

AWARDING LINE UMPIRE ASSESSMENTS

GUIDANCE FOR NATIONAL CHAIR UMPIRES

In an effort to create greater consistency in how Line Umpires are assessed, the ABTO Training & Development (T&D) Panel has been looking at ways in which we can support our national Chair Umpires (i.e. Chair Umpires graded U1 and U2) in this area.

At the start of 2020, the T&D Panel organised short briefing sessions at professional tournaments covering this topic, and one of the ABTO webinars held as part of The Conversation also focused on answering questions from both Chair and Line Umpires about how marks are awarded. A recording of the one-hour webinar can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/419387391> (password: ABTOwebinar3).

Building on this, the T&D Panel contacted all British ITF certified Chair Umpires in May 2020 and invited them to participate in a survey in which they were asked to review a number of hypothetical on-court scenarios and indicate what mark they would award in each case. The purpose of the exercise was to create a resource that could be used as a useful reference guide for national level Chair Umpires who typically have fewer opportunities to assess Line Umpires than certified Chair Umpires.

We have compiled a summary of the results and set them out in this document. While the results provide a useful reference, please remember that no two scenarios are ever exactly the same so the results shown here are not prescriptive and should be used directionally. When awarding Line Umpire assessments, you should always consider each scenario on the basis of its own specific circumstances.

While we can all appreciate that awarding marks is by its nature subjective, our aim is that by sharing examples such as the ones set out in this document, we can work towards achieving greater consistency.

We hope that you will find this a useful reference guide and wish you the best in your officiating.

The ABTO Training and Development Panel
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The survey

- 43 British Chair Umpires were invited to participate in the survey; 15 were International Chair Umpires and 28 were White Badge Chair Umpires.
- The survey was conducted between 26 May 2020 and 16 June 2020.
- Responses were received from 24 Chair Umpires (9 International and 15 White Badge).
- Respondents were asked to review a number of hypothetical on-court scenarios and, using the standard 1-7 assessment scale (including n/a), indicate the mark that they would award to the Line Umpire in each case.
- In addition to indicating the mark that they would award, respondents were also able to provide additional comments to explain how they reached their decision. This has been very helpful in understanding their thought processes.

On the pages that follow, we have provided brief descriptions of 16 Line Umpiring scenarios. The descriptions provide as much context as is possible in this document, but please bear in mind that the written descriptions alone cannot replicate real-life scenarios so in some cases, respondents may have interpreted the situations slightly differently. For this reason, please do review the comments that accompany each scenario in addition to looking at the marks awarded. The comments provide some useful guidance and help explain the factors that were considered in each case.

As well as the specific comments that are listed beneath each scenario, there are a few general observations that apply in all cases and that we have set out below:

- Always check the Line Umpire Marking Assessment Scale, which should be displayed on the notice board in the officials' area and remind yourself of the scale before awarding any marks. The assessment scale is reproduced on the next page.
- If in any doubt about what mark should be awarded, talk through the situation with the Chief.
- If you intend to award a mark of 2 or lower, this should be discussed with the Chief as soon as possible after the match. This will ensure that any investigations or training for the Line Umpire can be carried out as soon as possible.

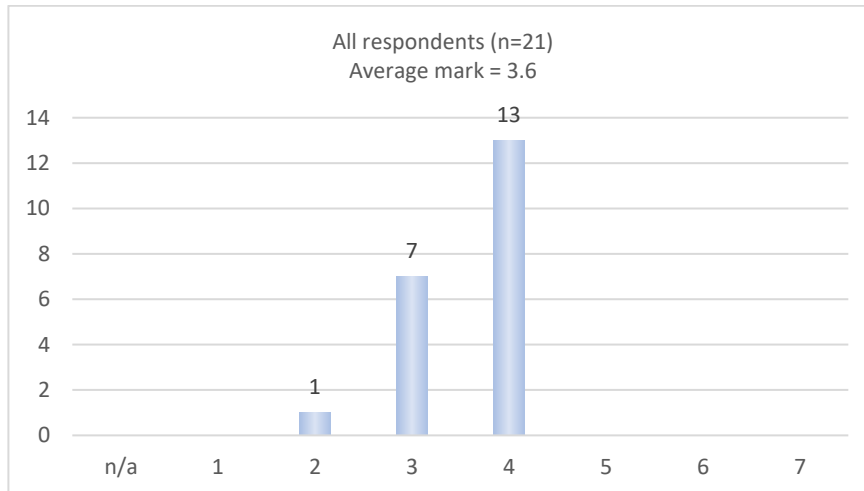
Line Umpire Marking Assessment Scale

For reference, we have shown the standard 1-7 assessment scale here. This scale is used at all ITF, WTA and ATP events and at Grand Slams.

7	A Line Umpire who had an excellent rotation and in whom you have absolute confidence. Accuracy is never in doubt and all calls are sold in an outstanding way. Excellent image. OR Excellent handling of a very difficult on-court situation with outstanding professionalism.
6	A Line Umpire who had a very good rotation. There is very little doubt in your mind about the accuracy of his/her calls. Very good image. OR Very professional handling of a difficult on-court situation.
5	A Line Umpire who had a solid professional rotation. This official had some challenging calls that were made correctly and sold well. Comfortable and confident on-court image.
4	A Line Umpire who is not outstanding in any way or was not challenged during his/her rotation. This official did an average job with an occasional error during the rotation. Acceptable image.
3	A Line Umpire who had a below average rotation. This official made some errors, and looked nervous, lacking in confidence and/or inexperienced.
2	A Line Umpire who had a poor rotation and was overruled or missed calls several times during the rotation. You would only want to see this Line Umpire on the near side and you still feel that you to watch that line closely. This official did not sell his/her calls, may have had numerous questioned calls and displayed poor on-court positioning and image. OR Lack of professionalism.
1	A Line Umpire who had an unacceptable rotation and whose calls were overruled and/or questioned numerous times affecting the flow of the match. This official has a very poor image as well as very poor techniques. You had no confidence in this official on any line. OR A very serious or repeated lack of professionalism or breach of the Code for Officials.
N/A	The Line Umpire did not have to make any calls during that rotation. The line Umpire was not observed enough to give an assessment.

