

UNITED STATES SOCCER FEDERATION



GUIDE FOR FOURTH OFFICIALS

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FOREWORD

In 1998, the United States Soccer Federation updated the *Guide to Procedures for Referees, Assistant Referees and Fourth Officials*. Although there are a number of entries in the *Guide* regarding the role of the fourth official, its focus was primarily on referees and assistant referees. Both within the Laws of the Game and in actual practice, the responsibilities of the fourth official have been growing in recent years. Given that such officials are commonly used in the most competitive and widely seen matches, the National Program for Referee Development is issuing this *Guide* to the responsibilities of the fourth official.

The procedures outlined in the pamphlet will standardize officiating techniques, signals, and mechanics at all levels of play. These thoroughly tested mechanics were drawn from earlier memoranda, papers, and other guidelines which have been reviewed by senior referees and instructors.

The *Guide* and its accompanying instructor manual were compiled by Dan Heldman and Josef Zeevi as part of the national instructional program. David McNeill, Jr. and Gil Weber provided additional contributions and comments.

References to the male gender in this *Guide* in respect to referees, assistant referees, fourth officials, and players are for simplification and apply to both males and females.

Alfred Kleinaitis
Manager of Referee Development and Education, 2001

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Evolution of the Fourth Official

There are several critical years worth noting in understanding how the role of the fourth official has evolved. Observing how the role has changed through the addition of new functions and expanding responsibilities is key to seeing where this increasingly important element of the officiating team is likely to move in the future.

1991 - The International Football Association Board (IFAB) officially introduced the fourth official to the Laws of the Game. At that time, the formal role was brief:

- Officiate "in the event of any of the three match officials being unable to continue" (the competition authority to decide whether this would occur directly by stepping in for the referee or indirectly by filling in for the senior linesman who would take over for the referee)
- Assist "with any administrative duties before, during and after the match as required by the referee"
- Assist "with substitution procedures during the match"
- Control "the replacement footballs" and, if necessary, "provide another ball" to the referee
- Check "the equipment of substitutes prior to their entering the field of play" and inform the linesman if such equipment is not within the Laws of the Game
- Generally, though not having any official status under the Laws of the Game, "to assist the referee at all times"

These instructions were covered separately and at the very end of the *Laws of the Game*, after various non-Law sections on kicks from the penalty mark, cooperation between the referee and the linesmen, and approved signals. In one sense, the single most important function was as a "safety net" in case an assigned official for an important game could not work. Since this insurance was seldom needed, it was important for the fourth official to have other visibly useful tasks.

1995 - The Laws of the Game were amended by IFAB Decision 15 to Law V which, for the first time, acknowledged the existence of the fourth official as part of the officiating team and referenced IFAB guidelines which were to be followed regarding role and duties. Although the duties remained substantially the same as those outlined above, the International Board modified the last item in two ways: first, by removing the comment that the fourth official had no official status and second, by moving the section dealing with the fourth official farther forward in the group of non-Law entries. Finally, the International Board issued Decision 13 (Decision 1 as of 1999) under Law V providing “liability protection” for referees, linesmen (now assistant referees), and fourth officials while acting in their official capacity under the Laws of the Game.

1996 - The IFAB added a responsibility to the list. The fourth official was authorized to "submit a report to the appropriate authorities, on any misconduct which has occurred out of the vision of the referee and the assistant referees." He was also to advise the referee and assistant referees "of any report being made." The Board noted that this would "enhance the role of the fourth official as one of the refereeing team" and facilitate "the use of written evidence from the fourth official ..."

1997/1998 – The Laws of the Game were extensively rewritten. Board Decision 15 became Decision 2 under Law 5 and the guidelines remained substantially the same.

1999/2000 – This edition of the Laws of the Game had several new and revised fourth official duties. First, if the equipment of a substitute does not comply with the Laws of the Game, the fourth official now had the authority to inform the referee directly rather than having to communicate through the assistant referee. Second, he could inform the referee regarding "irresponsible behaviour by any occupant of the technical area." The IFAB clearly indicated its desire that fourth officials be appointed to "top division matches in competitions organised by national associations or their leagues." In the **1999 Memorandum**, USSF advised referees that these changes marked a deliberate extension of the responsibility of the fourth official, both by increasing the duties to be performed (e.g., monitoring bench behavior) and by creating a direct relationship between the fourth official and the referee.

