



AMERICAN SUBBUTEO

ASA's Referee Project

*MEMBERS AS PLAYERS
AND REFEREES*

ASSOCIATION

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“Position is everything for a ref, knowing the rules is so important...the main ones players know... it is the little ones that they don’t.”

—Gregg Deinhart, 7-time ASA National Champion (Open)

“Refs make decisions, but players decide the match”

—Peter Vahle, 2018 ASA Nationals organizer & Northern California S.C. Member

When I started playing Subbuteo again in 2014, I was as mystified by refereeing. I did not understand stoppages in play, or how referees made decisions so quickly, and had trouble differentiating the multitude of rules. I read the FISTF rulebook, but struggled with my inadequate application of the rules. It was difficult to be a referee!

Typical board games have rules that are rather fixed, declarative, and not especially prone to interpretation. Subbuteo (table football/soccer) seems more like a sport where the game’s value is enhanced by a third party like a referee making judgments on play on the basis of agreed-upon rules. Players can elevate the quality of their matches when they know the rules and accept the referee’s informed judgment.

My quest to learn as a referee was an effort to best function for the good of the competing players. But without a guide for how to referee competently, how could I learn to officiate properly? I could not find a program or written document for successfully using rules in a sports table soccer match. Therefore, I set out to gather information from players with years of refereeing experience who exemplified competency. In the process, I received many tips and advice from fellow players, as well as their encouragement along the way. The product of this work is this American Subbuteo Association Referee Project. It is primarily aimed at new referees who may lack experience and confidence (such as myself!). It also includes a few modules for learning and for brushing up on rules, including the pesky “little ones” mentioned by Gregg Deinhart above. Individual items in the modules have the official FISTF rule number when needed. For example: “Offsides Module,” definition of offsides (13.1.1).

Many ASA members and players contributed to this project. A big thank you to each of the players for their assistance, insights, and kind sentiments. I hope that reading this guide and learning the FISTF rules will make us all better referees and help continue to improve the quality of Subbuteo table soccer in the United States.

Bryan Arnold
ASA Executive Board and USA World Cup Team

REFEREEING AS LEARNED BEHAVIOR

A major concept in achieving competency is “active refereeing”—that is, an ongoing and unremitting focus upon the match to actively perceive what is happening and what is likely to happen next. An active referee must try to anticipate the players’ flicking movements (e.g. short or long, quick or slow), and players’ intentions (e.g. cut through defensive line to win free flicks and a shot, move laterally to pull out defense and to win free flicks).

An active referee can achieve this focus and efficacy by asking the right questions while watching the match: What do the players want to do (e.g. possess the ball, shepherd the ball to sidelines, force, foul frequently to break rhythm, etc.)? What do they have to do (i.e. caused by limitations in choices)?

Active refereeing serves to elevate the match itself into a flowing exchange of playing styles rather than a halting experience with stop-and-go possessions. Active refereeing can also reduce fractious debate between players. Providing firm guidance in certain situations can make refereeing decisions quicker and more accurate, and help to apply rules more consistently. A referee using this active approach must also scan the pitch while flicks are taken to watch for the original location of figures and ball position.

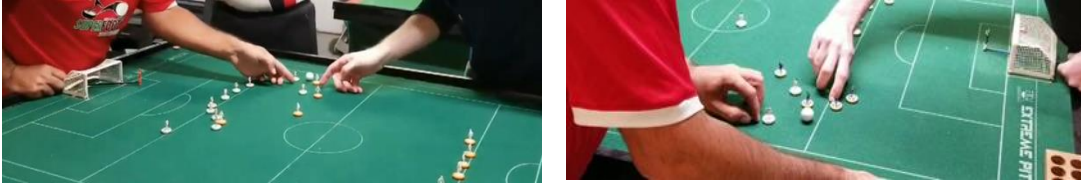
ACTIVE REFEREEING IN SPECIFIC COMMON SITUATIONS

