

THE ROLE OF THE REFEREE

The interests of fair play are paramount to any sport including Snooker. The only way to do this is to have totally unbiased referees who make decisions during any frame to ensure that fair play is not only done, but seen to be done. He must be vigilant and in position at all times that any stroke is about to be played or has just been played. He must ensure that the winner of any frame or match is the player that has accrued the most points, either by fair scoring strokes or by receiving penalty points and/or a combination of both. He must also be prepared to explain any contentious decision to the player/s after the frame or match even though any such decision cannot be changed or overturned. The players can only learn what referees expect of them if decisions are clarified, and can only have confidence in the officials if their decisions are seen to be correct. The Miss rule has been discussed ad nauseum previously and I am confident that the club as a whole understands and administers this rule in an acceptable fashion. I am readily available to discuss this rule with new members and any existing members who are not comfortable in its interpretation.

What I would like to discuss today however, is the Free Ball rule. Whenever a player has fouled it is the duty of the referee to determine if the non-offender is able to strike any ball on at both extreme edges in a straight line with the cue ball. If he cannot the referee must call "Free Ball". This includes when the cue ball has been pocketed and the incoming player has to play from within the confines of the 'D'. When the decision is an obvious one and there is plenty of room for the incoming player to strike a ball on or when it is clear that he cannot and a free ball must be called, then the referee taking a line of sight and declaring his decision (or saying nothing, indicating that it is not a free ball) is the accepted way to act. If the decision is not so straightforward and fine judgement is called for then please do not leave anyone in doubt. Use your ball marker if you have one or a pocketed ball if not. Place it in position on the table so as to be in no doubt of your decision and allow the players to see what you can see and to also be in no doubt.

A diagram and an explanation of how to use a ball marker/pocketed ball for this situation is in your Maccabi rule book and will be posted on this website in this section.