cited by the referee during this sequence of events, although it is not clear from the conflicting reports when this occurred. The altercation ended with Player B punching Player A in the face. At this point, other players on the pitch began squaring up and issuing verbal challenges. The referee then terminated the match.

The referee report states: “My conclusion is that the fault is shared by all the players on the field at the time.” The referee also notes that “Both coaches behaved properly in trying to stop the fight”.

It is the longstanding practice of this committee not to allow any team to benefit if found culpable in the decision of a referee to terminate a match. The escalation in tensions resulting in match termination appear to the match official to be a fault shared by both sides. Upon review of written reports and statements made at the hearing, the committee agrees with this assessment.

Further, R&D views any untoward action occurring after ejection as a very serious offense. Ejected personnel are to leave the area of the pitch immediately, and not involve themselves in any aspect of the match. Match officials are left with very little recourse in dealing with these circumstances. Frequently, these are the cause for match terminations or, even more severe consequences. The committee will impose additional sanctions on players and team officials who involve themselves in disciplinary issues or who fail to immediately leave the pitch upon being shown a red card. These sanctions will be commensurate with the severity of the offense.

Lastly, the committee commends the coaches and team officials of both sides for actions to contain the incident to that which occurred.

Decisions of the R&D Committee:

1. The match is declared a “non-match”. No points are earned by either team and the match will be erased from the Spring 2006 schedule. However, all cards issued will stand.
2. Player B in addition to the suspension earned for the red card during the match, is suspended for an additional 3 matches for violent conduct following an ejection.
3. Player A in addition to the suspension earned for the red card during the match, is suspended for an additional 1 match for unsporting behavior contributing to the tensions which brought about match termination.

4. U16/2 Protest

The subject match was played to completion with a result of Team A 2 – Team B 1. Team B’s protest the match result, alleging the referee concluded the match in the 78th minute. The committee reviewed written reports of the match by the referee, match assistant referees and team officials of both teams. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 17 May, 2006.

Team B’s complaint states toward the end of regulation time, Team B earned a corner kick. At that time, Team B officials asked the referee for an indication of time remaining. The referee responded with “2 minutes”, and the corner was taken. Team B alleges that following Team A clearance of the corner, the referee blew his whistle ending the match. The complaint further states that team officials had “more than a minute” remaining on their watches. Following the match, Team B reports approaching the referee to ask why he ended the match and that in a conversation, they were told that the referee felt that the match was getting out of hand, and that “he [the referee] felt like ending it.”

The referee’s statement indicates that he was asked about the time remaining on the Team B corner kick, and that he responded with a “guesstimate of 2 minutes remaining” without referring to his watch. The referee further states that following the corner and clearance, with a Team A player in control of the ball, he looked at his watch and realized that time had expired. He then blew his whistle and ended the match. The referee report indicates that the post-match comments were not quite as benign as reported by Team B, and his responses to Team B officials were meant to dissuade them from further discussion.

Law 5 states in pertinent part that the referee “acts as timekeeper and keeps a record of the match.” Further, Law 5 states that “the decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play are final”. Assertions from team officials, spectators and other ‘witnesses’ regarding the amount of time played carry no weight when the referee’s report clearly states that he consulted his watch, saw that time had expired, and blew his whistle to end the match.

Decisions of the R&D Committee:

1. The protest is denied. The match result stands as played.
2. Team B forfeits the \$200 protest fee.

5. U16/2 Protest

The subject match was played to completion with a result of Team A 2 –Team B 1. The committee reviewed written reports of the match by the referee, match assistant referees, and team officials of both teams. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 04 May, 2006.

In approximately the 76th minute, with a score of 1-1, Team A played a through ball to an attacking player. The lead assistant referee raised his flag, signaling an offside infraction on this attacker. Reports conflict from this point, but the most likely scenario is that both Team A attackers and the Team B goalkeeper went for the ball, resulting in a collision between them within the penalty area. The referee states that he observed an illegal charge by the Team B goalkeeper on the Team A player, and stopped play at that point with a whistle for a foul against Team B, as well as to issue a caution for unsporting behavior to the Team B goalkeeper. At that point the referee conferred with the assistant referee and then returned to the pitch, signaling a penalty kick for Team A.

Team B alleges that the referee misapplied Law 12 in awarding the penalty kick which resulted in the winning goal. The alleged misapplication is rooted in a perception that the officials failed to penalize an alleged violation of Law 11 (Offside) correctly. Team B asserts that dynamic play was over at the point in time of the assistant referees signal for offside, and thus any resulting contact between the Team B goalkeeper and the Team A attacker could not have been a foul since the ball was not in play, as required by Law 12.