2000/2001 - A significant change occurred in this edition of the Laws. The fourth official will notify the referee if a player or substitute (1) has been cautioned or sent off based on an incorrect identification, (2) has not been sent off despite having received a second caution, or (3) has committed violent conduct out of the view of the referee and assistant referees.

2001/2002 – The International Board recognized the role of the fourth official in

assisting with situations involving players who have left the field because of bleeding or blood on the uniform. In the past, only the referee could approve a player's return to the field based on personally determining that the problem had been corrected. In order to bring the team back to its authorized strength on the field as soon as possible, the Board endorsed the option of having the fourth official perform this inspection. This new responsibility has been widened further by the USSF to include involving the fourth official in situations where a player has been instructed to leave the field due to equipment problems.

This pattern of change from the beginning of the 1990s to today parallels in many respects the elevation of the linesman to an assistant referee. It marks for both types of officials a trend toward closer integration of all the different roles which together are responsible for managing the modern game of soccer.

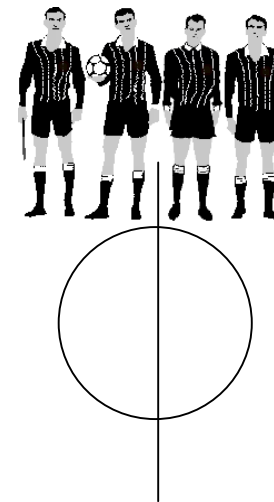
At the same time, it is equally clear that the duties of the fourth official have not received enough attention to enable an otherwise experienced official to perform them according to appropriate professional standards. It is the purpose of this pamphlet to provide guidelines for the specific and concrete responsibilities of the fourth official within these broad parameters and to set forth approved mechanics and procedures for how these responsibilities can be performed.



1. Responsibilities Prior to Start of Match

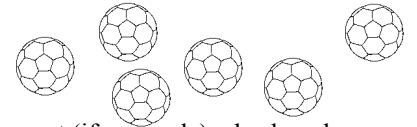
A. Reporting to the Field

- Coordinate with referee the preferred arrival time and meeting location so that the entire team can present themselves at the field together
- Determine from the referee the appropriate uniform and the governing rules of competition regarding the fourth official's responsibility to substitute either for the referee or for the senior assistant referee if needed
- Be fully prepared (equipment and uniform) to serve as either the referee or as an assistant referee, in accordance with competition authority rules
- Have additional items of equipment such as a clipboard, fourth official's game report forms, extra paper, extra flags, and additional copies of the standard USSF substitution pass
- Participate fully and attentively in the pre-game conference regarding responsibilities, mechanics, procedures, and any match-specific issues



B. Field, Ball, and Team Inspections

- Participate with referee and assistant referees in inspecting the field, with particular attention to the benches and technical areas
- Interact with the facility manager regarding matters such as the referee changing room supplies
- Obtain the game balls specified by the competition; check and ensure compliance with the requirements of Law 2



- Obtain the substitution board equipment (if available); check and ensure its completeness and reliability
- Identify and coordinate security issues with home team and/or competition management
- Contact team representatives for rosters and related forms
- Prepare and issue to each team the appropriate number of substitution tickets or passes, marked for authenticity
- Accompany the senior assistant referee during credentials, equipment, and uniform inspection of each team



- If requested, instruct ball handlers regarding their duties (including particularly entering the field, retrieving extra balls from the field, and the need for neutrality)

C. Interaction with Coaches

- Identify and contact coaches or team managers
- Discuss with the coaches such matters as regarding substitution procedures, warm-up areas, and injury procedures
- Resolve any issues or ambiguities regarding competition rules as requested by the referee (e.g., overtime provisions)

D. Immediately Prior to the Start of Play

- Walk onto the field with the referee, assistant referees, and teams
- Perform final check of bench, technical, and fourth official's areas for proper equipment, supplies, and presence of only authorized persons
- Following inspection of the game balls, provide them to the referee for selection of the primary (starting) game ball
- Respond to eye contact by the referee to indicate that all matters under the fourth official's control are in readiness for the start of play

2. Responsibilities During Play

A. General

- Remain at the fourth official's table or designated location unless performing a specific duty elsewhere
- Remain standing throughout the match unless directed otherwise by the referee during the pre-game conference. If seated, be located next to (not behind) the fourth official's table
- Maintain proper records for substitutions, goals scored, cards displayed for misconduct, injuries, and incidents outside the vision of the referee and assistant referees
- Notify the referee as quickly as possible if a player or substitute has
 - been cautioned or sent off based on an incorrect identification
 - not been sent off despite having received a second caution
 - committed violent conduct out of the view of the referee and assistant referees
- Be aware of the position and movement of substitutes, coaches, and other team personnel