*(**For specific routines see “Active Refereeing”)*

Long flicks—can involve possible backs and fouls so pay close attention to location of figures inhibiting the path of a long flick and to any figures near the ball; pay close attention to defender’s fingers to anticipate likely flicks



Short flicks—can involve possible backs and fouls so pay close attention to fingers of both players for finger fouls and anticipate flicks of both to catch fouls and backs; quickly scan for the location of figures and ball



Pace

- Pay attention to players slowing down their pace, it can signal a close play or a shot
- Stop play as needed to gain a better vantage point to decide on backs, fouls, etc. (but be certain to not break players' rhythms, if not necessary)
- Stop play if a small amount of time is needed to make a ruling such as a when a ball is quickly flicked over the goal line for either a corner flick or goal flick

Shooting

- Look at the goal and line yourself up with goal line when anticipating a shot
- Look at the shooter's finger for a possible finger foul if the shooting finger is placed among figures positioned close by
- If there is a clear opportunity for a shot, then look at the goal as soon as possible
- A shot that scores a goal usually makes little sound and rebounds out with a nice roll that stops nearby
- A shot that hits a post/crossbar (and does not cross the line) usually does so with a loud noise and rebounds quickly at an angle ending up far away

Giving a Foul vs a Back

Pay close attention to what the ball is doing:

- If figures hit, then it is a back (moving or stationary)
- If ball is hit or involved, then it is a foul

- If figures hit but the ball was rolling and the attacker was going to flick at the moving ball, then it is a foul

GENERAL REFEREEING MANAGEMENT TIPS

Match Management

- Start by taking the ball yourself and doing the ball choice (for establishment of authority, to remind yourself of your upcoming role as match official)
- Use own timer as official game timer
- Good decisions can depend on being in a good vantage point to see play
- Make several declarative calls with certainty early on. This establishes your authority with the players and is a reminder of your important role)
- Show certainty in knowing the rules
- Show certainty in position of authority

Player Behavior Impacting Match Management

- Acknowledge possibility of making a mistake in a decision in real time, and move on
- Make decisions as best you see them
- No discussion between you and the players, although you can explain what you saw if challenged. For example: “Free kick. Mark, I saw your figure still moving there so free kick to Eric. Eric, flicks or no flicks?”; “Stop! Moving back on Eric. Mark do you want the foul or play on? Play!”
- Give rulings with authority, loudly if necessary.
- Good players may begin to criticize the referee to “work the ref” in order to get favorable decisions, especially if frustrated during a match
- Be aware of potential referee bias in favor of the superior player in rulings on close plays

SPECIFIC ROUTINES FOR ACTIVE REFEREEING

Long or Short Flicks

Ask:

- What is the offense trying to do?
- What is the defense trying to do?
- Where is the ball going?
- What does the defense look like and where might the ball travel?
- What can happen that can require stopping play? For example:
 - finger foul, smash, back, foul, change
 - incorrect flicking (e.g. nudges, scrapes, double flicks of the base)
 - referee's view blocked
- Look at fingers of both players
- Notice location of bases
- Anticipate a call depending on what both players are trying to do relative to the location of bases
- Find a good vantage point
- "Stop the match if you can't see"

OFFSIDES MODULE

A figure is in an offside position when it is closer to the goal than less than two defensive figures, one of which is usually the goalkeeper, and the ball (13.1.1)

1. If a figure is in the offside position, when is offside called?
 - when slightest part of the ball is passed the second to last def figure (and the ball is completely within the shooting area) --13.1.2.1
2. When is it not offside to play the ball even if a figure is in offside position?
 - if the ball is played towards the center line (not forwards) (13.1.2.2)
 - and also during “passive offside”
3. What is passive offside?

in an attacking move, passive offside is when the played figure moves from not offside into an offside position, and there is no offside for this figure as long as the ball is moving (13.2.1)
4. Can this figure play the ball again before the ball has stopped rolling?
 - No. This figure may not play the ball again until the ball has stopped (13.2.1)
5. When does the passive offside rule not apply?
 - when the figure started in an offside position and remains there even after playing the ball (13.2.1)
6. Can an attacker play on if the defender committed an incorrect block flick in putting attacker figure offside?
 - Yes, play on to attacker if no figures were in offside positions beforehand (13.1.2.6)
7. Is it true that if the attacker was in offside position before the incorrect block flick was taken, then attacker must take the foul and cannot play on?
 - True

