

THE ART OF OFFICIATING

These notes are to be read in conjunction with the HPA Umpire DVD

THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD UMPIRE

A good umpire must:

- Know the Rules.
- Concentrate on the play at all times.
- Be even-handed and consistent.
- Be clear, decisive and firm in delivering judgement and managing the teams.

DUTIES OF THE UMPIRES

The duties of the umpires can be divided into three parts:

- a. **Procedures.** Procedures are fixed and do not require judgement from the umpires. Failure to follow them will lead the players and those watching who understand the game to question the performance of the umpires.
- b. **Control.** The control and management of the players is very important as, if they are managed well, the judgement calls of the umpires are more likely to be accepted by the players and those watching.
- c. **Judgement Calls.** This is the most difficult part. Some have a good eye for fouls, some get better with experience and application and some will never be much good. Some umpire pairings work better than others as each must have confidence in the other and confidence is crucial.

PROCEDURES

- a. **Preparation.** The umpires should be appointed by the Tournament Committee care having been taken to ensure that neither has an interest in the two teams and are as far as possible known to be acceptable to both. They should be ready at least ten minutes before the match is scheduled to start, well turned out and focussed on the job in hand. They should report to the official in charge checking the ponies offered, their equipment, position of the referee, medical cover, timekeeper / scorer etc, the colours of both teams (is there sufficient contrast ?) and having received the go ahead from the Polo Manager should ride onto the ground as a pair at least five minutes before the match is due to start unless there is to be a parade in which case they will ride on with the teams.
- b. **Dividing the Ground.** On arrival at the centre the umpires should divide the ground diagonally between them. They should take one sideline each and then the back line to their right as they look onto the ground. This dictates who throws in and trails when. As an umpire you should always take a throw in that is away from your sideline and you should always be the trailing umpire when a hit or play is away from your backline.
- c. **Start of Play.** They should check the score as posted and having called the two captains together ask them if they are satisfied and if so toss for ends. The teams are then ordered to line up on either side of the tee and if satisfied that all is in order the umpires will throw in the ball.
- d. **During Play.** The two umpires should immediately take up position, one trailing the play and one parallel to it. They must keep up with the play (a whistle from the halfway line on a foul in the goalmouth will engender doubt as to the correctness of the call) and be quick to blow a foul. It is important that the umpires work as a pair and

when play switches the parallel umpire becomes the trailing umpire and vice versa.

e. **Set Piece Plays.**

- **Throw In.** If the ball went out over the sidelines then the umpire should stand inside the playing area. The nearest player should be at least 5 yards away. The other umpire should stand about 30 yards away at the back of the line out. The ball must be thrown in hard and underhand as close to the ground as possible and not backwards or overhand. There should be no contact between the players until the ball has left the umpires hand. As soon as the ball is in play, the umpire throwing in the ball should move to his right, in preparation for becoming either the parallel or trailing umpire depending which way the play goes.
- **Hit in.** The trailing umpire should be directly behind the hitter, the other between the 30 and 60 yard line towards his sideline. There is to be no contact between players until the ball is hit or hit at.
- **Penalties.** The selection of the penalty to be awarded is in the gift of the umpires; they should take into account the degree of danger and unfair advantage, the location of the foul, the position of the players and the frequency of the offence, remembering that the side that fouled has the chance to regroup with four players facing the hitter. Should the umpires be unable to decide which penalty to award they may consult the referee who will point to the spot where the penalty is to be hit. The rules governing the penalties are laid down in Rules 39 and 40 and must be studied as failure to carry them out correctly will undermine the authority of the umpires. As in the throw and hit in there shall be no contact between players until the ball is hit or hit at. For each penalty each umpire should take up positions as follows:
 - **Penalty One.** The umpire throwing in to be on the 10 yard line with his right arm nearest and in line with the centre of the goal. The other umpire 30 yards away at the back of the line out.
 - **Penalty Two (Spot Hit - defended).** The trailing umpire behind the hitter, the other 30 yards from the spot behind the left hand goal post looking onto the field taking a line through the ball.
 - **Penalty Two (30 Yard Hit - undefended).** The trailing umpire behind the hitter, the other behind the left hand goal post looking onto the field taking a line through the ball.
 - **Penalty Three (40 yard hit - defended).** The trailing umpire behind the hitter, the other on the back line 30 yards from the left hand goal post towards his sideline.
 - **Penalty Four (60 yard hit).** As for a 30 yard Penalty 2.
 - **Penalties 5a and b.** The trailing umpire behind the hitter, the other about 30 yards up the ground and towards his sideline.
 - **Penalty 6.** As for a 30 yard Penalty 2.
 - **Penalty 7.** As for the throw in.

CONTROL

Umpires should avoid talking to the players before, during or after a match. Neither the captain nor any other player may query or ask for an explanation of a call. Appealing and verbal abuse should be punished by the award of a technical penalty. For consistent abuse a yellow flag should be awarded or a Penalty 10a or b as appropriate. A quiet game is usually a well umpired game and the converse is likely to be equally true.

JUDGEMENT CALLS.

As previously stated this is the most difficult part of umpiring. The umpires must at all times concentrate on the line of the ball and from this deduce at each moment which player has the ROW or precedence and taking into account the relevant speed and distance, ask themselves the question - was there any danger? In particular they should focus on the following plays:

- **The Throw In.** In a throw in, dangerous play, such as taking a full swing in the lineout, should

be penalised, but umpires should avoid penalising crossing unless a player has established his ROW.