SCENARIO 1:

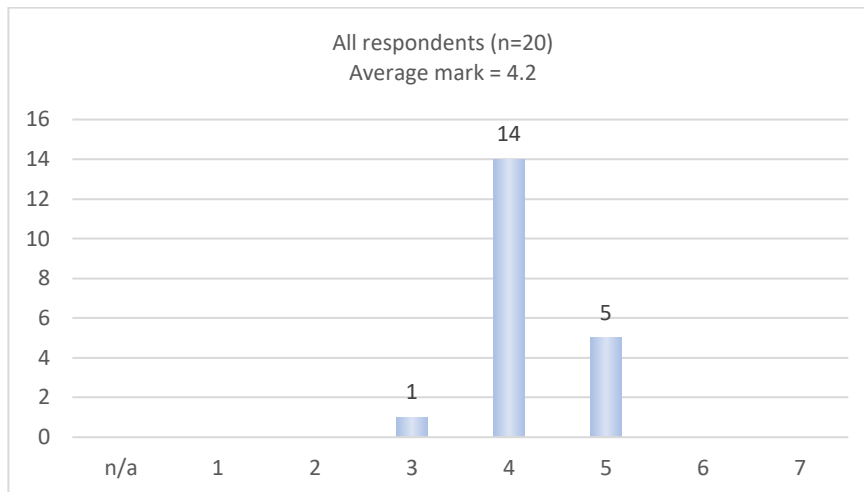
A Line Umpire is calling a long line at a Men's World Tennis Tour event in Bolton. The Line Umpire was under a little pressure and had a few calls to make, however received one clear overrule and corrected a call. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire?

**Comments:**

- I am tempted to say 3, but this could easily be a 4 as well. Clearly this was not above average as they were overruled and had a correction. If the calls they had to make were straightforward and easy to get correct then I think a 3 is justifiable. If the calls they made were tricky then a 4 is justifiable.
- The fact that they had a few calls to make probably means that overall a 4 is ok. If, however, there were technical problems and the Line Umpire continually looked unsure then I would have awarded a mark of 3.
- The Line Umpire was under a little pressure, with only a few calls, one overrule and one correction – this could be a 3 or a 4.
- There was one clear mistake and a self-correction. The Line Umpire needs to refocus after an overrule and not call too quickly.
- This could be a 3 or a 4 depending on how much pressure they were under, the players involved and how many calls they had to make as well as how tight these calls were and if they were sold well.

SCENARIO 2:

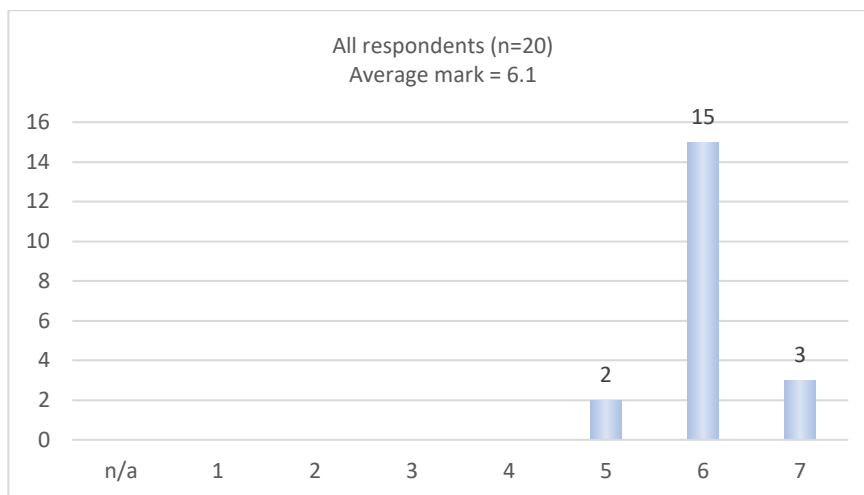
A Line Umpire is calling serve at a World Tennis Tour women's doubles final in Shrewsbury. The Line Umpire had a satisfactory rotation with acceptable calls, except for one overrule when the Line Umpire called a ball out that was taking a fraction of the line. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire?

**Comments:**

- If the Line Umpire was heading for a 4 anyway, I would give a 4. It does not sound as if they were looking at a 5 before the overrule but if they were, I would still consider a 5.
- It was a satisfactory rotation i.e. they did an average job. One overrule and the rest of the rotation was acceptable. It was certainly not above average.
- The rotation is described as 'satisfactory with acceptable calls', then even with one overall means I would award a mark of 4. If it said lots of good calls, but with one overrule just taking a fraction of the line, then I would award a mark of 5.
- There is no mention that any of the calls they got right were challenging.
- There was one mistake, taking only a fraction of line; I would mark this based on a satisfactory rotation.
- This is hard to comment on as it does not say how long the rotation was or what the match score was. A rotation of 45 minutes on a 6-0 6-0 match could be a 4 whereas had it been sit-and-stay on a 7-5 6-7 10-8 match, then it could be a 5.

