

REFEREEING BEST PRACTICE

WHAT SHOULD I SAY (AND WHEN SHOULD I SAY IT)?

It has been suggested that there should be a best practice guide to highlight exactly what a referee should say during the course of a match, so here goes.

At the start of the match, the referee should have tossed a coin to determine who is to break, and therefore the announcement will be **"First frame, Joe Bloggs to break"**. For subsequent frames, the referee will continue in this vein: **"Second frame, John Smith to break"**, etc. There should, of course, be large frame score cards on the scoreboard (if no easily visible electronic scoreboard), so that all can see the frame scores, thereby obviating the need to state the scores at the start of a frame, but in the event that current frame scores are not visible to all, it may be advisable to state **"Joe Bloggs leads one frame to nil. Second frame, John Smith to break"**.

BREAK SCORES

The new 2011 rules now make it clear that a stroke is not complete until the referee has announced the appropriate score (but the reverse is not necessarily true – calling the score doesn't automatically mean the previous stroke has ended and that the next stroke can be played). The referee should clearly state the scores as a break progresses, but the timing of calling scores is all important.

- If a red has been potted, the appropriate score can usually be called as soon as the ball drops, **provided** the referee is satisfied that no foul will be committed during the remainder of the stroke (eg cue ball heading in the general direction of a pocket, but certain it won't drop). If in doubt, WAIT until all balls are stationary.
- If a rest has been used for the stroke, the score should not be announced until the rest has been removed from the table, or the player is adjusting the rest for his next shot.
- If a colour has to be spotted, the score should not be called until spotting has been completed
- If a ball has been removed for cleaning, the score should be called once the ball has been replaced on the table and the ball marker removed.
- If, after **"Foul"** has been called, there is a likelihood of a free ball, this should be checked before calling scores, so that the call will be along the lines **"Joe Bloggs 39, John Smith 4. Free ball"** as one statement.

Clearly the calling of the score is usually the last thing that the referee does in relation to a stroke, and is the indication to the striker that he is free to continue, so be aware of the consequences of calling for a potted red too early!

At the end of the break, after a missed pot, the call should simply be **"Joe Bloggs, 67"**. It is best practice to state the name before the break, to assist any marker about to put the score on the board and for general consistency.

FRAME SCORES

Where there are no easily visible electronic scoreboards, it is useful for the referee to announce the scores at appropriate points during a frame, such as when a player is approaching 'snookers required' stage or when penalty points are required by one of the players. It is generally accepted practice that when announcing scores the referee should state the name of the striker first, with his score, before the non-striker and his score, eg **"Joe Bloggs 38, John Smith 45"** as Joe Bloggs approaches the table to take his turn.

If the striker, mid break, asks the referee what the scores are, the referee should respond: **"Joe Bloggs 38 and 32 in play, John smith 45"** The rules specifically prohibit the referee from telling the players the difference in scores, and if asked what the difference is, he should respond as above, although you may wish to be a little fuller: **"You have 38 points on the scoreboard and a break of 32, John Smith has 45 points (on the scoreboard)"**. It is perhaps obvious from the above that scores should never be added to the scoreboard until the break is complete!

FOULS

The rules state that the referee shall call **“Foul”** immediately he notices one has been committed. However, the referee should wait until the stroke is completed before announcing the penalty. In part this is to ensure that no further fouls are committed which would affect the penalty awarded. It also goes back to the point raised in the previous section about the last thing the referee does is to announce the score. This can be extended to say the last thing the referee does is to announce the score and any appropriate penalty.

For example, the striker is using a long rest to play the blue, but fouls the red with the rest as he strikes the cue ball. The referee will call **“Foul”** straight away, but will wait until the completion of the stroke (which includes removal of the rest) before announcing the scores/penalty (the penalty might have increased if, for example, the rest had knocked the black as it was removed from the table). The call at the completion of the stroke would then be **“John Smith 5”** or, if Joe Bloggs was on a break when he fouled, **“Joe Bloggs, 23, John Smith 5”** (adding ‘free ball’ if one exists).

FOUL AND A MISS

The rules specifically state that if the cue ball fails to first make contact with the ball on then the referee will call **“Foul and a Miss”**.

The referee should always be aware of the difference in scores, so that he can immediately make a call with confidence, and not call **“Foul”** then look at the scores, then add **“and a Miss”** as an afterthought. It is one statement, not to be broken by announcements of scores, penalty points etc.

It is conceivable that there might be a gap between calling **“Foul”** and **“and a Miss”** where, after the stroke has been played, the striker commits another foul before it is clear that the cue ball has not first struck the ball on (eg touching a hampering ball with the cue after striking the cue ball).

If there is a clear path such that central full ball contact is available with a ball on, then after the second Foul and a Miss call, the player needs to be warned about a further Miss if the balls have once again been replaced: **“I must warn you that should you play a further Miss, the frame will be awarded to your opponent”**.

The referee should always be aware of the position of the cue ball on every shot, especially when there is a likelihood of a Miss. He should never be afraid to ask to take a closer look at the position to make a mental note. The referee should always be sure he is clear as to the non-offender’s intentions – ie whether he wants the balls replaced or the offender to play from the current position, and should ask for clarification if required.

