

AYSO Program: Referee
Lead Instructor: Advanced Referee
Instructor

Advantage – Where and When

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Change History	
September 30, 2012	Lesson Plan First Developed
September 30, 2013	Updated
September 30, 2014	Updated

Advantage – Where and When

1. DESCRIPTION

This workshop reviews the proper use of advantage and how to signal it in different situations. It then explores the factors the referee should consider in determining whether to apply advantage, such as the location of the incident, the time in the match, the age and skill levels of the players, and so on.

2. GOALS

- A. To cement the attendees' understanding of the legal basis of advantage and the mechanics associated with its application.
- B. To acquaint the attendees with the factors used by the referee to determine if advantage should be applied.
- C. To give the attendees the opportunity to practice applying those factors through a series of scenarios and video clips.

3. PREREQUISITES

There are no formal prerequisites for this workshop, but it is intended for referees who have a basic understanding of the advantage clause and sufficient refereeing experience to have encountered situations in which it might plausibly be applied. Specifically, some experience with play at the U-12 level or above is desirable and assumed.

4. ATTENDEE MATERIALS

There are no attendee hand-out materials for this workshop.

5. INSTRUCTOR EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

Computer and projector for display of the PowerPoint presentation including scenarios and video clips.

6. INSTRUCTOR NOTES

Included with the PowerPoint slides.

7. OTHER FILES

REF 205 – PowerPoint – Advantage – Where and When.pptx

LESSON PLAN

I. Introduction (1 min.)

- A. Introduce self and co-instructors, if any.
- B. Introduce topic: the proper use of advantage.
- C. Alert attendees that this workshop is for those with some experience refereeing at U-12 or above, since it is chiefly at those levels where the application of advantage is important.

Note to instructor: The following two sections are designated as review. The attendees are assumed to be familiar with this material, so cover it quickly.

II. Review Law 5: Advantage Clause (2-7 min.)

- A. What is the advantage clause?
 1. Read text from Law 5: “The Referee ... allows play to continue when the team against which an offence has been committed will benefit from such an advantage and penalizes the original offense if the anticipated advantage does not ensue at that time.”
 2. As written, this requires clairvoyance by the referee! (“allows play to continue when the team ... will benefit ...”) Of course, the referee must actually apply his best judgment, BUT he may change his mind within a second or two if his decision turns out to be wrong.
 3. The FIFA Interpretations and Guidance help with the understanding of how to choose and apply Advantage. Another helpful resource is the USSF *2013-14 Advise to Referees*. The *AYSO Guidance for Referees, Coaches, Other Volunteers and Parents* is consistent with these materials.
- B. What is the spirit of the advantage clause?

Fairness! When an infringement occurs, the opposing team should get the “better” outcome – the opportunity to continue play or the punishment specified under the Laws of the Game (generally a free kick).
Who decides which option is “better”? The referee.
- C. Can advantage be applied when misconduct occurs?
 1. Yes (assuming the ball is in play, of course).
 2. We know because the advantage clause simply says “offence”, not “foul”.

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3. We also know because Law 5 tells us two bullets following the advantage clause: “The Referee ... takes disciplinary action against players guilty of cautionable and sending-off offences. He is not obliged to take this action immediately but must do so when the ball next goes out of play.” That is, the referee may decide that the better result for the opposing team is for play to continue. .

D. How is the application of advantage related to trifling offenses?

1. Advantage is applied when an offense occurs that is significant enough to punish, but circumstances lead the referee to allow play to continue because he believes Advantage is the better outcome for the team against which the offense was committed.
2. A trifling offense is one that is too minor to have any effect on the game; that is, did not disadvantage in any way the team against which it was committed. A referee determination that an event is trifling is not the application of Advantage.

III. Review: Mechanics (5 min.)

A. Signaling advantage

1. The referee gives the hand and voice signals as soon as he determines that the advantage exists, that is, that the team against which the foul has been committed will benefit more from continuing play than from a free kick.
 - a. Instructor demonstrates the hand signal for advantage.
 - b. Instructor demonstrates the use of the voice – “Play On!” – and explains that it is important since players may not see the hand signal.

B. What if the advantage doesn’t materialize?

1. Even if the referee has signaled, he may change his decision if the advantage doesn’t materialize within a few seconds. *Note to instructor:* “a few seconds” is the exact wording of the Laws – see the Interpretations and Guidelines for Referees (Law 5, Advantage).
2. If the referee changes his decision, he penalizes the original infringement.

C. What if, shortly after the advantage is applied, there is a second foul within a few seconds?

1. The referee may choose to apply advantage again, if appropriate. This is true whether the players involved in the two fouls are the same or different.