SCENARIO 3:

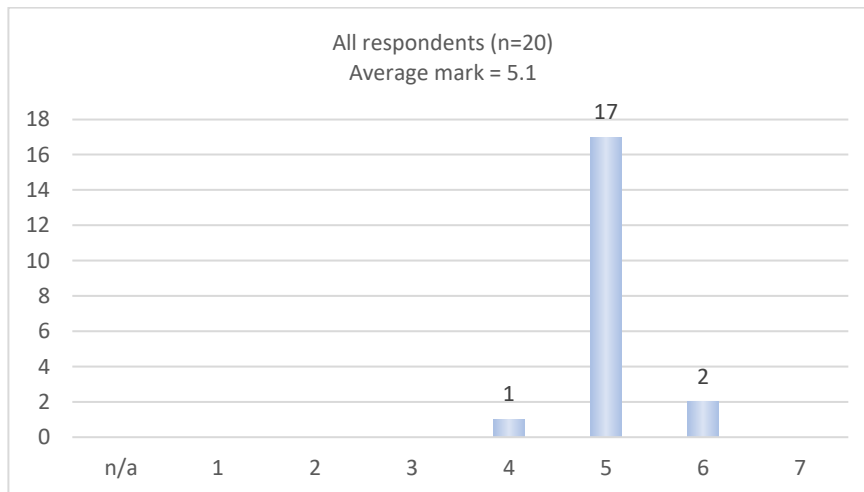
A Line Umpire is calling long line on an ATP Challenger match in Glasgow. It is a second-round men's match, and the Line Umpire is one of two umpires calling long lines through the net. It is a long rotation and the match is very close, ending in a final set tiebreak. The Line Umpire makes numerous excellent calls on both sides of the net, with all calls appearing to be correct. All calls are sold well, made promptly and with no queries from players. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire?

**Comments:**

- The marking scale describes a 7 as 'a Line Umpire who had an excellent rotation, accuracy never in doubt and all calls are sold in an outstanding way'. The description above goes a long way to meet that, with it also saying a final set tiebreak. Only being a second-round match is a factor to consider, which may sway it to a mark of 6.
- The only problem maybe with this scenario is defining what an 'excellent' call is as we will all have differing opinions there. From the way I read this scenario then I would give a 6.
- This depends on what is meant by a 'long rotation' - does this mean an hour or 90 mins or longer? What 'excellent calls' means is dependent on the person marking. I would expect a Line Umpire to be calling balls flat on the line in and ones clearly out, other people would say these are 'good, accurate calls'. The mark could vary between a 5 and 6 here.
- This is a borderline 7.
- This is an ATP Challenger, so there is more pressure. The Line umpire is calling through the net, it is a very close match, numerous excellent calls with no queries. Perhaps if this was the semi/final with more of a crowd it could be a 7.
- This is potentially a 5 or 6, or even 7 depending on the length of the rotation and when the calls were made. Making 6 great unquestioned calls in the final set tie break may get a 6 or 7 if unquestioned by both players. There are lots of variables here.
- This was an excellent rotation at a Challenger event, medium pressure, selling calls well. This is certainly better than a 5.

SCENARIO 4:

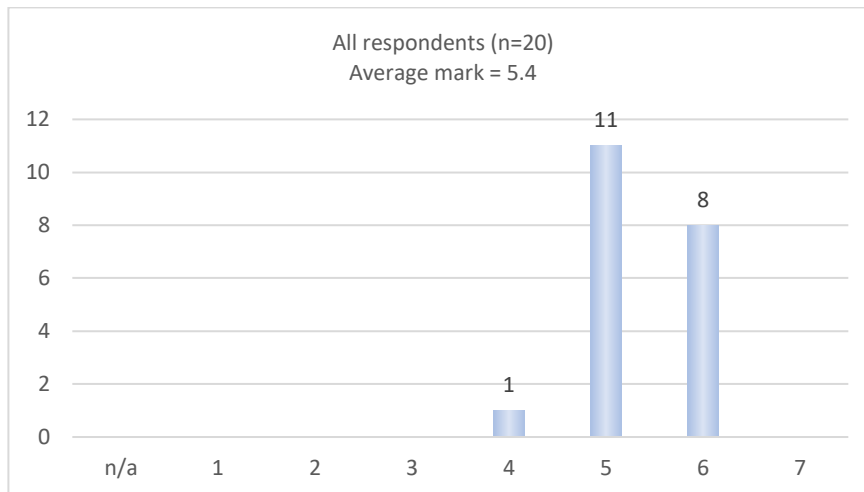
A Line Umpire is calling the long lines through the net at a World Tennis Tour event in Chiswick. It is the women's singles quarter final match and there are two umpires calling long lines on the match. The Line Umpire gives a solid performance. He/she had some calls to make, and all calls were accurate and sold well. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire?

**Comments:**

- A solid performance, calls to make, all accurate and sold well. This all matches the description of a mark of 5 on the scale.
- It is tough to tell from the description as I do not know how close these calls were, but it sounds like a 5 is most likely.
- 'Some calls' is what we would expect to be made therefore this could be a 4, but if there was one call at a vital moment and it was sold well, then this could be a 5.
- This reads like an average rotation. Again, the mark here depends on the length of the rotation. If the Line Umpire was doing sit-and-stay or was on for say 90 minutes, then a 5 could easily be warranted.
- This was a solid performance, in a normal level pressure match.
- We need to allow for calling through net which makes it more difficult. I have assumed that the calls were close.
- This would probably be a 4 but could be a 5 depending on how many 'some' is.

