



For the Good of the Game

**To the national associations
of FIFA**

Circular n° 874

Zurich, 22 October 2003
GS/hus-sma

Law 11- OFFSIDE

Dear Sir or Madam,

We would like to inform you about a decision passed at the Annual Business Meeting of the International FA Board on 16 September 2003, in order to achieve uniform interpretation of Law 11 "Offside", based on the following principles:

- This is not a change to the Laws of the Game as it adheres entirely to the original wording of the Law.
- The aim of this interpretation is to respect the Laws of the Game and to protect attacking play intended to result in a goal, which is the ultimate objective in football.

Law 11 reads as follows: "A player in an offside position is only penalised if, at the moment the ball is touched or played by one of his team, he is, in the opinion of the referee, involved in active play by:

*interfering with play, or
interfering with an opponent, or
gaining an advantage by being in that position."*

How should we interpret "interfering with play"?

PLAYING OR TOUCHING A BALL PASSED OR TOUCHED BY A TEAM-MATE

How should we interpret "interfering with an opponent"?

PREVENTING AN OPPONENT FROM PLAYING OR BEING ABLE TO PLAY THE BALL. FOR EXAMPLE, BY CLEARLY OBSTRUCTING THE GOALKEEPER'S LINE OF VISION OR MOVEMENTS.

MAKING A GESTURE OR MOVEMENT WHILE STANDING IN THE PATH OF THE BALL TO DECEIVE OR DISTRACT AN OPPONENT



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How should we interpret "gaining an advantage by being in that position"?

PLAYING A BALL THAT REBOUNDS OFF A POST OR THE CROSSBAR HAVING BEEN IN AN OFFSIDE POSITION

PLAYING A BALL THAT REBOUNDS OFF AN OPPONENT HAVING BEEN IN AN OFFSIDE POSITION

We are aware that there will always be controversial incidents, but as stipulated in the Laws of the Game, the referee's decision is final. We also believe, however, that with clearer instructions, referees will be in a better position to make informed decisions based on uniform criteria.

Yours faithfully,
FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE
DE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Urs Linsi
General Secretary

cc: Confederations
International Referees
International Assistant referees