



# OPERATION OF THE Three Umpire System

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# MODULE: POSITION — OPERATION OF THE THREE UMPIRE SYSTEM

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## Introduction

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The principal aim of the Three Umpire System is to enable umpires to accurately adjudicate contests in all areas of the ground. The information included in this module is a guide to the operation of the Three Umpire System with a focus on the initial positioning of umpires in set play situations and responsibilities with regard to control and change of control.

In the course of general play an umpire's positioning may vary in a match taking into account:

- Ground conditions (size and dimensions)
- Weather conditions (wind, rain and sun)
- Playing conditions (team tactics)

For reference purposes the ground is divided into three unequal zones with each umpire assuming responsibility for "his" zone at any particular time in the match. In the course of play all three Umpires continually adjust their position enabling the umpire to be in a safe and appropriate viewing position for all contests. The observation capacity of the umpires is increased within their zone as a result of better positioning and co-operation with each other.

A key feature of this revised Three Umpire System is the move away from the major axis as the primary reference for umpires for their on field positioning. In fact under this system, when the play enters the End Zone from the Mid Zone, the Near End Zone Umpire **must not** be on or near the major axis. The benefit for the players is that it creates more space for them in the area commonly known as "the centre corridor". The umpire benefits from the reduced likelihood of being contacted by players wishing to contest the ball in "the corridor".

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## Definitions

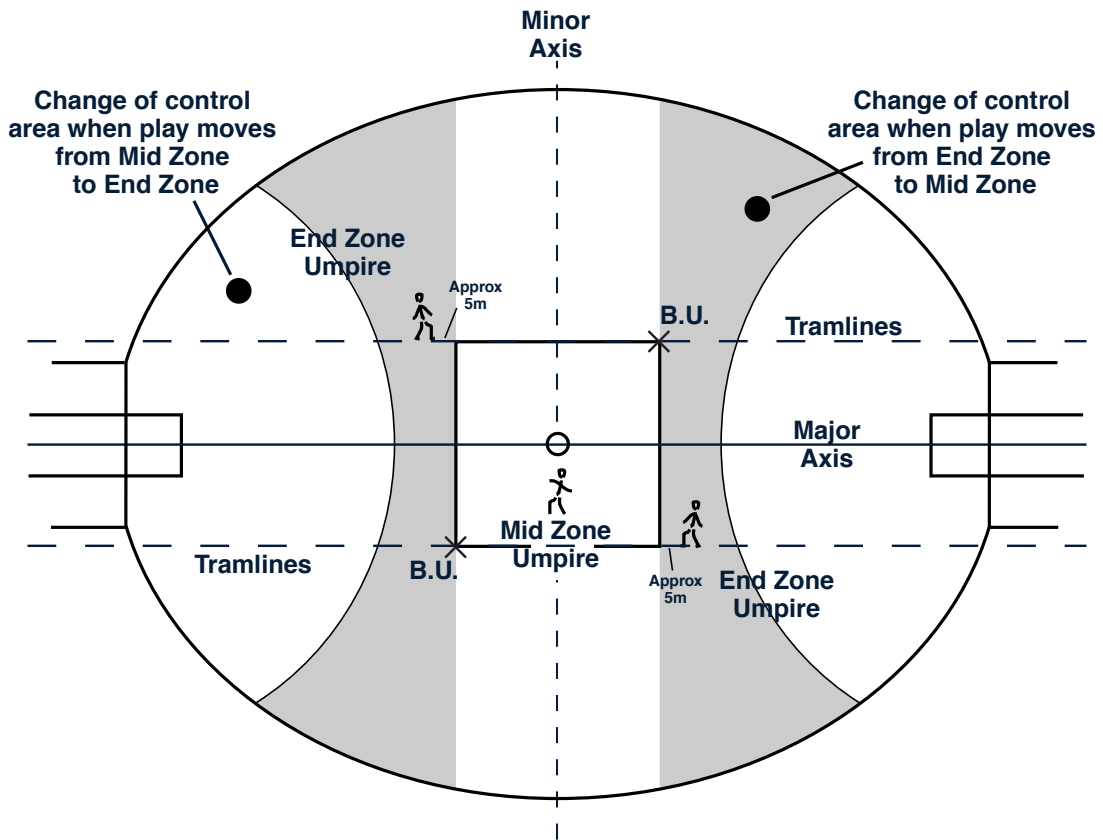
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|-------------------------|---|
| Backward of Mark:       | Just behind the adjacent line of the mark.  |
| Centre Corridor:        | The area between the “tram lines” extending along the length of the ground.   |
| Change of Control:      | The umpire relinquishes control.  |
| Change of Control Area: | When the ball is moving from the End Zone to the Mid Zone it is the area on ground between centre square line extended to the boundary and the 50m line.<br><br>When the ball is moving from the Mid Zone to the End Zone it is the area on ground inside the 50m line. |
| End Zones:              | Area between the goal line and an imaginary line extending from the top of the 50m line to the boundary.  |
| End Zone Umpire:        | The umpires in the end zones.   |
| Far End Zone Umpire     | The umpire in the end zone furthest from play.  |
| Near End Zone Umpire    | The umpire in the end zone nearest to play.   |
| Major Axis:             | Straight line extending from centre of goal at both ends passing through centre.  |
| Mid Zone:               | All the area between the two 50metre lines.   |
| Mid Zone Umpire:        | The umpire in the mid zone.   |
| Minor Axis:             | Straight line extending from wing to wing passing through centre.   |
| The Controlling Umpire: | The umpire in control of play.  |
| Non Controlling Umpire: | The two umpires not in control of play.   |
| Tramline:               | Imaginary straight lines, extending from both of the sides of the centre square to the boundary lines at both ends of the ground parallel to the major axis.  |
| Set Play:               | Resultant play from a stoppage in play such as a mark, free kick, field bounce and boundary throw in.   |