SCENARIO 5:

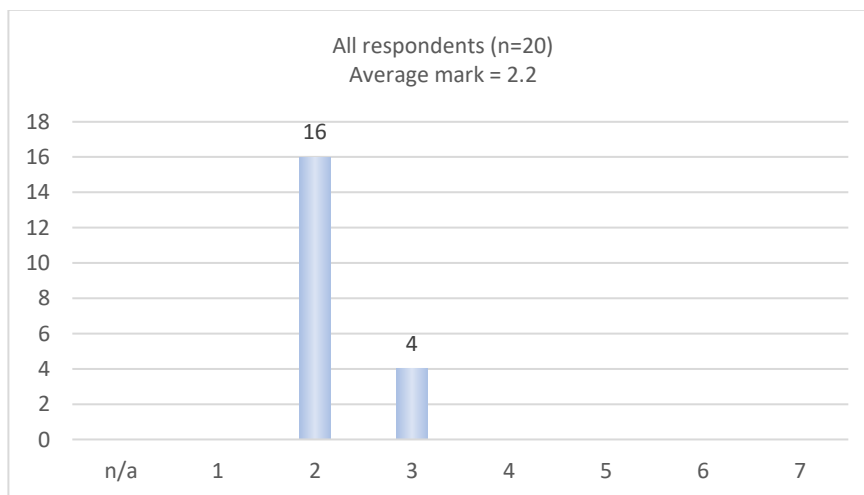
A Line Umpire is calling serve on a women's semi-final match at a World Tennis Tour event in Sheffield. The players are serving very fast and close to the line, and overall the Line Umpire gives an excellent performance with many close balls correctly called. The Line Umpire does miss one call across the session, which is overruled by the Chair Umpire. Regardless, the Chair Umpire is still comfortable and confident of the official's performance. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire?

**Comments:**

- It could also be a 6, but they would have had to be on court for a long time with lots of calls just off the back of the line or just out to earn that. From the description provided, I think this is a 5.
- The description says an excellent performance, which could lead to starting at a mark of 7. One overrule is going to take a mark off. To award a 6 with an overrule it has got to be an otherwise absolutely exceptional performance under very high pressure, which I do not think this description quite matches, so therefore a mark of 5.
- The single error does not negate an otherwise excellent session.
- This probably would have been a 6 without the overrule so logically with only one call missed within an excellent performance it shouldn't be downgraded by 2 to a 4.
- This would probably be a 6 but it depends on the length of the rotation and exactly how many calls were made, alongside the severity of the overrule.

SCENARIO 6:

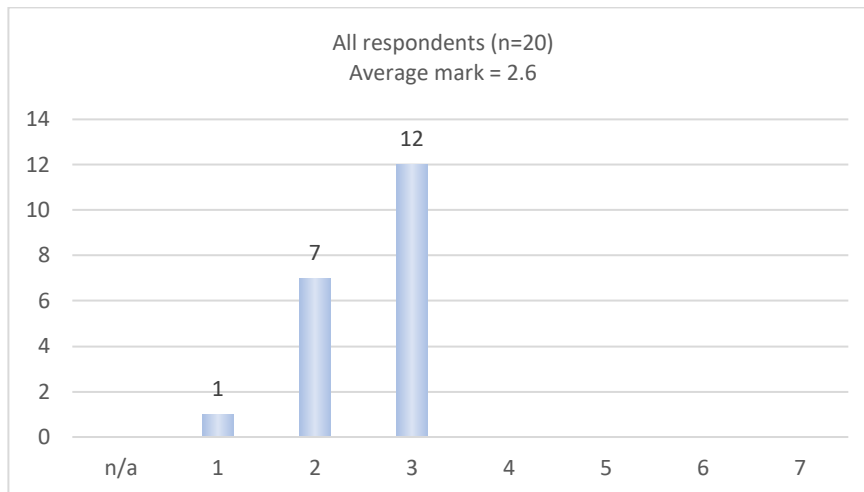
A Line Umpire is calling baseline at the Wimbledon Qualifying event. A coach of one of the players is sitting directly behind the baseline Umpire. The Chair Umpire notices that whenever the player and coach are at the same side of the court, there is some verbal communication occurring. At the change of ends, the Chair Umpire asks the Line Umpire if there is any coaching taking place and asks them to please report immediately if they do in fact hear any coaching. At the end of the match the Line Umpire admits that the coach was giving clear direction and instruction, but the Line Umpire didn't want to interrupt the match because they were too scared to come up and report it. What score should the Chair Umpire give the Line Umpire?

**Comments:**

- I would mark them on the basis of the failure to listen to a request, which also undermines the Chair Umpire.
- It is a Line Umpire's responsibility to report this incident. Lack of experience and confidence prevented him from doing so in this case, but it is not an excuse particularly as there was clear verbal communication and the Chair Umpire had noticed something of this nature asking the Line Umpire to report it if heard. This might have had an effect on the outcome of the match if one player is being coached.
- This is a failure to perform duties and responsibilities in a potentially high-profile match (grand slam qualifying). While coaching has its grey areas within the sport, the Chair Umpire was clear with their instructions and the Line Umpire failed to perform.
- This was a lack of professionalism made more serious as the Chair Umpire specifically asked. I assume that they called the Line Umpire up to chair to make this request?
- Tough one. How did the Chair Umpire ask the Line Umpire? Did they just make gestures, or did they physically call the Line Umpire up at the changeover and tell them to report coaching if they hear it? If the Chair Umpire clearly told the Line Umpire about reporting coaching, then this has to be below average. Though, a Line Umpire should report clear code violations. It is their duty, so if they do not do it, then that is a below average performance.

