



**OHIO SOUTH** STATE REFEREE COMMITTEE  
A MEMBER OF THE UNITED STATES SOCCER FEDERATION



# Offside

## Judging Involvement in Play

Ohio South  
Advanced Referee  
Recertification Training

Fall 2010

# OFFSIDE VIDEO

The following video is optional and your choice to review or not. It is an extensive analysis of a video clip which includes elements a Referee and/or Assistant Referee must take into account before deciding to call the offside offense.

This is a rather advanced discussion of offside that will take a good deal of time to go through - but should be very worthwhile.

# Offside Decisions

The following video clip you are about to see contains all the elements that are involved in determining whether an offside offense has occurred or not, i.e. timing, location, involvement and defensive response.

All the key aspects pertaining to making a correct offside decision are seldom captured in a single play situation such as this.

# PLAY SCENARIO

The team in white is attacking from left to right, while the team in red is defending the right half of the field.

The ball is passed back from an attacking white player to a teammate, who immediately volley kicks the ball over the red team's defenders.

Two attacking players subsequently run forward and become involved in active play. The second attacker ultimately gathers the ball and continues toward her opponent's goal.



Scroll mouse over black area. When Start Bar appears at bottom, press Arrow.

# Camera View

All the discussion points and presumptions to be made in this play analysis will occur during stop action and all the camera views are from a fixed point above and behind the play.

Remember these are not the views that the Referee or the AR has on the field, nor do they have the luxury of stop action replay.

# View of the AR

The AR has at best a one or two-dimensional view of the various segments of the play and must initially be able to look through players in order to determine who may or may not be in an offside position at the instant the play begins, .... i.e. at the precise time the ball is volleyed forward.

In a crowded stadium she probably also does not have the ability to hear when the kick is taken.

# Officials' Decision

So, in the reality of the actual game situation, it is doubtful that even the best trained and most alert official is going to be able to see and determine precisely all the aspects involved.

However, everyone, including you, still expects the team of officials to be able to immediately process all the discussion points and make the perfect call.



# MOTION OF PLAY

At the start of this video all of the players on both teams, as well as the Referee and presumably the AR, are retreating to the left toward the center of the field.

Note that the Referee's back is to the right side of the field and will remain so until after the ball is volley kicked forward to start the play sequence.

# The REFEREE

The Referee is in no position to determine which players were in an onside or offside position at the time of the kick.

Consequently, the Referee can have no real input regarding which players can or cannot actively participate in this play.

In this entire play situation the Referee must rely solely on the capability and judgment of the lead AR.

# Offside Position

When making an offside decision, the first thing that you must always determine is whether a player is in an **offside position**.

That is, are they simultaneously (1) ahead of the ball (2) in their opponent's half of the field, and (3) ahead of the second-to-last defender.

# Offside Position

When?

.... Precisely at the time the play starts, i.e. when the first touch of the ball is made by a teammate.

# TIMING - The Start of the Play



# Offside Position Time of Decision

At the precise moment that the ball is volley kicked forward is the instant that the first decision has to be made ... not a fraction of a second before nor a fraction of a second after .

Must determine exactly who is ... and/or ... who is not ... guilty of being in an offside position.

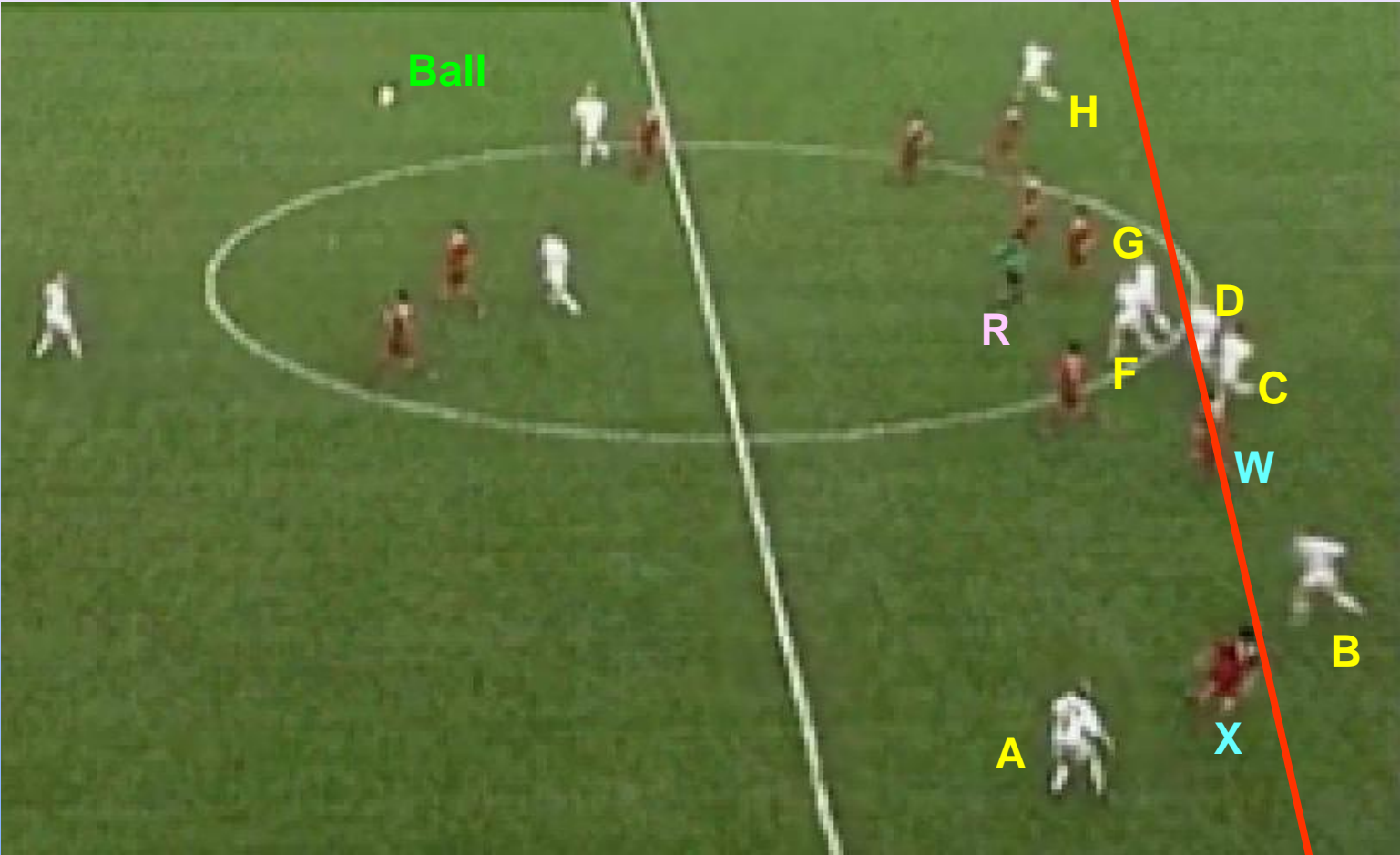
# Position of Players

During a play such as this, if there is **any uncertainty** as to whether a player is in an offside position (or not) at the time of the kick the AR must consider that player as **not** being in an offside position.

Therefore, that player could never be guilty of committing an offside offense, during the remaining play sequence.

# Time of Kick

At the instant that the ball is kicked, we can only see 11 of the 22 players on the field and we can see that the Referee still has her back to where the ball will eventually be directed.



# Immediately After the Kick

A fraction of a second after the kick has been taken, all 20 players and the Referee are in the stop-action view and the ball itself has yet to cross the half-line.

This is the first time we get to see the relative positions of all the players involved in this game situation, but it is still not at the moment the ball was kicked.

# Immediately After the Kick

In reality this is NOT the time that the offside position decision should be made.

For the purposes of this video review let's assume the positions of all the players in this picture are relatively the same as when the kick was actually taken.