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## Playing Field – 3 Umpire Positions

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## Starting the Game – Centre Bounces

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### (i) Centre Bounce Positioning

The Mid Zone Umpire should make his approach along the minor axis for the centre bounce.

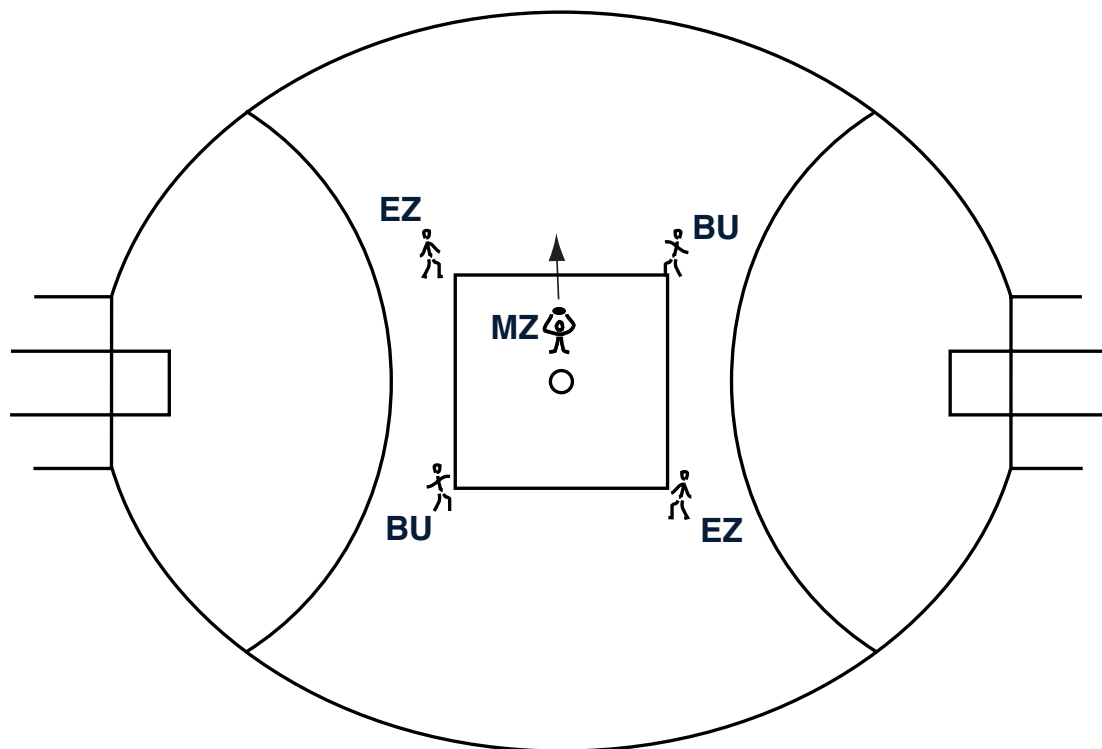
The End Zone Umpires should position themselves diagonally opposite each other and on the opposite side of the ground to that of the Boundary Umpires, within an area approximately 5m in radius from the corner of the centre square.

