REFEREES INFO

Posted by STLCoach - 05 Aug 2010 08:58

How refs can master most important rule

By Randy Vogt

Law 12 on Fouls and Misconduct is the most important rule in soccer. Referees who have played soccer have an initial advantage in spotting fouls over those refs who never played the game. After all, the official who played knows what a foul feels like and might even know what a cautionable or sending-off foul feels like as well.

But the referee who never played the game certainly can learn how to recognize fouls as well.

In order to increase fouls and misconduct recognition, officials should watch soccer games, whether on television, video or live, and “referee” the game along with the officials. I cannot overemphasize how much watching games actually helps officials.

Let me also stress that it is extremely important that the referee call the first foul so that it does not lead to a second. For example, red No. 5 pushes blue No. 9 but nothing is called. You can expect red No. 5 to be fouled later, most likely by blue No. 9. Call the first foul and you will most likely not have a retaliation foul.

Goals
Play becomes more physical and fouls often occur after goals. The team that scored is energized and perhaps the team that gave up the goal is frustrated. Especially be on your toes after a goal.

Player Fatigue
It takes stamina to play (and referee!) a sport like soccer, which is a wonderful cardiovascular exercise. You will soon recognize signs of players growing tired -- players huffing and puffing on the field or asking you how many minutes are left in the half when there is a great deal of time left.

As players fatigue, the game tends to become easier to officiate as there can often be fewer challenges on the ball and the fouls that are committed tend to be obvious. All because of tired players.

Consistency and What to Watch Out For
To establish game control during the first 15 minutes of a game, the referee should whistle relatively minor offenses so that the slight push does not become a bigger push a few minutes later.

Officials acting decisively and correctly for an important call, such as a penalty kick, disallowed goal or caution, have done a terrific job and made the game much easier to officiate than if this important call was missed. Referees often talk about the moment of truth in the match when the control of the game was hanging in the balance. The truth regarding this “moment of truth” is that some games have them and some do not.

Particularly in tough games, be a rhino -- take charge, be unafraid and have a thick skin.

Red-card offenses are send-offs, whether they occur in the third minute or the 90th minute. The 10 penal fouls, when committed by the defense inside the penalty area, are penalty kicks whether they occur at the beginning of the game or the end.

Referees who lack courage and give cautions for what should be send-offs and move the ball outside the penalty area for fouls that occur just inside it will have a tough time for the rest of the match. Do not be surprised if the players, realizing that no penalty kicks are going to be called that day, turn the penalty area into a war zone.

Think of attending a speech. The decisive speaker who speaks looking directly at the audience in enthusiastic tones can command the room. The speaker who looks down and stumbles over words or speaks in a monotone or a whisper will make the audience bored very quickly. Which type of speaker would you like to be?

And which type of referee would you like to be?

(Randy Vogt has officiated over 7,000 games during the past three decades, from professional matches in front of thousands to 6-year-olds being cheered on by very enthusiastic parents. In "Preventive Officiating," he shares his wisdom gleaned from thousands of games and hundreds of clinics to help referees not only survive but thrive on the soccer field. You can visit the book's website at www.preventiveofficiating.com/
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Re: REFEREES INFO

Posted by STLCoach - 01 Sep 2011 08:01

Why so few women referees?

By Randy Vogt

In her Youth Soccer Insider column on Aug. 15, Sarah Weld laments the lack of women coaches and refs in youth soccer. It's an oddity that I've noticed and am concerned about as well. The book I authored, "Preventive Officiating," is the only soccer referee book that I know of that uses the pronoun "she" as much as "he" to describe referees and has the same number of female soccer ref models as male ref models.

I cannot write with any great insight as to why there's a lack of female coaches but would like to offer some reasons and remedies to have more women become and continue as referees.

The hierarchy of FIFA, the USSF and NCAA are all looking to promote good female referees to the highest levels. If the United States did not play in the Women's World Cup final, chances are that American Kari Seitz would have been given the assignment. She and two American assistant referees, Marlene Duffy and Veronica Perez, wound up officiating the third-place game instead.

One of the referee organizations that I belong to, the Long Island Soccer Referees Association (LISRA), now has a female President, Cathy Caldwell. LISRA is way ahead of the United States in this regard as we had an African-American President, Barrington Lawson, a decade before Barack Obama was inaugurated.

