

Ask a Soccer Referee

Answers to Laws of the Game
and Practical Refereeing Questions:

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OFFSIDE/NOT OFFSIDE?

Your question:

Would you please provide me your thoughts on the following scenario: An attacking player takes a shot on goal sending the ball high. The GK stops the shot by deliberately striking the ball back towards the center of the field (i.e., her hands strike the ball as opposed to the ball striking her hands). Thereupon, another attacker, who was in an offside position when the original shot on goal took place, kicks the ball into the back of the net.

Should the goal be allowed on the theory that the GK's action constituted controlling the ball, thereby starting a new play? Or, should the goal be nullified and the second attacker penalized for an offside violation?

USSF answer (November 27, 2001):

The decision depends on the referee's perception of the entire play. If the referee believes the goalkeeper deliberately played the ball by fisting it out of her immediate area, then the goalkeeper had gained possession of the ball. This means that the opposing player who was in an offside position prior to the goalkeeper's play is no longer offside and the goal should be scored. However, if the referee believes that the player in the offside position (prior to the goalkeeper's play of the ball) interfered with the goalkeeper, then that player should be declared offside and the goal should not be scored.

In the situation you describe, it seems clear that the player should not be penalized for offside.