Note to instructor: At this point in the lesson, do not get into a discussion of what factors to consider in deciding whether to apply advantage again. This

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portion of the lesson is about the Law and mechanics; the decision to apply advantage (or not) is the subject of the next section.

2. If the referee stops play, he should penalize the more serious foul.

IV. Application of Advantage (15-20 min.)

- A. [Slide 10] Application of advantage: Factors that don't change during the match
 1. Technical skill of the players
 - a. Players with greater technical skill are more likely to be able to "play through" minor fouls.
 - b. Players with lesser technical skills are more likely to want a free kick when fouled, even if the foul is minor.
- B. [Slide 11] State Ken Aston's maxim: "Never use advantage to your own disadvantage!" The proper understanding of this maxim is to be developed through the subsequent bullets.

[Note to instructor: If necessary, explain to attendees that Ken Aston was a former FIFA Referee, chairman of the FIFA Referees Committee, mentor and teacher, and long-time friend to the AYSO](#)

1. Maturity – The ability to understand and accept advantage.

Note to instructor: Characterize the difference in maturity of players with respect to their understanding of the game and their ability to accept the notion of advantage, using the following guidelines. These are factors based on age and normal emotional development. The next section addresses emotional level that might vary during the game.

- a. U-12 and under: Players often do not have a fully developed sense of "team". Advantage is awarded to a team, not a player. The U-12 player who was fouled is likely to perceive justice as a free kick because he was disadvantaged, and is unlikely to be aware that his team might benefit from continued play.
- b. U-14: Players generally have a more developed sense of "team" than U-12's and can therefore accept the notion of advantage, though they may not actually understand it. However, there is still considerable focus on the "self", so the player who is the victim of a hard foul may expect individual justice, even if the team might benefit from continued play, and therefore may retaliate if the foul isn't whistled.
- c. U16-19: Players should understand advantage and generally have a well-developed sense of team, so they expect the referee to apply advantage.

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At the same time, fouls beyond a certain level of severity may trigger a need for individual justice, and if advantage is applied instead, retribution may follow.

C. Application of advantage: factors that can change during the match

Note to instructor: Emphasize that these are factors that can change during the match, sometimes very quickly. The referee must be aware of these factors and take them into consideration in deciding how to act in every potential advantage situation.

1. Severity of infringement (generally a foul), including misconduct that occurs during play.
2. Emotional level of players at this moment
3. [Slide 13] Location of the infringement and the likelihood of an immediate, promising attack or scoring opportunity
 - a. Defensive third – generally unlikely
 - b. Middle third – more likely
 - c. Attacking third – most likely
 - d. Attacking penalty area – rarely applied, but weigh the likelihood of immediate score versus from PK, if the offense was a DFK foul
 - e. In all cases, the capabilities of the team must be weighed. For example, a low-skill team may have little opportunity of mounting an attack even in the attacking third.
4. Overall atmosphere of the match: Spectators, coaches, and player emotional level, player fatigue, score, remaining time, what's at stake, etc. can indicate that control is more important than the flow of the match.

D. [Slide 14] Considerations for the referee in deciding to apply advantage

1. Can the player play through the foul?
2. Can the players understand the team benefit of applying advantage now?

E. In summary, the proper application of advantage is integral to the balancing of flow and control in the match.

1. If advantage is used too much (too much flow), players may perceive the referee as weak, unwilling to call fouls, or inconsistent in deciding what to call. The consequence is that players complain – “Hey ref, what about that trip?” – and take matters into their own hands, retaliating against opponents for perceived injustices left unpunished.

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2. If advantage is used too little (too much control), players may perceive the referee as out of touch with the game and the players' capabilities, or a "book" referee. The consequence is that players get frustrated and dissent. "C'mon ref, let us play!"

F. Ken Aston's maxim again

- a. What does "using advantage to your disadvantage mean?"
- b. Applying advantage when the players can't handle it.
- c. Allowing too much flow, risking loss of control.

- G. Bottom line: The proper application of advantage gives the players a sense of fairness without loss of safety. In other words, FUN!

V. Scenarios (20-25 min.)

Note to instructor: The following scenarios are illustrated with animated PowerPoint slides. The scenarios are briefly characterized here, and the notes on each slide indicate the salient points to be discussed.

It is important to recognize that several of these scenarios are not obvious advantage situations. This is deliberate - the focus should be on helping the attendees to think through and understand the factors that may affect the award of advantage. The instructor should explore various "what if's" for most of these scenarios.