Here are some ideas why females make up nearly 50 percent of soccer players in the United States but are very much still a novelty as referees:

Intimidation. As Sarah wrote, the great majority of youth soccer coaches are men and some of them will try to intimidate a female ref much more than a male ref.

“We lose female refs three times more frequently than male refs due to verbal abuse,” LISRA President Caldwell said. “When I first started, I refereed three games and could not take the abuse from the adults. I called up the assignor, Nanci Apostolides, and told her that I did not want to referee anymore but she convinced me to stick with it. More than a decade later, I’m still refereeing!”

“But just last weekend, I spoke to a women who had taken the referee course but chose not to referee due to the lack of respect and intimidation she witnessed by both coaches and parents,” she added.

I’m aware of some youth soccer coaches saying derogatory comments about a referee (they do not know) based solely on the gender or age of the ref to their players before the game. Do you think those players then will go onto the field and actually respect the ref?

“In addition, many male coaches are uncomfortable with a woman refereeing their games,” Caldwell added. “More than once, I have called a coach to get field directions and inform him that I am the referee for their game and there is a second or two of silence followed by an ‘Oh.’”

Females tend to view soccer in more social terms than men. As a referee advances, he or she will officiate with other officials -- one ref and two assistant refs. But generally the first games of a career are the boys U-7 intramural game or the girls U-10 travel team match that uses just one referee and two club linesmen (that the teams provide to help out). I’ve found that females are more excited to officiate with their friends than males. Years ago, as I was about to ref a girls U-15 game, I heard the girls talking with excitement about which of their teammates they would be officiating with in intramural games later that day. Unfortunately, that club was the exception as most intramural games are officiated by one ref. No matter your gender, refereeing by yourself can be very lonely.

“I ask the assignors to pair up the few women in the chapter with me as we have such a good time officiating together,” Caldwell commented. “When I work with other women I find an immediate bond.”

Lack of open bathrooms in youth soccer. Generally, the lack of bathrooms is not a problem for the female player who is playing one game a day or the female assistant referee who (at least on Long Island) is often officiating one game per day. But it’s a huge problem for the female ref who is refereeing 2-4 games per day. Take into account that the officials should be at the field 30 minutes before kickoff and a ref is often spending 5-6 hours at a soccer field.

So what do female refs do if there’s no bathroom? They’ve told me that they do not drink water at all, a very unhealthy choice, or take time between matches to drive to a building with a bathroom, delaying the next game.

The great majority of youth soccer games that I have officiated did not have a bathroom at the field. But the times, thankfully, are changing. Years ago, youth soccer was often played at schools (closed on weekends) and also sometimes at parks (with open bathrooms). Many youth soccer clubs now maintain their own soccer complexes with bathrooms. If they did not build a bathroom, they bring in a few port-a-potties, not a very good option for either gender, but particularly for women. I’ve never heard men talk about whether the port-a-potties are clean but it’s a frequent topic of conversation among women at soccer games.

Summarizing, if youth soccer clubs and leagues get rid of verbally abusive coaches and used their resources to have three officials for all games plus build and maintain bathrooms, the number of refs would increase but particularly on the female side.

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Beckenbauer group proposes rule changes

Posted by STLCoach - 26 Oct 2011 08:40

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Beckenbauer group proposes rule changes
Reuters

A task force led by former German international Franz Beckenbauer has recommended changes in the offside rule and punishments for red cards. Beckenbauer said definitions of active and passive offside are too confusing, and sending off a player for a penalty-area offense that also mandates a penalty kick is too severe. Both proposals are likely to go before the next meeting of the IFAB, soccer's rule-making committee, in March.

"We have a situation with active and passive offside at the moment, I think we should stay away from complicated expressions, we should go back to making it more simple, not like it was at the beginning but somewhere in between," says Beckenbauer, who won a World Cup with West Germany in 1974 and coached West Germany to its triumph in 1990.

"In my time it was very simple, offside was offside, it didn't matter where the ball was. It's a nonsense, it's too complicated."

Beckenbauer believes only a deliberate handball on the goal line or a violent foul should be punished by a red card if a penalty kick is awarded, "If it's a simple foul in the penalty area, where you try to get the ball but are a second late, a penalty and yellow card are enough," he said. "If it's a violent foul, which would have been a red card anywhere on the field, then it this case its a penalty and a red card."

