

Umpires Progression and Advanced Umpire Training

Introduction

Since the start of the International Umpires (IU) certification in 1973, the ITTF has qualified more than 5000 IUs. It has set a minimum standard for umpires of all Associations, which have different training methods with no uniform standard of performance. Since 2002, the Umpires and Referees Committee (URC) of the ITTF has taken an important step towards one of its major objectives: “To raise and level the standard and consistency of umpires from all Associations/Federations”.

This has been done by creating two levels of certification for IUs, expressed in the colour of badges, namely the White Badge and the Blue Badge. These badges only exist in name and on paper, IUs will continue to wear the copper-coloured badge issued by the ITTF.

White Badge

All current IUs will be considered as qualified for the White Badge. URC will develop training facilities, and perhaps the exam procedure will be adapted. In the near future there will be additional conditions to maintain the active status, such as secure knowledge of rules.

Blue Badge

Umpires with excellent performance who have the ambition can try to achieve the Blue Badge qualification. This qualification has been and will be an increasing factor in umpire selection.

How to qualify for Blue Badge

Requirements:

- Be an active White Badge umpire for at least 2 years;
- Comply with the URC code of conduct and dress-code;
- Attend the AUT course;
- Pass the written examination during the AUT course;
- Have at least 4 personal evaluations during actual performance with “meets expectations” in each of the defined categories (in a minimum of two competitions from a minimum of three evaluators);
- Pass an oral interview to demonstrate their competency in English to communicate with players and officials during tournaments.

The examination consists of 60 multiple-choice questions, of which 15 will be only in English, the other 45 will be available translated into 8 other languages: French, German, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Arabic. This is to ensure that candidates have a sound knowledge in the application of laws and regulations, as well as a reasonable command of English that is required in major ITTF events.

Additional requirements

- The umpire must have participated as an IU in at least 2 international events;
- The 4 “meets expectations” should be obtained in a minimum of two competitions from a minimum of three different evaluators;
- After obtaining the first “meets expectations” the remaining 3 should be obtained within 7 attempts;
- No evaluations can be from an evaluator from that umpire’s own association;
- After obtaining the 4th “meets expectations” the candidate will have a maximum of 12 months to take the English interview;
- If the candidate fails the English interview they will have a maximum of 2 years from their first interview to re-take it;

- The Blue Badge process must be completed in 5 years or less from the time of passing the AUT exam;
- Candidates not taking the interview in time or not completing the Blue Badge process in 5 years, revert to the White Badge status and must restart through the complete Blue Badge procedure;
- For evaluations performed in 2006 or later, a “meets expectation” would only be counted after passing the written examination;
- Evaluations only count if the umpire is part of the regular umpires squad, performing daily duties, but not tournament officials who officiate only for the sake of evaluation;
- Any “meets expectation” evaluations are only considered as “conditional meets”, which will only be confirmed after continuous observation further evaluation throughout the tournament. Any inconsistent or poor performance would result in deletion of such positive result, and the trainer will notify the umpire;
- After having obtained the first “meets expectation” getting a “does not meet” (not a “near”) will cancel a “meets expectation”;
- If a Blue-Badge candidate is not present at the “Referee’s briefing” he will not be evaluated during the respective event, unless the absence was for an acceptable reason, at the discretion of the evaluator.

How to maintain the Blue Badge status

Requirements:

- In a period of 3 calendar years at least 3 personal evaluations during actual performance with “meets expectations” in each of the defined categories;
- Meet the current re-certification process of White Badge umpires, as soon as re-certification is in place;
- The 3 “meets expectations” should be obtained in a minimum of two competitions from a minimum of two different evaluators;
- No evaluation can be from an evaluator from that umpire’s own association;
- After passing the oral interview any further “meets” will count for the following period of 3 years for maintaining the blue-badge qualification, but “meets” between the 4th “meets” and the oral interview shall not be reckoned;
- Blue Badge umpires not meeting these requirements by December 31 of any year, would be qualified as White Badge umpires for the following year;

Former Blue Badge umpires who lose their status may regain their Blue Badge status by meeting the requirement of 4 “meets expectations” in 2 successive calendar years.

Advanced Umpires Training Courses

The AUT course is normally scheduled one day before the start of several ITTF sanctioned events. White Badge umpires officiating in these events are invited to attend the training. The URC will announce the schedule of the organised AUT courses on the website; umpires who are not officiating in the event are also welcome to attend the course and take the examination.

The training is based on the concept: “I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand”. There is a high degree of active participation.

Global summary of subjects:

- Introduction activities;
- Code of conduct & dress-code;
- Standards for service & behaviour;
- Hand signals & field of play procedures;
- Evaluations;
- Knotty problems;
- Written exam.

The training does not cover the material asked in the exam. Participants must have a very strong knowledge of rules and must be up to date on recent rule changes. The examination and oral interview may not be re-taken less than 12 months since the last attempt, and not more than twice within a five-year period.

The Trainers

The trainers for AUT courses are experienced International Umpires / Referees who are nominated by their respective Continental Federations or identified by the URC during the course. All trainers are specially trained and updated regularly on requirements of the Blue Badge Programme, with an aim to maintain consistent application of laws and regulations, as well as a standard presentation at major ITTF events.

Costs for Participants

A course fee of US\$40 will be charged, which will include attending the course, the written examination and the field of play evaluations, and the evaluations thereafter in subsequent tournaments. However, if a candidate fails in the written examination, there will be no more field of play evaluations conducted until he takes the examination again.

Participants are required to pay for the extra personal costs (e.g. hotel and food) when arriving one day earlier.

Costs for Organisers

For URC selected events, the ITTF will be responsible for the following costs:

- Travelling expenses and honorarium for the appointed trainers;
- Course and examination materials.

The Organisers are responsible for the following:

- Hospitality (accommodation + meals + local travelling) for the trainers;
- Airport transfer and local transportation for the trainers;
- Training facilities – classroom, equipment such as computer, projector, screen, white board, flip charts, copying services, etc;
- Refreshments during breaks would be appreciated.

To qualify for the ITTF expenses, a minimum of 12 and maximum 25 participants from at least three different Associations are required. Two trainers will be assigned to the AUT course and evaluations, and additional trainers may be required for more than 25 participants.

Other Special Considerations

The URC may also send trainers to specific events upon request of the Organisers, who agree to cover all related costs of the course, including transportation and honorarium for trainers.

Priority is also given to regions and special groups (such as women in sport), where the Blue Badge Programme is less developed. Requirements for the AUT course may also be relaxed (e.g. fewer participants / Associations) at the discretion of the URC.

Consideration will also be given to sending evaluators to events, where no AUT course is held, where the organiser agrees to cover the costs of the evaluators.

Contact

Organisers wishing to organise an AUT course, or to have trainers/evaluators at their events, please contact the Chair of the URC.