If the non-offender asks for the offender to play from the original position, then both will be consulted about the position and it is good practice once the referee believes the position to be correct, that he finally asks both players **“Are you satisfied with the position of the balls?”**

The rules don’t provide for automatic replacement of all balls moved after a Foul and a Miss call, but it is good practice to do so. The non-offender may ask which balls other than the cue ball will be replaced, and the referee is allowed to answer with his intentions.

PENALTY

Prior to the publication of the 2011 rules the old rules only provided for penalising the non-striker in two specific circumstances: for touching a ball marker whilst on the table in place of an object ball, and for touching a ball during

consultation after a Foul and a Miss call. The call was not “Foul” but **“Penalty”** followed by NON-offender’s name and the appropriate points. The non-striker could not commit a foul and a foul automatically ends a player’s turn and the next player becomes the striker. Obviously there should be no change to the order of play in the two situations mentioned. Note that if the striker touches a ball marker, then it is a foul, and his turn ends, but if the striker touches a ball during consultation after a miss, he too will be called for “Penalty” without changing the order of play.

In the 2011 rules the definition of ‘Striker and Turn’ talk about the non-striker committing fouls. However, to avoid any confusion that might arise from calling “Foul” and the associated options and actions, it is still considered best practice to call **“Penalty”** for any infringement of the rules committed by the non-striker.

FREE BALLS AND NOMINATING COLOURS

Once the cue ball has come to rest after any foul, the referee should always check, if not immediately obvious, if a free ball situation exists, and if one does then he should immediately add **“Free Ball”** after announcing and scores and penalties from the previous stroke.

It is not necessary for the striker to verbally state (declare) which ball he is playing as his free ball (or indeed his colour after a red) as the rules state that nomination (of a colour or a free ball) may be by indication (pointing with hand or aiming of cue) or by declaration (verbally stating). However, if the referee is unsure what colour is being nominated by indication then he should call **“Please declare”**. It is particularly important to ask a player to verbally declare his choice if the cue ball is touching a colour after potting a red or when a free ball is declared, because he can simply choose to play away without hitting another ball.

TOUCHING BALL

If the cue ball comes to rest touching a ball that is on or could be on (eg a colour after a red has been potted), then the referee will immediately call **“Touching Ball”**. The referee should automatically check for a touching ball without having to be asked by a player. If the cue ball is close to more than one ball on, then the referee **should point** to whichever ball(s) the cue ball is touching as he makes his call.

The 1995 rules first enabled a referee to answer, if asked, if the cue ball is touching a ball that is not on (eg a red after having potted a red). The response should be **“The cue ball is touching the red”** (or whatever the colour of the ball is). It is not a ‘touching ball’ if the ball is not and cannot be on, so the call is NOT “touching ball” in these cases. The referee should remain silent if not asked whether the cue ball is touching a ball not on, and should not volunteer the statement.

STALEMATE

If the referee considers that there is an obvious stalemate, particularly early on in the frame, then he should ask the players **“Would you like to restart the frame?”** If the players are unwilling to restart at that stage, then they should be warned that they need to resolve the possible stalemate within a short period of time: **“I’ll allow you a few more shots each to end the stalemate”**. If the position has not been resolved by the point the referee has mentally allowed the frame to continue to then he should state **“This is a stalemate, the frame will be restarted”**.

UNGENTLEMANLY CONDUCT

If the referee has to take action under s4 r1, then he must either warn the player **“I’m formally warning you that any such further conduct will result in the frame being awarded to your opponent”** or award the frame to the

opponent: **“Frame awarded to Joe Bloggs”** or, with a further occurrence, the match: **“Match awarded to Joe Bloggs”**.

OTHER QUESTIONS

The rules specifically prohibit the referee any questions that are not provided for in those rules, and, therefore, the referee should know what to say in response to some of the more frequent questions that aren't covered.

Q: “Will the pink go on its spot if I pot it?”

A: “Pot the pink and then I'll tell you!”

Q: “Am I in hand?”

A: Pick up the cue ball, clean it and place it against the bottom cushion (if in hand); if not in hand, place a ball marker before removing the cue ball to clean.

Q: “Was that a Miss?” after you've just called “Foul”

A: “No” possibly followed up with “In my opinion that was not a Miss”

Q: “Do you think I can see that full ball?”

A: “That's for you to judge”

Q: If the player is in hand “Am I within the D?” or “is the ball properly placed?”

A: “Yes” Answering to “Can I play from here?” is a bit more dubious though!

AND FINALLY

If a player questions a rule, then the referee should not get into a debate and explanation during the match, but simply state **“I shall explain the rule to you after the match”**. If a player continues to question your decision then he should be told **“Please continue with your next stroke”** or after further remonstrance **“Please continue the match or the frame will be awarded to your opponent”**.

If there is a Marker who spots an error in the referee's actions, then he should call **“Check”** to attract the referee's attention and address the issue.

SUMMARY

Some of the referees calls are laid down in the rule book, and others are often common sense. The referee should not answer any questions not authorised in the rules, nor should he give any indication that a player is about to commit a foul. Certainly the referee should not provide a rule explanation to just one of the players. Players should all be familiar with the rules, and it is his downfall if he is not. If both players are unsure about a rule, then if it is considered appropriate a brief explanation may be given to both.

A prize will be awarded to the first person who can honestly say they have legitimately called “Foul and a Miss, Joe Bloggs 47, John Smith 4, free ball, touching ball, please declare!”