- A. [Slide 15] U-14. Charging foul in middle third of the field, player maintains possession. Some room to attack. Discuss factors that might lead to award of advantage: team maturity, severity of charge, history of game so far.
- B. [Slide 16] U16. Charging foul in defending third, player maintains possession with lots of room to advance ball. Discuss factors that might lead to award of advantage: team maturity, severity of charge, age group, game history.
- C. [Slide 17] U16. Kicking foul inside attacking half, player maintains possession and breaks away with a teammate toward penalty area, where two defenders and goalkeeper await. Advantage could be awarded, but nature of foul may override with need to exert control.
- D. [Slide 18] U19. Foul inside attacking half – a slightly late charge after ball is passed to teammate. Defense has slightly superior numbers and position. Lack of clear promising attack and the need to maintain control imply advantage should not be awarded.

- E. [Slide 19] U14. Cautionable offense (late tackle) as ball is passed to teammate with promising scoring opportunity. Advantage should be awarded, caution at stoppage. Discuss how referee should verbalize to manage the situation and prevent immediate retaliation.

VI. Video Clips (10 min.)

- A. Clip #1 – Proper application of Advantage
1. Identify foul
 2. Emphasize location, direction, and potential for promising attack
 3. Did the Referee wait & see?
 4. Skill level of players?
 5. Would you apply Advantage or not?
 6. This is a perfect example of the application of Advantage.
 7. Open discussion for a couple of minutes.
- B. Clip #2
1. Where on the field?
 2. Skill level of players?
 3. Would you apply Advantage or not?
 4. This is an acceptable “wait and see” however, should the whistle have been blown sooner?
 5. Open discussion for a couple of minutes.
- C. Clip #3
1. Where on the field?
 2. Promising attack?
 3. Skill level of players?
 4. Would you apply Advantage or not?
 5. This is an example where Advantage should likely NOT be applied.
 6. Open discussion for a couple of minutes.
 - 7.
- D. Clip #4
1. Where on the field?
 2. Promising attack?
 3. Did the referee wait and see?
 4. Skill level of players?
 5. Would you apply Advantage or not?
 6. Did the Advantage materialize?
 7. Open discussion for a couple of minutes.

E. Clip #5

1. Where on the field?
2. Promising attack?
3. Did the referee wait and see?
4. Skill level of players?
5. Would you apply Advantage or not?
6. Did the Advantage materialize?
7. Open discussion for a couple of minutes.

VII. Technicalities (5 min.)

A. Application of advantage to non-Law 12 violations

1. Although USSF has taught for years that advantage applies only to violations of Law 12 (see, e.g., USSF Advice to Referees , 2010-2011 edition, item 5.6), it revised its position in May, 2012, to follow international practice, which applies advantage more broadly
2. Note that the Interpretations and Guidelines for Referees state “The referee may play advantage whenever an infringement or offence occurs.” It is rare in AYSO matches for infringements that are not violations of Law 11 or Law 12 to occur in a way that makes the application of advantage plausible.

B. Application of advantage on misconduct by non-players

1. If a substitute enters the field without permission and interferes with the game, advantage may be applied if circumstances warrant. For example, if a substitute enters the field and challenges an opposing player for the ball but the opponent maintains possession and a promising attack immediately develops, the referee may apply the advantage. In this case, the misconduct (which is technically unsporting behavior by the substitute) should be punished at the next stoppage.

Note to instructor: The *Laws of the Game* are explicit about the possibility of awarding advantage in this situation. See the Interpretations and Guidelines for Referees, Law 3 – Extra persons on the field of play – Substitute or substituted player. This is consistent with the general principle, reinforced in a June, 2012, memo from USSF, that the application of advantage is not limited to violations of Law 12.

2. Such an unusual situation is unlikely to be understood by anyone at the field except the referee.
 - a. The thinking referee should apply the spirit of the game to decide whether or not the circumstances of the incident compellingly argue for application of advantage. That is, is the advantage sufficiently compelling that the

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team against whom the infringement occurred would clearly expect play to continue despite the infringement?

- b. If the referee does apply advantage, it should be explicit, so that everyone understands what is happening and what is going to happen at the next stoppage. For example, the referee may shout “Play on! #10 Blue, a card is coming!”

VIII. Summary (2 min.)

- A. Proper application of advantage maintains a sense of fairness and safety among players.
- B. Many factors affect decision to apply advantage, some of which may change considerably during the match.
 1. The referee should establish a level based on the technical skill and emotional maturity of the players.
 2. The referee should adjust level during the match based on player condition, game situation (score, remaining time, etc.)
- C. “Never use advantage to your own disadvantage!” Balance flow and control.