Testimony and written reports made by the referee and assistant referee state that the referee did not immediately see the lead assistant referee signal the offside infraction. The referee stated that it was only after he had made the conscious judgment and resulting whistle for a foul and misconduct against the Team B goalkeeper that his attention was brought to the raised flag of the lead assistant referee.

Despite the Team B assertion that the offside violation results in a “dead ball situation”, the mere raising of the flag by the assistant referee, is not in itself a signal that play is to be stopped. USSF publication *Advice to Referee’s* states that play is only stopped when the referee makes a conscious decision to stop play and then subsequently communicates his decision to players. Regardless of the reason for not stopping play upon the assistant referee’s offside signal, reports and testimony of match officials indicate that the decision to stop play was based on the decision of the referee that a violation of Law 12 occurred. Further, it is immaterial if the ball had crossed over the goal line during the illegal charge. The fact remains that the described action occurred on the field, while the ball was in active play and contested by the two players. The decision by the referee to stop play and award a penalty kick to the attacking team because of the illegal charge by the goalkeeper against the attacker is consistent with the correct application of Law 12.

Decisions of the R&D Committee:

1. The protest is denied. The match result stands as played.
2. Team B forfeits the \$200 protest fee.

6. U16/3 Affiliate Misconduct

The match was played to completion with a score of Team A 2 – Team B 1. Statements were received from all parties. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 2 November 2006. The R&D Chairman recused himself from the hearing due to having a son playing in this division.

The match was reported as an intense match with an abundance of physical play. Following the match, several Team B parents approached the assistant referee’s who were packing up following the match. (The Center Referee had left hurriedly due to having another match). The assistant referees gear was positioned in a direct line between the spectators sideline and the path to parking. Several Team B parents made a point of stopping to engage the assistant referees at a relatively close distance, and proceeded to tell them that the officiating was “terrible”, the “worst they had seen” and other phrases to that effect.

Although the assistant referees positioning was not ideal, the fact that several groups of Team B parents closed the distance, stopped to engage and demeaned the performance of the referee crew from close distance is in direct violation of the parents code of conduct. Under other circumstances, this could have easily escalated to a more severe incident. Parents and affiliates must be mindful of the relative isolation of the referee crew following the match and the perceived threat of a group approaching to demean their performance, especially in the case of younger assistant referees. (In this case, one of the assistant referees was the younger son of the Senior Assistant).

Team B leadership conducted an investigation into the events which occurred at the subject match. The result was a two match ban for each of two parents, and one match ban for each of two parents. In addition, the team is formulating a handbook to address affiliate behavior at matches, as well as accepted procedures to handle any grievance which occurs. The R&D committee thanks team officials for taking these proactive steps in the interests of advancing good sportsmanship for the benefit of youth soccer.

Decisions of the R&D Committee:

1. R&D endorses Team B’s action to ban 2 parents for 1 match each and another 2 parents for two matches each.
2. Team B is fined \$250, and placed on probation for the 2007 Spring and Fall season. Payment of the fine is suspended pending successful completion of the probationary period. The terms of the probation require that no complaints regarding Team B parent behavior are to be received from match referee’s during the probationary period, and the TSL function must operate per League rules during that period.

7. U15/3 Inappropriate Team/Affiliate Conduct

The subject match was played to completion with a result of Team A 2 – Team B 2. The committee reviewed written reports of the match by the referee, match assistant referees, and team officials of both teams. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 20 April, 2006.

The referee reported a hotly contested match, which resulted in several cards: 1 caution to Team B; 2 ejections (both for 2 cautions) and an additional caution for Team A players. In addition, Parent A was ejected, as was Assistant Coach A.

There is no dispute that 2 Team A affiliates were ejected from the match: Parent A and Assistant Coach A, later identified as the son of Coach A. Parent A ran onto the pitch when his son was injured while the match was still in play and started to verbally abuse the referee for his performance, who then stopped play, showed the spectator a red card, and told him to leave the facility. At the hearing, the Team A Sportsmanship Liaison (TSL) reported that this sparked at least one verbal confrontation between affiliates of Team A and Team B on the spectator sideline. The Team A TSL also reported that she was unable to stop the parent who ran onto the pitch, stating that she did not know how to accomplish this given his agitated state.

Assistant Coach A was ejected during an injury stoppage and, upon being shown the red card, refused to give his name to the referee. The referee reports that he asked the Coach A both during the incident and after the match for the name of the ejected assistant coach, but was again refused. Based on the ejections of Parent A and the Assistant Coach A, the referee reported that he considered terminating the match, but decided to continue.

