



THE ASSESSOR

The Assessor has to determine two things. The first is to confirm whether the umpire is performing adequately within their grade. This can be measured objectively and there is seldom disagreement. The second is to assess whether the umpire being assessed has potential for advancement. This is an entirely subjective judgement based on the assessor's experience of hockey at the target level and in particular, of assessing umpires. For this reason, two or more assessments are normally completed.

An assessor will broadly analyse an umpire in the first 10 minutes or so, and form their most significant impression of the umpire's capability. In the next 50 minutes, the assessor will broadly decide whether the first 10 minutes' performance flattered to deceive, or whether they have someone really worth looking at. The assessor can then set about looking at the umpire's presentation, use of personality to manage the match and its players effectively. Has the umpire a sensible knowledge of the rules in terms of applying them sympathetically to the game so as to have rapport with the players? Has the umpire some intelligent thought-through strategies for dealing with difficult or perhaps unexpected situations? What areas might benefit from improvement in performance?

In the final 10 minutes, the assessor may collect their thoughts to assess likely potential, summarise their feelings concerning the umpire's overall capability, then wait for the final whistle to ensure that the umpire is performing as well then in terms of stamina and concentration as when the match started.

After the match, the assessor would be expected to be able to talk to the umpires, singly or together - that is largely up to them. The assessor can then check with the umpire about any doubts they might have had about certain significant decisions and identify with them areas that they agree should be worked at. The assessor should report on the performance. The assessor may express satisfaction with performance, in the right way, or perhaps indicate that they were less than fully satisfied. The assessor is NOT primarily there to coach but to report on the performance.

However, if the assessor is also a qualified coach then they may be prepared, once the grading assessment debrief is complete, to function as a coach if it may benefit the umpire.

THE COACH

The coaching role is quite different from that of the assessor. It is not for the coach to determine what future the umpire might have, though they may well form an opinion, but to help the umpire to improve his or her own performance; through personal analysis, to develop strategies and time-scales for self-improvement. The coaching event starts a long time before the match – usually several days, possibly even a couple of weeks, before the match, when the umpire is asked to consider what special points they need to address.

The coach must analyse the match, the umpire's performance within it and relationship with it and the players, and often the team officials too, very carefully. Like the assessor, the coach is unlikely to be bothered by odd mistakes - nobody can be perfect. Mistakes have causes, however, and it is these that the coach is looking for - the patterns of mistakes in terms of time and place. Every time the coach sees something that might have been done better, the question arises: "Why?" then "Why?" again until the basic cause is exposed; and all the time the strengths, the good points on which to build, must be noted. Thus armed, the coach can confidently plan the post-match discussion with the umpire. But no coaching can be totally effective if it is done without previous knowledge of and discussion with the umpire, nor if it consists entirely of the views and opinions of the coach. Before the match, it is essential that the umpire and the coach meet to determine what the UMPIRE perceives as areas that need working on. No more than 3 will suffice. Then, after the match, whatever else the coach might have learned in the match, the priority is to concentrate on what the umpire has asked for. Sometimes, deep analysis is necessary, at others, simple reassurance.

Whether the umpire detailed problem areas before the match, or the coach is able to lead the umpire into identifying some that arose during it, it is important to get the umpire to self-analyse and recognise their weaknesses. The next task should be to help the umpire to develop a strategy to strengthen and improve performance. This must be tempered with reality - what to do, and the time-scale in which to do it, must be realisable, and this is where the experience of the coach can help. On completion of a match, it is the normal courtesy for the coach to provide a written summary of the discussion to the umpire (within 7 days) via the Umpire Portal. There it will be retained.

SUMMARY

Clearly the roles of the assessor and the coach are somewhat different. It is perfectly in order to seek advice from an assessor on completion of a match but do NOT to expect a full coaching debrief, for many assessors are not coaches nor wish to be coaches! The coach backs up the development system by helping umpires to help themselves. Make use of the coaches - they are there for YOUR benefit and WANT to be used!