

Assistant Referee – Where to be, What to do

There is a great deal of discussion about Referees, their court positioning and their functions, but very little to help guide the Assistant Referee.



Responsibilities

The Assistant is present to assist the Referee in the smooth running of the game.

To officiate a game well, both Referees must work together to provide two points of view on the game. It's important, therefore, that the two views cover as much of the court as possible, and that the Assistant and Referee communicate well.

Prior Discussion

As detailed in the rules, the Referee must give specific instruction on the actions that the Assistant is required to perform. Of most importance, is the permission for the Assistant to enter the field of play when the game is in progress. Unless given prior permission, the Assistant cannot enter the field of play. Moving into the court is of significant benefit to the Assistant (and hence the Referee) to achieve proper visibility.

The Referee may also define specific actions by the Assistant in special circumstances – an example may be a signal for the Assistant to 'take over' the general game while the referee moves close to the post to observe or reduce contact between players.

Out Line

The Assistant's prime responsibility is to signal an **out ball** on their own side line, and also the end lines and the central dividing line *when these are within their scope of clear visibility*.

Free Pass

During the Free Pass, the Assistant is responsible for observing the activities at the post – these include pushing during the jostling for position during the set-up, and also pushing and early encroachment afterwards.

Penalty

The Assistant should be observing the penalty-taker's foot to ensure that it does not touch or overstep the mark until the after the shot.

It is also important that the Assistant observes the opposing team bench, to ensure the opposition does nothing to distract the player taking the penalty shot.

Turn Over

In case of an intercept and a quick feed by the defence into the attack, the Assistant will usually take over the calling of the game (using the flag) while the Referee makes their way from one end to the other.

Contact after the Shot / Holding Off

During a long shot, usually taken from near the centre dividing line, the Assistant is watching for contact by the defender on the attacking shooter while the ball is in the air. While the Referee follows the flight of the ball, the Assistant observes the players and will signal the Referee should contact occur.

Communication

The role of the Assistant is just as important as the Referee, and their decisions are just as important – the only difference being that the Assistant carries a flag, and the Referee has a whistle. Therefore the Assistant must use signals to provide the Referee with information about what's happening on court.

Flag

The flag is used to signal a request to stop play. When the Referee sees the signal, they will normally blow the whistle to stop and enquire the reason for the stoppage. It may also be that the Referee has seen something and decides to allow advantage to play on.

The Assistant should bear in mind that a flag is a very visible signal to spectators and players, and should ensure that the flag is not used indiscriminately. Only use it to stop play, and if the referee plays-on, drop the flag.

Hand Signals

The Assistant can provide useful hand signals to the Referee, which the Referee can quickly refer to in cases of doubt. This double-check procedure allows the game to flow and provides confirmation for the Referee.

Hand signals should be small signals showing the direction of play (pointing, held at chest level), or other detail such as contact after a shot (hand on chest). The Assistant may also signal to play on (small rotating hand). In all cases, these small signals are provided when the **Referee looks up to query** the Assistant.

General Signals

Once play has been stopped, the Assistant should use the Approved Signals to communicate with the Referee and players. The Assistant should also signal the direction of play, and any particular type of attacker's restart (restart / free pass / penalty)

Assistant's Positioning

The preferred side-line for the Assistant to take is the line *opposite* the jury table. This allows the Jury clear visibility of the court to complete their required tasks.

Diagonal and Figure 3

The Assistant must ensure that they are in the best position for the Referee to be able to see their flag and signals. To achieve this, the Assistant should aim to position themselves **diagonally opposite the Referee** at all times. The Assistant must constantly check their position and move to ensure that they are constantly in the Referee's field of vision. This allows the Referee to just glance up, confident that the Assistant can see them.

If approved by the Referee, above, the Assistant should run in a figure 3 shape, entering the court near the central dividing line when the Referee moves behind the post.

Lead the Referee

The Assistant, when a turn-over or goal is scored, will lead the Referee into the new attacking half, signalling any infringements with the flag. Once the Referee approaches their usual position, the Assistant returns toward the centre dividing line. At all times, the Assistant maintains their position diagonally opposite the Referee.

Baseline for Free pass

The Assistant *quickly* takes their position for the Free Pass at the **baseline nearest the post**. This position allows close monitoring of the players, while the Referee monitors the pass itself.