The committee asked Team A what action was taken with the players and affiliates who were sent from the match. Team A reported Parent A and Assistant Coach A proceeded away for the pitch into the parking lot, but the players sent off were allowed to remain on the bench.

The referee crew and several other witnesses reported that team officials and affiliates of Team A “stalked” the match officials as they left the facility following the match. Reports indicate that Team A affiliates may have waited in the parking areas in an attempt to intimidate. The referee crew and members of Team B report taking elaborate measures while leaving the park to ensure the safety of the crew, but they were followed for a short distance, despite leaving the facility “the long way around” and driving away from town and the Interstate.

Team A deny the allegations of stalking, deny that the referee asked for the name of Assistant Coach A and allege instead that the reactions of the Team B affiliates and referee crew were part of a cultural bias against Team A. However, the reports of the sideline confrontation, and Parent A running onto the pitch as well as the report of the untoward behavior by Assistant Coach A were not in dispute.

The committee notes that it considers evidence from all sources. Frequently, there is a difference in the reports submitted by various parties. In these cases the committee weighs the evidence and arrives at the most probable scenario on which to base its decision. Reports by match officials are frequently given the most weight.

The Team A TSL function clearly failed during this match. Parents running onto the pitch during match play is a very serious infraction, both for the safety of the players and match officials, as well the integrity of the game. The committee notes that many NCSL matches have been terminated prior to full time for incidents such as this, and commends this referee for showing great restraint in not terminating the match at this point. Additionally, players sent from a match are required to move at least 100 yards from the pitch for the duration of the match, in accordance with NCSL Rules and Procedures Section V.G. This is intended to diffuse any potential confrontation. Team A did not follow this procedure, thereby creating a more volatile match atmosphere. Finally, the committee finds credible evidence that the referee did ask, and was refused, the name of the Assistant Coach A who was sent from the match. This refusal represents a gross violation of the leader’s code of conduct for all member of Team A leadership who were asked. The alleged stalking of match officials is very troubling to the committee.

Team A’s affiliate behavior was the subject of an R&D hearing in the Spring 2005 season with substantially similar issues. The referee crew felt threatened following a match and the team claimed a cultural bias existed. Further, during this hearing, it was revealed to the committee that this team feels that this cultural bias has been exhibited during many of its matches.

The committee is very concerned about the pattern of behavior and the readily apparent tension which is mounting in Team A. Reports of cultural bias are taken seriously. Therefore, a monitoring system will be required at all future Team A matches played this season.

Decisions of the R&D Committee:

1. Team A is fined \$400. The fine must be received in the League office during normal working hours, and no later than Wednesday, 03 May 2006, 4:00pm, EDT. Failure to meet this deadline evidenced by non-receipt, late, or incomplete fine will result in forfeiture of at least one match.
2. Team A is ordered to institute a three match attendance ban for parents/guardians of current players. This sanction will be effective as of Saturday, 06 May 2006, and must be observed in the next three matches actually played by Team A. Parents/guardians/siblings must observe the sit out requirements imposed on coaches and team officials, as outlined in

Rules and Procedures, Sect V.G. Only the head coach and team manager may attend the sanctioned matches. A sit out card should be prepared and presented to the opposition for signature as evidence of completion of the attendance ban.

3. Team A Club Officials are required to submit to the R&D committee a written plan for providing club monitoring of each of the remaining Team A matches through the remainder of the season. The plan must be submitted no later than 03 May. This plan must list the name, Team A position, and cell phone number of the designated monitor for each match. The monitor must NOT be affiliated with the team in any way. This club monitor is responsible for validating the parent/guardian sit outs through personal observation, and for monitoring the conduct of Team A and opposition affiliates for the balance of the matches. Written reports to the R&D committee may be submitted at the discretion of the monitor/club.

8. U15/4 Protest

The subject match was played to completion with a result of Team A 3 – Team B 2. Team B protests the match result, alleging the match was played with a 45 minute first half and a 40 minute second half. The committee reviewed written reports of the match by the referee, and team officials of both teams. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 17 May, 2006.

Only one referee was assigned to this match. The match commenced with the assigned center and two step-in assistant referees, one from each team. The Team B complaint states the first half was played a full 45 minutes, in violation of NCSL Rules and Procedures which stipulate a 40 minute half for the U15 age group. At the half, Team B step-in assistant referee reports approaching the center to inquire as to the reason the half was played a full 45 minutes. Team B alleges that the referee stated to the assistant referee that he thought it was a U17 match, and he therefore played the 45 minute half. The assistant referee reported this to both benches. The referee then played the second half 40 minutes.

