Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre Districts Referees' Association

Dealing with Club Assistants

Some hints **on how to use them to help you through your games**

Try to remember that the person acting as the Club assistant referee, will generally be a willing volunteer and will be doing his or her best.

He or she almost certainly will not have the detailed knowledge of the Laws as the referee so your instructions to them should be as clear as possible and their duties as limited as you want them to be. Naturally they will be slightly pre-disposed towards their own side, but most of them really do try to be honest in the decisions they give.
Of course we have all heard of or even experienced the club official who is biased and who only flags when his team shouts, but it is up to you to spot that early and take counter measures. Always remember in the last resort you can ask to have any club assistant changed, even if that means you have no-one on the line!

Club linesmen

The term Club Linesmen was the old name for Club Assistant Referees. In 1996 FIFA, the world governing body for soccer, stated:

LAW VI - ASSISTANT REFEREES
As the term "linesmen" does not accurately reflect the tasks of the linesmen who are, in actual fact, assistants to the referee, the words "linesman" and "linesmen" are to be replaced in the Law by the words "Assistant Referee" and "Assistant Referees", where applicable. Some people still use the term Club Linesman, but this is incorrect and should be discouraged.

There is a distinction however **Club Assistant Referees** and **Neutral Assistant Referees.**

A Neutral Assistant Referee is a certified referee who is running the line and is expected to be neutral and have no ties to the players or the team. Neutral Assistant referees are used in all championship games, and sometimes during league play.

A Club Assistant Referee is normally a parent of a player on one of the teams .
Because of the close relationship of the Club Assistant to one team, and the difference in training if any, Club Assistants have less authority than Neutral Assistant Referees.

The Club Assistant Referee is a game official

A Club Assistant Referee is a vital part of your team. He or she is a game official and an offence by a player or spectator against a Club Assistant Referee must be treated as seriously

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as if that same offence was directed towards you. They operate under the direction of the referee and must be fair and unbiased.
Most of them will be trying to be scrupulously fair in their own mind, but if they are seen to be yelling instructions or encouragement to their own team, they won't be giving the impression of being fair and unbiased. The best advice for Club Assistant Referees is say nothing during the game. They can applaud good play but try to encourage them to do so for both teams.

What a referee should tell a Club Assistant before a game

The referee has sole conduct of the game, and you should spend a minute or two before the game with the Club Assistant Referees to give your instructions on what you want. Sometimes an inexperienced referee may overlook this, and if you do, don't be surprised or embarrassed if they come to you.
Ideally you should try and get both club assistants together to give the pre-match instructions, not only will this save time, but it also means that both club assistants get the same information.

Probably your instructions should concentrate on the following aspects which you want them to assist with-

1. When the ball is out of play and which team has the throw in.

2. If the ball goes out for a goal kick or a corner kick

3. When you believe an offside offence has occurred. This is optional – in our area club assistants are used to being asked to watch for this, but if one of the teams is from elsewhere you may find they don't do it. If this is the case, then make sure that BOTH club assistants will not be flagging for offside to avoid confusion and controversy.

4. Usually Club Assistant Referees will not be expected signal fouls nor should they enter the field.

Try not to be vague, give clear unambiguous instructions so that everyone knows exactly what they are expected to do.

Try not to give them too much involvement or expect too much. Some may say they are experienced referees (whether they are or not you may not know). But if you are seen to allow one club assistant to have more responsibilities than the other, then that might cause you problems.

Stress that you will be grateful for any indication they may give, but YOU will be the one who actually makes the decision and they should not be upset if you over rule them, as you might have had a better view of the particular incident.

Try to impress on them that they are part of your team for that game and that you are grateful for the assistance they will be giving to you and you will support them if they face unnecessary criticism from others.

Tell them that you will watch them at all times and they should be watching you. In the event of them flagging for something and you want to keep the play flowing – **ALWAYS**

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acknowledge with a 'Thank You' signal or a call. Even if they have flagged for something that is clearly not an offence, wave their flag down in a friendly fashion and say thank you, even if inwardly you are raging at their bias or incompetence.

Ask them to bear this in mind and not to get upset if you over rule them. Remember you must try to keep them on your side because their next decision may well be spot on.

Your attitude towards them

Always be friendly and polite in your dealings with Club Assistants. Don't be bombastic and try to lay the Law down and impose yourself very forcefully. These people are there to help so don't antagonise them unnecessarily.

Points to ponder

The role of the Club Assistant Referee is to ASSIST the Referee not INSIST

Club Assistant Referees work for the referee, and only the referee.

The referee controls the game. Only the referee makes decisions and his decisions are final. Club Assistant Referees signal an opinion to the Referee – they do not make decisions.

The Club Assistant Referees signal to the referee conditions or situations the referee may not be able to see.

The Club Assistant Referee's signals are only for the referee, no one else.

Because most of the communication between the referee and the Club Assistant Referees is non-verbal, it is essential they maintain frequent eye contact.

The Club Assistant Referee's flag is often more visible to the players than the referee, yet it is only referee who makes decisions.

Replacing a Club Assistant

If you find that a Club Linesman's performance is so bad, or that he is affecting the players by his behaviour, rather than confronting him directly, approach the team manager and ask for the club assistant to be replaced. But again do this as politely and calmly as possible to avoid confrontations

Top Tips

Get to the ground early, so that you give yourself plenty of time to inspect the field of play, speak to the managers, examine the players' equipment and have time to brief your club assistants, before taking a moment or two to compose yourself for the game ahead.

Always take your own flags to the game (most clubs won't have any spares) and make sure they are in pristine condition as that creates a good impression.

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