# Immediately After the Kick

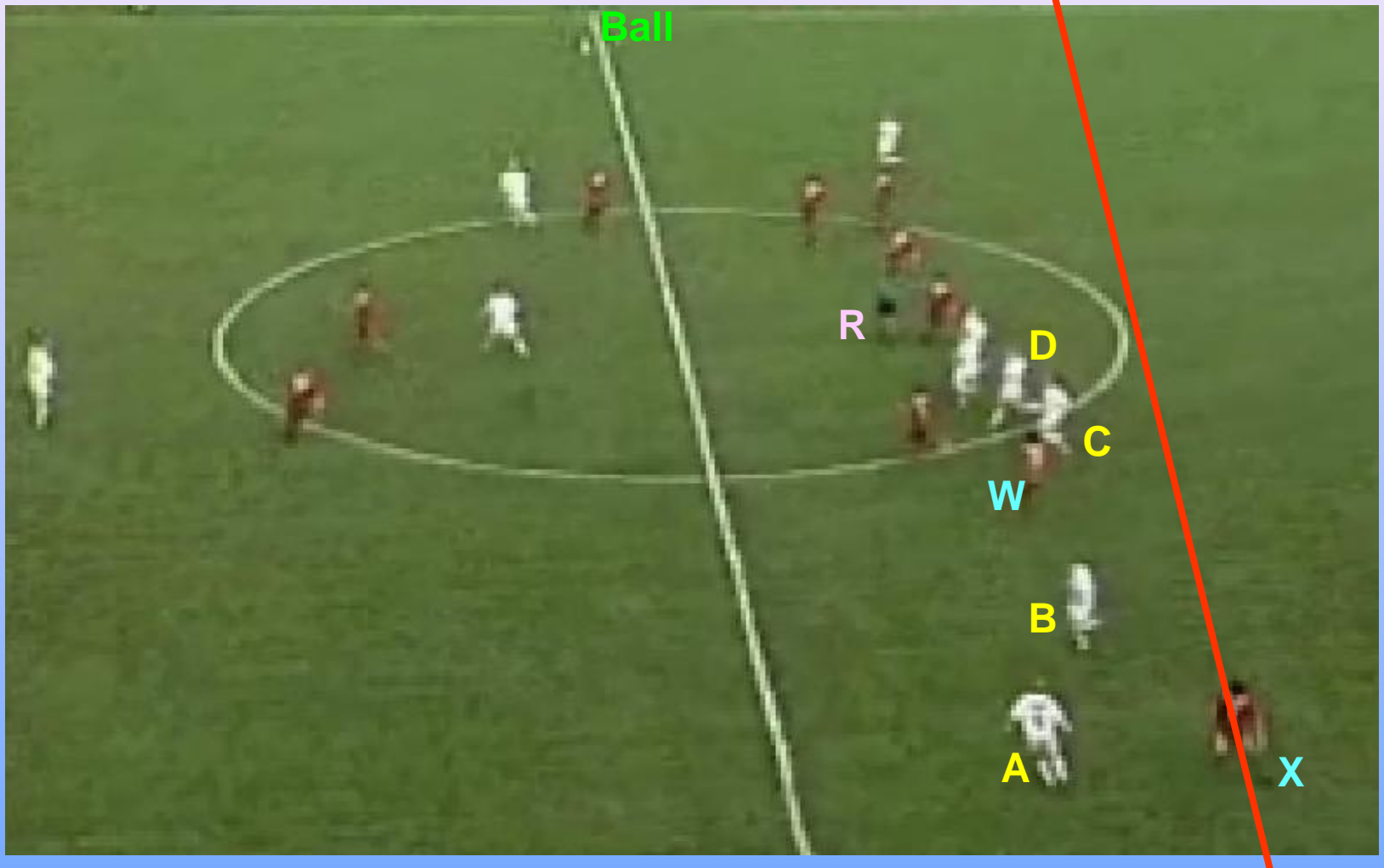
In this view, at least 3 of the attackers (players B, C and D) meet the criteria of being in an offside position. Defender "W" is the next to last defender and is the offside position reference point.

Only these three players can be potentially called for the offside offense as a result of this pass.

# Immediately After the Kick

At the precise time of the kick it is quite possible that players "F" and "G" were also in an offside position and maybe even player "H".

Again the Referee cannot help in this determination, because she is beginning the process of turning around and getting back into seeing the resulting play.



Ball

R

D

C

W

B

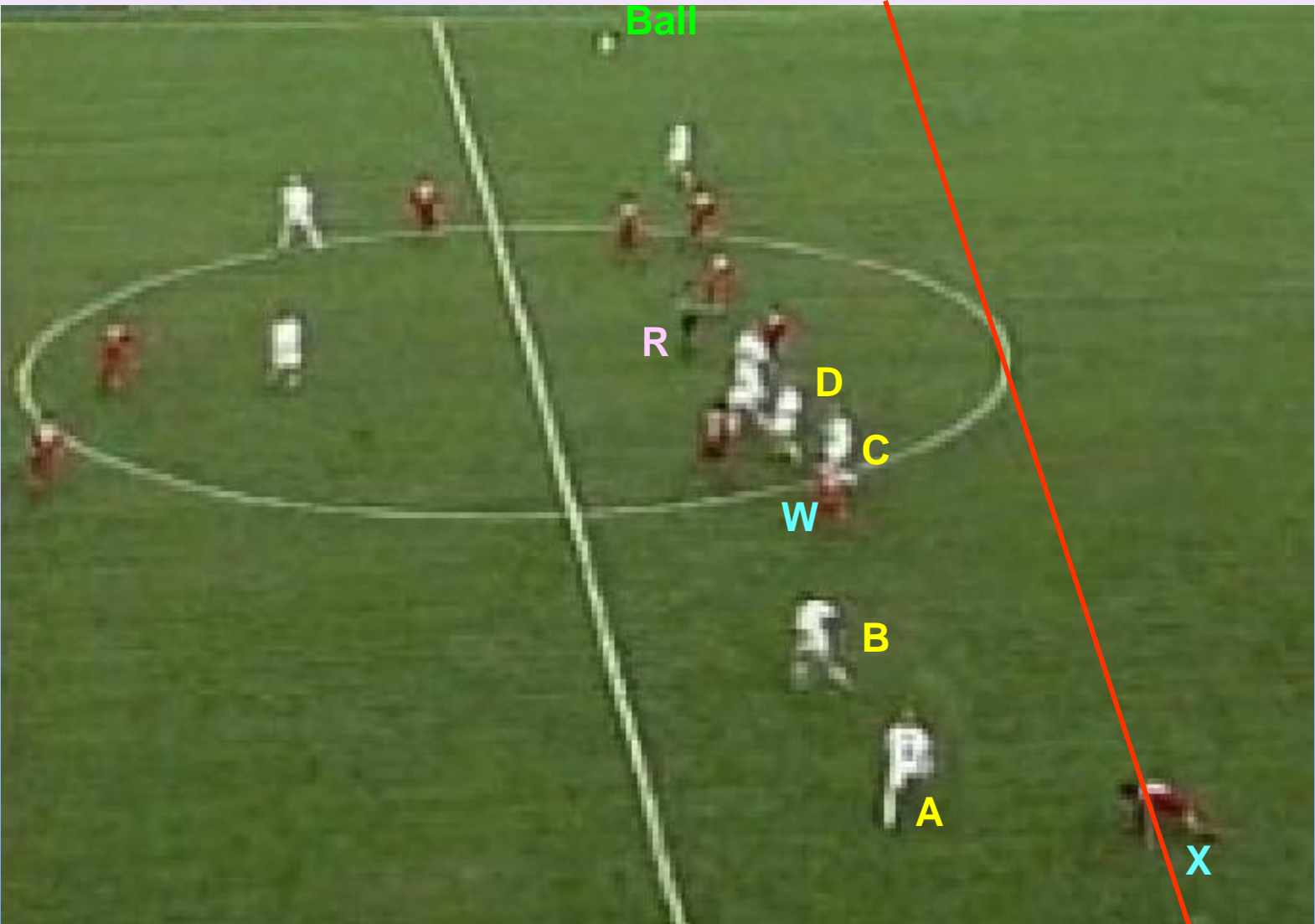
A

X

# One Second After the Kick

One second after the play started the ball has just reached the halfway line.