A statement submitted by Team A in response to this protest corroborates the fact that the match was played in two unequal halves of 45/40 minutes.

Although Law 5 states in pertinent part that the referee “acts as timekeeper and keeps a record of the match.” the competition authority has a reasonable expectation that the referee acts with some minimally acceptable level of judgment. The statement received from the referee was inconclusive, self-contradicting, factually incorrect and did not match the statements of the two teams. Therefore, the referee’s statement was given no weight.

Law 7 states in pertinent part: “The match lasts two equal periods of 45 minutes, unless otherwise mutually agreed between referee and the two participating teams.” FIFA allows the competition authority to modify the duration of the periods of play for teams U17 and under. The NCSL, acting as the competition authority, has mandated that U15 play a 40 minute half. This is taken as *de facto* agreement among participating teams and match officials who accept NCSL assignments.

Law 7 also requires that the match be played in two equal halves. The reason for this is to ensure that any disparity due to field conditions, goal placement, sun position, weather etc. are properly randomized by the coin toss. This is only true if two equal halves are played, notwithstanding the extra time allowance provided for under Law 7 for injuries, substitutions and the like. In this instance, the referee misapplied both stipulations of Law 7: the length of the half and the requirement that two equal periods be played.

Other facts associated with the match, such as when and how goals were scored, tactics employed by teams, etc., are not germane to the arguments of the protest. The protesting team need only show that a misapplication of a Law of the Game or NCSL rule which was NOT an error in judgment by the referee may have affected the outcome of the match. If the referee had allowed the second half to be played for a full 45 minutes, the protest would have no merit since the both teams would have had fully equal opportunities. However, in this case, one team was deprived of an equal opportunity to attack one end of the pitch by a full 5 minutes as compared to the opposition. The reason was that the referee erred in his knowledge of the length of the half AND in not playing the second half for an equal length of time.

Decisions of the R&D Committee:

1. The protest is upheld. The match result is annulled and the match will be replayed in its entirety.
2. The \$200 protest fee will be returned to Team B.

9. U15/6 Assistant Coach and Affiliate Misconduct

The match was played to completion with a score of Team A 4 – Team B 3. Statements were received from all parties. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 25 October 2006.

Prior to the match, the assigned Team A TSL was forced to leave due to a reported “emergency.” Manager A stated that she stepped up to take the Team A TSL position, but did not introduce herself to the center referee nor to the Team B TSL.

In the second half of the subject match, the referee issued a warning to a Team A player taking a free kick to get play moving after he appeared to be delaying the restart. Shortly thereafter, Team A earned a corner kick, and elected to use a set play. This play was interpreted by the referee as another attempt to delay the restart of the match. At this point, the referee stopped play and verbally warned the Team A bench about the delay. This caused Team A officials to become agitated and to dissent loudly. The referee then cautioned Coach A, who continued to demonstrate his displeasure, resulting in a send off by the referee.

All parties to the hearing stipulated, in large measure, to the facts surrounding the ejection of Coach A.

The referee reports that the “crowd became very unruly and abusive after the coach was ejected”. He reported issuing cards for dissent to two Team A players, one of whom was subsequently sent off. The referee reported the assistant referee on the bleacher side of the pitch was shaken and intimidated by the “supporters [who] were verbally abusive to the referee crew and [who] showed no sportsmanship throughout the second half.”

The step-in Team A TSL noted in her report that “When the people in the stands were getting loud, I kept looking for some sign from the side referee they were getting out of hand. Since the assistant referee never turned around I assumed that they were not bothering anyone”. She further notes that “I make absolutely no excuse for the parents yelling at the center referee about his calls. I would like to say that at this point if the referee thought the parents were doing something wrong, why did he not give them a warning or card one or more of the parents? Our team never received any indication from the referees that anything was wrong until I read it in the report. Not one of the referees took any action to warn or reprimand the parents during the game while they were officiating”.

The statements by the Team A TSL indicate a complete lack of understanding of the TSL function. It is the duty of the TSL to take pro-active measures to ensure that the behavior of team affiliates never escalates to a point that the referee must stop the match to warn the spectators or to seek out the TSL. Regardless of the reason, it was clear to the committee that the TSL function was totally abdicated by the Team A at this match.

Team A’s club leadership conducted an investigation into the events which occurred at the subject match. The result was a two match suspension (one for the red (mandatory) and one additional) for Coach A. In addition, the team is required to attend a mandatory meeting for all players’ families and coaches regarding expectation for conduct at NCSL matches. The R&D committee thanks Team A club officials for taking these proactive steps in the interests of advancing good sportsmanship for the benefit of youth soccer.

