

SERVICE



JUDGING

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Introduction

Umpiring versus Service Judging – 2 sides of the same coin.

It has become quite the norm to regard the role of Service Judge to be less than that of an Umpire. The truth is that the roles, though inter-dependent, are different. Umpiring is in the main about *presentation* whilst Service Judging is about *delivery*, delivering a judgement. It has also become acceptable to think that one can be an Umpire, and a good one at that, and either not be a Service Judge or possibly be an *ok* Service Judge. In essence, a reluctant Service Judge: a Service Judge without conviction.

We are all Umpires, therefore, we also Service Judge. We should face up to the job of Service Judging and give it the respect that it deserves. We should also be very realistic about the job itself and especially how the time spent in the loneliest chair in the hall is likely to develop as we, along with the Players, Umpire and Lines-people, become an integral part of the match: in effect as we make the decisions demanded by our very presence in that chair.

We should not be under any illusion about the situations that can, and invariably, will occur.

We should meet the challenge of being a Service Judge head on. It is true to say that we, Service Judges, do indeed know what we have to do, and also what is expected of us in this role but we are not necessarily equipped to face up to the pressures that always develop as time progresses in a match. We do not seem to be aware of the situations that are developing right in front of our eyes. We are shown the Rules of Service, the Faults and the Signals. We are rarely, if ever, shown what to expect or how to cope.

For some reason we seem to have come up with a defensive mechanism which often involves basic inaction and a collection of excuses as justification. Typical excuses are: 'I could have called every one' – but obviously did not! 'It was marginal but I let it go!' 'It was difficult to get a clear view' – so, nothing was done! 'It looked a bit high but I let it go'!

Of course we must be fair to the server. It is not our function to call faults just because we can and are empowered to so do. Equally, we are not entitled to concoct excuses to justify our inaction

This document provides an outline of what you could experience and some possible coping strategies. So, this is a start. It is definitely not the end of the matter or even the only way to survive in that chair. Hopefully though, we will approach the role of Service Judge with open eyes and especially with purpose.

Presumptions

For the sake of convenience and for no other, 'HE' has been used in all references to Players, Referees, Umpires and Service Judges.

It is not the intention of this document to analyse service actions and then to describe faults. The Laws are perfectly clear. The presumption is that we have service judged; that we have called and not called faults; that we have sat in that chair and felt uncomfortable; that we have left the court - thankful for the release. In essence, that we are experienced.

There is no attempt here to make it easier for us to see a fault because, we do see the faults. Note how good we are as *armchair* Service Judges, when we have comfortable seats on the sidelines or in the back row.

The issue is that we are not consistent in the application of The Laws. There are circumstances and pressures which lead to this inconsistency.

It is the intention here that we should in future be aware of these circumstances and pressures in advance of a match rather than to have them *sneak up* on us during a match with the effect that we are left helpless and floundering in the chair.

A positive start

It is particularly interesting to watch how a Court Official, be it an Umpire or a Service Judge, approaches a match, how they go about their business from the point of arriving on court. In many ways this is how we set the tone for the match.

The Service Judge needs to:

- Measure the net.
- Ensure that the scoring machine is appropriately set.
- Assist the Umpire with regard to Player compliance of the Clothing Regulations.

The Referee may have given an instruction 'not to test shuttles without prior consultation with himself' or even 'to play from the tube'. It is still acceptable, if not advisable, to allow the Players to *try out* one or two shuttles from a tube to be played with. Certain conditions, be it with the hall itself or with the shuttles, and only with the Referee's consent, may necessitate that a more comprehensive shuttle test be carried out.

It has become the trend, in recent times, for the Umpire to want to have the shuttles tested immediately after the toss has been completed. The Umpire then tells the players that they will have 2 minutes to warm-up from the point that agreement is reached on the shuttles.

The Service Judge is an important part of this process. He should try to stand at the baseline and:

- *feed* the 2, 3 shuttles from the tube to the Player.
- Ensure that they are being tested from the correct point.
- If it is not the case, then the Service Judge should say so to the Player in question and also to the Umpire.
- the Service Judge should point out any shuttles that were not correctly tested.

There is a proper way to test shuttles and it is your responsibility as the Service Judge to see that this happens. Fairness is ensured by so doing. Of course the Players can still object to the shuttles and this dispute will ultimately be settled by the Referee. Managing this initial interchange firmly will help earn you the respect of the Player. Your resolve here, and that of your Umpire, will stand to your credit if and when other issues arise during the match. You have started the match in a business like way by asserting that the Laws be applied, equally and fairly.

