



The updated Blue Book rules target better sportsmanship and quicker play

With the season fast upon us and the Blue Book in print it is time to look at the changes to the rules.

I have previously mentioned that the right of the captain to ask for an explanation after a penalty has been withdrawn. This brings us closer to the Argentine ruling that the players may have no discourse with the umpires.

Under our ruling players are expected to behave in a sportsmanlike manner, both to each other and to the officials. At no stage may a player, now including the team captain, approach or shadow either umpire after the whistle has blown. Nor may any player query a decision of the umpires; this includes any sort of gesture to another player, the officials or spectators.

When the umpires agree that a foul has been committed they will announce only the name of the team that has fouled, what the foul was and the penalty awarded.

Thus: "Foul by red for blocking. Penalty 4."

If unsportsmanlike behaviour occurs during play, the whistle will be blown and a technical penalty (Rule 38) will be awarded against the team of the perpetrator. If the incident occurs outside of play then the penalty, if one has been awarded, should be upgraded or, if not, a technical penalty given.



The changes to the Blue Book rules this season have banned the kind of dialogue seen between Lolo Castagnola and the umpires at the Argentine Open final.

In all Victor Ludorum matches a second personal or technical foul against a player will be accompanied by a yellow flag against that player (Rule 41).

Another change I have discussed previously is the referee's ability to award a technical penalty from the sidelines. In all cases when awarding a technical penalty the umpire should raise his hand.

On the turn

And so on to the rule on crossing and turning. There is really no change in the rule as a cross has always been a cross, but over the years there has developed a sort of divine right to cross an opponent if in the act of turning the ball.

The rule as now written is very specific to this foul in that the

words "turn left or right across" (Rule 33a) have been included.

Thus the moment the player in possession checks or slows down to turn the ball either way, the umpires should be alerted to the probability that he will commit a foul if there is an opponent following in close order.

Players are expected to behave in a sportsmanlike manner on the field

For a foul to be awarded, the following player must remain committed at such a speed and distance that, were he to continue down the line, a collision or near collision would have resulted.

The player with the ball, under

these circumstances, has the option of hitting it forward or playing a backhand shot. Should he cut the ball to his offside and take up the new line without slowing down he is also unlikely to be penalised.

Mending the tap

The third major change concerns the "One Tap" rule (Rule 33p), which is horribly artificial but does help to speed up the game.

The distance from the player with the ball to an opponent who is deemed to be challenging has been increased from one to two lengths. Perhaps more significantly, the penalty for a breach of the rule has been raised from a Penalty 7 (a throw in) to a Penalty 5a (a hit from the spot).

This will be policed with the usual proviso that it will not be awarded against a defender within his own 60 yard line.

That is about it except that Annexes C (guidelines for tournaments) and D (conditions for official HPA tournaments) have been amalgamated to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Please let the HPA know if you think any other rules need to be looked at. ✕

► Read more from Arthur at www.polo-times.co.uk

► See page 79 for this month's Products featuring umpire's kit

Play goes on until the whistle blows...

This month's puzzle

Under what circumstances can a team play with three players?

Last month's solution

A team is awarded a penalty and the striker goes off to change onto his steadiest pony. While off the ground a teammate places the ball as time is running short but, unaware of this, the penalty taker on return replaces the ball.

This is a violation under Rule 39b that states that only one player may place the ball. The umpire should blow the whistle and award a Penalty 5a against the team about to take the penalty.