Decisions of the R&D Committee:

1. R&D endorses the Team A club action. In addition to the suspension served for the red card issued by the referee, Coach A was suspended by the club for the next NCSL League match.
2. Team A is fined \$200. The fine must be received in the League office during normal working hours, and no later than Friday, 17 November, 2006 4:00pm, EST.

10. U14/4 Terminated Match, Coach and Manager Misconduct

The match was terminated in the 51st minute with a score of Team A 4 – Team B 1. Statements were received from all parties. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 25 October 2006.

The committee notes that it considers evidence from all sources. Frequently, there is a difference in the reports submitted by various parties. In these cases the committee weighs the evidence and arrives at the most probable scenario on which to base its decision. Reports by match officials are frequently given the most weight. Team A’s club R&D conducted an internal investigation into this incident, and suspended Coach A for one match in addition to the suspension required by match ejection. Coach A and Manager A responded to the Team A R&D findings with emails which were made available to the Committee. Based on the light club sanctions and the contempt demonstrated for the Team A sanctions by Coach A and Manager A, NCSL R&D constituted a League hearing to review the case.

The referee reported that the subject match was terminated prior to full time “due to the Coach A’s conduct and failure to follow dismissal instructions.” All statements received generally agree that after a foul signaled by the assigned assistant referee and then confirmed by the center referee, Coach A engaged in a loud demonstration calling for the foul to be called. The referee requested that Coach A cease his comments and return to coaching. At this point, Coach A made some sort of dismissive gesture and turned away from the referee. The referee states that Coach A muttered something to the effect that “this is garbage” although the Team A statement disputed this. Following this exchange, the referee ejected Coach A from the match, and asked him for his name. Coach A refused to leave and continued the debate/negotiation regarding his

ejection. Reports indicate that he was told by the referee at least once, and possibly twice more, that he must leave the match. After Coach A's final refusal, the referee terminated the match.

At this point, Manager A who was serving as a STAR assistant referee, made his way towards the referee to discuss the match's termination. The referee's statement indicates that Manager A "began criticizing [his] actions in a derogatory and belittling manner." Although reports conflict, it appears that Manager A then threw his assistant referee flag to the ground, and began to follow and address the referee not as the STAR/AR but as the team manager. During the hearing, Manager A became noticeably irritated and made an inappropriate vocal outburst at the suggestion by the Team B representatives that his enactment of calmly placing the flag on the ground was inaccurate. His demeanor required admonishment by the Committee Chair.

In a letter to the Committee, Team A asserts that the referee failed to follow the league prescribed procedures for ejection, in that no card was shown to Coach A. This point was also raised at the hearing. Further, Team A asserts that the match referee was unfairly biased and influenced by events which stemmed from a match he officiated earlier in the day. Lastly, Team A asks that the terminated match be replayed.

The committee views the lack of remorse and understanding on the part of Team A officials to be surprising, and the contempt shown for Team A club sanctions to be disappointing.

The committee finds that the referee operated within Law 5 in asking Coach A to leave the pitch. Although no card was shown, NCSL Rules and Procedures XI, p.34, *Sit-Out Procedures*, are clear that any ejection requires coaches and team officials to immediately leave the pitch. The committee also finds that the preponderance of evidence clearly indicate that Coach A refused to leave the pitch more than once, in direct violation of this section. Coach A was also in willful disregard of the NCSL Leader's Code of Conduct, which states in pertinent part:

- *"I will insist on the highest respect for soccer officials by players, parents and fans. I understand that dissent is contrary to the Laws of Soccer and that criticism of officials could destroy the game. I will abide by NCSL's Rules and Procedures."*

The committee also finds that the referee was justified in terminating the match. Match officials have little recourse to deal with disciplinary infractions which occur following ejection. The committee will harshly sanction untoward behavior demonstrated following ejection. The referee stated that the match was terminated solely due to the actions of Team A. NCSL Rules and Procedures as well as R&D precedent decisions make it clear that no team will benefit from culpability for match termination.

Manager A is found to have violated the NCSL Leader's Code of Conduct in his capacity of Manager following the match, and the USSF Referee's Code of Conduct in his capacity of STAR at the point of match termination. Further, his outburst at the committee hearing was provocative, and could have resulted in hearing termination.

Lastly, the committee finds that both Coach A and Manager A demonstrated by their actions during the match, their contempt for Team A club R&D and their actions and demeanor during the hearing that sanctions must reflect the serious nature of the breakdown and/or lack of team official leadership and adherence to the Codes of Conduct, as well as the tenants of general good sportsmanship as role models for youth soccer.

