



Critical Match Incident Guidelines

This policy is applicable as a guideline for all levels of officials.

In evaluating a match official, the assessor must consider the overall performance as well as the accuracy and credibility of critical match decisions. If a key error is detected, the assessor must consider whether the critical match decision should have reasonably been expected to be seen by at least one (but maybe more than one) match official.

If the critical match incident is missed due to a serious and/or obvious error of judgment and/or lack of control and the assessor decides that the error should have been reasonably expected to be seen or dealt with correctly by an official working that level of game, then he or she should take that into consideration in grading the official. Games evaluated by U.S. Soccer assessors require multiple contributory detractors to warrant a not acceptable rating.

When determining if a critical match incident should have been reasonably expected to be seen or dealt with correctly by an official working that level of game, an assessor must make a fair judgment. In other words, should any match official assigned to that particular game be reasonably expected to see or deal with the critical situation? The assessor must consider the situation and the scenario surrounding the judgment. The assessor should ask, should a referee at this level be reasonably expected to see or deal with the situation correctly?

A significant detractor could be one of the following:

- A critical match incident that occurs outside the view of any of the match officials but is missed due to poor positioning, failure to anticipate or read the game, improper attention, poor mechanics, poor fitness or some other match official-controlled situation.
- A serious and/or obvious misapplication of the Laws of the Game.
- The missing of a serious and/or obvious decision that impacts the outcome of the game that a match official working that level of game should reasonably be expected to get correct.

Not a significant detractor:

- A critical match incident that occurs outside the view of the match officials and reasonable officials, working that level of game, would not be expected to see.
- A critical match incident that can only be seen via video replay.

If a match official fails to deal with any of the critical match incidents listed below and such failure results in the outcome of the game being affected, then the performance of the official(s) should be judged to be significantly impacted. Under most conditions, multiple errors rather than a single mistake would dictate a not acceptable rating.

A critical match incident could be one of the following:

- Incorrectly dealing with a denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity (DOGSO);
- Incorrectly handling a clear and obvious serious foul play/violent conduct sendoff;
- Not calling a penalty kick that is obvious or incorrectly awarding a penalty kick;

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- Incorrectly allowing a goal that should be disallowed or not allowing a goal that should be given (including offside decisions for assistant referees);
- Not sending off a player after he/she has received a second yellow card;
- Incorrect application of the Laws of the Game;
- Any other incident that has a significant impact on the match that requires further examination from the assessor.

Impacting the outcome of the game often times depends upon the final result of the game and the timing of the critical match incident. For example, if an obvious and clear penalty kick is missed in a game which at the time has a score of 4-0, the impact on the game may be lessened. Although this may not be judged as a critical match incident, it does not minimize the impact of the missed call on the referee's overall match performance rating.

If the critical match incident is missed early in a close match, it may be considered to have impacted the outcome of the game regardless of the final score. If a match official, who has been of high standard throughout the game, misses an obvious penalty kick decision when the score is 4-0, could still have an acceptable mark but the failure to get the decision correct should be reflected in the written report. Conversely, a game may end as 3-0 but, early in the game with the score 0-0, the referee misses a critical match incident which then possibly impacts the outcome of the game for the losing team. In this case, the assessor must use reasonable discretion.

In some instances, the failure to correctly address one of the aforementioned factors when the outcome of the game is not affected, may also impact the referee's overall performance due to the significance of the error.

There may be occasions where there is a collective responsibility by match officials in missing a critical match incident. In such cases, two or more match officials could be responsible and their final marks should reflect this. In a case where a player is shown a second yellow card and is not dismissed from the field of play, all four officials are to be held responsible as this is a referee team event.