If the offside position decision were to be made at this time .... and remember it's way too late .... none of the attackers are in an offside position .... a different defender (player "X") is now the next-to-last opponent.



Ball

R

D

C

W

B

A

X

# One Second After the Kick

It isn't until this time that the Referee has just gotten turned around into a position to be able to view the rest of the play.

So, from the Referee's late view of the play situation, there appears to be no offside offense possible.

# AR Position & Mechanics

Most important to making the correct decision is the AR's position and mechanics.

Now, let's discuss the reality of the play situation from the AR's point of view.

We cannot see the AR in this video, but we need to assume that the AR lines up square to the field and with the second-to-last defender.

# AR Position & Mechanics

Remember that the players and the Referee were all running back toward the half-line just before the volley kick was taken.

And the AR?

.... She was also running back up field in an attempt to stay with the next-to-last defender

... bear in mind that during this run-back up-field the next-to-last defender was not necessarily always the same player.

# AR Position & Mechanics

This AR had to keep track of:

... all the attacking players ... as well as

... all the defenders ... and

... remember which players were in an offside position ... and

... which players were not in an offside position ... while

... both teams were in constant motion, as well as the AR herself.

# AR Position & Mechanics

Exactly where is this AR at the time of the kick or even this fraction of a second later?

If she's slightly ahead of the actual next-to -last defender or slightly behind, she will have a distorted view of where the line of "offside position" may be.

# AR Position & Mechanics

Depending on the AR's angle and the timing of the AR's decision, there could be as many as six players (Players "B", "C", "D", "F", "G", and "H"), and as few as only one player (player "B"), initially being regarded as being in an offside position.

# AR Position & Mechanics

The AR also has to look thru several bodies to determine which attackers are where, while at the same time being able to peek thru another set of bodies to determine exactly when the kick was taken.

# Offside Position Decision

With this maybe you can begin to see the difficulty that the AR could have had.

Most likely the only player that the AR could be 100% sure, one way or the other, was the attacking player "A" .... who was clearly in an on-side position.

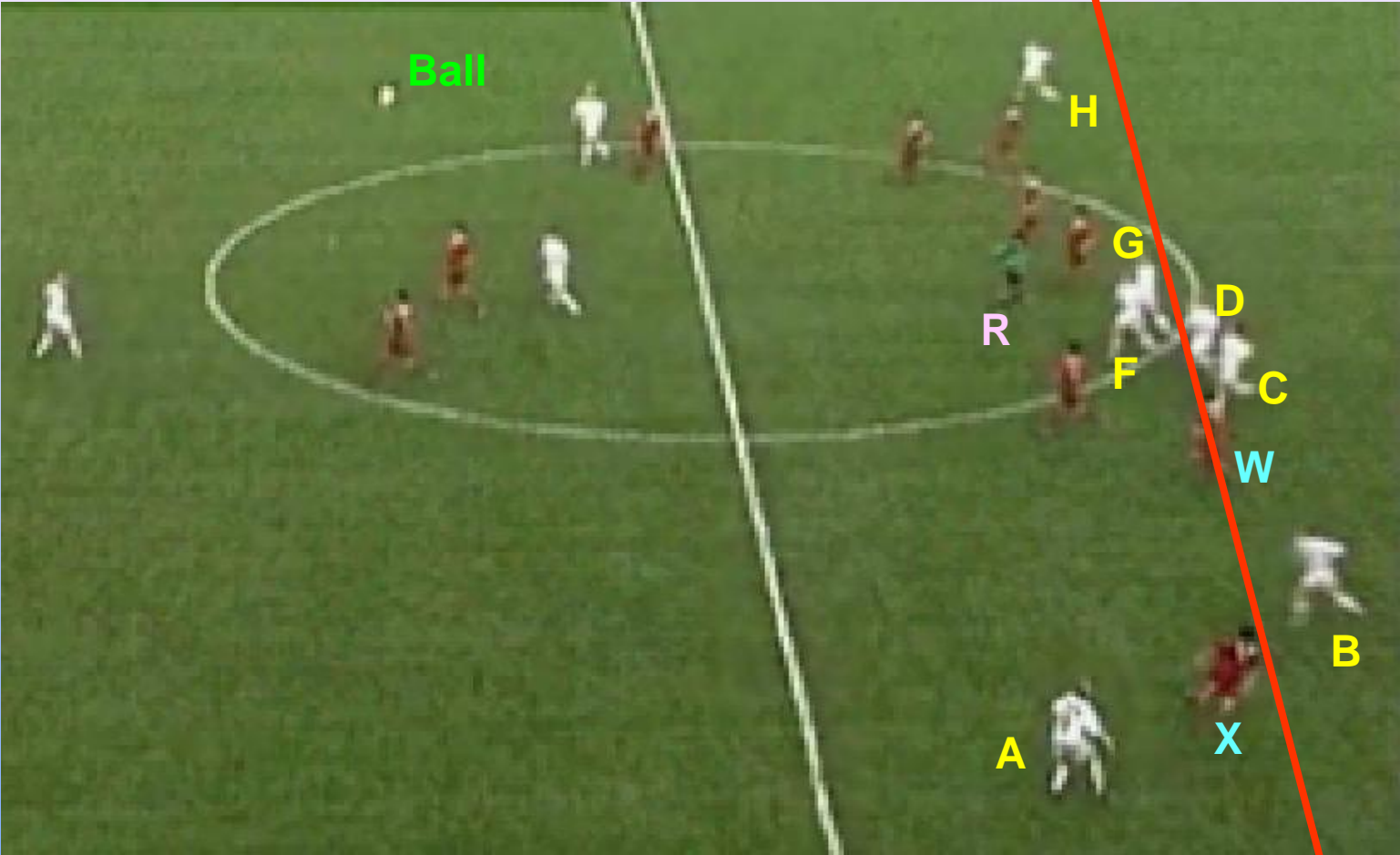
# Offside Position Decision

The AR must be focused on:

- (1) Any and all of the attackers in an offside position in the event that any one of them actually moves toward the ball altering the course of a defender and thereby interfering with them.
- (2) any attacker that comes from an on-side position and becomes directly involved in the play.