Decisions of the R&D Committee:

1. The terminated match is declared a forfeit in favor of Team B: Team B 3 – Team A 0.
2. Team A is fined the sum of \$112, which is nominally equivalent to league cost for referee, 2 ARs/STARs and assignor fees for the terminated match. The fine must be received in the league office during normal working hours, and no later than Friday, 17 November, 2006 4:00pm, EST.
3. In addition to the suspension served for his ejection in this match, Coach A is suspended for the next three NCSL League matches.
4. Manager/STAR A is banned from holding any match-related team official position during the Spring 2007 season. Team officials include, but are not limited to: Manager, Assistant Manager, Coach, Assistant Coach, Team Sportsmanship Liaison, STAR, club linesman, volunteer Assistant Referee, Trainer etc.

11. U13/4 Inappropriate Team/Affiliate Conduct; Replacement of Referee

The subject match was played to completion with a result of Team A 1 –Team B 1. The committee reviewed written reports of the match by the referee, and team officials of both teams. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 14 June, 2006.

The match began with the assigned center official and two STARS, one from each side. The referee assigned was younger than the assignment guidelines for the League, which stipulates that the center referee should be at least 2 years older than the level of play. Communications with the assignor indicates that she was unaware of the referee's age.

Several controversial calls were made in the first half, which resulted in vocalization of displeasure by players, team officials and affiliates. Each team contends that affiliates of the other participated in loud and continuous dissent which eventually caused erosion of the authority of the referee. This caused the referee's confidence to wane until, at half-time, he was visibly upset.

After talking with the referee at half-time, the referee stated to team officials that he did not want to continue. Coach A suggested that the referee be replaced by Assistant Coach B (a certified referee), but Head Coach B stated that he did NOT want to replace the referee. After more discussion, Assistant Coach B stepped in and replaced the referee. The match was then played to completion. Both sides indicated at the hearing that they felt a fair result was obtained.

This situation presents unique circumstances. In 2005, a match was delayed and then continued when the assigned center referee was overcome by heat exhaustion and was replaced by an assigned assistant referee. The match result was valid. In another 2005 match, no referee was assigned, so the match was begun with an agreed volunteer. At the half, the volunteer was replaced amid some acrimony, and the match result was annulled by R&D.

Based on the referee's statement, it appears he was unable to continue due to emotional distress. In his statement, the referee states that "Everyone was screaming at me, and I just couldn't deal with it.", and that he "had no wish to go near an NCSL field ever again." These statements, coupled with the obvious error in assigning this referee to this match, as well as statements made by both teams, leads the committee to agree with the decision of the referee to discontinue his involvement.

NCSL Rules and Procedures do not specifically address this situation. However, Section IV.B Playing a Game: *When the Referee is Missing*. States: "If at all possible, the league encourages teams to play their matches." In this case, the referee was unable to continue, and the decision was made to replace him with Assistant Coach B. The committee considers this as the correct interpretation of League Rules.

Finally, the cause of the referee's decision to abandon his assignment was addressed. The committee notes that it considers evidence from all sources. Frequently, there is a difference in the reports submitted by various parties. In these cases the committee weighs the evidence and arrives at the most probable scenario on which to base its decision. Reports by match officials are frequently given the most weight.

The referee's statement reads, in pertinent parts:

- "This was a really bad experience for me, as I got nothing but grief from the Team B kids, parents, and their coach."
- "I think the Coach B made the wrong choices, like encouraging his players to yell at me."
- "The people who were the most trouble were Player B and Coach B."

The preponderance of the evidence indicates that it was principally the actions of Team B officials, players and affiliates which lead to the conditions causing the referee to abandon his assignment.

Decisions of the R&D Committee:

1. The match result will stand as played.
2. Team B is fined \$200. The fine must be received in the League office during normal working hours, and no later than Friday, 13 July 2006, 4:00pm, EDT. Failure to meet this deadline evidenced by non-receipt, late, or incomplete fine will result in forfeiture of at least one match, and may affect structure decisions.

12. U13/6 Inappropriate Affiliate Conduct

The match was played to completion with a score of Team A 2 – Team B 1. Statements were received from all parties. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 27 September 2006.

The referee stated that a Team B Affiliate dissented on several calls during the match by voicing loud objections and throwing his hat down on a number of occasions. During one such demonstration during the second half, the referee stopped the match and instructed Team B Affiliate to leave the pitch and to proceed to the parking lot. At the point he reports that Team B Affiliate refused to leave, and stepped onto the pitch to confront him. The referee stated that Team B Affiliate approached him with a confrontational posture, and that both team's TSLs and another Team B affiliate intervened to steer Team B Affiliate away from the pitch. As Team B Affiliate was walking toward the parking lot, the referee alleges that he heard him issue the threat of "See you in the parking lot."

