



# It is essential that we take steps to protect the authority of our umpires

**W**ith Lent upon us once again, it is time to make a resolution.

Last year we concentrated on improving the game for the benefit of players and spectators by introducing the so-called “no turning rule”, which this year we hope to strengthen by being more specific about the turn to the left.

This year as the star theme we will make a really determined effort to impose stricter discipline to avoid sliding into the sort of anarchy that is currently gripping football’s Premier League.

The writing has been on the wall for some time as players are allowed to confront the referees and, perhaps worse, managers seem to be able to say what they like after a match.

A headline which appeared recently says it all: “This unbridled criticism makes it impossible to create respect for officials.” I couldn’t agree more. The authority of an official should not in any way be undermined; otherwise how can he gain and receive the respect due to him by the players?

Probably the most damaging accusation of all is contained in the words: “You want a fair referee or a strong referee – and we did not get either.” That



Umpires Paul Withers and Tim Keyte discuss an important decision on the field

clearly implies that the official is partial, whether through bias or weakness of character; how can you get worse than that?

So what are we going to do about it? I mentioned last month that with the use of radios the

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referee on the sidelines is to be brought more into the equation.

Secondly, we have taken away the rule that allowed the captain to ask for clarification of a

decision, as this proved a loophole through which many jumped to open a dialogue with the officials.

Finally, we will be issuing a directive to umpires similar to that seen in Argentina last year. This showed good results, at least in the early stages of the season.

### Grooming tips

Following on from this theme, and call me old fashioned if you will, but I was saddened to see in the press recently a photograph of two Argentine 10-goal players looking as if they had spent the last ten nights sleeping rough on the street.

These men are role models and thus should be setting an example and here one is forced to draw

comparison with the Gracida brothers, who never failed to do this. It is for a good reason that the army requires every soldier to appear on parade shaved and with short and tidy hair; that reason is discipline which should be a part of life for a polo player.

This also applies to an umpire. Unless he is well turned out the players will not respect him and his authority will be diminished.

### Umpiring tips

As the season is nearly upon us, I finish by revealing the guidelines given to the Pro Umpire Group last year, which remain relevant.

- Umpire A should avoid blowing for a foul under the nose of Umpire B – trust each other.
- Avoid talking to players when awarding penalties.
- Delay in blowing a player blocking the legitimate progress of a opponent.
- Soft whistle blowing implies indecision and lack of grip.
- Avoid lengthy discussion between umpires after having blown the whistle.
- Avoid playing the advantage for too long.
- Beware the player working on you – the Cambiaso effect. ✘

► Read more from Arthur at [www.poloimes.co.uk](http://www.poloimes.co.uk)

Photograph by Alice Gippis



## Play goes on until the whistle blows...

### This month’s puzzle

*A penalty is awarded to a team and their ace penalty taker goes off to change onto another pony. While off the ground another member of his team places the ball. The penalty taker returns and he too places the ball. What should the umpires do?*

### Last month’s solution

*Extra time is to be played and the goals widened. Where should play start?*

*The answer is from the centre, the teams having changed ends. Under these circumstances any penalty awarded at the end of the last chukka should be taken at the end of that chukka and not carried forward, as was done on one memorable occasion in the Cowdray Gold Cup. Who doesn’t fancy hitting a sixty into a widened goal!*