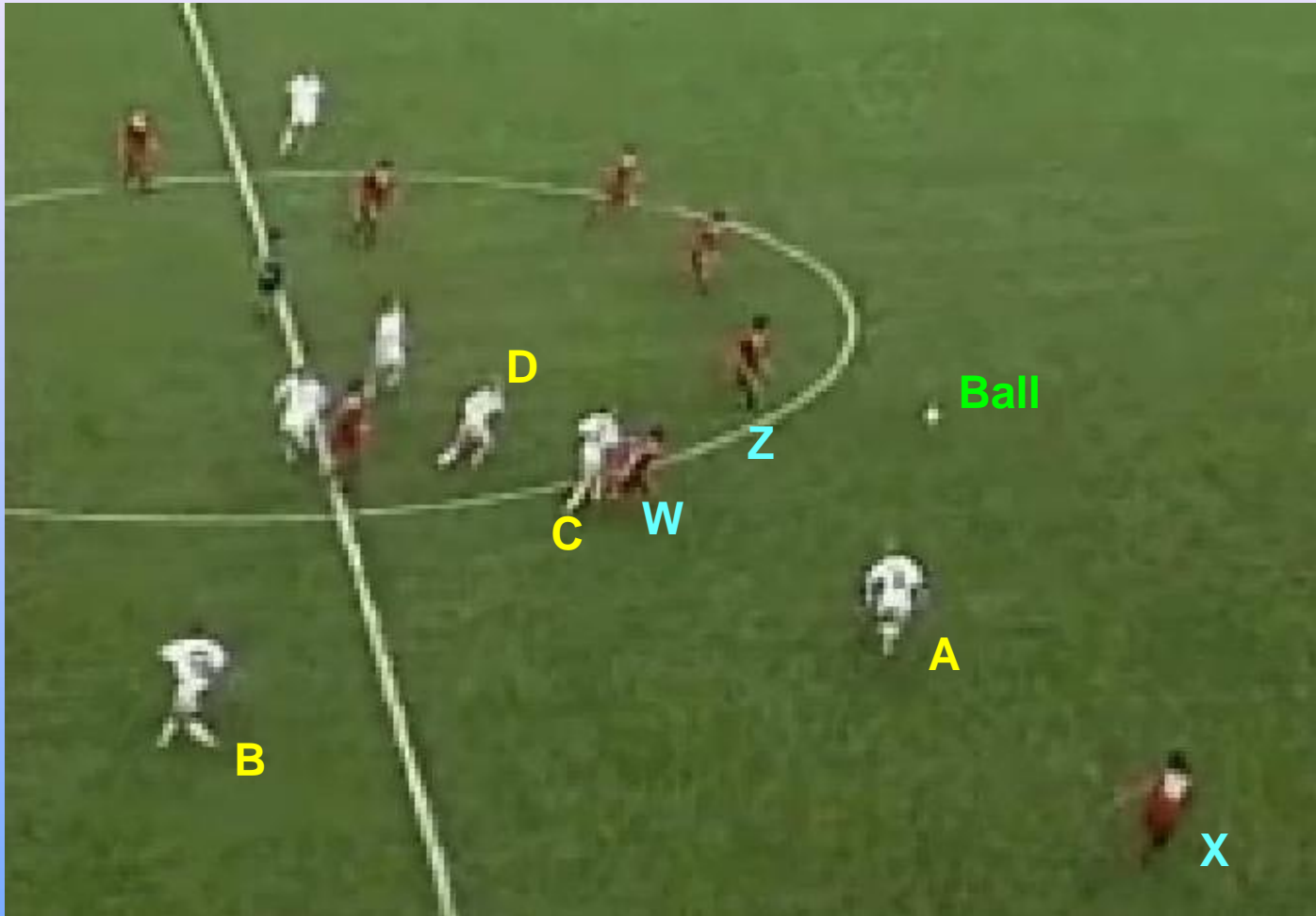
# Offside Position Decision

Clearly the AR must maintain a great deal of concentration and patience in order to get the decision correct.



# OFFSIDE POSITION

For the purpose of continuing this discussion the three attackers (players "B", "C", and "D") that we initially determined to be in an offside position are the only players that we can or will be potentially calling for the offside offense, as a result of this pass.



# Player Involvement

As the ball falls to the ground most players from both teams can be seen to have turned or are in process of turning and moving towards the ball.

The lead attacker (player "A") and the nearest red defender (player "Z") are on a collision course.

# Player Involvement

Although this player "A" has definitely become involved in the play, the AR had to be patient and hold her flag.

The AR had to first determine whether this attacker was one of the three original attackers (players "B", "C" or "D") in an offside position or not.

# Player Involvement

If you watch the video carefully, you will see that this attacker (player "A") is not one of the players who was in an offside position at the time of the kick ... or for that matter she was not even close to being in an offside position.

# NOT OFFSIDE

Upon determining that player "A" was not one of the players in an offside position, the AR had to resist raising the flag.

The AR then had to begin to move again with the attack.

# End of Play ??

However ... Point of Note

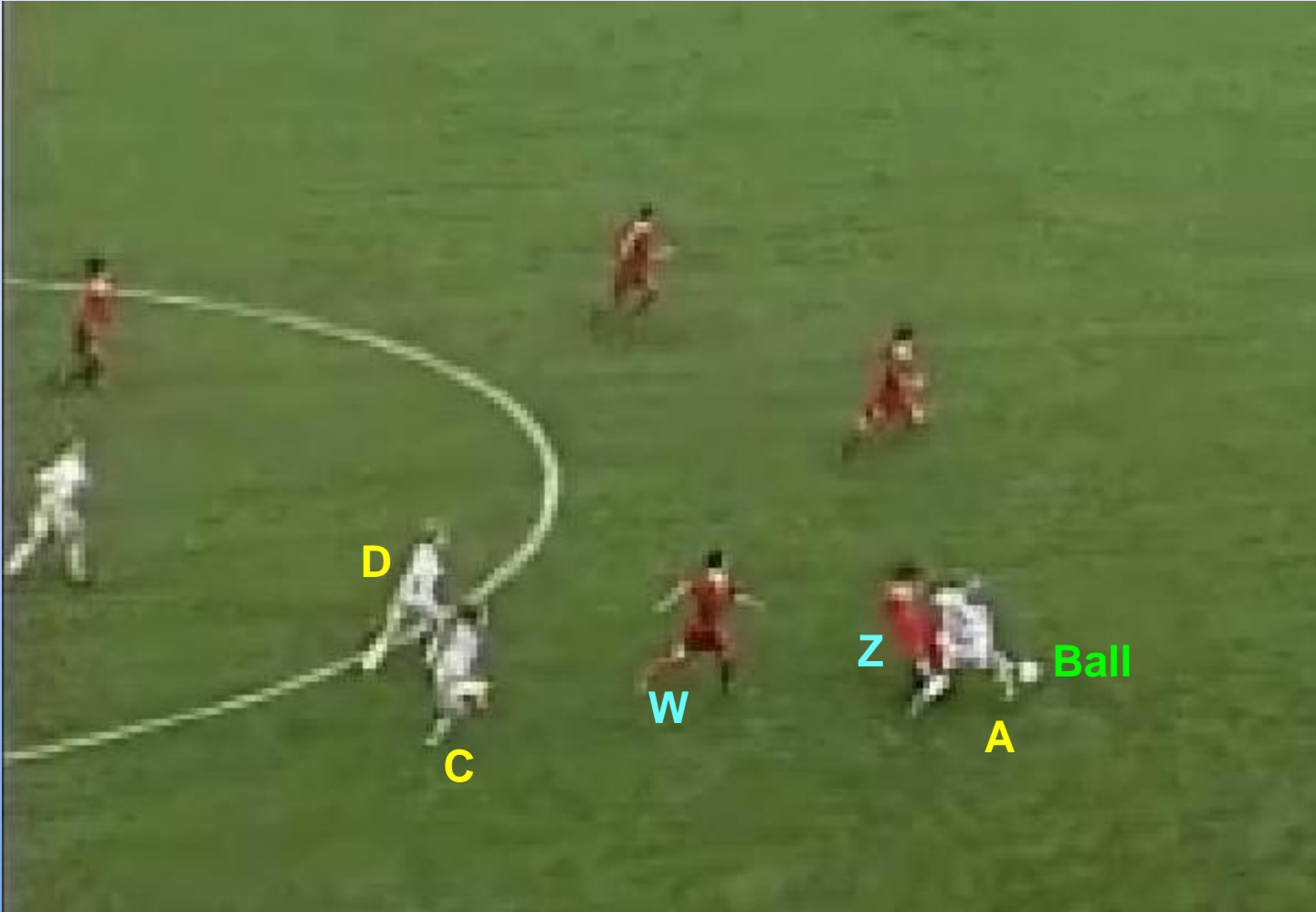
Even though there is active involvement by an on-side player, the initial play is **not necessarily over** ....

One of the three attackers (players "B", "C" or "D"), who was initially in an offside position, could somehow still become involved in the play.

