



The Flag and Whistle

Newsletter of the Soccer South Bay Referee Association

June 30, 2006

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www.ssbra.org

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MEMBERS LET THEIR OPINIONS BE KNOWN; WARREN IS TAKEN TO TASK; GABRIEL PITCHES IN

Being pressed into service as ringmaster, uh, meeting chairperson, in the absence of President **Keith Gendler**, Vice-President **Ed McClure** called the June 27 meeting to order, with Member-at-Large **Gabriel Goldsman** taking notes and so on as Secretary **Warren Howell** was likewise nowhere to be seen. None of this discouraged Webmaster **Lee Jordan** in the least from jumping in and talking about his favorite subject, SSBRA.org. Lee rightly told the 42 (out of the 163 on the current roster) of the various additions and items of interest, both old and new, there that made it worth a look. One thing that is not there yet is the SSBRA roster, which he said was delayed because the developer was out of town or something.

Gabriel then had a chance to make a speech, and he did not let the opportunity go by. He explained his ideas about the functions and structure of the newly developing Welcome Team that he is forming to help new Members quickly and easily fit into our Association. One of those prospective new Members was in fact introduced to the gathering: though known to some of the Members already because he is the son of **Surendra Menon**, everyone was pleased to see the young **Ajay Menon** officially apply for Membership, and welcomed him accordingly.

Not to be outdone, Treasurer **Tom Mallen** stood up to get his two cents in. Actually, the amount in the bank was quite a bit more than that, totaling a tidy \$3803, with more coming in now that the time to start collecting Membership dues has begun. In fact, Tom promised to facilitate that collection by deducting those same dues from the Eagles Classic tournament checks that he had prepared, but would have to mail to the Members later after securing Keith's signature.

Finally getting to the interesting stuff, Assignor **Bill Cook** then had his turn. He quickly shared the list of upcoming tournaments of which he was aware so far, though he had to report that there was nothing going on over the long July 4th week-end:

- 7/22 week-end; Islands Classic in Camarillo and Pateadores in south Orange County
- 8/5 week-end; CVU Oak Classic in 1000 Oaks and MV Invitational in Mission Viejo
- 8/12 week-end; Capo Cup in SJC and So. Cal. Cup in 1000 Oaks
- 8/19 week-end; El Camino Real in 1000 Oaks and West Coast Futball in San Clemente
- 9/1 week-end; Disney Labor Day at HDC, Blues Cup at SJC and Simi Valley in S.V.

As always Bill told the gathering that he would be sending out availability requests and taking the fields offered based on the response. He also talked about the CSL scheduling system and how passwords etc. are needed for that. Something was also mentioned about SBPSL division 4 games but, alas, Gabriel's notes are woefully inadequate on this subject and I have no idea what was said.

More interesting stuff also followed Bill's presentation, as Training Director **Heidi Garlick** gave a training class. The subjects were the Law 4 cautionable offenses modifications and recent USSF changes. As always, this part of the meeting was both informative and thought-provoking, with Members sharing their views both to the group as a whole and more privately to those around them. Heidi and Lee have arranged for all the details to be accessible via SSBRA.org, as usual.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING, JUNE 12, 2006

- an incident involving one Member at the Eagle's tournament was discussed, with no further action to be taken
- another Member's recent behavior was also considered, likewise with no follow-up action to be taken at this time
- Warren will be out of town on business and unable to attend the June 27 meeting. Arrangements were made for Gabriel to cover in his absence
- the May election meeting was discussed, with most of the attention being given to the quality of food and drink versus cost, as several Members had expressed a concern. Several options were considered for future meetings.
- in general the consensus was that the Eagle's tournament went well, and Bill reported that an invoice for SSBRA services had been sent
- a third Member who was causing problems, and how to deal with it, was talked about
- a letter of complaint was received about an article that appeared in the April 2006 F&W. The Board decided that the complaint had merit, and directed the Secretary to delete the offending article and so note the deletion

in the next newsletter

- Bill reported a no-show at a recent match, and it was decided to impose a fine and suspension in accordance with the bylaws
- Bill revealed that there would be many tournament games available on the week-ends in August leading up to the start of the CSL season. Also, there will be some SBPSL summer games available. This started a long discussion about the problem of the small number of referees showing availability on most week-ends and the impact that has on our ability to accept and cover games. Several theories as to why this is were advanced, with one strong idea being that too often the games take up the whole day for the referees because of travel times and the distances to the fields - no good solution to this was forthcoming (carpooling to ease the pain is already widely practiced), as few tournaments are held locally due to lack of fields.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING, JUNE 27, 2006

- the Board met with a Member, at his request, to discuss an earlier incident
- applications for youth Membership were accepted for Ajay Menon and **Eni Ihassim**.