B. Substitutions

- Confirm substitute
 - is listed on the official roster
 - has an authentic substitution pass
 - equipment conforms to Law 4
- Stand at halfway line with substitute slightly behind and on bench side of you
 - If both teams are requesting a substitution, keep the substitutes on their respective bench sides
 - Perform substitution procedures below for each team separately
- If a numbers kit or board is being used, display the number of the player being substituted and number of the substitute entering the field
- Require the substitute to hold the substitution pass until entry to the field is permitted
- When the substitution request is acknowledged, make sure the substitute does not enter the field until the exiting player has completely left the field
- Take the substitution pass
- Record the time and any relevant circumstances of any player instructed to leave the field temporarily to correct equipment, uniform, or bleeding problems.



C. Control of Benches and Technical Areas

- Keep both benches and technical areas under observation
- Take particular note of any persons not recognized as authorized to be in these areas and bring their presence to the attention of the match officials (e.g., field marshals) for removal
- Note instances where a coach or other team official moves off the bench to give technical instructions but does not return after giving instructions
- Be prepared to bring to the attention of the coach any instances of improper behavior by team officials or substitutes on the bench
- Monitor and prevent the practice of throwing water containers of any kind onto the field or to players on the field
- Observe the behavior of ball persons and ensure that they follow the instructions regarding their responsibilities given prior to the start of play
- Monitor substitutes who are warming up
 - Prevent such persons from interfering with official activities
 - Ensure that such persons are easily distinguished from players (be mindful of the field of vision of assistant referees)
 - Use this information to prepare for a possible substitution request



D. Equipment Problems, Bleeding, or Blood on the Uniform

- Be aware of the referee instructing a player to leave the field due to illegal equipment, bleeding, or blood on the uniform and distinguish this from either a send-off or a substitution
- Do not permit a player to return to the field until:
 - the referee's instructions have been complied with regarding who must confirm the correction of a bleeding or equipment problem, and
 - the referee has beckoned the player back onto the field
- Monitor efforts to stop any bleeding, replace a blood-soaked uniform, or correct illegal equipment
- If, in the pregame conference, the referee has authorized the fourth official to inspect and confirm the correction of any bleeding or equipment problems, ensure that the matter has been fully resolved in accordance with the referee's instructions
- Follow the procedure requested by the referee in the pregame conference to notify him that the problem has been resolved and the player is ready to return to the field, whether during play or at a stoppage, at the earliest opportunity

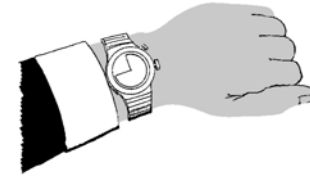


E. Goals, Injuries, and Critical Situations

- Record the time and immediate circumstances of all goals (may seek assistance on this information from team officials or bench personnel)
- Check both bench areas to ensure that non-players are not entering the field
- If celebrating players approach their bench area, encourage them to prepare for the kick-off restart of play without excessive delay
- Record the time and immediate circumstances of any injury for which play is stopped
- Prevent team officials and bench personnel from entering the field in response to an injury and, when permitted by the referee, allow only appropriate personnel to attend to the player
- Be prepared for a substitution request
- Where an injured player off the field is prepared to return to play, stand at the midfield line to communicate to the referee that the player is now ready to return to the game
- Monitor team officials and substitutes on the bench in critical situations where there might be an attempt to enter the field, prevent such entry if possible, and identify for subsequent referee action any persons who do enter the field despite your efforts
- If a player is sent off (shown a red card), ensure that the player exits the field entirely and conforms to competition authority requirements for further removal from the area of the field (utilize field marshal, match official, or security staff to assist if necessary)

F. Halftime Break

- As the period closes, gather equipment (records, paperwork, sign board or kit, etc.) and join the referee and assistant referees so that all officials can exit the field as a group



- Secure game ball and replacement balls unless this has already been done by the referee or an assistant referee
- Participate in comparing and, where necessary, correcting records of significant events
- Participate in the general discussion among the team of officials regarding the conduct of the match, patterns observed, player behavior to be observed more closely, etc.
- Before the start of the second half, check with teams to determine if substitutions are to be made and ensure that the proper information is logged

