

## Misapplication of the Rule

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Pictures never tell the entire story, but they are useful when put into context. In the image below you see me in position as the Trail official in a two-person crew straddling the midfield line.



Looking just at the photograph we can conclude that the red defender is offside, but what you don't see is the push from the white attackman that caused the red defender to step over the midline. Even though I'm in a good position to make the correct call I still misapplied a rule about two seconds after this picture was taken.

I'll set the stage a little further to emphasize the magnitude of my screw up. This was a 6-6 game between two rival high school teams a few years ago about two minutes into the first overtime period. I was running bench side as the Referee and I had a very good view of this entire play from start to finish. When I saw the push I put one arm in the air and shouted "Play-on!" After stepping offside due to the push the red defender flipped the loose ball rolling towards him over to an unguarded midfielder. I signaled that the play-on was over, and once the white team realized I wasn't calling offside they started screaming.



They kept screaming while the red midfielder ran through their defense, shot, and scored. Suddenly the game was over and I was quite confident that I made the correct call despite the white team's vocal assertions to the contrary. Plus I was in the best position to make the call, but I did not realize until a few days later that I completely messed up applying the rule on loose-ball simultaneous technical fouls.

Rule 7.6.4 b states: "When penalty times are equal or all fouls cancel:

1. If a team has possession or is entitled to possession at the time of the flag or whistle, that team shall retain possession."

There is also a situation that even more clearly explains the correct procedure:

"7.6.4 Situation C: B1 pushes A1, creating a play-on. While the ball is loose, A2 goes offside. RULING: Whistle is blown when A2 goes offside. Simultaneous foul, award the ball to Team A."

That situation is exactly what happened to me in that rivalry high school game.

I should have recognized my error.

I should have stopped play immediately and called an official's timeout.

I should have called my partner over so we could discuss the sequence of fouls.

I should have explained that I did not correctly apply the rule.

I should have awarded the ball to the Red team on their offensive half of the field and allowed both teams time to get the correct players on the field for the restart following my error.

I didn't do any of that.

I left the game confident that I had gotten a tough call correct at a critical moment. I got the first call right, but the second one wrong and that hurt. So I spent the remainder of that season reading Rule 7 over and over again so I wouldn't make the same mistake. I have yet to run into that particular situation since that game, but because of that error I am more knowledgeable about simultaneous loose-ball technical fouls and I reinforced the correct steps to take if I misapply the rule in the future.