It is your, the Umpire and Service Judge's, court to manage. You will find that shuttles, properly tested and observed to have been so tested, will rarely speed-up from within the tube. Actual playing conditions can and do change during a match and a subsequent review of the shuttles being used for this reason is not the issue here. Without your positive involvement at the start a Player can always maintain that he did not test them properly, if indeed that was the case, and slow, if not stop a game altogether, at an opportune stage to him and probably not to his opponent.

Body Language

Your body language, what you are saying about yourself without using words, is so important to consider in your role as Service Judge.

There is little point discussing the wrong way to do it. Let us just say that, just as is the case for an Umpire, you want to make a positive impression. You want to sell yourself well. You want to show that, you are interested; you are concerned, you have a function.

You are functioning in all aspects of the job, not just dispensing shuttles with style!

- Walk onto court in a business like way. Think. You are part of a team of 2 Umpires on that court.
- Also try to build up a rapport with the Line Judges. Why not? You are all part of the same, *on court*, Team and doing so could prove valuable at some point during the match. You may find it possible to give support for a good call or even to assist with bringing a drifting Line Judge back on board.
- Give the Players a new shuttle from the tube. It is your equivalent of the Umpire's handshake. You are human too!
- Measure the net – quickly, efficiently and properly.
- Straight back to your *Office*. Organise your *desk* – shuttles, basket, scoring device and chair. Have it tidy and keep it that way at all times.
- Be seen to show interest when serves are being practiced. Being seen is critical. You should take up the appropriate position for each serve.

The Players are all different heights; they are on opposite sides of the court and net. You want to be seen to be evaluating each individual serve on his merits. If you make like a statue then you are not doing your job. You can maintain that you are *service judging* but your body language is saying otherwise. Even if a service action does not give you some particular concern you should hold your position and replay the serve from the now empty space which was formerly occupied by the Player. You may have been concentrating on one particular *likely fault* and this is now your opportunity, to either, categorically dismiss or to put back into play other possible faults.

If you jump in fright at the serve that has just been delivered but do not make a call you are indicating to the Receiver that a fault just took place and you have not called it. He is not likely to be impressed by this.

- Get involved with the match. Live the points too. You do not need to applaud or to go ooh and aah but, facially you can and should look interested and appreciative. You too can and should be able, and indeed want to, enjoy the lighter moments of a match.

Having an active demeanour also helps to keep you alert. All too often you will find yourself in the Service Judge's chair after a long day's work in a warm hall. You will be tired. Your eyes will go down. The best will in the world cannot stop this. Being active and involved can and does help see you through.

Checking the Net

We do seem to be good at doing this job! But do we use it as an information gathering opportunity?

There is an invaluable opportunity here which can so help later on in the match itself.

- That is, whilst measuring the net we can also be gauging our height with that of the Players.

The most common service faults are *racket-head* and *waist*. Expect to have to use all the possible tools at your disposal to you to help you determine for sure whether a serve is ok or not. Use the hall itself, seating, lines on walls and court surrounds. There are occasions when this may not be either possible or enough.

Being aware of the Player's height may allow you to view a serve differently. Instead of getting an eye-line on the serve you could actually sit back in the chair and watch the flight of the shuttle. Circumstances where the Server is hidden from your view may necessitate this.

Being aware of what constitutes a legitimate serve for you will make it easier to determine the same for a Player, especially if you are conscious of the Player's height relative to your own. Standing beside or in front of the Players whilst measuring the Net affords you this opportunity.

It is just that, an opportunity. It may help you to make a final decision, on a particular service action, if you are finding doing so difficult.

Pre-Match warm-up

We probably only have 2 minutes to work with here. In truth, we have substantially less. The Players will always practice serves during this period. You want to be ready for this opportunity. The opportunity afforded to the Service Judge here is one of elimination and also of possible warning.

The elimination being such, if the Player serves like that there are a number of service faults that cannot occur. This is a great help to you as the Service Judge. It is difficult to look at a service action and to be worried about 2 possible faults without being always concerned about 6 possible faults.

As for warning signs, these can be obvious. A player wearing his shirt outside of his shorts, thereby hiding his waist – you are worried about *shuttle high*. A Player positioning the shuttle right on the line of the waist – legitimate at address but you are now concerned about the hand holding the shuttle. If it moves up at all it is a fault.

