



# **Guidelines on the use of Electronic Flags and Devices for Match Officials**



## Electronic Flags

The use of "Electronic Flags" is an effective tool for the referees, assistant referees and fourth officials. They have been in use for over 10 years within our professional and semi professional game and enough experience has been gained to suggest a number of general guidelines. Electronic equipment, where used, should be tested prior to entry to the field of play, re-tested immediately prior to kick-off and again immediately prior to the start of the second half.

Below are some guidelines on their use:

The "buzzer" feature is a means of enhancing communication between the referee and the assistant referees under conditions in which the flag by itself may not be noticed. There are very few situations in which the buzzer alone would be used; in most cases, the assistant referee should use the buzzer along with the appropriate flag signal.

Because the buzzer feature of these flags more readily demands attention, assistant referees must take particular care not to overuse this signal enhancement to avoid distracting the referee from more important events on the field. The general principle should be that the electronic capability is a means only of calling the attention of the referee to the fact that a visual flag signal is being given out of the sight of the referee or that a critical visual flag signal is being given.

### **Guideline 1.**

The referee will discuss the techniques and requirements of their use (in what situations, in what manner, etc.) as a part of the pre-match instructions.

### **Guideline 2.**

In most cases, the electronic signal is used along with an existing visual flag signal. The electronic signal can also be used with no visual flag signal to indicate:

- A request during active play to return to the field from a previously injured player who had left the field temporarily;
- A player waiting to return to the field of play who had previously been sent from the field to correct equipment, bleeding, or blood on the uniform etc (unless the Fourth Official has been delegated responsibility) the buzzer signal is maintained even after eye contact with the referee is made, it indicates a request for the referee to inspect a returning player; and
- A substitution request to attract the referee's attention.

### **Guideline 3.**

In implementing **Guideline 2**, in addition to the proper visual signal, the buzzer can be used to draw the referee's attention to:

- Serious misconduct or a foul occurring out of the sight of the referee, for which the referee would likely stop play if aware of the event. An assistant referee must use a raised flag signal to advise the referee that he has seen a foul committed (or unsporting behaviour or violent conduct) when he is better positioned than the referee and the referee has not clearly acted on the offence. If the assistant referee has additional information, concerning the offence, he wishes to give to the referee or if the referee has not seen his flag signal the electronic beep signal should be used, but only to supplement the flag signal already given. Such action by an assistant referee must be taken for all appropriate offences including those committed inside the penalty area. When a flag is raised for Law 12 offences, it should be unfurled and waved, so as to distinguish it from the signal for offside;
- To confirm a valid goal has been scored, an assistant referee should display clear movement down the touchline towards the centre line but maintaining eye contact into the field of play. In borderline

cases, this movement should be a clear sprint to be recognised by the referee. The flag may be used to supplement this decision by pointing towards the centre line parallel to the ground. If in his opinion a goal has not been scored correctly, the assistant referee should stand still, retaining any signal already given. The referee may then choose to consult further if he needs additional guidance;

- An offside infringement in which the attacking team retains control of the ball either during play or for a restart, particularly if the offside infringement occurs inside the penalty area where the infringing attacker retains control of the ball and continues an active attack on goal; and
- If an assistant referee knows that a referee has made an obvious disciplinary error (e.g. two yellow cards to the same player without sending him off, red or yellow card to the wrong player, player kicked the ball twice at free kick, etc.), the assistant referee must intervene immediately (flag and beep or even enter the field of play). The other assistant referee (or fourth official) should if necessary, also assist in such case.

#### **Guideline 4.**

Referees are warned not to become overly reliant on the enhanced signalling ability of the electronic flags. Do not replace or reduce existing recommended practices of glancing at the assistant referee on through balls or of making frequent visual contact with all members of your team during stoppages or breaks in active play.

#### **Guideline 5.**

Assistant Referees should avoid overuse of the electronic signal to the point that it becomes either a distraction or merely additional background "noise". Referees are advised to monitor such use during the first half of play and to discuss any problems during the halftime break.

#### **Guideline 6.**

Some Electronic Flags have a different "tone beep" or a faster "beep". For identification purposes, referees should regularly assign the use of having the same tone or faster beep to the senior assistant referee to assist the referee's recognition of who is "beeping".

#### **Guideline 7.**

Except as may be modified in the pre match instructions and assuming an electronic signal is to be given, assistant referees should continue signalling electronically until the objective is achieved -- gaining the referee's attention -- as indicated in most cases by positive eye contact.

#### **Guideline 8.**

The pre match instructions regarding the use of the electronic signal should include means of avoiding situations in which both assistant referees attempt to signal the referee simultaneously. When it is likely that both assistant referees are reacting to the same event, only the assistant referee who is closer to the event should use the electronic signal. In those rare situations in which the assistant referee furthest away believes it is necessary to use the electronic signal to indicate a separate, different event, the signal should be delayed if at all possible until the nearer assistant referee is no longer using the "buzzer" (e.g. when the flag is dropped).

The buzzer should be limited, for example, to very specific offside situations, not for every offside (unless the referee requests it – *not recommended, as previously detailed*). It is limited to very specific foul and misconduct situations, not for every foul or every case of misconduct. It is limited to signalling for a substitution only when the referee cannot see the visual signal.

## **Guideline 9**

Where an electronic signalling device is being used by the fourth official, apart from the guidelines offered above, there may be times where the use of the electronic beep could provide further assistance. For example:

- A team wish to make a substitution;
- Safety issues raised by the Police or Chief Safety Steward;
- Misconduct by Technical Area Personnel; and
- At half time and full time to warn the referee that there may be some "issues" in the tunnel area warning him of a potential situation in which the referee may wish to delay entry.

The above guidelines have been written to offer advice and guidance on the use of Electronic Flags and Devices. The guidance re: use of the electronic signal should be clearly communicated by the referee during his pre match instructions. When functioning correctly, they are an effective tool in communicating to the referee and can enhance match control.