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Referee can overrule the assistant referee

Posted by STLCoach - 31 Jan 2012 09:04

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By Randy Vogt

The referee can overrule the assistant referee but the assistant can never overrule the ref. The assistant is to assist the referee and not insist instead.

We have a situation in which the ball has gone over the touchline near the assistant referee, who indicated that it is blue’s throw-in. However, the AR did not see the last bounce off a blue leg so it should be red’s throw-in instead. The referee should blow the whistle and indicate that it’s a red throw by pointing the direction that red is going. The ref should also say something nice to the assistant such as, “Thanks, Bob, but you were screened when the ball last came off blue so it is red’s throw.” The assistant should then point the flag in red’s direction.

A referee should not overrule the AR often, otherwise the officiating crew will not be working as a team and the players will realize that the ref has no confidence in his or her assistant -- so why should the players?

While overruling the assistant may be necessary on one or two occasions during the match when the ball is out of play, it is absolutely dangerous when the ball is in play.

When an assistant's flag goes up to signal an offside or foul, players tend to stop, even if they have been told to play the referee's whistle, not the assistant's flag.

It's a lesson that I learned the hard way while refereeing a college game two decades ago. A red player headed the ball in the general direction of a teammate in an offside position. The assistant made the mistake of raising his flag immediately and the blue defender momentarily stopped. From my angle, I could see that the red player was probably dribbling the ball rather than passing it so no offside should have been called. My interpretation was in conflict with the assistant's.

The player recovered the ball without his teammate playing it, dribbled to the goal and scored. A relatively easy game became difficult from that point on as the blue team thought that I allowed an offside goal. Clearly, the assistant and I did not work as a team on this important call.

As soon as the flag was raised, I should have blown the whistle and given the offside as it was not clear whether it was a pass or dribble at that point. I should have gone with the AR's interpretation rather than telling him to lower the flag.

The bottom line is that the only time that a referee overrules the AR while the ball is in play is if all 22 players on the field know that the AR is clearly wrong.

Let's take this a step further and mention a boys under-16 game in which I was the AR and the shoe was on the other foot. Both the other assistant and I were well positioned with the second-to-last defender throughout the match to flag for offside. Yet, the referee decided to whistle for offside when we kept our flag down on five different occasions -- two in my half of the field, three in the other AR's half. The game became an absolute disaster! Three players of the losing team were sent off near the end of the game for using abusive language when they cursed the referee.

Let me also describe two instances during college games from a number of years ago in which MLS refs (who should know better) created problems for the officiating crew by overruling ARs during the course of play, giving the impression that they did not have the confidence in that AR.

The first example is a ball was played at midfield to an attacker who was onside. But she could not get to the ball as the defender pushed her 10 yards from me as soon as the ball was passed. I twirled the flag in my right hand, signaling the defense committed a foul. The ref signaled for me to lower the flag, which I did. The defender who intercepted the pass after the push played the ball upfield and the ball was in the back of the net 10 seconds later. Loud dissent followed from the other team, who had seen my flag. At halftime, we talked about my decision and the other assistant referee, with a more panoramic view of the field, had seen the foul too and questioned the ref why he had overruled me. The ref's answer was that he did not think a foul had occurred. He apologized.

The second example involved a pass inside the penalty area. At the time the ball was played by an attacker, the ref standing nearby thought all attackers were in onside positions. The ball deflected off a player to an attacker near the goal. The other AR's flag went up for offside. The ref told him to lower the flag as the defense questioned why the ref overruled the AR. Thankfully, the shot was saved by the keeper. The ref and AR discussed it later and the ref thought that the ball deflected off the defender and since he believed all attackers were onside at the time the ball was originally played by an attacker, offside should not be given. Yet an attacker was standing next to that defender so it certainly could have been played by an attacker to a teammate in an offside position near goal.

In both games, goals were later scored in tight offside situations with the overruled AR and loud dissent followed. Not simply because the disallowed goal was incorrect -- replay would prove it was right. But because the ref had shown no confidence overruling that AR in close decisions before the goal.