You are always concerned about more than one forward movement and also about foot movement – but to a lesser degree about this. The obvious reason being that, to concentrate on this possibility would make it impossible to adequately consider the other possible faults.

Watching for elimination points and warning signs during this period is time well spent. Of course, during a match the Players may serve in a totally different manner or style and so each serve should be assessed with the benefit of doubt firmly given to the Player. But forewarned is forearmed and the balance of probability is such that Players will practice what they are likely to do in a match. You are acting no differently than you would as an Umpire in this regard. You are anticipating, no more than that.

Yet again, the situation and time outlined above is just an opportunity that has been afforded to you.

Shuttle Management

When seated in the Service Judge's chair your primary function is to Service Judge. Your secondary function will usually be to manage the shuttles.

Your focus must always be service judging but regardless, you will still be managing the supply of shuttles.

As with the other aspects of your role you want to do this properly and efficiently. So doing, is achieved by:

- Ensuring that, before, during and after the match, all loose shuttles are tidied away into the used shuttles box.
- Place the tube of shuttles to be used on one side of you and the box of used shuttles on the other.
- If tipping is NOT an issue all you have to do is to bring the next shuttle to the top of the tube so that it can easily and quickly be given to the Player. Once a shuttle is given over the next shuttle should be brought to the top of the tube so that you are ready to facilitate a change. Hammering and banging on the tube is **not** the way to achieve this. Develop a technique that achieves this goal efficiently, unobtrusively (to yours and other's courts) and as quietly as possible. With the base-cap left in the tube and holding that end, gently tapping the tube on your free hand will work.
- Having brought the next shuttle to the top of the tube, ensure that it is not stuck to the following one. If so, gently snap them apart within the tube.
- If tipping IS an issue then you will need to keep a stockpile of tipped shuttles. A single stockpile of 3 shuttles should be enough. As you take one shuttle from the stockpile you replenish it, as above, from the tube. Tipping it appropriately and placing it to the end of your, now replenished, stockpile of 3 shuttles.

- The next shuttle for play should rest either in the tube or in a small stockpile (maximum of 3 shuttles). You should **never** hold the shuttle that is next to be called into active service. Doing so may affect its speed.
- Creating mountains of shuttles is not the way to go. They represent a greater mess to tidy up at match-end and look terribly untidy during the match. Remember, you are as much part of the match presentation as anyone else on court.
- Such heaps also only increase the possibility of an accident. A pile falling over and causing a shuttle to roll onto court could result in a Let. You do not want to be the cause of a Let!
- As a match concludes, reduce the number of shuttles in the stockpile to a minimum because, any remaining tipped shuttles will have to be discarded. By doing this you are being economical, thinking about the bigger picture and not being wasteful.
- Finally, when the match is over, leave your position as tidy as you would hope to find it.

Multi-tasking

This situation arises all too often. As a Service Judge you are always doing at least 2 jobs. That is, Service Judge and Shuttle Dispenser. A third task can be added, that of Shuttle Tipper, and finally, a fourth, that of Scorer for the electronic / computer system.

The key to surviving is getting your priorities right. You are on court to evaluate each serve. Therefore, your priority is that. None of the other tasks should impact too negatively on the main job at hand.

To ensure that you are always in a position to do your job as a Service Judge properly you should always have a new shuttle to hand if there is a request to change. Having dispensed a shuttle you should re-stock at the first available opportunity. If tipping is not an issue then getting a new shuttle to the top of the tube will suffice.

If you are also the Shuttle Tipper then it is advisable to have a stock of tipped shuttles ready at all times. This is the case because, all too often, you will be asked to replace a tipped shuttle because it does not meet with a Player's approval. Tipped shuttles also break quicker. A stockpile of ready shuttles can disappear all too quickly. Your aim here is NOT to delay the match. You want to assist.

It is quite possible that the Umpire will agree to a shuttle change before announcing the score. You therefore have to dispense the new shuttle first, updating the scoring system only after your Umpire has announced the score

Look at Receiver so as to confirm that the serve is going to be received by the correct Player. Inform the Umpire if there is a Receiver problem. Inform him somehow (?) – it is always better to prevent an error if possible. If there is no problem look to the Server. Take in the Serve, evaluate and make a decision.

Now start to replenish your stock of prepared shuttles. Evaluate your overall stock of unused shuttles. Again, you do not wish to create a delay by waiting until your last shuttle is gone. Call for additional shuttles well in advance. You can always bring them back if they are not used!