Correction to Earlier Flag and Whistle: The April 2006 edition contained an article relating to the World Cup that, while solely meant to be amusing, prompted a formal letter of complaint being written to the Board. Said letter was discussed by the Board, which found it had merit, and it was ruled that a piece of that type should not appear in the official record of the Association. The editor was therefore directed to remove the offending article from the permanent edition posted on ssbra.org, which it was. For the record, the contents of the F&W, and what to print or leave out, is solely the responsibility and decision of the editor rather than the Board as a whole - it is not vetted by the Board before publication. Of course, no offense was intended, and this writer regrets if any was taken.

Transition (submitted by **Joe Robolotto**):

....**Herman Gompers'** wife **Debbie** died last week. Herman has been a member of one or all of the Associations for a number of years. Herman was very loyal and caring of Debbie and I am sure that he will miss her dearly, especially after all that they have gone through together....

Joe

NEXT MONTHLY MEETING

THERE WILL BE NO MEETING IN JULY, NOR A FLAG AND WHISTLE. THE NEXT MEETING IS ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 29, 2006, AT 7:30 P.M. IN THE CAFETERIA OF NORTH TORRANCE HIGH SCHOOL, YUKON AND 182ND ST. AGENDA TO INCLUDE ITEMS RELATING TO THE START OF THE COAST SOCCER LEAGUE AND VARIOUS MENS' LEAGUE SEASONS, TRAINING AND OTHER ASSOCIATION BUSINESS.

A Good Plan (attributed to **Brian Hall**):

"I once did a game with two Mexican teams. In the last minute, I called for a penalty kick that decided the game. All of a sudden, the team and crowd were running at me.

"My car was cornered, so I ran into a market and hid in the fridge for 30 minutes. Now I always back my car into a spot for a quick exit."

That Explains It (submitted by **Larry Savell**):

From the Toronto Star

Why it's so hard to judge offside

A new study finds that more than one in four calls is dead wrong

KENNETH KIDD, FEATURE WRITER

You can forgive Canadian hockey fans for being a little puzzled by the World Cup of soccer.

We're not talking about the glacial pace of some games, all that seemingly pointless passing back and forth at midfield (see "England"). Nor is it the writhing bodies on the field, ostensibly near death, in performances that are worthy of an appreciation night at Cannes if not a coveted red card.

No, we're talking about offside, something that's mostly straightforward in hockey but often seems completely arbitrary in soccer.

There is, it turns out, a perfectly good reason for this perception: It's accurate. Or, at least, roughly as accurate as the calls the assistant referees make.

Werner Helsen, a kinesiologist at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium, recently led a team of researchers that looked at video replays of all the offsides during the 2002 World Cup, including offsides that weren't called. The results were sobering: The call on the field was dead wrong 26.2 per cent of the time. The refs, in other words, blew a little more than one in every four calls.

"The offside is a very interesting problem," says Helsen, who has been working with the referees at this year's World Cup to improve their decisions.

Any officiating judgment made instantly, in the heat of the action, is naturally prone to error. But the definition of "offside" in soccer, coupled with the assistant referee's typical vantage point, makes it doubly so.

The basic principle is that an attacking player is deemed to be offside if he is closer to the opposing goal line than both the ball and the second-last defender when the ball is kicked. That sounds simple. But since the players are constantly moving, there's a lot of judgment involved. So the assistant referee has to figure out where the lead attacker was when the ball was *kicked*, not where he is when he receives the ball. The defenders also move, which alters the location of the "offside" line. Defenders will even step up an instant before the ball is kicked, in an attempt to put an attacker offside — what's called an "offside trap."