If required to attend an incident the End Zone Umpire may vary his position from the corner of the centre square.

Prior to the bounce the umpire will indicate to all players the path that he will take after bouncing the ball.

After bouncing the ball, the Mid Zone Umpire shall back off along the minor axis, (as indicated to players), and make position according to the next act of play.

End Zone Umpires should adjust their position according to the next act of play. They should remain on the same side of the ground as their initial position following the bounce and should endeavour to move towards their immediate End Zone along the tramline.



## **(ii) Rotation of Positions**

The Mid Zone Umpire changes position with the non-controlling End Zone Umpire after each goal, and as the need arises throughout the game.

If one End Zone Umpire has a succession of goals (a guide may be 2–3 goals), he may initiate a change with the Mid Zone Umpire. Similarly in situations where one Mid Zone Umpire has had long periods of umpiring he may initiate a rotation of position with the End Zone Umpire after a behind has been scored.

Whilst rotating positions Umpires should ensure all areas of the ground are kept under observation.

## **(iii) Awarding of Free Kicks at Centre Bounces**

All umpires have a responsibility to award all free kicks they observe at centre bounces including 5 in centre square infringements. End Zone Umpires need to be aware of players running from outside the square and infringing opponents.

Any Field Umpire can award a free kick prior to the commencement of a quarter.

After a goal has been scored and before the ball has been bounced, all three umpires are empowered to penalise infringements.

Once the Mid Zone Umpire is in possession of the ball for the ensuing centre bounce, he becomes the Controlling Umpire.

End Zone Umpires should determine which end they shall commence the next quarter based on time spent in respective End Zones during the previous quarter.

## **Simultaneous Penalties Awarded at Centre Bounces**

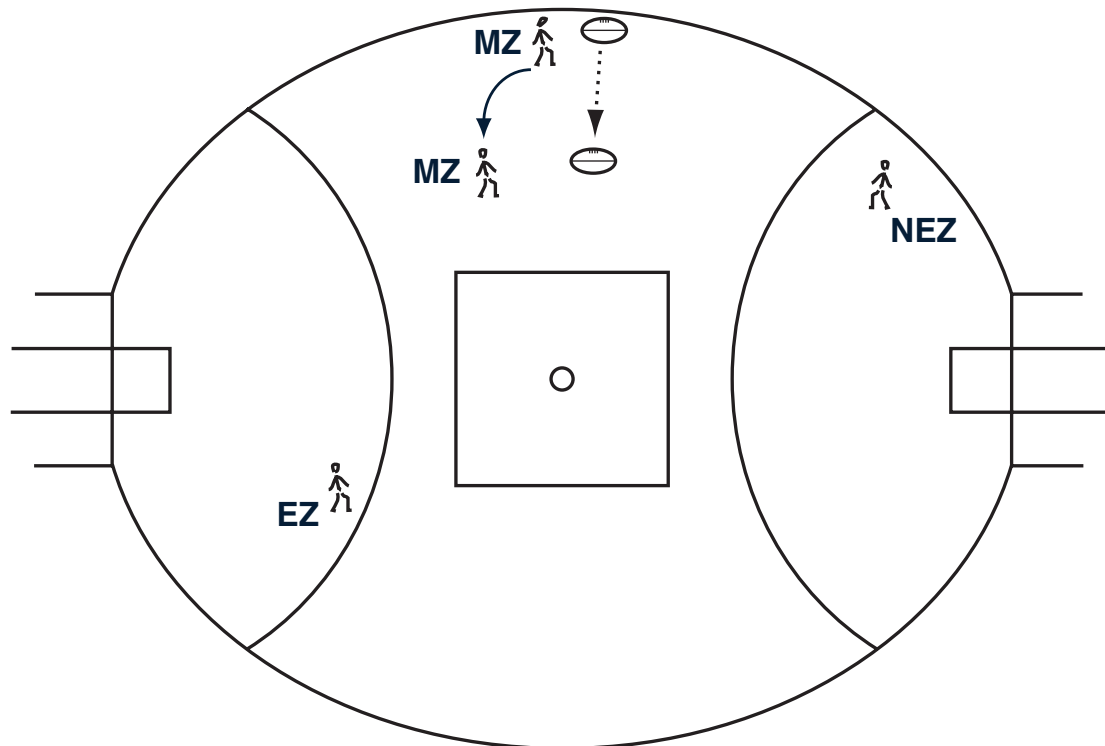
- Infringements awarded by Field Umpires in the centre square take precedence over centre square infringements awarded by Boundary Umpires.
- Where two penalties are awarded to one side, the most advantageous penalty is to apply.
- Where penalties are awarded to opposing sides for encroachment, play shall recommence with a centre bounce. Refer Law 11.3.4 (d)