Shuttle Changing

This is probably the one area where the Service Judge can build up a relationship with a Player. You should be polite here. There may have been tension between you and the Player over service calls but you should not let this tension affect how you conduct yourself here.

If you are watching a match, participating in it actively, you will quickly get a feel for what is likely to happen. You may observe a feather flying off during a rally, or even, a long rally with many smashes and returns takes place or a rally comes to an end with a thunderous smash into the court surface. Usually after such incidents, the Players will want to change the shuttle. Usually it is the losing Player who is signalling this request to his opponent and Umpire. He, after all is the one picking it up. He also wants to create a legitimate break in play. You should anticipate this situation. You should have your hand on the new shuttle – all the time looking to your Umpire. You see his nod to the Player and you can make a quick and efficient change. Play is continuous. You are not fumbling with a tube, with an agitated Player standing in front of you or having an Umpire sitting helpless in his chair, also getting agitated by the delay that is occurring on his court.

This situation is an opportunity to show another side to yourself. You do this by being polite throughout the shuttle exchange. A thank you and use of the Player's name can go a long way. You too should know the Player's names. During this exchange there is the opportunity to break any tension that may have been building up between you and the Player.

Of course, a Player may not wish to reciprocate. Players will fire the shuttle to be changed at you. They may even cast it behind you so that you have to retrieve it. This too can become a game of nerves. You may find yourself on your own here. The Umpire has given his consent to change the shuttle. His attention will probably revert to the other Player(s) and the Player changing the shuttle will probably have his back to him anyway. As with everything to do with the game you should remain calm. Above all else – be professional.

Teamwork

It is so critical that you consider yourself part of a team. Unfortunately it is not unusual to find yourself with an Umpire who seems to be ignoring you. Regardless of the reason for this, be it ambivalence, pressure, inexperience or bad technique, you should not stop participating.

- Be aware of the score. Look to your Umpire as soon as a point comes to an end. Have the next announcement in your head and as soon as the Umpire announces it, support his call with a nod if he is looking at you. Do not mouth the score back at the Umpire – this can be the most annoying and even confusing thing that you can do. Take it that the Umpire is able to speak. Your reassurance though, is always welcome.
- Watch for shuttles coming onto court. Make a subtle (?) eye-catching signal to the Umpire if he has not seen the shuttle coming onto court. Your intention here is to catch the Umpire's eye and NOT to distract the Players. This is not easily done.
- Watch the net during tight play. Be in a position to confirm contact with the net by a Player. An indication from you could well be the difference between an Umpire making or not making a call.
- Support your Umpire when he makes a call under these circumstances. Very often the Players will look to you too. Nothing can be achieved, absolutely nothing, by you undermining the Umpire in front of the Players.
- Watch for contact with the Shuttle on the wrong side of the net.
- Watch for a Player interfering with a shuttle – invariably slowing it down by a Player putting either his elbow or racket grip into the shuttle. You may see this and the Umpire not because your focus is more to the Server, i.e., the Player with the shuttle.
- Be the Umpire's second pair of eyes with regard to checking the advertising on Player's clothing and also in the area of coaching. Especially with regard to the issue of coaching, you will have more time to concentrate on it and to confirm, or not, the Umpire's concerns.

Look to your Umpire as often as you can. An Umpire may wish to convey some signal of concern to you. He may also be looking for confirmation from you that you are indeed *ok* with a serve – especially when you have not made a call. Look to give and receive reassurance when it is required.

Essentially, Umpire from the Service Judge chair. 2 heads are better than 1.

Responsibility to your Umpire

Just as with the Umpire, you have a responsibility to see that fair play takes place (see IBF Statutes / Officials and Appeals / 17.6.1).

In some circumstances this can be a difficult thing to do. As with the Umpire you also want to allow a game to take place. Avoiding your responsibility, by not calling fault where one is occurring, can be a disaster. It may lead to the opponents taking the Law into their own hands and foul serving themselves or to a disruption to play due to heated discussion taking place about your apparent blindness!

If there is a problem you need to act decisively at the first opportunity in a match. Evaluate the results of your activity. Has it brought about change? Can you live with the new levels being set by the Players? How do the serves from both sides weigh up against one another now?