In other words, to make the correct call, the assistant referee has to deal with two parts of an equation that often occur far apart on the field. He can't, alas, look in both directions at once. Nor are the referees consistent, according to Helsen's research. During the first 15 minutes of the average game at the 2002 World Cup, the assistant referees made the wrong offside call 38.5 per cent of that time. That improved to 17.3 per cent in the next 15 minutes, but then swelled to 26.5 per cent for the last 15 minutes of the first half. Much the same pattern held in the second half. Fortunately, the damage caused was relatively slight: Only 4.3 per cent of the erroneous offside calls effectively aborted a goal-scoring opportunity.

Among academics — yes, there is such a thing as the World Congress on Football and Science — two theories have arisen about why these mistakes happen.

One holds that it's an optical problem. The assistant referee can't align himself with the offside line at all times, so he's often looking from an angle and making a judgment about where the line is at that moment. The other is the "flash-lag effect." The referee has to watch the ball being kicked — the "flash" — and then turn his head toward the receiving player, so there's a delay. This delay often means the referee perceives the receiving player to be further ahead than he actually was when the ball was kicked. Helsen figures the "flash-lag effect" is probably key. Even with video cameras, you can't always see the

kicker, the lead attacker, and the offside line all at once. So, of the 337 offside incidents during the last World Cup, Helsen's crew could analyze only 256 using videotape.

Does this mean that soccer officiating is inherently hopeless?

Some recent tinkering with the offside rules certainly complicates matters. Unlike past World Cups, an attacking player doesn't have to be closer to the goal line than the second-last defender — he can now be parallel with the second-last defender. So the question becomes: Was a part of the attacker — a hand or a foot, say — actually beyond the defender?

The other change: A player can now be offside without being penalized if he is not involved in the play. So, a writhing player near the sideline could technically be offside, but he's obviously not "active" in the play, and therefore not called offside.

The new rules "definitely make it more difficult," says Helsen.

Still, there's reason for optimism. Helsen has been using videotape and simulations to work with this year's referees on compensating for the "flash-lag" effect. One official, he notes, now automatically subtracts one meter from a moving attacker's position to estimate where he was at the moment the ball was kicked. "He's been one of the very best," says Helsen. He figures that, once his group does a similar video analysis of offside during the current World Cup, the results are apt to be encouraging. "I'm quite sure the percentage [of errors] would be significantly less," he says. "That's my feel at this point."

I Hate it When that Happens (news article):

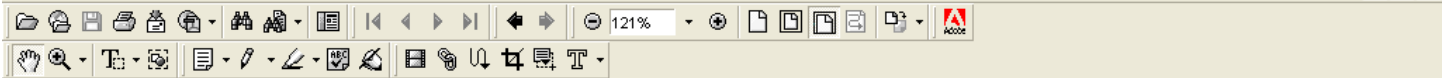
After being granted permission to leave the team because of a "family emergency," **Youri Djorkaeff** of Major League Soccer's New York Red Bulls was seen by a team official on TV at the World Cup game between France and Brazil. Wrote **John Ryan** of the San Jose Mercury News: "Maybe Youri Djorkaeff has been in American soccer too long and he forgot that people actually watch the games."

One More Victory Should Fix the Problem (news article):

Later Wednesday.....a massive match-fixing trial in an improvised courtroom in the belly of Rome's Olympic Stadium heard another round of testimony, part of a scandal so unseemly that one newspaper called it "football's funeral." In all, 26 people, including referees, soccer federation officials and the executives of four top Italian soccer teams, stand accused in the largest scandal in Italian sports history. Most of the charges in the so-called "megatrial" involve an alleged conspiracy to pick and choose favorable referees and otherwise throw matches.....

Some Italian fans hope that the World Cup will allow their team to cleanse it's reputation....."You watch, if Italy wins the World Cup....." said (Juventus fan) **Nicola Policastro**....."The scandal will be over."

Watching the World Cup (submitted by Ed McClure: no explanation was offered for the unusual orientation - see below):



D2 MONDAY, JUNE 19, 2006

LOS ANGELES TIMES

The Inside Track

No compromise: Mark Bradley of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution has a system for watching World Cup soccer.

"When Dave O'Brien is calling a match for ESPN or ABC, I switch to Univision. Do I speak Spanish? Why, no. But I'd rather understand next to nothing than to listen to someone who knows less about soccer than I do."