- **The Turn Across.** The rules have been re-written to emphasise that a player turning the ball left or right across an opponent, committed, and following down the line will foul having taken into account the speed and distance involved. The player has the option of continuing down the line or hitting a backhand shot. See Guidance Note below.
- **The Block.** A player who blocks the forward progress of an opponent with the right of way must be penalised at the outset and before the player being blocked is reduced to having to tap the ball.
- **The One Tap Rule.** The rule has been re-written to increase the distance to a challenging player to two lengths and to alter the penalty for a foul from a Penalty (Throw In) to Penalty 5a (Hit from the Spot) with the proviso that this will not be given against a defender within his own Sixty by a Penalty 4,3 or 2 as appropriate.
- **No Contact.** The rule, which previously only applied to the throw in, now covers penalties and hit ins as well. As a first stage, the umpire, if contact occurs, will blow the whistle and order the players apart before calling 'Play'. Should a player persist in making contact with an opponent then a Penalty 5a should be awarded against his team; if both players are equally to blame then a Penalty 7 (Throw In) should be awarded.
- **Advantage Rule.** Umpires should try and keep the game flowing and to this end may use the Advantage Rule. However, they should immediately penalise dangerous play or that which is patently unfair to the team fouled; a team will usually rather have a penalty.
- **Personal Fouls.** See Guidance Note below.

END OF PLAY

At the end of play, the teams are encouraged to thank the umpires who should ride off together. At a suitable interval the umpires should analyse their performance, preferably with the aid of an assessor and a DVD of the match. They should complete a Report Form for any of the incidents listed in Rule 6 including any awards of a yellow flag or Penalties 10a and b. The captain of either team may also complete a Report Form should he have a complaint in the way that the umpires controlled the game and awarded or did not award penalties. His form must also be signed by another member of his team and be supported by a DVD or other evidence,

THE REFEREE

When asked, the referee has an important role to play in deciding 'Foul' or 'No Foul' and occasionally the penalty which is to be awarded. He should also be alert to any dangerous or foul play occurring off the ball and may invite the umpires over the radio to take appropriate action against the player or players involved. He should speak to the umpires personally at half time and be in radio contact throughout the game. The referee should be a player experienced at the least in the level of the match being played. He should sit in an elevated position away from any distractions. Should he be paid for referee duty then he is required to complete a report on the match to be handed in to the Polo Manager at the end of the match.

GUIDANCE FOR RULE 33a AND RULE 38

Rule 33a. Crossing. No player may cross or turn left or right across the ROW of an opposing player who is committed on the ROW except at such a speed or distance that no risk of collision or danger to either player is involved. A player crossing behind a player on the ROW will foul if he crosses another player following the ROW.

Guidance. *The moment a player in possession checks or slows down to turn the ball either way, the umpires should be alerted to the probability that he will foul if there is an opponent following in close order. The following player must remain committed at such a speed and distance that were he to continue down the line a collision or near collision would have resulted. The player with*

the ball, under these circumstances, has the option of hitting it forward or playing a backhand shot. Should he cut the ball to his offside and take up the new line without slowing down he is unlikely to have fouled. If, at any time, he slows down to a walking pace he also risks being in breach of the 'One Tap' rule, even if he does not turn right or left, the penalty for which is now a Penalty 5a (Hit From the Spot).

Rule 38. Personal Fouls and Technical Penalties.

A personal foul involving unsportsmanlike conduct such as, but not limited to:

- (i) Disrespect towards officials,
- (ii) Arguing with the umpire or other official,
- (iii) Foul or abusive language,
- (iv) Appealing for fouls verbally or with the stick,

must be penalised by a penalty known in this case as a technical penalty. If a penalty has already been awarded then an upgrade to a more serious penalty should be made except when the initial penalty was a Penalty 2 in which case the umpire will raise an arm and allow the penalty to be taken as normal; if successful, play will be started with a Penalty 5b, teams having changed ends; if unsuccessful then it will be taken again and play will continue as normal. If no penalty is awarded then the decision as to the award will rest with the umpires. A Penalty 1 will not be given as a technical.

Note that a Penalty 10a or b can be awarded in addition to any of the above penalties.

Guidance. *Players are expected to behave in a sportsmanlike manner, both to each other and to the officials. At no stage during play or when play has been stopped may any player, now including the team captain, approach or shadow either umpire and nor may any player query a decision of the umpires in any way during the game; this includes any sort of gesture to another player, the officials or spectators.*

If, after blowing the whistle, the umpires agree that a foul has been committed, they will announce only the name of the team that has fouled, what the foul was and the penalty awarded. Thus: "Foul by Red for Blocking, Penalty 4."

In the event of any unsportsmanlike behaviour then the umpire will blow his whistle and award a technical penalty against the team of the perpetrator as in Rule 38.

The referees may now invite the umpires at any stage to award a technical against a player for a personal foul.

In all cases when awarding a technical, the umpire should raise his hand as a signal that he has done so.

Note that in all Victor Ludorum matches, a second personal foul leading to a technical penalty against a player should be accompanied by an automatic showing of a yellow flag against that player.