Is there *balance*? Both sides serving overhead may be *balance* but it is unacceptable. It is a fault every time without question. Both sides serving very close, possibly just over the legally defined line, may rank as *balance*. You may have to accept this. You are conscious of it. You are comfortable with it in the sense that you will be able to justify what you have done. But you are constantly vigilant for the slightest regression.

Essentially you are acting fairly. You have taken decisions and indeed a game is taking place on your court.

One side foul serving, even marginally, is not balance. There is no fairness for the opponents when this situation occurs. You have to act. Unfortunately, you will have to act each and every time. A good Umpire, a pro-active one, will intervene when this situation occurs and effectively take some of the heat off of you. But, you **must** call. It is your responsibility to the Umpire, the Players and the game, to call.

Service Faults

There is no intention here to go through the service faults. The Laws are there for all to see; they are clear; we should know them - the assumption is that we do.

To focus on a Player's serve we must first focus on the warning signs:

- Shirt outside of shorts – making waist difficult to locate.
- Shuttle being held at arms length from body – making judgement of waist relative to shuttle difficult and also increasing the possibility of the racket head high fault.
- Positioning of Server and Receiver – trying to hide something?

The main thing with the above is that you do not wish to blinker yourself and find that you are over-concentrating on the possibility of one fault over others. You are trying to make a difficult job more do-able. You will still address each serve in the full knowledge that the Player has not committed a fault with this serve, regardless of previous serves by him or call by you.

Even with all of the above difficulties we must also be able to focus on the actual service itself. This does not take place until positions have been taken up. In many cases a *merry dance* can take place with the Server putting out the shuttle as if to hit it but all the time standing on one foot and/or maybe even looking at the floor. All this is just a pre-amble. The serve starts when both the Server and Receiver are ready. The Server is ready when the *dance* is over, not when it begins. Let the Umpire decide on the Server's actions. Let him decide if they are a deliberate distraction. You have to focus on the serve.

The situation will often arise again that you find yourself in a position where you have a nagging doubt about a serve and you find it impossible to make a definitive decision. You are probably beginning to squirm in that chair. In such circumstances you could consider the effects of the serve. These are professional players that you are dealing with. Sometimes it is quite inconceivable that one should win so many points consecutively purely as a result of service. If you have some nagging doubts, this run of points may be confirmation of those doubts.

A quick look at the reaction of the Receiver may also help you. He too is a professional. He should not be finding it impossible to return a serve. This may be all the confirmation you need. The bottom line though, is that for all of the possible service faults with the obvious exception of racket head, you need to see the fault before you can make a call.

As with an Umpire, you should have the call and signal in your head before you call. You should not shock yourself with your call of fault and then be thrashing around in your mind for the signal. Be prepared to make a call. Be prepared to make the appropriate signal.

Some players have what can best be described as a *poor* service action. They put the shuttle out first and then bring the racket to it. Strictly speaking, this does indeed constitute the first forward movement. Taking the racket back now and going on to subsequently strike the shuttle is of course a fault. Forward movement was not continuous or singular. But, we as Service Judges seem to have taken a sensible approach to this *poor* service action. We have taken it to be part of the pre-ambule and not actually the start of the serve. The serve starts from here. A quick look at the Receiver should also confirm that he too is not being confused by the *poor* service action, that indeed, he recognises it for what it is.

One of the frequently used excuses for not calling faults that did occur during a match is to say that 'no advantage was being gained'. Simply, there is no such thing as *no advantage*. Sometimes the best that you may be able to achieve is a reasonable balancing of this *advantage* between the serves being delivered by both sides. A foul serve no matter how marginal is an advantage and should be recognised as such.

The evaluation of used Shuttles

It is not unusual for the Umpire sitting in his chair to observe his Service Judge giving the Player a new shuttle and then evaluating the *old* one. This is often followed by looks of utter bewilderment because, in the opinion of the Service Judge, there would seem to be nothing wrong with the *old* shuttle.

As a Service Judge this is not your job. Your job is to put the *old* shuttle in the basket provided. The Umpire and Players are agreeable to changing the shuttle – your opinion neither counts nor helps the situation.

Shuttle Control will sort out the used shuttles and if they have a problem no doubt they will voice that concern to their boss, the Referee. He, in turn, will no doubt raise the issue at a briefing or at whatever occasion is most appropriate. In essence this is a job, which as a Service Judge we need not take on.

Your Umpire may of course be agreeable to the change but may also have doubts about either the validity or frequency or both, of these requests. He may signal to you to verify his doubts. This can only be done by you evaluating the used shuttle. In these circumstances there is no problem. In other circumstances though, evaluating used shuttles could be the unfortunate catalyst for an on court discussion between all concerned. It is a waste of time.