# NOT OFFSIDE

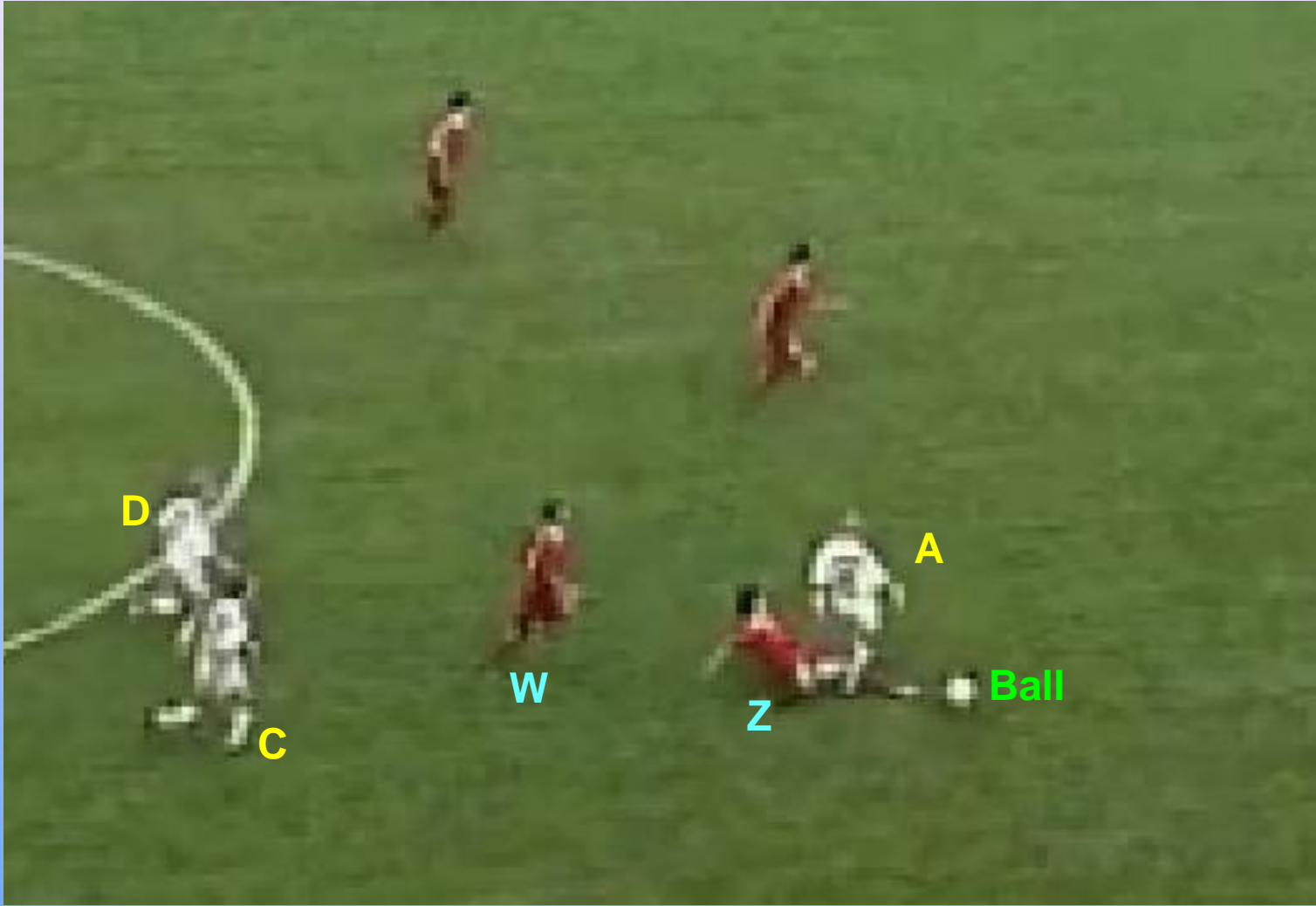
Accordingly, it would be very easy for the AR to lose focus, assume that this play is over and that the whole offside decision process and snapshot process should begin anew.

**NOT necessarily the case!**



# What Happened?

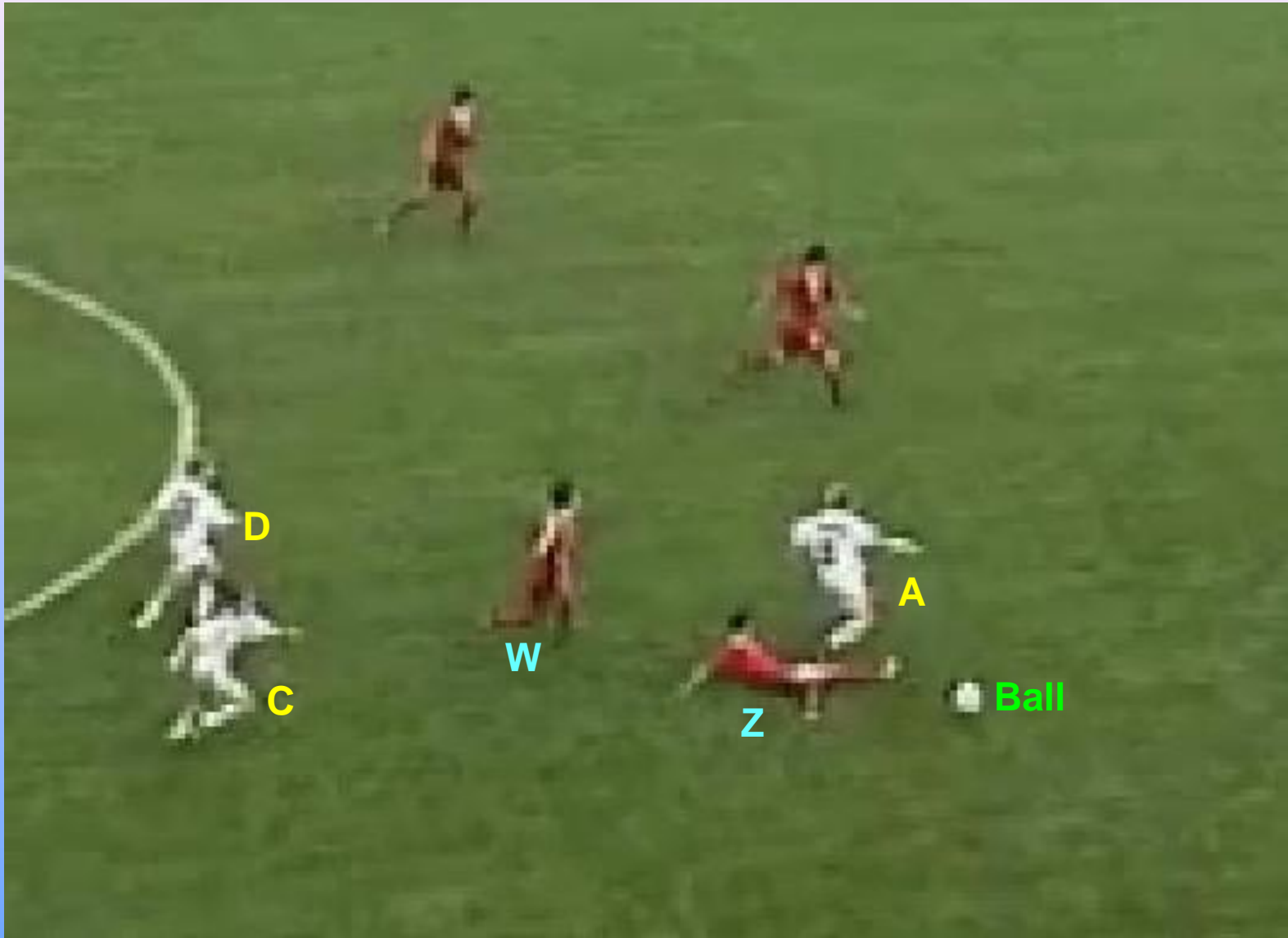
In the subsequent run onto the ball by player "A", the defender, player "Z", at the same time almost slide tackles the ball away.



# What Happened?

What did you initially see ?

- ... In the actual play sequence did it appear that player "A" may have touched the ball first?
- ... Or did the player "A" simply jump over the slide tackle by defender "Z"?
- ... Did defender "Z" slide tackle the ball in such a manner that it glanced off the attacking player "A"?