SCENARIO 7:

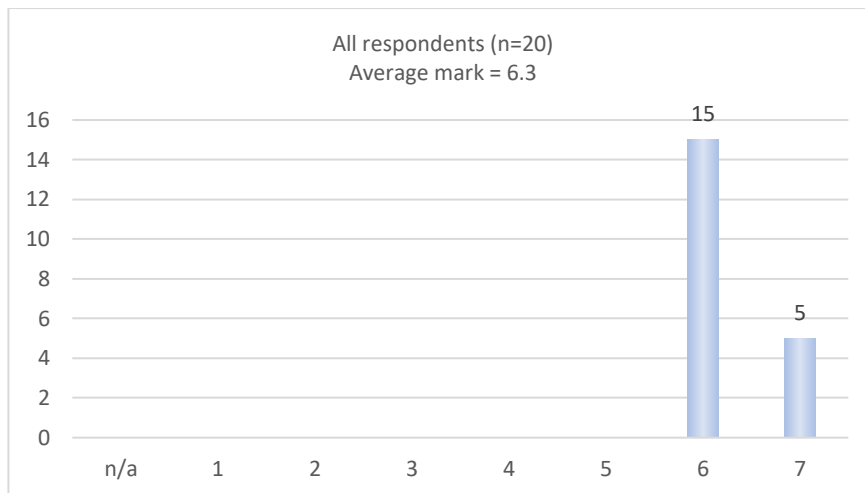
A Line Umpire is calling a long line at a World Tennis Tour event in Barnstaple. The Line Umpire receives an overrule when a clear mistake is made. Due to a lack of technique, there are also many other issues throughout the session, including several weak calls. This caused a distraction in the match a couple of times, and a growing frustration from the players. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire?

**Comments:**

- It is better to correct the technique for future matches rather than discourage by issuing a 2 at this stage, particularly at this event.
- It matches the description on the assessment scale of someone who had a poor rotation and someone who you would be watching extremely closely.
- Several techniques, positioning and image problems that are causing multiple distractions in the match. It will have a significant impact on the confidence that the Chair Umpire and players would have.
- The lack of technique caused issues and player frustration, there were several weak calls, an overrule on a clear mistake. This could be a 3 or even a 2 as I would maybe only be confident with this Line Umpire on a near line.
- This cannot be higher than a 3 as it is clearly below average. It could also be a 2 if we feel in the chair that we would not trust the Line Umpire even on a near side.

SCENARIO 8:

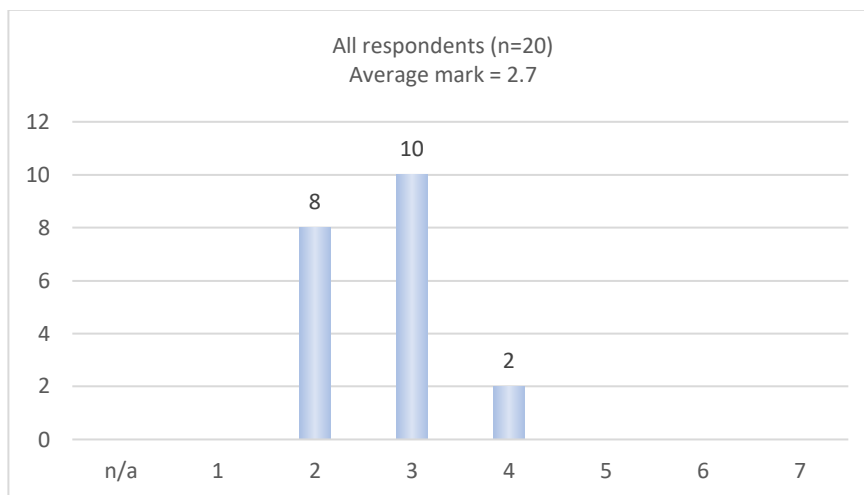
A Line Umpire is calling serve for the singles final at an outdoor World Tennis Tour event at the NTC in Roehampton. The Line Umpire makes many excellent calls and all calls are sold well, made promptly and with minimal queries from players. During the set break, the Line Umpire escorts a player to the toilet and notices the player uses the time to sit in the shade. It is a particularly hot day. The Line Umpire tells the player that this is not allowed during a toilet break, and reports the matter to the Chair Umpire once returning to the court. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire?

**Comments:**

- A mark of 6 or 7 would be appropriate. Excellent calls and also the handling and reporting of an off-court situation.
- Excellent performance.
- Professional response to the situation and should be rewarded as well as the excellent performance on court.
- The on-court performance was good, in addition to professional handling of an off-court situation, which is part of the duties and responsibilities of a Line Umpire.
- This could be a 5, 6 or 7 depending on the calls and whether they were under pressure.
- This is a borderline 7.
- This is in the 5-7 range; there's not enough information to know just how close the calls were.

SCENARIO 9:

