



To: Chair, State Referee Committee
State Referee Administrators
State Youth Referee Administrators
State Directors of Referee Instruction
National Instructors

From: Alfred Kleinaitis
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Re: Instructions to Ball Persons

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FIFA has requested that national associations implement various means of speeding the return of the ball into play. Among the recommendations are having up to six balls available around the perimeter of the field and providing ball persons whose responsibility it is to provide the ball to a player for the restart and to retrieve the ball which was struck into touch.

Ball persons serve both teams equally and act only under the general instructions of the referee. Accordingly, the referee, or, at his direction, the fourth official should set time aside to brief ball persons on their duties and responsibilities.

In general, such instructions should be given simply and precisely, taking into account the age and experience of the ball persons. They should be reminded of the following requirements:

- ◆ they may not favor either team or any player
- ◆ they must refrain from commenting for or against either team, any player, or any specific action on the field
- ◆ providing an available ball takes precedence over retrieving a ball
- ◆ they must take every opportunity to prevent an extra ball from entering the field

It is generally expected that a ball person will not enter the field, even to retrieve an extra ball. However, the ball person should be instructed that reaching into the field or stepping into the field briefly will be permitted if this enables the extra ball to be quickly removed and if neither active play or any players are in the vicinity of the extra ball.

The referee, assistant referees, and fourth official need to be aware of the presence on the field of an extra ball which cannot be quickly removed by the ball persons and which could lead to confusion. If, in the opinion of the referee, an extra ball moves into the area of active play, or if this area shifts in the direction of an extra ball, he may stop play, order the extra ball removed, and restart play with a dropped ball where the ball was when play was stopped (subject to the special requirements of Law 8).

The spirit of the game suggests that referees should be sensitive to selecting an appropriate time for stopping play under these circumstances so that a team having possession of the ball at the time is not penalized unduly.

In fact, where an extra ball entering the field is associated with a restart (throw-in, free kick, etc.) the referee should stop play in such a way as to require a retake of the restart.