Tipping

Like all aspects of doing this job, tipping shuttles can be managed pro-actively. Consistency on your part helps. Anticipation also helps. The ability to tip and one's capability in this regard are very important. Any old thing will not do. You will soon become the focus of the match, for all the wrong reasons. This is something that, as a Service Judge, you want to ensure does not happen.

You should be aware of the conditions in the hall and also how they have changed throughout the day. The usual practice nowadays is for the Referee to issue a 'No tipping without prior consultation with him' instruction before play starts. After a spate of requests for his presence on-court, he will issue a new instruction that tipping is at the Umpire's discretion from here on out. You must go along with this but there is nothing to stop you anticipating the change and having some shuttles tipped already.

The Referee, when called onto court, will of course re-test the original shuttles and they will be too fast. Instead of you now having to frantically tip a shuttle for testing, have one with every fourth feather tipped at the ready and also have one with every second feather tipped. The aim is to assist the process not to further delay play.

The same method can be used at the start of a match prior to warm-up, during the initial shuttle-test. If shuttle speed has become an issue and only if tipping is permitted then it is possible to offer the Players up to 4 speeds of shuttle rather than laboriously going through each option and tipping more as each shuttle is rejected.

Getting into difficulties – sinking!

This is the easiest of situations in the world to find yourself in. It happens to all Service Judges and the only positive outcome from it is that we learn for the next time.

There are days when we will have difficulty getting ourselves into a match, possibly because there has been some interruption to our pre-match preparation. The end result is a feeling of discomfiture in the chair. We do not seem to be able to make a call, yet we are pretty sure that something is wrong. We find ourselves giving the benefit of the doubt when we know better. Having not called, we then end up justifying our inaction to ourselves. The Players will start to get agitated and we know that we cannot now call because that would be seen as reacting to a Player's demands.

Better to carry on doing nothing then? No, actually! Better to recognise the black-hole that we have fallen into and better to snap out of it. We need to recognise the mess that we are currently in and are getting deeper into.

This horrible sinking feeling is akin to feeling tired whilst driving. It is of course easy to give into and to close your eyes, just for an instant. Driving with your eyes shut is never a good idea!

Therefore, recognise that the situation can and will arise: recognise the symptoms: shake yourself awake and call. It is less stressful to have acted, even belatedly. It is so difficult to face yourself, never mind your colleagues, if you have spent a match squirming at your own indecision on court.

Eyes

To look or not to look? – At least that is the question being asked here.

An Umpire needs to look into, to see into a Player's eyes. It is a necessity if he is to get his message across. An Umpire needs to be able to get hold of a Player, especially when the going gets tough.

For a Service Judge to attempt to do the same thing could be fatal. This is probably one of the most fundamental ways in which the method of approach to their jobs differs for an Umpire and a Service Judge.

It is not unusual for a Player to attempt, during the warm-up, to get *hold* of a Service Judge. This is done by the Player practicing a serve and looking to and at the Service Judge, who, if he is taking the opportunity afforded to him, is of course looking at the serve. It is so important that the Service Judge does not get drawn in by the Player. The Player may of course just be seeking some re-assurance but be wary. It is not one of your duties to sort out Players' service actions. They have Coaches for that.

As a Service Judge you want to have a mutually respectful relationship with the Players. You do not want or for that matter, need, to be the best of buddies. To be so, compromises your position. It clouds your decision making process. Again, be conscious of being seen to be fair. Seemingly having a pre-match discussion with one side may not appear so in the eyes of the opposition.

Also, especially during play, for a Service Judge to be *drawn* in by a Player can be a disaster. A Service Judge has very little vocabulary available to him. Effectively being caught by the Player in this manner can and often does give the Player, be it the Server or Receiver, the opportunity to continue a conversation which was initially started by a glance, a look.

It is therefore with a strong will on your part and with great caution that you look a Player in the eyes.

The only circumstance that will necessitate you having to look to the Server is as part of displaying your service decision. You call fault, you make the appropriate signal and, at the same time, look to the Server to confirm that they have at least heard and hopefully understood the reason for your call. After this action, which should only last a few seconds, your gaze should return to the Umpire.