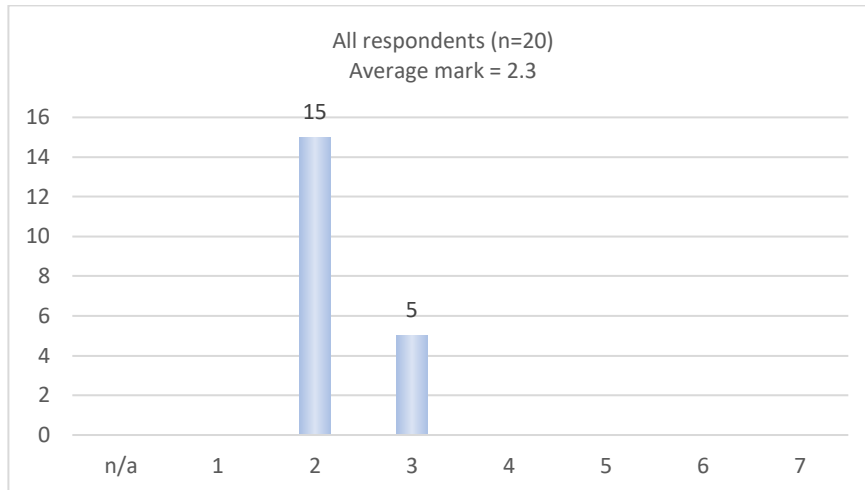
A Line Umpire at a World Tennis Tour event in Sunderland is giving a satisfactory performance across their rotation. The performance is of a standard that the Chair Umpire would have given the official a score of 4. At the set break the Line Umpire is asked to escort a player to the bathroom. Upon returning to court, the Line Umpire says nothing to the Chair Umpire and play resumes. At the end of the match, a different Line Umpire informs the Chair Umpire that they were also in the bathroom during the player's toilet break, and saw that the player splashed water on their face and did not use the toilet at all. On further investigation, the Line Umpire in question admits that the player did not use the toilet and the official said nothing to the player. What score should the Chair Umpire give?

**Comments:**

- If a Line Umpire escorts a player for a bathroom break, there is a clear procedure and this should be followed, otherwise there would be little point in them going with the player.
- It was a mark of 4 for the on-court performance, then a drop of one for what happened at the set break.
- This is a tricky one. This could be a 3 or a 4. The Line Umpire should know that this is not what a toilet break is for and should tell the player and also report what happened to the Chair Umpire as they could receive a code violation for it.
- This was a failure to perform duties and responsibilities. The Line Umpire would need further education on ALL duties and responsibilities of a Line Umpire.
- This would be a low mark as it is their duty to report this. Depending on the rest of the rotation, a 2 or 3 could be given or if they had an exceptional rotation maybe a 4. There is no one-size-fits-all answer to this.

SCENARIO 10:

A Line Umpire is calling serve on the women’s singles final at a World Tennis Tour event in Shrewsbury. The Line Umpire receives three overrules in the first half hour of the rotation, all were clear mistakes with no question of the overrules from the players. After the third overrule, the Line Umpire was swapped to a long line for the remainder of the session. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire for the service line?

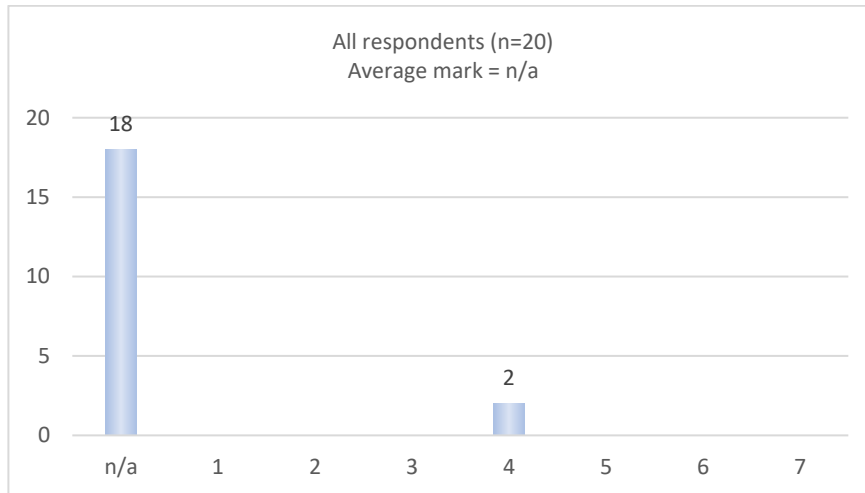


Comments:

- A very poor rotation with the three overrules. As it was more than two and then the umpire was swapped, it would equal a mark of 2.
- I would also mark them on the long line for their remainder of the match.
- It might be 2 or 3, depending on how I felt about my overrules - if I was wrong on the first did this trigger further mistakes?
- It was a poor rotation and the Line Umpire was switched.
- The cut off for a '3' mark would be two overrules. This should be treated as 'several' times.
- The umpire was overruled several times, it was a poor rotation and the Chair Umpire felt the need to switch them.
- They were possibly inexperienced on serve. Numerous overruled calls and switched lines so the Chair Umpire has little confidence even after this.
- Three clear overrules in the first half hour of rotation. Did this start the match? Was it during the match? Was it a tense match?

SCENARIO 11:

A Line Umpire is calling a long line at a World Tennis Tour event in Chiswick. The Line Umpire is only on court for the last three games of the match, and during this time the ball did not land within one metre of the line in question. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire?

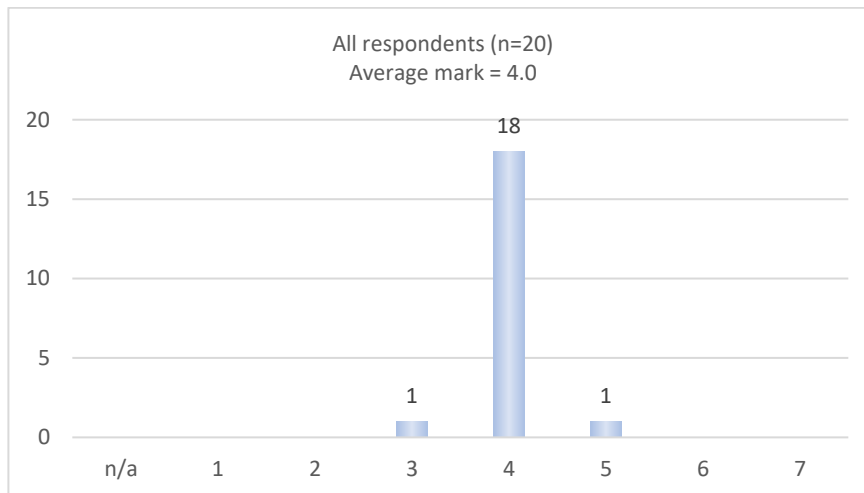


Comments:

- It depends on how long these three games were. If they lasted say 20-30 minutes, then I would award a 4 because the Line Umpire did their job and was in the correct place at the correct time with correct techniques. If they were on court for a short time period, then this is an N/A.
- It was a short period and not much to call.
- The perfect description as to what an N/A is for.
- Three games. No calls.