The referee's account, as well as the threat issued by Team B Affiliate were corroborated by the Manager A.

Team B statements indicate that the referee was acting in an aggressive manner toward Team B officials and affiliates; that Team B Affiliate did not enter the pitch; and that he did not issue a threat.

The committee notes that it considers evidence from all sources. Frequently, there is a difference in the reports submitted by various parties. In these cases the committee weighs the evidence and arrives at the most probable scenario on which to base its decision. Reports by match officials are frequently given the most weight.

The Committee notes that the TSL organizations of both teams seemed to operate per the letter and spirit of League rules, and helped to diffuse this situation. Past experience with ineffective TSL implementations has led to much more severe consequences at other matches. However, the committee reminds teams that the TSL should work to prevent occurrences of this type from happening in the first place. In the past, teams have been sanctioned with fines for ignorance, or token application of, the TSL at League matches.

In this case, the committee finds that the preponderance of the evidence indicates that Team B Affiliate did threaten to meet the referee in the parking lot after the match. Threats issued to match officials are very serious incidents. The committee will sanction incidents of this type with attendance bans at matches. However, the committee feels that the effective and responsible use of the TSL in helping to deal with this situation is a mitigating factor in the sanctions ordered.

Decision of the R&D Committee:

The Team B Affiliate is suspended from attendance at the next three NCSL League matches played by Team B. The sit out requirements are the same as for team officials serving a sit out in accordance with NCSL Rules and Procedures Manual Section XI. A League sit out certification must be submitted to the opposition for signature verification, and then mailed to the League.

13. U12/2 Protest

Team A protests the result of the subject match. The match was played to completion with a result of Team B 1 – Team A 0.

Team A's complaint alleges that the match was played in two unequal halves; the first half of 30 minutes and the second of 35. An investigation was conducted by the R&D Chair and statements were received from both teams and the match referee. There is no disagreement among the parties that the match was played in two unequal halves of 30/35 minutes. The referee admitted in his statement that he called the first half early.

FIFA Law 5 requires the referee to act as timekeeper. FIFA Law 7 requires that the match be played in two equal halves, and that the duration must be in accordance with competition rules. NCSL Rules and Procedures clearly state that the duration of a U12 match is two equal halves of 35 minutes. This information is printed on the blue match card.

For a protest to be granted it must be: (1) timely submitted in accordance with NCSL procedures; (2) must allege a breach of NCSL rules or FIFA Laws of the Game, and; (3) cannot not be a judgment call of the referee; and (4) may have affected the outcome of the match.

The match ended 1-0, therefore shortening the match by 5 minutes could certainly have had a material affect on the outcome of the match. Further, the duration of a match is NOT a rule subject to the judgment of the referee, except in the case of adding time for injuries, substitutions, etc. Therefore, all criteria have been met.

Decisions of the R&D Chairman:

1. The protest is granted. The result of match is annulled. The match will be rescheduled by the League and replayed in its entirety.
2. The protest fee will be returned to Team A.

14. U12/3 Affiliate Misconduct

The match was played to completion with a score of Team A 2 – Team B 0. Statements were received from all parties. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 2 November 2006.

The match was played with an assigned center referee and two STARs assistant referee's, one from each side. The committee received a complaint from the Team A club representative, stating that the STAR A was being harassed during the match by affiliates of Team B. At one point, STAR A called for the center referee to approach the Team B affiliates with in an effort to control alleged inappropriate comments.

Two Team A statements allege that the Team B TSL could not be identified or found. The statement from the center referee indicates that he “asked for the Team B TSL to re-identify himself...which he did. I directed him to keep control of his sideline, and his response was something to the effect that he would.” At least one Team B affiliate makes the following statement: “With regards to this incident, our Team B TSL should have spoken up immediately. I thought the other teams’ TSL did a great job of coming over to our side to resolve the situation”.

The committee notes that it considers evidence from all sources. Frequently, there is a difference in the reports submitted by various parties. In these cases the committee weighs the evidence and arrives at the most probable scenario on which to base its decision. Reports by match officials are frequently, but not always, given the most weight. In this case, the committee has conflicting reports as to the role and effectiveness of the Team B TSL, as well as the relative severity of the alleged harassment suffered by STAR A.

