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Subject: **Advantage in the Penalty Area**

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Special circumstances govern the application of advantage for offenses committed by defenders inside their own penalty area. Although the basic concept of advantage remains the same, the specific decision by the referee must be governed by both the close proximity to the goal and the likelihood of scoring from the penalty kick restart if play is stopped instead of applying advantage.

The basic elements of the decision are straightforward:

- Advantage is a team concept and thus the referee must be aware not only of the fouled player's ability to continue his or her attack but also of the ability of any of the player's teammates to continue the attack themselves.
- Advantage has been applied when the decision is made, not when the advantage signal is given. The signal itself may often be delayed for 2-3 seconds while the referee evaluates the advantage situation to determine if it will continue.
- Where it does not continue, the Laws of the Game provide for the referee to stop play for the original foul.
- If the original foul involved violence, the referee is advised not to apply advantage unless there is an immediate chance of scoring a goal.

Inside the penalty area, the competitive tension is much greater and the referee is called upon to make quicker decisions. The time during which the referee looks for advantage to continue becomes defined by the probability of scoring a goal directly following the foul or from the subsequent play.

In the attached clip of an incident occurring in the 27<sup>th</sup> minute of a match on April 9 between New England and Kansas City. NE defender #31 (Nyassi) fouls KC attacker #11 (Morsink) near the top of the penalty area. Just as Morsink is fouled, however, he passes the ball to his teammate #19 (Sealy).

The referee properly recognized the advantage but then whistled for the foul against Morsink after he decided that a goal would not be scored by Sealy. In fact, Sealy made a shot on goal just as the whistle sounded and the ball failed to enter the net.

- In the absence of a whistle stopping play and if the ball had entered the net, the advantage would clearly have continued and the goal would be counted.
- If, in this case, the ball had entered the goal after the whistle had sounded, the goal could not be counted.
- **Ideally, the referee in this incident should have delayed stopping play for the original foul until he saw more concretely what Sealy would have been able to do with the ball.**

In this incident, the penalty kick for the original foul was successful.