# What Did the AR See?

The AR must maintain full concentration during this play series in order to determine what actually occurs, but being at ground level and having a different view than what we've seen in the video the AR's judgment may be considerably different than ours.

# End of Play ... Or Not?

Remember, if the ball touches or is touched by an attacking player (player "A"), intentionally or not, the play in progress is over and a new play sequence begins.

# End of Play ... Or Not?

From our vantage point we can see in the stop action mode that the attacker (player "A") jumped over the ball and the defender (player "Z"), and that there was clearly no contact between player "A" and the ball.

As a result, this original play-in-motion has **not** ended (at least for the reason of a touch of the ball again by an attacking player) and an offside offense may still be possible.



No Offense

# End of Play ... Or Not?

The next point that must be considered is the defender's actions (player "Z") and the manner in which she continued to participate in the play.

We can see that player "Z" clearly reacted to the run to the ball by player "A" and in turn made a frantic run to the ball as well.

In the process player "Z" cleanly slide tackled the ball away at the last moment.

# End of Play ... Or Not?

The point that the AR must now consider (in a split second) is whether this defender (player "Z") made a "controlled play" of the ball or not.

The Referee can offer no help at this time because she, as noted earlier from her initial positioning, has no concept that an offside offense is even possible.

# End of Play ... Or Not?

Keep in mind that a play-in-progress is not considered to be over if a defending player (in this case player "Z") merely touches the ball or deflects it away.

In such a situation, a new play sequence can only begin if the defender "plays" the ball, i.e. clearly makes a "controlled play" on the ball.

# Controlled Play

What is a “controlled play” verses a “touch” or “deflection”?

That’s something that can only be “judged” at the moment by personally witnessing the action along with the totality of the overall play situation.

# Controlled Play

In reviewing any play situation, such as we are doing in this video, there will be some disagreement (and rightfully so) with our individual interpretations, i.e. “judgments”, of what we collectively observed.

# Controlled Play

So, in regard to the action by the red defender "Z", what did you see or better yet what is your judgment?

Did this defender "Z" make what you would consider to be a "controlled play" on the ball?

# Controlled Play

Were actions of player "Z" a desperate deflection of the ball into open space to merely clear the ball away from the attacking player "A"?

Or were the actions of player "Z" somewhere in between and in some respects a combination of both?

# Controlled Play ... Or Not ?

There is no final or correct  
“black or white” decision.

**Totally Your Judgment**

**Totally Your Decision**

# Basis of Decision

Let's take a few moments and reflect on the defender's actions more closely.

These are just factors that you need to incorporate to help you make your final "judgment".

# Basis of Decision

- 1) Did the defender "Z" rush to the ball because of the lead attacker's (player "A") movement to the ball? .... **obviously, YES!**
- 2) Was the defender's run to the ball deliberate? ... **YES!**
- 3) Was the defender's rush to the ball hasty and totally reactive? .... **appears that way, YES!**

# Basis of Decision

- 4) Did the defender's rush to the ball appear to be a "last ditch" effort?  
.... again, it appears so, YES!
- 5) If the lead attacker (player "A") was not making a direct run onto the ball, would you expect the defender (player "Z") to react differently? .... again obviously YES!

# Basis of Decision

- 6) Would you expect the player "Z" to more obviously gain control of the ball and play it to a different, and more advantageous, location than what resulted from the slide tackle ... **definitely, YES!**
- 7) Was the slide tackle by defender "Z" a controlled effort? ..... **your individual judgment ... at this level, probably, YES!**  
... **but then again, maybe not.**

# Basis of Decision

- 8) Whether you consider the slide tackle to be controlled or not, could the defender "Z" have directed the ball to another more favorable location?  
.... probably NOT!
- 9) Could the defender "Z" have successfully played the ball any other way? .... again, probably NOT!

# Basis of Decision

10) How successful was the slide tackle of the ball by defender "Z"?

... totally in your opinion (and the AR's)

11) Did it prevent the lead attacker "A" from playing the ball?

.... definitely, YES!

# Basis of Decision

12) Would the defender "Z" have played the ball to a different location, if she was able to do so?

.... Absolutely! As it was the ball was cleared away into open space that allowed a trailing, wide-open, attacker (player "C") to collect the ball and make a run on goal.

# YOUR Decision

Individually, each of you may see other aspects of the overall play that you would take into account as well.

When you collectively take all those separate questions and answers and mesh them together, what is **your** "final answer"?

It's again, **totally an individual interpretation and judgment!** "Controlled Play" in its truest sense ... or not?

# Consequences of Decision

If it is judged that the actions of defender "Z" were indeed a "controlled play", then the original play-in-motion is over and a new play sequence begins ....and the offside offense did not occur.

# Consequences of Decision

If, however, it's determined that the actions of defender "Z" resulted in a "deflection" (no matter how deliberate the act), then this initial play-in-motion has **NOT** ended ....and an offside offense again may still be a possibility.

# AR's Decision

In an in-game situation, such as this, the AR does not have the luxury of time and a stop action video

... such a decision must be judged immediately!

... No second guessing!

.... No time for additional input!

... Period!! ... End of Discussion!!

# Play-In-Motion

Since the attacking player "A" was running onto the ball from an on-side position the influence of her movement upon the nearest defender "Z" is perfectly legal.

Whereas, in the same play if an attacking player were coming from an offside position there is a violation of the Laws that, therefore, allows the game officials to stop play for the offside offense.

# Play-In-Motion

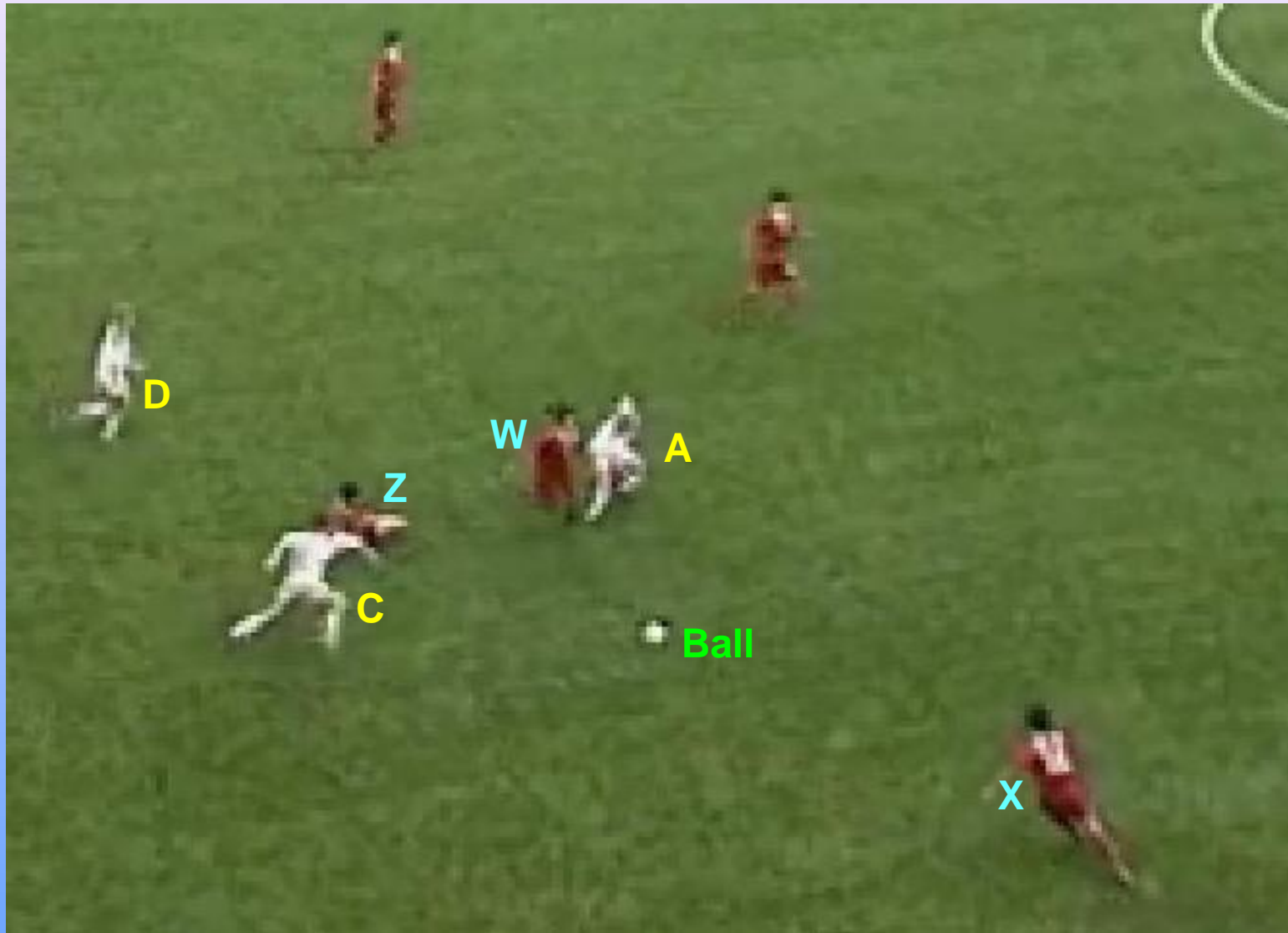
Continuing from the point of the slide tackle of the ball into open space by the initial defender "Z".

