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The Fourth Official Guidance

- A Fourth Official will be appointed to certain rounds of FA and County FA Competitions and all matches in the English Premier League, English Football League and National League Premier. The Football Association may also appoint a Fourth Official to a Contributory League match. The Fourth official actively officiates if any of the three match officials are unable to continue
- If the Fourth Official is a Referee they may replace any of the three match officials if they are unable to continue
- The Fourth Official shall be conscious of competition rules and act accordingly
- Guidance on how a referee can best utilise the Fourth Official to assist in their match control is outlined in the section 'Guidelines for Referees' below.



Before the Match

The Fourth Official:

- shall ensure that only those personnel named on the official teamsheet occupy the Technical Area
- shall remind all named personnel within the Technical Area that they must remain within the confines of that area during the match and act in a responsible manner and also remind them that only one person at a time is authorised to convey tactical instructions from the Technical Area.
- shall instruct the physio/doctor that they must not enter the field of play without first receiving the permission of the Referee
- will ascertain, prior to the match, the location they will occupy near to the touchline, between the Technical Areas where possible, for the duration of the game
- will ensure that the electronic number boards (where provided) or other communication facilities used for the substitution of players and for indicating 'time-allowed' are in place
- shall check the pressure of all the replacement footballs. They will provide a replacement football, on the instruction of the Referee except in matches where the multiple ball system is in use.
- shall listen to the pre-match instructions issued by the Referee and ascertain what procedure should be followed if the Referee or one of the Assistant Referees are unable to continue



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During the Match

The Fourth Official

- assists the Referee at all times. They shall maintain frequent eye contact with the match officials
- shall keep a full record of the game, including details of any players cautioned or sent-off
- shall be in charge of substitutions and whether the substitutes equipment is in order. They shall indicate substitutions by holding up, to display the numbers, the number board provided for this purpose (if available). The Fourth official shall record the exact times that substitutions are made
- shall not communicate their estimation of the allowance for time lost to the Referee but await the Referee's instruction of the minimum amount of time to be allowed. The Electronic substitution board, if available, is not to be used as a method of communicating, to the Referee, a confirmatory signal. On 45 and 90 minutes display the amount of 'time allowed' on the board/substitute number boards provided
- will monitor the entry into the field of play by the physio/doctor/stretcher bearers allowing such entry only with the permission of the Referee
- will supervise the Technical Area to maintain order and inform the Referee of **irresponsible** behaviour by any occupant of the Technical Area. **Irresponsible behaviour** may be defined as, but not exclusive to:
 - any person who leaves the Technical Area to remonstrate with the Referee, an Assistant Referee, opponents or members of the opposition Technical Area
 - any act of abusive, insulting, offensive or threatening language and/or gesture
 - persistently failing to comply with the Laws of the Game, League Regulations, Competition Rules or the request of the Fourth official
- should advise the Referee of any verbal abuse from occupants within the Technical Area
- is expected to control the Technical Area in a preventative rather than confrontational manner. If the occupants of the Technical Area indulge in serious misconduct the Fourth official must inform the Referee immediately
- is expected to stand, where this is practicable, during the game



After the Match

The Fourth Official

- shall subject to the instructions of the Referee position themselves appropriately to enable supervision of the players and officials through the tunnel area to the dressing rooms and act as witness if any incident



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- shall assist the Referee in the preparation of a full match report, including details of misconduct, substitutions, and other incidents as required.
- shall advise the Referee of any breach of the Technical Area regulations
- shall submit a report to the appropriate authorities on any misconduct or other incident, which has occurred out of the view of the Referee and the Assistant Referee. The Fourth Official must advise the Referee of any reports being made

The Fourth Official assists the Referee and Assistant Referees at all times. This will involve being pro-active in any dealings with players, substitutes and club officials, especially during the match.

Guidelines for Referees

Referees should ensure that, like assistant referees, the Fourth Official 'assists' with their match control. The primary responsibility for controlling the match remains with the referee who makes the final decision at all times. In discharging this responsibility it is expected that referees will only seek assistance from the Fourth Official in respect of significant match changing incidents which have been missed by the other three match officials and which are clearly visible to the Fourth Official. Such incidents are:

- red card offences
- yellow card offences (as these could lead to a player being dismissed for a second yellow card)
- penalty area offences (e.g. handball on the goal line to prevent or illegally score a goal)

The Fourth Official must also indicate to the referee when the wrong player is cautioned or dismissed because of mistaken identity or when a player is not sent off having been seen to be given a second caution.



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