

editor's note



I WAS REFEREEING AN AYSO SOCCER GAME LAST WEEK and after the game one of the coaches commented (nicely, of course, because you never want to tick off the ref!) that he thought I wasn't being aggressive enough on calling offside—that other referees in the league called offside differently.

We talked a bit about what was necessary for the player in offside position to be penalized, but I went home wondering if I was correctly interpreting the rules (if anyone wants to discuss this further, feel free to e-mail me at melnick@aisc.org).

Fortunately, I had a great resource for finding out.

I posted a message to our local referee forum and quickly received confirmation—citing chapter and verse from FIFA, and even including some diagrams—that I was right (phew). Of course, being referees, it also started a long chain of other comments and discussions about the finer points of offside calls.

Judging by some of the online discussion groups I subscribe to, engineers and detailers seem equally favorably disposed to discussing issues. I've also noticed that engineers, being innate problem solvers, are constantly writing small utility programs, Excel spreadsheets, and MathCAD routines to solve simple problems (similar to the wonderful—and free—Steel Tools originated by AISC's Jason Ericksen and posted on the AISC web site at www.aisc.org/steel-tools). And when asked, engineers are often willing to share their utilities.

As a new service, *Modern Steel Construction* is now offering a forum where those involved in the structural steel industry can post their utilities and others can download and make comments. This new forum, located at www.steelutilitiesonline.com, is an open forum where people can post "software" (our generic term for any electronic utility), along with a brief description. Visitors can then download the utilities and, if they wish, post comments.

The forum is unmoderated so anyone can post, download, or respond—as long as they're registered on the site. Registration serves two purposes. First, it makes our lawyers happy by ensuring that people were at least shown the site's disclaimer statement. And second, it allows a user to see who is posting a utility or comment, which helps in the evaluation process. Note that we don't examine the utilities for reliability but instead rely on the professionalism of the steel design and construction community.

The site looks a tad confusing at first (I know this is anathema to most of us, but it really is useful to read the instructions on the site), but I think it has the potential to be a great resource to the industry. Please give it a try and let me know what you think!

SCOTT MELNICK
EDITOR

P.S.—In last month's issue, Jim Fisher made reference to "Wooten's Third Law." This was based on an MSC article by Jim Wooten that originally ran in 1971 ("Wooten's Third Law and Steel Column Design"). We've now posted a copy of the original article in PDF format at www.aisc.org/wooten.

MSC

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