



San Diego County Tennis Umpires Association



Line Umpire Evaluations

Below is information from the ATP regarding the grading of line umpires. If you are now working or considering work as an ATP line umpire, you should be familiar with this material. Good grades are critical for obtaining and maintaining ATP assignments.

Included also are instructions for chair umpires evaluating line umpires, and how line umpire are graded. Even if you never work an ATP match, this information can be useful since it gives you an insight into how officials working at the highest level are evaluated and what approach the tour uses to grade and hire officials.

How to Evaluate Line Umpires

Premise: This is your subjective opinion of how comfortable you feel with each line umpire on your matches for a tournament week.

Healthy Philosophy: We do not cut people. We pick 15, 20, or 30 top rated officials for that week *to* work the final days of the tournament. (This is done at European tournament, not in the USA.)

The week's grades will reflect a line umpire's performance that week only. Do not grade on your history with a line umpire, their reputation, on the opinion of other chair umpires, or on any other personal criteria.

What should you use in your evaluation:

- ACCURACY
- Consistency
- Voice
- Appearance
- Reliability
- Punctuality
- Cooperation
- Professionalism

What items to take into account:

- Which lines (far-side, serve, baseline, near-side, all lines)
- How often did you see them (once or 10 times)
- How often did they work Gust qualifying, main draw, semi-finals/finals)
- How well did they sell their calls (solid, without query, weak voice, flagged calls, blocked but guessed anyway)
- How difficult was the match (7-6 in the third set, or 6-1 6-1)
- Importance of the match (first round, or semi-final/final)
- Feature match vs. outside court
- How do they perform under adversity (long match, long day, long week / heat, cold, rain / pressure match vs. dull match / pressure line vs. easy line / reaction after a close call / reaction after an overrule / accuracy and technique calling between the receiver)

Daily grading:

It's very important to grade the line umpires after each match so his or her performance is fresh in your mind. If you are not provided with the form(s), it is your responsibility to obtain the information needed to record evaluations on the line umpires who worked the match.

Individual grading systems are as different as chair umpiring techniques.

The simplest system uses a check, check minus, check plus, minus, and a plus. Simple but difficult to differentiate one line umpire from another.

Adding the line that the line umpire was responsible for adds another dimension.

Adding the number of overrules and/or close calls also adds dimension. !

Adding a notation as to the difficulty of the match, weather conditions, etc. gives you more information to add into your deliberations.

You have to find a system you are comfortable with and gives you the ability to rank the line umpires by ability at the end of the week. Number grades are not necessary at this time. The Chair Umpire Summary Form (PRO-I OD-2) with the alphabetical listing of all line umpires at the tournament is provided for this purpose.

Transferring your grades from each match to the Chair Umpire Summary Form (PRO- 10D-2) on a daily basis is very important so you will be ready to help select the line officials for the weekend or to answer the question "Who do you want on serve or far side?".

End-of-week grading:

The night before your last day, you need to look at all your daily ratings and determine a grade for the entire tournament for each official using the Chair Umpire Summary Form (PRO-IOD-2). Give it to the On-Site Monitor or the Supervisor.

Only grade officials that you have seen and that you have a definite opinion on. There may be an official that you only saw once or twice on easy matches/no close calls that you don't feel comfortable giving a grade. There may be an official you only saw once but they had several close calls or overrules and you feel you have enough information to give them a grade.

It is important to have your grades reflect small differences between officials (i.e. not all officials are 2.0). Again there are many systems to arrive at final grades.

- One system is to give a grade to your best official then a grade to your worst official. Then establish several officials between those two and give them grades. Measure and compare those officials with each official and determine a grade.
- Another system is to use the below guidelines for each official regardless of the other officials at the tournament. Assuming the delineation will happen nevertheless.

Guidelines

Grading Standards: "1" is high and "4" is low. Grades should be given in tenths (i.e. a line umpire with a grade of "1.8" is slightly stronger than one with a grade of "1.9"). There are no grades in tenths between a grade of "3" and a grade of "4". A grade of "4" is a flag to indicate the line umpire should not work under any circumstances.

Above Average Officials

"1 " - a line umpire in whom you have absolute confidence for any match for this week, perfect on every tough call, accuracy never in doubt in your mind.

"1.1 to 1.4" - a line umpire who had a very good week on tough lines, never missed a call, and very little doubt in your mind about those calls.

"1.5" - a line umpire who had a very good week with many close calls that they sold with confident calls and hand signals.

"1.6 - 1.7" - a line umpire who had a good week with several close calls and in whom you have a reasonable amount of confidence.

Average Officials

"1.8 - 1.9" - a line umpire who had a good week with some close calls but you may not feel confident in this person on far-side line.

"2.0" - an average line umpire (base line and near side line only)

Below Average Officials

"2.1 - 2.4" - an average line umpire who did not have a good week. May have been overruled several times, did not sell his/her calls, had numerous questioned calls.

"2.5" - a below average line umpire who you would only want to see on near-side and still feel that you have to watch that line very closely. This person should only be used for the first round in an emergency.

"3" - a less than average line umpire whom should only be assigned at most to work qualifying when you are short-handed.

"4" - a line umpire who should not be assigned as a line umpire at any time at a professional tournament.

What Chair Umpires are Looking For In Line Umpires

By Joan Vormbaum / January 2003

Here is what they want, in order of importance:

1. Most important: consistently accurate calls, particularly when the match is hotly contested and the calls are all millimeters inside or outside the lines.
2. Loudness of voice should be appropriate to closeness of out ball and also should be responsive to the atmosphere of the match. No matter what, the line umpire should never sound intimidated, unsure or bored. A weak voice in the player's mind implies that the line umpire is unsure and that the call may be wrong.
3. Confident athletic image - umpires who look timid, have poor posture, move slowly or are noticeably out of shape do not win the confidence of the players, and having them on court causes extra problems for the chairs. A player's very life depends on enough discipline to be fit to play, and a player instinctively distrusts someone who appears to lack that kind of discipline. They also are for the most part kids playing tennis, and anything over 30 is ancient to them. If you want to win their confidence and you are older, you have to appear that much stronger and more confident than the younger umpires.
4. Aura of integrity - players fear that men umpires are too egotistical to correct a mistake if they make one, and they fear that the women umpires will be intimidated by their opponents or the crowd and won't make the tough call. Being able to look the players in the eye without being officious or challenging or obsequious is very important. The players judge all of us by looking at us and what their instinct tells them in that look.

The best umpires share one outstanding trait - they have very high standards and they do not flinch from evaluating themselves hard, even when others are praising them. And they never care what line they are on, or what court they are on, or what players they are umpiring. They know every call and every match is important.