(Randy Vogt has officiated over 8,000 games during the past three decades, from professional matches in front of thousands to 6-year-olds being cheered on by very enthusiastic parents. In "Preventive Officiating," he shares his wisdom gleaned from thousands of games and hundreds of clinics to help referees not only survive but thrive on the soccer field. You can visit the book's web site at www.preventiveofficiating.com/.
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Re: REFEREES INFO

Posted by STLCoach - 29 Feb 2012 09:30

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By Randy Vogt

A soccer player's basic uniform consists of a shirt, shorts, socks, shinguards and footwear. All players should have their shirts tucked into their shorts, including goalkeepers, and shinguards must be completely covered by the socks. A preventive officiating technique is to make sure that the goalies are wearing shirts that contrast with both teams before the match, rather than realizing it at kickoff.

The footwear will generally be cleats, and the referee must check the bottoms to make certain that they are not dangerous, such as having sharp edges. Players may not participate without footwear. However, a goal counts if scored by a player who temporarily lost a cleat.

According to the rules, shinguards must "provide a reasonable degree of protection." Players cannot use shinguards that have been cut in half.

For improper equipment, such as earrings, the referee hopefully spotted any jewelry before the game while checking the teams and no player is wearing it on the field. But if a player wears jewelry on the field, play does not need to be stopped. Instead, the ref waits until the next stoppage in play, then tells the player to leave the field to correct equipment. A substitute can replace the player wearing jewelry. The player with jewelry is allowed to reenter the field when the ball is out of play and the ref has checked that the equipment has been corrected.

Medical alert jewelry or clothing required by a player's religion may be worn only if the referee does not consider it dangerous and it does not give the player an unfair advantage while playing. Medical alert jewelry can often be made safe by wrapping it with tape with the necessary information still showing.

Regarding uniforms, should a player remove his jersey when celebrating a goal, that player is cautioned for unsporting behavior. For the caution to be given, the shirt need not be completely taken off; all that is needed is that the bottom of the shirt to be raised to the bottom of the chin. Players who raise jerseys to display slogans, advertising or messages are cautioned as well.

Regarding arm and/or hand casts, they must be properly covered in sponge and not be dangerous to others for that player to participate.

For complete knee braces, manufacturer's padding comes with each brace and should be worn over it so that there are no sharp edges, which can be dangerous. Some players do not like to wear the padding as they believe it limits their mobility. Have them wear the manufacturer's padding over the brace so they can play.

Some leagues, especially youth ones, prohibit players with casts or knee braces from participating. Ask about this before going to the field.

Instructions to Teams?
When checking the teams, many referees, particularly new ones, make the mistake of telling them how the game will be called.

Saying things such as "When the goalkeeper has the ball, you leave her alone, otherwise I'm going to call a foul" or "Gentlemen, I heard that you don't get along with the other team so I'm going to call a tight match" or any other such instructions is a bad idea and can open a can of worms.

After all, as soon as the ball is legally in play near the keeper and you don't call a foul, the keeper's team will complain that you contradicted yourself. Or as soon as you don't call a perceived foul in a game that you said that you were calling tight, players will complain. Besides, who told you that those teams do not get along?

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How refs can deal with spectator abuse

Posted by STLCoach - 10 Apr 2012 12:40

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By Randy Vogt

Abuse from the sideline is a very sad component of some youth soccer games. Many soccer refs quit during their first two years of officiating with verbal abuse from the touchline being the No. 1 reason for quitting.

If all of us understood that referees are human beings who make mistakes and have feelings like everybody else, plus that coaches and spectators are role models for their own children, so many of the discipline problems associated with youth soccer would go away. And your league's Arbitration Committee would be about as busy as the Maytag repairman.

My Soccer America column in August 2010 was on how referees control the coaches who need to be controlled. Coaches only have the ability, per the Laws of the Game, to give tactical instruction from the technical area and that is it. It goes on to state that coaches "must behave in a responsible manner." Certainly, for a ref to allow a coach to give a running criticism of the officiating hurts game control. Allowing constant criticism from a coach (or anybody else) contributes to an environment in which the players stop playing soccer and begin to focus on what the ref is whistling, which leads to more robust

challenges and more vocal dissent.

I have also learned that referees who control problem coaches have a much easier time with that same coach should their paths ever cross again as the coach knows that he or she will not be allowed to dissent much at all.