Also, the Receiver will often look to you. Especially after a point has been won directly from the serve, a situation where you have clearly *not* called. He will look to seek confirmation from you, much in the same way that a Player will invariably look to the Umpire when a shuttle has been *taken / smashed* very close to the net itself and, as with you the Service Judge, no call has been made. Hopefully, you are happy with the decision that you made and should be able to confirm this to the Player, with a nod or a quick word. There is of course no official vocabulary for this, but, to say to the Receiver that the serve was 'ok' cannot do you any harm. It also shows that you were actually looking at the serve and that you are aware of what is going on and, especially, that you are not some automaton sitting in the chair!

It should not be perceived by your look to a Player that you are challenging him. You are just trying to do a job. You are not trying to be antagonistic.

If a Player wishes to pursue an issue with you it should only be with the Umpire's consent.

Otherwise any *conversation* is never two-way, especially with the Player towering over the Service Judge. It invariably is just an opportunity to apply pressure onto or embarrass the Service Judge.

Help is near at hand

The situation being outlined here is that of a Player attempting to have a conversation / discussion with you the Service Judge.

Quite often, a Player may try very hard to achieve just that. The purpose of the Player can be varied for trying to do this. It can be a way of :

- stopping the continuous progress of a game.
- putting pressure on you.
- undermining an Umpire's control of a match.

Teamwork will play a big part here, should such a situation arise. The Player will be facing you and there is little point in the Umpire talking to the back of the Player's head. So, you should direct the Player, with a friendly open hand, to make his point to the Umpire. It would also be better if you were looking at the Umpire when you were doing this. You are telling the Player, in no uncertain terms, that you are not going to be drawn into a conversation by his attempts. The Umpire can now take control of the situation and if a Player needs clarification of your decisions this can now be done with the Umpire's consent.

A major downside of actually entering into a conversation / discussion with a Player is that it could be perceived by his opponent, that you, by your subsequent actions, have reacted to his complaints. Your independence would seem to have been compromised. Your independence is paramount.

Be aware of this possibility whenever you sit down to service judge, It is just that, a possibility. Good teamwork and match awareness will make dealing with this situation easier. When all else fails it is best to let your Umpire do the talking.

Winning

Many Service Judges believe that Players, in general, do not deliberately break the rules, for to so do would, in their opinion, be cheating. And sportsmen do not cheat.

However, Players do deliberately and consciously break the service rules and they are NOT cheats. To have this opinion of them is wrong. Players are competitors and by definition they are trying to win. One way to win is to vary your serve. To serve right on the limit, maybe just over the limit. This is perfectly acceptable because you, the Service Judge, are there to pass judgement; to make a decision; to call if necessary.

It is not the Player's fault if you do not do your job. It is therefore important that you assume the role of Service Judge in the full realisation that a Player may well foul serve or more to the point test your resolve, at some point in a match. Be prepared to make the big decision. Do not delude yourself into thinking that faults are unlikely.

The possibility of a foul serve increases if a Player is struggling with an opponent and cannot get a run on his serve. Maybe a change to the action would make all the difference? They want to win. They must do something. You are not trying to pre-judge, you are just being more aware.

As a Service Judge you should be prepared to be tested just as you would not be surprised if the Players push the limits.

The situations that arise

As with most things, situations will arise which are totally out of your control.

By doing your job you may well find that a Coach will be going mad because of decisions that you are taking. The Players may well also be going crazy. Throw into this pot a partisan crowd. The Referee coming onto your court because of repeated requests through the Umpire, may only further increase your feeling of isolation and discomfort.

An approach from the Umpire whereby he tells the Players, in no uncertain terms, that he has total confidence in his Service Judge, would be an ideal first line of defence from the on-court team. Unfortunately, this rarely happens.

It is one thing when all hell is breaking loose in front of you, Referee, Umpire and Players, having a big discussion about you. It is worse, when, out of the corner of your eye, you see the Referee drifting into a position alongside your court. In this instance, as with the other, you have to be resolute and especially not to be influenced to do other than what you were doing anyway – which of course was a good job?

Players will try to humiliate you. This can be done by the Player stuffing their shirt into their shorts and hitching them up in a comical way – all the time looking at you. They are trying to imply that you have problems locating their waist when in actuality it is the location of the shuttle at impact that is the issue.

Another tactic used by an *offending* Player is to halt proceedings by initially asking for confirmation of your call / signal. Then they question your call by proclaiming innocence for a fault which you have not called. For instance, you call fault for shuttle above the waist – the Player will proclaim innocence for racket high, not below the hand, and vice versa. Your best tactic is to make your signal again, keep conversation, if any, to a minimum and, if the charade is no more than just that, to direct the Player to the Umpire. That is what the Umpire is there for.