SCENARIO 12:

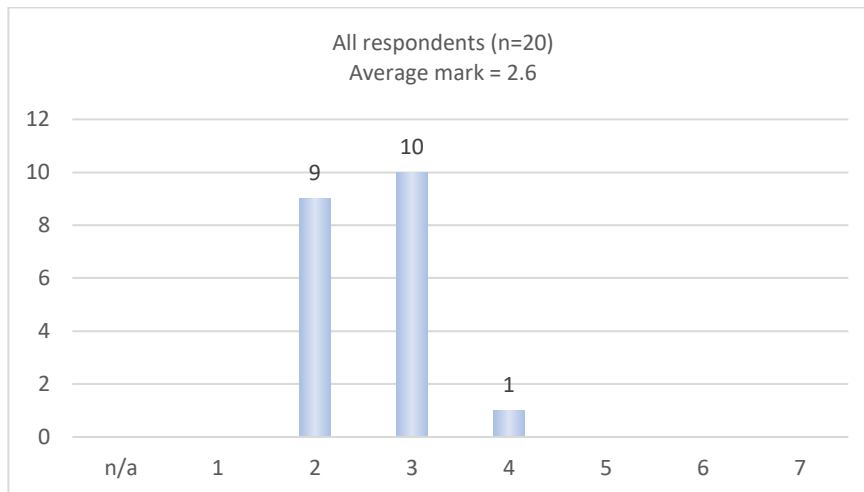
A Line Umpire is calling baseline at an ATP Challenger event in Glasgow. The Line Umpire generally made correct calls; however, the call was occasionally a little late. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire?

**Comments:**

- All that is required is an adjustment to their technique to sell the calls which were correct.
- 'Generally made correct calls' - does this mean there were some questioned calls or inaccurate calls? Why were they late? Bad position, too slow getting from centre serve, incorrect technique? If there were no overrules this could be a 4 or 5. If the late calls meant the Chair Umpire was having to overcall on big points, this could mean a 3, 4 or 5.
- I think that this would be a mark of 4 or 5; it doesn't specify how many correct calls and how close they were though. The lateness isn't a major issue, just maybe a quiet conversation off court about looking to be a fraction more prompt with calls.
- I think this could also be a 3 as the Line Umpire is making late calls, which is not an average performance and could lead to players losing confidence in them as well as the Chair Umpire losing confidence in them. They would certainly need to be spoken to after the match. This could be a 3 or 4. If an umpire made 'generally correct calls' then that also suggests they were overruled as well.
- The Line Umpire was not selling calls consistently.

SCENARIO 13:

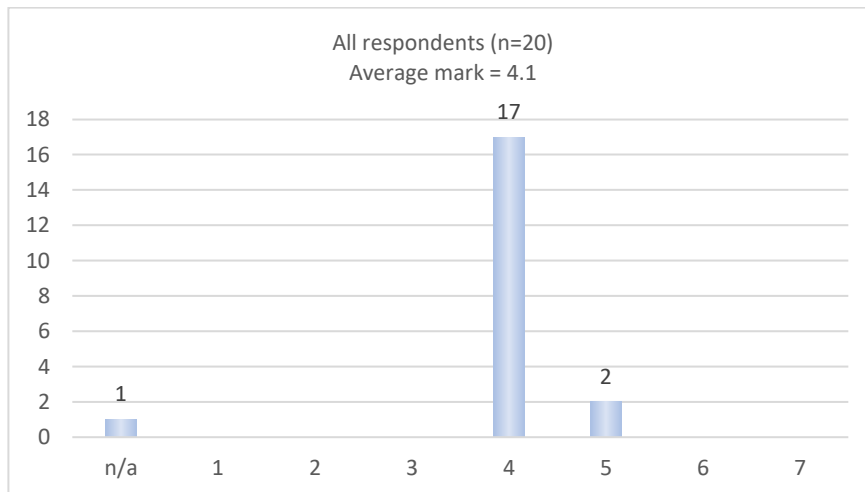
A Line Umpire is calling baseline at the Wimbledon Qualifying event. The Line Umpire was having a satisfactory session, however with ten minutes remaining in the session, the Line Umpire is overruled by the Chair Umpire. As a result, the Line Umpire loses concentration, and makes an additional two clear mistakes in the remaining ten minutes. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire?

**Comments:**

- A satisfactory rotation became unsatisfactory due to an error, and the inability to reset and focus for the remainder of the session.
- Regardless of the timing of the overrules, there are 3 clear mistakes. They had only been having a 'satisfactory session' before this and so a mark of 2 or 3 can be given.
- This is clearly below average. Several mistakes and a loss of concentration. It doesn't matter that the rest of the rotation was satisfactory, the whole rotation needs to be satisfactory.
- This is either a mark of 2 or 3. Satisfactory is probably starting the mark at a 4, however then with three mistakes in very quick succession, it is probably enough to move that down to a 2.
- Three mistakes = several.