Coaches are part of the equation of touchline abuse but what about abuse from the spectators? Many spectators have absolutely no idea what the rules say, especially in youth soccer, and the only soccer games that they have ever seen are their son's or daughter's. The great majority of problems with parents are avoided by officials who hustle, smile, are approachable, get calls correct plus briefly explain decisions that need to be explained.

Over the course of an officiating career, a referee will come across that rare human being who has very little experience with the game yet thinks he or she is an authority on the rules and does not respect the ref's decisions or whatever brief explanation the ref may give. Just smile and move on.

But what if that spectator continues to yell? Once the ref figures out which team the spectator is rooting for, he or she could seek that coach's help to control the spectator. Many youth leagues now require that the coach control unruly spectators. When a coach has been instructed by the referee to quiet the team's parents, the coach can send over an assistant to deliver the message or be forced to deal with the parents while the game is stopped.

If the spectator(s) continue the poor conduct, the coach receives a yellow card (should the league want coaches to be shown the actual card) and later a red card if the poor conduct continues. Before it gets to that point, the ref explains to the coach that the game could be terminated if the conduct persists. Should the poor conduct persist, the referee terminates the game and files a report.

The referee should not confront the spectator as this will only add fuel to the fire. Thankfully, spectator behavior rarely gets to that level. I can only recall abandoning one of my games because of poor spectator behavior.

The league might have adopted a Zero Tolerance policy, which governs the behavior of coaches and spectators toward game officials. It is imperative for the ref to know if a Zero Tolerance Policy is in force for the game and how that league interprets zero tolerance.

Yes, some people take youth soccer way too seriously and one unfortunate consequence of this verbal abuse leads to the referees remaining often being overworked on weekends. I started refereeing when I was 16 years old and obviously stuck with it. But it struck me as odd when some adults 2-3 times my age at that time showed less maturity at a soccer game than the players a few years younger than me. I still see this lack of maturity in some of the adults today.

As Jim Tunney, who officiated in the NFL for 31 years, once stated, "My definition of a spectator is a person who yells at me for missing a subtle hold in the interior line and, after the game, cannot find his car in the parking lot."

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Re: REFEREES INFO

Posted by STLCoach - 20 Aug 2012 09:10

The problem with Brit-style chatty refs

By Paul Gardner

Toward the end of the first half of the Olympic final there was an intriguing short episode featuring the English referee Mark Clattenburg and Marcelo, the Brazilian defender. Marcelo had recklessly tackled Mexico's Oribe Peralta, and Clattenburg had immediately shown him a yellow card. Marcelo had spread his arms in that universal gesture of innocence and bewilderment to show -- quite mildly, there were no dramatics -- that he disagreed with the call.

Clattenburg got the call right and acted decisively, Marcelo showed his displeasure. Nothing unusual in any of that. Then came the odd bit. As Marcelo walked away, shaking his head in disbelief (though surely mock disbelief), Clattenburg called him back and for the next 12 seconds proceeded to give him a face-to-face lecture. Again, all very calm and correct; Clattenburg was not shouting, while Marcelo simply stood there, nodding his head occasionally.

Now, what was that all about? For a start, which language was Clattenburg, who did all the talking, using? Does he speak Portuguese? Or does Marcelo speak English? I don't know, but I'd take a bet that the answer to both questions is no. Clattenburg could claim that English is all he needs, because FIFA has ruled that English is to be used by referees at international games. Which is quite a good idea, but not really of much use if you're dealing with a player who does not speak English.

So Clattenburg's lecture was simply a charade? I'd say so. Which leads on to the bigger question: Would things have been any different had Marcelo understood every word Clattenburg was saying? I doubt it. Because, whether or not there is a language barrier, the little chats that referees have with players -- and they are a particular specialty of British referees -- always contain a substantial element of farce.

Clattenburg's warning (I'm assuming that's what it was -- what else could it have been?) came after he had issued a yellow card. But most of these chats seem to be designed to take the place of a yellow card. A verbal, or oral, caution. Is there any allowance for such tolerance in the rules? Not that I'm aware of. If a player commits certain offenses, as outlined in the rules, he should get a yellow card. Period.

