

2003: The following FIFA Circular No. 874 was issued on 22 October 2003
Circular No. 847
Law 11 - OFFSIDE

We would like to inform you about a decision passed at the Annual Business Meeting of the International Football Association 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 project 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.

(The following was an addition from UEFA Referees' and Assistant Referees' seminar held in Nyon in September 2003:

"A player in an offside position, by his manner and direction of movement, near the path of the ball, in the opinion of the Referee, interferes with an opponent (e.g. getting closer to the path of the ball)."
"A player in an offside position and clearly in the goalkeeper's line of vision (between him and the kicker), in the opinion of the Referee, interferes with the goalkeeper (distraction)."

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.