SCENARIO 14:

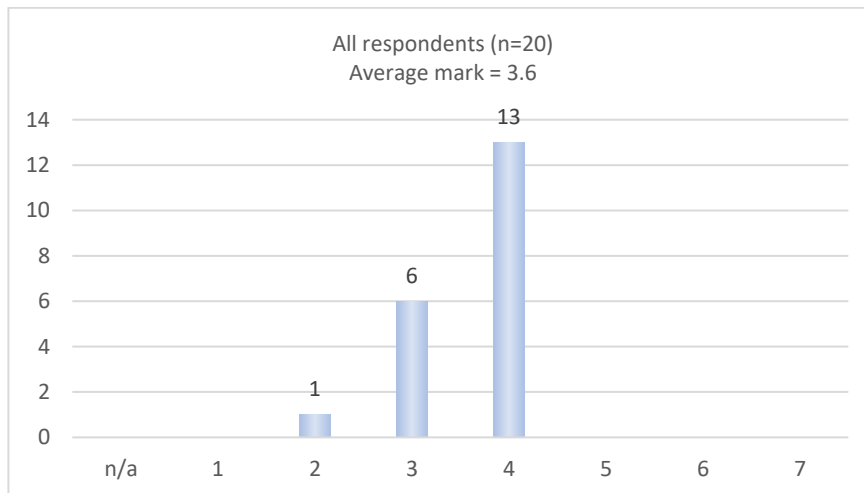
A Line Umpire is calling serve for a wheelchair match at the Wimbledon Championships. It is the first round and the Line Umpire has a couple of balls land near the line, in an otherwise quiet session. The Line Umpire was on court for the full hour. There was no pressure during the rotation. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire?

**Comments:**

- This was an average rotation where the Line Umpire was on court for the full hour. I do not think that this can be an N/A as we can evaluate the techniques etc of the Line Umpire and they were on court doing an average job for a whole hour. As a Line Umpire, I expected to receive 4s for these sessions.
- What does 'near the line' mean? It does not sound like a 5 but it could be.
- You can debate whether this is a 4 or 5. It's a 5 for me, as wheelchair serve is never easy due to the angle that the ball comes, which is quite different from an able-bodied serve. The fact that they did the whole hour could push it to a 5 rather than a 4.

SCENARIO 15:

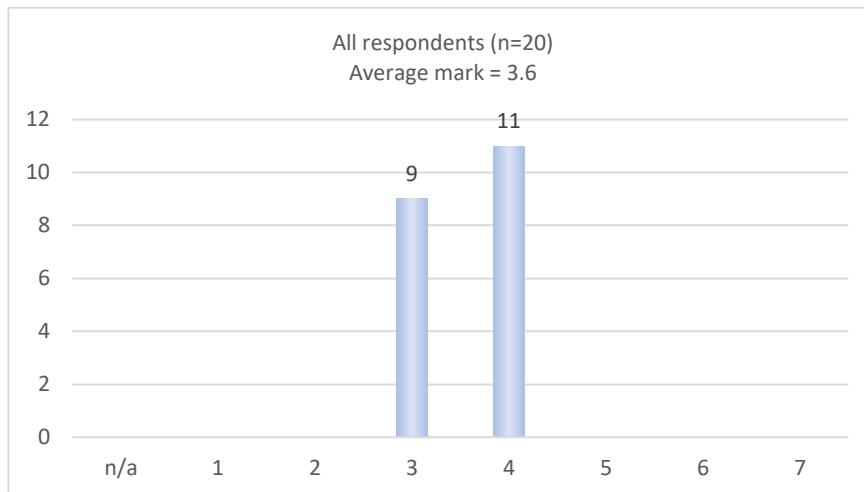
A Line Umpire is calling a long line at a World Tennis Tour event in Bolton. On two occasions the Line Umpire corrected their calls, which lowered the Line Umpire's credibility with the players. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire?

**Comments:**

- Depending on the rest of the session this is probably a 3 or a 4 if they had a lot of other close calls.
- It's good that they have corrected their calls, however it shows that they were calling them wrong in the first place.
- The Line Umpire corrected their call plus their credibility was lowered. This would be considered a 'below average rotation' and a score of 3.
- There were no overrules. However, there were two corrected calls, enough to bring the Line Umpire's technique and credibility into question. Enough to be considered a below average rotation.
- This could be changed if they had a lot of other good calls - not really enough information. Were they the only two calls the Line Umpire had?
- This is below average, and the players lost confidence in the Line Umpire, which means that the Chair Umpire would as well. This cannot be considered average. It is good that the Line Umpire corrected their mistakes, but this is still a below average performance.
- Would need to consider what else happened in the session. Calling through the net?

SCENARIO 16:

A Line Umpire is calling serve on the singles final at the World Tennis Tour event in Chiswick. Overall, the Line Umpire made accurate calls and had one overrule, however the calls were often late which lowered the Line Umpire's credibility with the players and lead to the occasional questioned call. What score should the Chair Umpire give to the Line Umpire?

**Comments:**

- The late timing of the calls led to issues. Delay on grass can be expected, but not on a hard court.
- There was one overrule and the Line Umpire was occasionally late with the calls, however the accuracy was reasonable.
- This could be a 4. It would depend on how the Chair Umpire felt at the time and whether they still had confidence and trust in the Line Umpire or not. The fact that the players lost confidence in the calls and started questioning them shows that maybe the Chair Umpire would lose confidence as well. Late calls always increase uncertainty and shows a lack of confidence from the Line Umpire. I would say that this is most of the time a 3, but it could be a 4.
- This would be a 4 and an average session however with the late calls being occasionally questioned, it would be considered as below average.