Is a referee permitted to soften that mandate by substituting a verbal caution, a sort of pre-yellow-card caution? I would say no -- but they do it all the time. Tune in to any EPL game -- Sunday's Wigan vs. Chelsea game, for instance, refereed by Mike Jones, a fully-paid-up member of the chatting-referee fraternity. When Wigan's James McCarthy visited a nasty -- and dangerous -- foul on Juan Mata, Jones called the foul, and gave McCarthy a brief verbal warning, but no card. Three minutes later McCarthy was at it again with a late -- also dangerous -- tackle on Eden Hazard. And again Jones called the foul but didn't give a card. Later in the game, Chelsea's Frank Lampard went in hard -- and landed on the ankle of Jordi Gomez. Lampard got the brief verbal warning -- and no card.

There is no question, in the three instances I've cited, of the referee playing the advantage rule. In each case, the foul was called. And in each case the foul was worthy of a yellow card. OK, that's my opinion -- I saw them as reckless. And I can see no reason why a player who commits a reckless physical foul should escape the yellow card that the rules mandate.

Referees can argue that the rules are too harsh, that they are reluctant to give that first yellow for fear that they may later be required to follow it with a second yellow and an expulsion. Referees do not like forcing a team to play with 10 men, and keeping 22 men on the field is seen as a virtue. I have some sympathy for that position, but it is an altogether different argument, one that needs a drastic rule-revision to correct.

What would really help in assessing the value of the chats would be for us to be allowed to listen in. Not live -- but later. The chat tapes could be released for our inspection and/or delectation. It has puzzled me for a long time -- what can the referees be saying? Something like “Now see here, Mr. Snodgrass, that was a bad foul but I’m going to let you off this one time. If you do it again, I’ll book you. Now stop being a naughty boy, get back to the game, and behave yourself.” Accompanied, of course, by that laughably emphatic arm gesture that is presumably meant to let us all know that this is one tough ref.

Or does the referee feel it necessary to explain the rules? “Listen, Snodgrass, you may not know this, but under Rule (or in Brit parlance, Law) 12 what you just did is classified as Unsporting Behavior and you should get a yellow card. Just this once, I’ll overlook it. But try not to use your hand again.”

If the real chats are a lot more sensible than my virtual chats, then there should be no difficulty in letting us hear them. If they are not, then the referees should shut up and just give the cards.

One wonders, too, what the players might be thinking about all this. On the whole, I’d say they’d be inwardly smirking at the thought that they’ve got away with one. And that goes double when they realize that, even when they do get a yellow card, they can get away with another bad foul because of the referee’s reluctance to give that second yellow.

It is quite possible that players may actually not know the rules, but that can never be an excuse to overlook their transgressions, certainly not for pro players. That’s their responsibility -- to know the rules.

As things stand, I don’t see that the verbal warning is justified by the rules, and it certainly flies in the face of an obligation (I always hope that referees do feel such an obligation) to protect players. If the referee is in doubt about the severity of a foul, he should give the benefit of that doubt to the victim, not to the perpetrator. He should give the yellow, not the chat.

This matter of using chats to soften the rules has recently saddled MLS with an awkward problem. On the one hand, MLS has let it be known that it is clamping down on violent play -- to this end we now get regular reports from its Disciplinary Committee decreeing extra punishments -- suspensions and fines -- for players who, in the DisCom’s opinion, were not sufficiently punished by the referee at the time of a foul, or for players who might have escaped punishment altogether.

Alongside that, MLS has hired ex-EPL referee Peter Walton as the man to show American referees how to do their job. An English referee straight from the heart of the very chat culture that aims to reduce the punishment for fouls -- surely a philosophy directly opposed to that of the DisCom.

The thought that Walton might not be on the side of the chatters had occurred. But the Brits are usually pretty certain they’ve got everything right in soccer and, sure enough, Walton let us know how he feels about this in a recent interview on ESPN’s web site.

It makes interesting reading -- though not, I should think, for the MLS DisCom and its backers: “When a player makes a challenge that endangers an opponent's safety and everyone in stadium just goes ‘Ouch!’ the law dictates ‘Red Card.’ But if the player already has a caution and the challenge is merely worthy of a second yellow, I would prefer to see a referee employ a management technique: talk to the player, calm him down and let everyone know that he will get another card if the offense is repeated.”

Extraordinary. This is a statement from a high-ranking MLS employee. So far, MLS has issued no disclaimer, no disavowal of Walton's words, which make a mockery of what its own DisCom is trying to do.

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