FOULS MODULE

1. What is the consequence for a finger foul?

- if player on offense touches any figure but the figure to be flicked, then it is a free flick where the figure was touched (can be a penalty in the penalty box) (10.4)
- if offense touches any figure but the figure to be flicked when the flick was a tick flick or position flick, then it is a “back” and referee says “play!”
- if player on defense offends, then it is a “back” and the referee says “play!”

2. What happens if player(s) touch the ball with any part of the body?

- it is a free flick where the ball was touched for the offended player (10.5)
- if this occurred in the penalty box, and was intentional, but the ball was not headed to the goal, then it is a free flick from the penalty spot
- if it was intentional or headed to goal, then it is a penalty

3. Can deliberate behavior by the attacker--to cause a handball--be a foul?

- yes, if the attacker deliberately tries to hit the defender’s body to force the offense, then it is a free flick awarded to the offended player

4. What is obstruction?

- Players may not obstruct opponents physically on or off the playing area with any part of the body in order to prevent a flick from being taken (e.g. hand on surface to prevent a flick without flicking a figure, defender obstructs offenses view of the ball or figure when it is going to be played, defender hinders attacker’s play to make a block flick) (10.6)

5. What are the consequences of an obstruction foul?

- free flick from the position of the ball at the moment of the offense (10.6)
- free flick from penalty spot if the ball is in the box

6. Can player’s comment on the match, referee’s decisions, or influence opponent/referee/spectators?

- No (10.7)

7. Can players ask the referee questions during play?

- No (10.7)
- but exceptions are: announcements by players of “offsides, tick!”; “substitution”; “ready” in a shoot-out; outvotes of the referee; “no flicks!” on flick ins and free flicks; “play-on” by offended player or accept awarded sanction; and asking for removal of the ball and nomination of figure in order to take a positional flick before flick in, corner flick, free flick

8. What is time wasting?

- Using more time to proceed with play than it seems adequate to the referee (10.8).

9. What are the consequences for time wasting?

- Referee says, “Time wasting, free flick!” Free flick awarded where the ball was at the time of offense
- Free flick from penalty spot if ball was in the box at the time

10. What are the time limits for single movements?

- 10 seconds to shoot, 5 seconds to flick, 5 seconds to shoot in shoot out

11. When is time wasting is not punished?

- when the attacker does not inhibit the defense’s fair chance to regain possession of the ball

12. Is time added to a match when time wasting is ruled?

- Yes. Referee shall note wasted time and add it as extra time

13. Can a shooter flinch or fake a shot then shoot?

- No feigning of a shot, and no removing of hand is allowed unit shot is taken --10.9
- Feigning or faking when making a regular flick is not allowed either

14. What is the consequence for flinching or faking before a shot?

- Referee say:, “illegal behavior—free flick.” Free flick to defender is awarded where the ball was at the moment of the foul.

ATTACKING MODULE

1. Can a lying down figure gain possession of the ball?
 - No, it is a neutral object while lying down --5.1.2.6
2. Does the player who becomes attacker after a “change” need to wait for defender to take position behind the goal or take control of keeper?
 - No (5.1.3)
3. What happens If a change occurs and a moving figure of the player--who was the attacker before the change--touches the ball or any stationary figure of either player?
 - the touch is considered an incorrect block flick even if the playing figure was flicked before the “change” of possession?
 - free flick if ball is touched (5.1.3.1)
 - back if stationary defensive figure is touched
4. What happens if a “change” occurred and a playing figure of the player--who was the attacker before the “change”--is hit by a moving figure of the player who was the defender before the change?
 - the touch is considered to be an incorrect block flick committed by the player that was the defender before the change
 - “change” for the player who was the defender before the “change” occurred (5.1.3.3)
 - “back” for the player who was the attacker before the “change” occurred
 - So referee says “change—back!”
 - If “back” is claimed, then referee places offending figure in previous position and offended figure where it was when the offense took place...and referee says “play!”
 - However, the “change” is given to defender whether attacker before the “change” occurred requests a “back” or not
5. When is the requirement of change of possession satisfied so the attacker regains the right to three flicking opportunities?

