

With Arthur Douglas-Nugent, deputy chief umpire for the HPA



How happy pairs could create domestic bliss

Consistency is one of the pillars of good umpiring, but how to achieve it? It is difficult enough during the course of a game but much harder across a season, with so many matches being umpired by so many at so many different levels. Evidence shows that we have failed, to the detriment of the game and the frustration of the players.

There are two elements here. The first – which should be easy – involves carrying out the rules as they are written. For example, when you award a Penalty 2 your first action is to give the captain of the team awarded the penalty the choice "Spot" or "30"; or when a player delays hitting in you warn him and then award a Penalty 6; or a captain queries a decision so you explain and if he continues you award a technical against him and so on. All this is fairly black and white – in line with the shirt you are wearing.

Then there are the judgement calls, and it is on these that the umpire stands or falls. The key elements here are positioning and concentration. The wrong call may still be made but the chances of a mistake are greatly diminished if the umpires are focused and in close touch with the play.

Consistency is much easier to achieve across a tournament if the same two umpires operate throughout. This has become accepted practice when our umpires go abroad, but not here. The key is that players have to accept, like it or not, that they will be umpired by the same pairing and must get on with it even though they may on occasion feel hard done by.

The flip side is that the umpires have to perform, which they have a better chance of doing as they will generally be on the spot, get to know and trust each other and will be free from outside distraction and influence.

With the widening of the paid umpire group, a number of whom are no longer playing, we now have a chance to

introduce this system to domestic polo. This may not work so well for the Queen's or Gold Cup because of the sheer volume of matches over a restricted period and the spread of location but we could do so in many club tournaments in which all the matches are played at the same location at different times.

DEAUVILLE'S NUCLEAR DETERRENT

The point above is well illustrated by the experience of Julian Appleby and Peter

rule at which we are still at sixes and sevens. The message that you are in danger of being penalised if you turn to the right with a player following seems to have sunk in but there is confusion as to what to do if a player turns to the left.

I understand that in the US this is counted as a foul though I still need a little convincing if the player so doing does not cross the old line.

What I am absolutely clear about is that most players lack the skill to carry



Using the same two umpires for a whole tournament has become accepted practice when our umpires go abroad

Wright at Deauville, covered in the last issue. Because they umpired all the matches over a four-week period they were able to impose the rule that if a team accumulates three technicals in a match the highest handicapped player is stood down for a chukka.

This so concentrated the minds of the players that they did not have to impose this penalty; the deterrent, like the atom bomb, that works without being used.

The other aspect is the turning-across

out this operation without being at a virtual standstill and using more than one tap to get round. Thus hammer them on the "one-tap" and let us not pussyfoot around but make this offence punishable with a Penalty 5a rather than the pathetic Penalty 7, with a special provision if the foul is committed by a defender within his own 60-yard line. ✖

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Play goes on until the whistle blows...



This month's puzzle

A defender hits the ball upfield but it rebounds off a teammate's pony and crosses his own back line. What should you award?

Last month's solution

When does the clock stop during a chukka?

The simple answer is when the umpire blows his whistle. It should also stop automatically at the end of a chukka; in other words, after the second bell in a normal chukka or the first in the last unless scores are tied and a result is required. It should not stop when the ball is hit over the sideline or boards, over the backline by a defender or when a goal is scored.