If the AR determines that the overall action by the defender "Z" was a "controlled play", then a new play situation begins.

# Play-In-Motion

**HOWEVER .....**

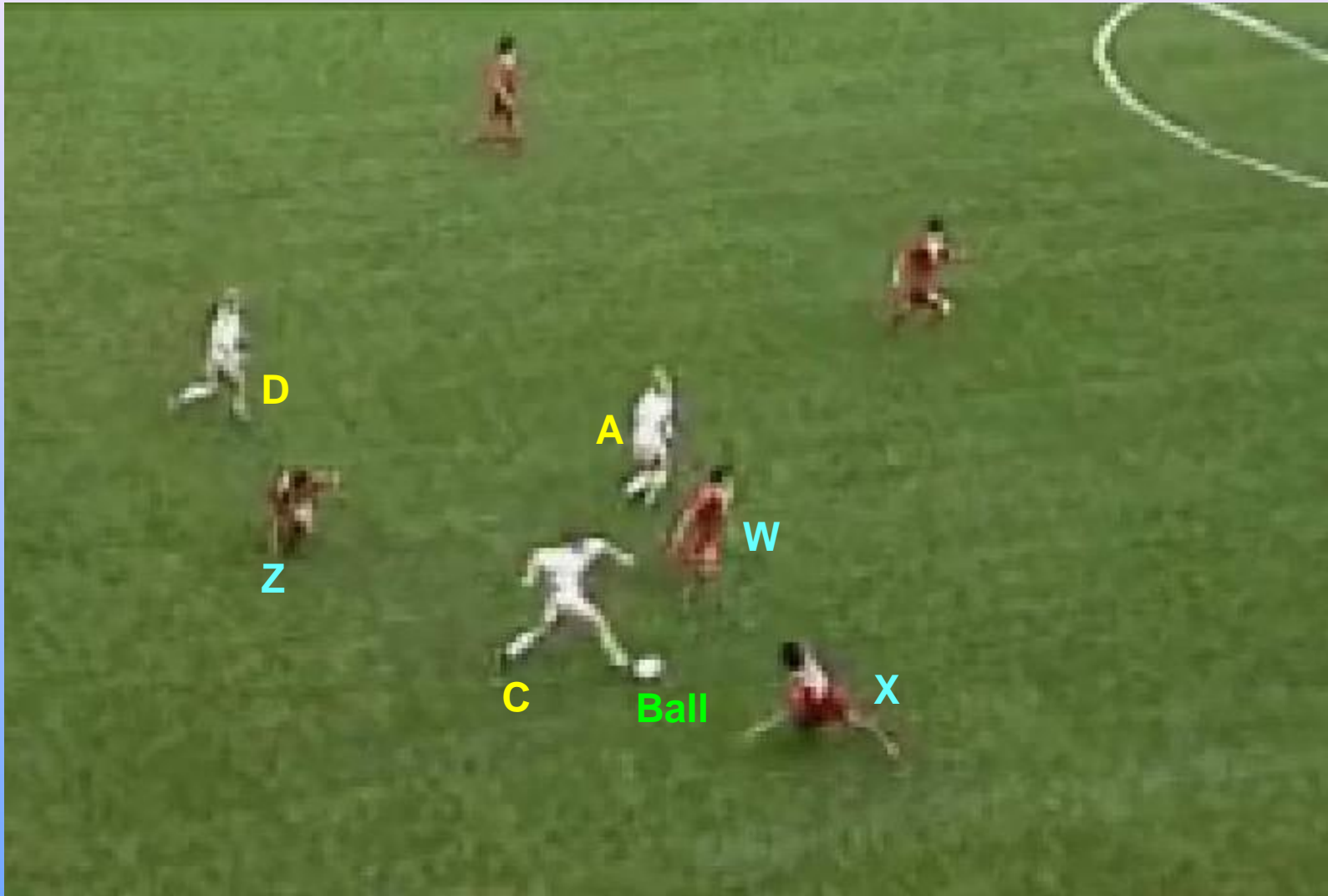
If the action by player "Z" was not a "controlled play", but rather a deflection, then the initial play is still in the active stage.



# Active Play

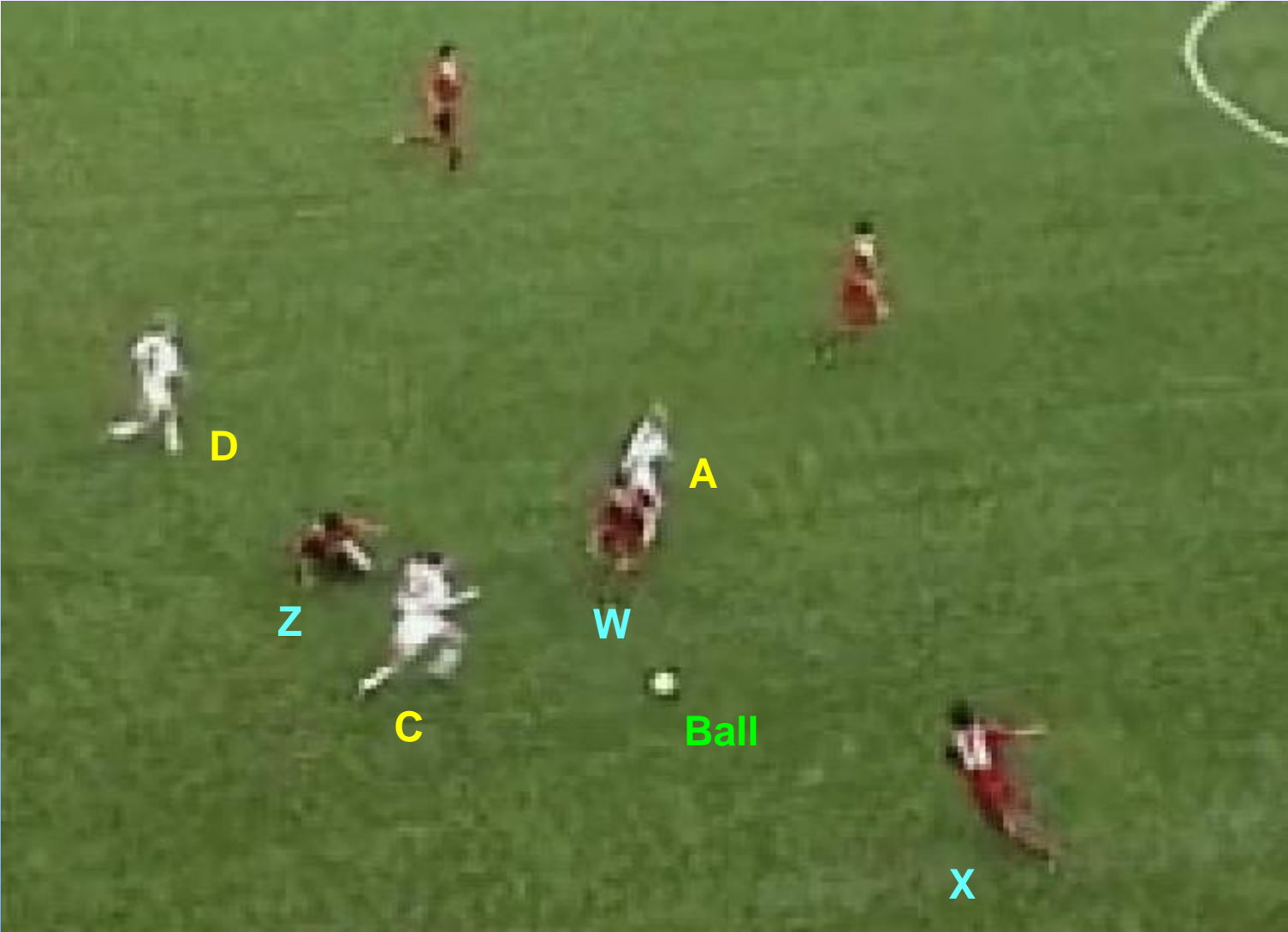
What the AR must now realize at this point is that the attacking player "C", who is running to and eventually collects the ball, was one of the three players ("B", "C" and "D") originally in an offside position at the time of the initial kick.