Also, please remember that it is up to the Player to know and understand the Service Judge's hand signals. Do not be taken in by a seeming misunderstanding or misinterpretation of your signal. Often this is no more than a delaying tactic and also a way to put the spotlight on you. The presumption here is that you have, of course, made the appropriate hand signal for the fault called!

You will be shouted at - use your Umpire.

Players will gesture at you and imply that you should possibly wake-up!

Shuttles will be fired at you during shuttle changes.

Players will make it their business to pass close to your position and to say something to / at you.

Be prepared for these attempts at your humiliation. See through them. Know them for what they are and do not be fazed by them.

As has been said earlier, we are both Umpires and Service Judges. We should be good Umpires too, when this part of the game starts to be played out. We should deal with it before it becomes too much for one of our colleagues to deal with.

Staying put!

This is a situation that you will find yourself in quite often, especially in Mixed Doubles. The service positions taken up by the serving side may partially, if not totally, obscure your view of the service.

Interestingly, this topic has generated the most discussion. It is the most difficult situation that you can find yourself in, especially if you have doubts about the legality of a service action.

A number of opinions as to how to deal with this situation have been given. All of this is in the presumption that the Service Judge has started from his traditional location of centre court at the net post. Here are the solutions that have been given:

- Move to the best position so as to enable you to see and judge a serve.
- Move to the opposite side of the court.
- Stay put and only physically move your body to endeavour to see as best as this position permits.

The other issue raised with regard to the original problem of being unsighted is that, even with serious doubts about a serve, it would be wrong for a Service Judge to make a call of fault for the reason that a Player is innocent until definitively proven guilty.

Another opinion is that the Service Judge should take into account all of the accumulated evidence of a problem and to call accordingly without having moved position.

Finally, there is a suggestion that the Service Judge should initially move location and if this effort too proves fruitless to call accordingly.

There are many problems with each of the above *solutions*. The aim is of course to solve what is indeed a serious problem for Service Judges and this does not happen in a satisfactory manner with any of the above.

It seems very wrong that a Player can effectively put a Service Judge in a position whereby he is unable to carry out the job which he has been appointed to do.

This document attempts to offer solutions to issues that may, and so often do, arise when service judging. Unfortunately, no definitive solution is given to this problem. Further discussion is required.

Here though, is a suggestion:

- An additional Service Law, stating that the Service Judge is entitled to a clear view of the complete service action and that the Players can only take up positions that permit this to happen.
- A call would of course be required. Possibly *Let?*

The Loneliest Seat!

As a Service Judge, you should be fully aware that our seat can and so often will become a very lonely place to be.

This can be the case whether we are doing a good job or a bad one. It can therefore, hardly come as much of a surprise when we invariably recoil when a service judging duty is awarded.

It is all about attitude. A positive attitude to the job will see us through, to be able to sit in this chair knowing that you have approached the job properly. Having used your time well and being confident in your decisions makes sitting there an awful lot easier than the sensation of squirming in indecision and self doubt for an entire match.

The loneliness of sitting low down on centre court is endurable if you are confident in what you are and have been doing. This confidence comes from the application of a proper method.

There is little point in fearing the inevitable with regard to being a Service Judge. We have to do it. Therefore, we should do it well. We are happy to make decisions from on high as Umpires. The same should be the case when we are Service Judges. We want to be part of the game. A service judging decision can either be *silence* or a call of *fault* from you. Either decision by you should be made in confidence and not under apparent pressure to so do.

Service judging demands a decision each and every time a serve is delivered and we as Service Judges have the best seat in the house from which to make these decisions.

The job can be a lonely one and you do have to be your own man / woman when out in the middle. Your role is no different from that of an Umpire in this regard. You do not want to be influenced by others. You do want to make your own decisions – soundly. And, you are part of a team.

Fear

Is there a fear behind all of this? Yes, there is.

There is a fear that –

- We will not do the job as it should be done.
- Referee's will bow to pressure put upon them at events and effectively not support their team.
- We are more willing to service judge some players than others.

Regardless of the above there is still the hope and the need for us Umpires to want and to be encouraged to become, initially better and subsequently as a consequence, consistent Service Judges.

Finally, there is the hope that this document will be a help to that end.