G. Additional Periods of Play and/or Kicks from the Penalty Mark

- Be prepared to remind persons in the technical areas of the requirements for these situations and their responsibilities
- If the rules of competition call for additional periods of play following a tied score, assist the referee in maintaining an orderly transition from the end of the last regular period of play to the first overtime period
- If the match will continue with kicks from the penalty mark to decide a tie, ensure that only players, not substitutes or coaches, enter the field for this phase of play
- Note the order of players kicking from the mark and the results of their kicks as backup to the record being kept on the field

3. Responsibilities After the Match

A. Equipment and Paperwork

- Make sure all equipment and other items you brought to the field are gathered up and taken with you
- Retrieve the ball if it is closest to you when the match ends and carry it with you until it can be given to the referee
- Move to join the referee and assistant referees without undue delay (avoid in particular being engaged in conversation by anyone wanting to discuss events during the match)



B. Match Debrief

- Provide information from your records as requested by the referee to confirm or correct information recorded on the field
- Bring to the referee's attention any events which were not observed by the officials on the field but which should be included in the final game report
- Participate fully as a member of the officiating team in discussions conducted by the referee and/or assessor to review and assess match events, critical situations, issues of control, call sorting, team and player behavior, etc.

C. Fourth Official's Report

- If a separate report by the fourth official is needed (in the case of events mentioned in the referee's game report which are included based solely on your information), ensure that the details are fully discussed with the referee
- Provide the referee with an information copy of any separate report you submit

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4. General Considerations and Special Situations

- The fourth official performs any other duties which the referee requests, consistent with and not detracting from the above guidelines
- The fourth official is the primary point of contact with the officiating team for all persons other than the players, substitutes, and team officials (e.g., stadium representatives, security, broadcast managers, ball retrievers, etc.)
- The fourth official performs his duties under and with the authority of the referee
- The actual authority of the referee should be used as seldom as possible and only as a last resort but, when it is needed, do not hesitate to inform the referee
- Maintain composure and a professional appearance at all times, avoid being drawn into any conversations which do not relate directly to the conduct of your responsibilities
- Small actions taken decisively and early often prevent situations from deteriorating into greater tension, conflict, and confusion
- If you intend to speak to a coach, substitute, or team official in the technical area, keep the conversation professional
- If action must be taken with respect to anyone in the technical area (including a player temporarily off the field for some purpose), attempt to involve the coach by requesting assistance or bringing the matter first to his attention

5. The Fourth Official

- The fourth official may be appointed under the competition rules and officiates if any of the three match officials is unable to continue.
- Prior to the start of the competition, the organiser states clearly whether, if the referee is unable to continue, the fourth official takes over as the match referee or whether the senior assistant referee takes over as referee with the fourth official becoming an assistant referee.
- The fourth official assists with any administrative duties before, during and after the match, as required by the referee.
- He is responsible for assisting with substitution procedures during the match.
- He supervises the replacement footballs, where required. If the match ball has to be replaced during a match, he provides another ball, on the instruction of the referee, thus keeping the delay to a minimum.
- He has the authority to check the equipment of substitutes before they enter the field of play. If their equipment does not comply with the Laws of the Game, he informs the referee.
- The fourth official assists the referee at all times. He must indicate to the referee when the wrong player is cautioned because of mistaken identity or when a player is not sent off having been seen to be given a second caution or when violent conduct occurs out of the view of the referee and assistant referees. The referee, however, retains the authority to decide on all points connected with play.
- After the match, the fourth official must submit a report to the appropriate authorities on any misconduct or other incident which has occurred out of the view of the referee and the assistant referees. The fourth official must advise the referee and his assistants of any report being made.
- He has the authority to inform the referee of irresponsible behaviour by any occupant of the technical area.

6. The Technical Area

The technical area described in Law 3, International F.A. Board Decision no. 2, relates particularly to matches played in stadia with a designated seated area for technical staff and substitutes.

Technical areas may vary between stadia, for example in size or location, and the following notes are issued for general guidance.

- The technical area extends 1 m (1 yd) on either side of the designated seated area and extends forward up to a distance of 1 m (1 yd) from the touch line.
- It is recommended that markings are used to define this area.
- The number of persons permitted to occupy the technical area is defined by the competition rules.
- The occupants of the technical area are identified before the beginning of the match in accordance with the competition rules.
- Only one person at a time is authorised to convey tactical instructions and he must return to his position after giving these instructions.
- The coach and other officials must remain within the confines of the technical area except in special circumstances, for example, a physiotherapist or doctor entering the field of play, with the referee's permission, to assess an injured player.
- The coach and other occupants of the technical area must behave in a responsible manner.