- if ball rebounds back to the played attacking figure from defensive goalkeeper then the requirement is satisfied to renew attacker's right to three flicking opportunities (5.2.2)
- change of possession is not satisfied (and so no regaining the right to three flicking opportunities) when attacker plays the ball into the defender, and it rebounds back to attacker (5.2.2)

6. When is a goal awarded?

When a ball originally shot from completely inside the defenders shooting area enters the goal by crossing the entirety of the goal line. If any part of the ball touches the goal line, then it is not a goal. (5.2.2)

7. When is a goal scored not awarded but instead a goal flick given?

if a shot was originally from outside the shooting area, then goal flick is awarded to the defender

8. When does an attempt to play the ball by figure, which failed, not add to the attacker's "used" flicks?

when it was intercepted by an incorrect block flick (which results in a back or free flick), AND the attacker decides to play-on (5.2.4)

MISCELLANEOUS MODULE

1. When does the attacker keep the ball even when missing the ball on a flick?

- when defensive flick occurred before the offensively flicked figure has touched the ball
(5.1.3.3)

2. When is the attacker's right for three tick flicks renewed?

- if the ball rebounds back to an attacking figure from defender's keeper (5.2.2)
- when a flick in, corner flick, goal kick is awarded to attack (5.2.2)

3. When is the attacker's right for three flicks not renewed?

- if ball is flicked by attacker into a defensive figure and rebounds back to attacker, the change of possession right is not fulfilled to regain three tick flicks (5.2.2)

4. What violation or foul can occur when doing a tick flick?

- when ticked figure hits the ball, then this is a foul and can be a penalty if in the box (13.3.3)

5. Can a spare keeper be removed and replaced by rodded keeper if spare keeper was used at the time of award of a penalty?

- Yes (12.2.3)

6. Can the rodded keeper move side to side on the goal line or must it be stationary for a penalty flick?

- must be stationary (12.2.4)
- replay penalty kick if moved side to side (12.2.4)
- can retake one time if miss the ball when taking a penalty flick; but miss more than one time, then a free kick is awarded to the defense on the spot of own penalty area

7. Can an own goal be scored from anywhere, regardless of the positions of the playing figures and the ball?

- Yes. However, an attacker cannot score an own goal directly from a free flick, corner flick, flick in, goal flick, or penalty flick (7.3)
- and if attacker flicks the ball into his own goal on these restarts, then a corner flick is awarded to the opponent
- and if ball rebounds directly off the post or crossbar after a regular shot at opponent's goal and passes attacker's goal line, a goal flick to the attacker is awarded

8. Is time added by referee to allow for a penalty flick?

- Yes, time is added by the referee to allow a penalty flick to be taken (12.1.2)
- time is extended only until referee decided whether a goal is scored or not from the penalty flick

9. When is added time given?

- After situations such as figure substitution, lengthy interruption of the match, time wasting or deliberate infringement (free flick, back, obstruction) by either player in the last 30 seconds of play (3.2)
- Referee announces how long added time will be, and extra time can be extended based on occurrences during extra time that happen during play (not including the time taken for repositioning of the ball, figures, position flicks)

10. Is the match officially timed by players' timers?

- No. The referee's timer is the official match timer.
- The referee gives no importance to the players' timers, and can even ask for those timers to be removed (3.1)

11. When is a referee's decision not adhered to by the players?

- when players mutually agree to reverse the referee's decision (10.7)

12. Where does the figure get placed if leaves the playing area and rebounds off a barrier, but does not leave the playing board?

- The figure is placed on the internal limit of the playing surface parallel to where it has come to rest as soon as the ball is stationary (2.1.3)