The role of the Team B TSL was central to the investigation of the committee. However the Team B TSL did not attend the hearing, in direct violation of the notice of hearing which was sent to all participants on 28 October 2006. Further, Team B did not notify the committee prior to the hearing that the Team B TSL would not attend, did not apologize for his absence, nor did Team B request that the hearing be rescheduled. The committee will sanction such blatant disregard for the requirements of disciplinary hearings.

Further, without the ability to directly question the Team B TSL, the committee finds that he/she was negligent in proactively preventing an unsporting atmosphere through the comments directed at the Team A TSL.

Decision of the R&D Committee:

1. Team B is fined \$250. The fine must be received in the League office during normal working hours, and no later than Friday, 1 December 2006, 4:00pm, EST.

15. U11/1 Coach and Affiliate Misconduct

The match was played to completion with a score of Team A 2 –Team B 1. Statements were received from all parties. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 2 November 2006.

The committee notes that it considers evidence from all sources. Frequently, there is a difference in the reports submitted by various parties. In these cases the committee weighs the evidence and arrives at the most probable scenario on which to base its decision. Reports by match officials are frequently given the most weight.

The referee reported that Coach B “was vocal beyond providing tactical instruction to his players”. Coach B was verbally warned in the 45th minute of play to cease his dissent. Beginning again the 57th minute, Coach B’s dissent became vocal. In the 60th minute, Coach B was shown the red card and ejected from the match. At this point, Coach B did not immediately leave, and started a short debate with the referee, including the use of foul and abusive language.

At about this time, an altercation began between affiliates of each team. Although the reports conflict, it is acknowledged that Team A Affiliate and Team B Affiliate became involved in an altercation at one end of the pitch, near the corner flag. The preponderance of evidence indicates that foul and abusive language was exchanged between the two men, and that at one point, they appeared ready to engage each other physically. The TSLs for both teams were up toward mid-field, and by the time they made their way to the flag, other adults had intervened and diffused the situation.

The statements made by both teams at the hearing indicate that the TSL functions were not affectively implemented in the subject match. In addition, the committee finds that both affiliates violated the parent’s code of conduct.

Coach B did not immediately leave the pitch upon ejection, and continued to engage the referee using foul and abusive language. The committee views any untoward behavior following ejection as a serious matter, since the match official has little recourse at that point to deal with such behavior.

Decisions of the R&D Committee:

1. Coach B is suspended for his next regular season NCSL match, which is in addition to the suspensions associated with his ejection at the subject match.
2. Both Teams are each fined \$200. The fine must be received in the League office during normal working hours, and no later than Friday, 17 November, 2006 4:00pm, EST.

3. Both Affiliates are each banned from attendance at the next one regular season NCSL match. A signed sit out certification must be received by the League documenting that this ban was observed. Affiliates A and B must abide by the sit out requirements associated with team officials, as detailed in NCSL R&P Manual, Section XI.

16. U10/O Protest

The subject match was played to completion with a result of Team A 2 – Team B 1. Team B protests the match result, alleging that referee allowed a goal directly off an indirect free kick. The committee reviewed written reports of the match by the referee, and team officials of both teams. A hearing was held at the Leis Center on 24 May, 2006.

The committee notes that it considers evidence from all sources. Frequently, there is a difference in the reports submitted by various parties. In these cases the committee weighs the evidence and arrives at the most probable scenario on which to base its decision. Evidence corroborated by one or more parties is frequently given more weight than other, contradictory statements.

All parties agree that during the match, Team A player was fouled just outside the penalty area. Team B alleges that the foul should have resulted in an indirect free kick, and that the referee signaled for an indirect free kick at the time of the infraction. Team A player took the kick which went directly into the net, and the referee allowed the goal.

The committee questioned Team B representatives at the hearing about their recollection of the signals made by the referee. In response, Team B was unsure as to the exact mechanic employed by the referee, stating that they thought she employed an arm raised signaling an indirect free kick, but no other signal. Team B also denied hearing the referee make any verbal announcement that the free kick was direct.

Team A and the referee statements are in agreement. The referee stated that she called a direct kick foul, raised her hand to indicate direction of the kick, and announced verbally that the play was a “direct free kick”. She notes that the kick was taken and went directly into the net.

Law 5 clearly states that decisions of the referee regarding the facts of the match are final. Further, judgment calls made by the referee may not be protested, therefore the decision to award a direct free kick may not be protested. Finally, the mechanic associated with the indication of the direct free kick is consistent with the USSF publication “*Guide to Procedures*”, and inconsistent with the contention that an indirect free kick was signaled. Allowing a goal to score directly off a direct free kick is consistent with Law 13.

Decisions of the R&D Committee:

1. The protest is denied. The match result stands as played.
2. Team B forfeits the \$200 protest fee.