

## Con Artist

It was an incident where I wondered if the referee took the right step. He had a choice to be lenient with the infraction or to penalize it according to the book. He took the lenient approach and I thought it may come back to haunt him. But it was late in the match and he might get away with it. To understand the tensions present in the game you need some history.

The home team had won the state championship the previous year and though they had lost a lot of talent through graduation they were still strong. The visiting team had seldom gotten past the first round of the playoffs. They were again mediocre but scrappy and competitive.

The home team scored first but the visitors leveled before the half. With less than 15 minutes left the visitors made it 2-1 and the desperation of home team that had never been beaten by that team was apparent from the bleachers.

About 2 minutes came the moment of truth. The home team mounted an attack and was fouled about 25 yards from the goal line toward the right side of the field. It wasn't a bad foul and the opportunity was not very good since the defense was well organized. The home team put the ball down and looked to take a quick free kick. A defender casually walked toward the ball and when directed away from the ball said, <sup>3</sup>This is my first year of soccer and how far is 10 yard.<sup>2</sup> The opportunity for the quick evaporated.

He had delayed the free kick and gave the defense more than enough time to set up. I thought he deserved a caution for delay and when I heard what he said I added trying to con the referee. While often you can get away with not cautioning this sort of offense but not in tense moment where the victimized team feels more put upon than normal. I was afraid that the failure to caution would create problems because of emotions.

The home team began to self destruct a couple of minutes later. Over the last ten minutes they accumulated 5 cautions 4 of them for dissent. I don't think any of this affected the outcome of the match. Control teetered but did not fall apart.

Could the referee have saved some of these cards if he had cautioned earlier. I think that is possible. When you are losing a game that you think you should win you begin to believe the world is against you. Perhaps the caution to the other team would relieve that and make you appear fair. I think the bigger problem was the team thought the referee was naive for falling for that line and lost respect.

When one team is feeling that nothing is going their way, it doesn't hurt to tighten up the game, Most or all of the borderline calls should go their way. And if an opportunity to caution the opponent don't let it pass.

Don't let yourself look foolish to the players. And don't a team that is having a bad feel that you are helping the other guys.