This attacker "C", in effect, has no right to now become actively involved in the original play.



# Active Play

When player "C" touches the ball she is guilty of committing the offside offense by reason of "gaining an advantage", since she played the ball after it was deflected away by an opponent (player "Z").



# Active Play

As the latter part of this play develops after the slide tackling of the ball by the defender "Z", we could interpret this a little differently.

Note that the defenders "X" and "W" are moving to defend the ball, as a result of the slide tackle.

Natural expectation considering all the action that has occurred prior to this moment.

# Active Play

The AR must judge whether either defender ("X" or "W") moves at a quicker pace or slightly changes their direction in anticipation of the next action by attacker "C".

If so determined, then attacker "C" is guilty of directly interfering with an opponent (Players "X" and/or "W") and the AR should signal as such at this time, not waiting to see if this attacker plays the ball or not.

# Active Play

## Point of Note .....

... even if the attacker "C" had stopped or veered away from playing the ball, but the AR initially determined that the **movement** of attacker "C" affected the play of defenders "X" and/or "W", then the offside offense has still been committed.

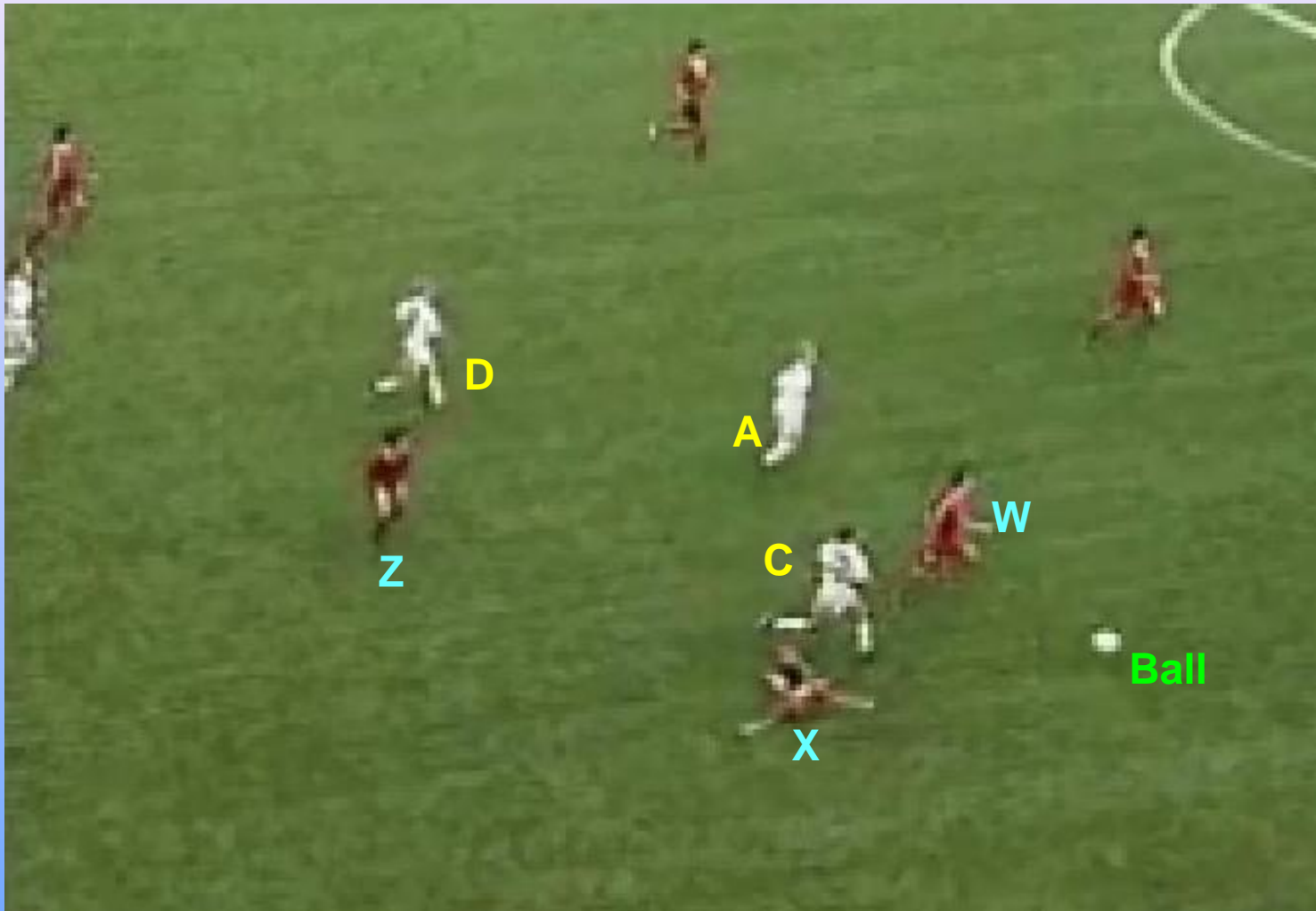
# Active Play

On the other hand, if the movement of both defenders "X" and "W" was considered to be already in motion and in no way influenced by the movement of the attacking player "C" then interfering with an opponent is not a reason to declare the offside offense.

# Active Play

The AR must then wait and see if the attacking player "C" then actually plays (touches) the ball.

If this were to be the case, but the attacking player "C" was to stop or veer away ... no offside offense should be called.



# Actual End Result of Play

## No Offside Offense

WHY?

... Player "A" was never in an offside position

... And the initial location of player "C" was never recognized.

# Actual End Result of Play

## No Offside Offense

WHY?

To be fair, the game officials and their collective points of view could in no way see and/or precisely process all the events depicted in this stop-action play review.

# Reality of Game Scenario

In the reality of the speed of the game, the movement of the players on both teams, and positioning of the Referee and the AR during the actual time sequence of this game situation .....

... it is extremely doubtful that even the best trained and most alert AR is going to be able to see and determine precisely all the aspects involved.

# Reality of Game Scenario

Neither you (via the video press-box view) nor the AR (on the field view) could have possibly seen all the details ... or been able to immediately process all the points mentioned in this presentation during the initial run of the play.

And the same is true for all of you that also had the opportunity to watch the second slow-mo repeat of the play.

# Reality of Game Scenario

From the point of initial kick to the touch by the second attacker in real time took a total of **less than 6 seconds**.

In a play of this nature the AR has the possibility of having to make up to 25 decisions in some manner, shape or form.