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## Boundary Throw Ins

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### (i) Boundary Throw In Mid Zone



#### ***Mid Zone Umpire (Controlling Umpire)***

The Mid Zone Umpire should take up an initial position to the front of the contest, 5–7 metres, to the side of the boundary umpire, anticipating movement to a position 15 - 20m side-on to the contest, on the long side of the ground. It is essential that he has a clear and uninterrupted view of the contesting players.

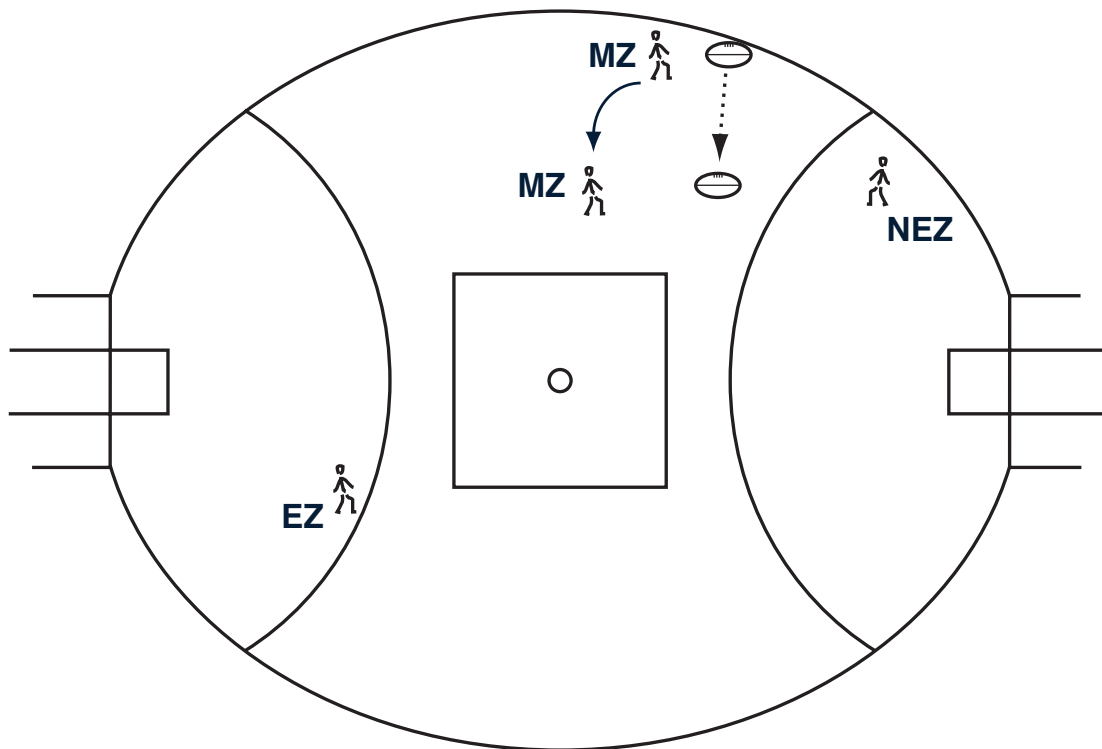
Following the ruck contest his position is determined by the ensuing direction of play. There will be occasions when he remains outside play. If the ball is in dispute in the area of the ruck contest he can use this opportunity to work his way inside play.

#### ***End Zone Umpires***

The Near Zone Umpire must take up a position on or outside “the tramline” on the same side as the boundary throw in and remain on that side of the ground until a set play situation allows them to adjust position.

The Far Zone Umpire must take up a position on or outside “the tramline” on the opposite side from the boundary throw in and remain on that side of the ground until the next act of play or a set play situation allows them to adjust position.

**(ii) Boundary Throw In Mid Zone – Close to the 50m Arc**



***Mid Zone Umpire (Controlling Umpire)***

The Mid Zone Umpire should take up an initial position to the front of the contest, 5–7 metres, to the side of the boundary umpire, anticipating movement to a position 15 - 20m side-on to the contest, on the long side of the ground. It is essential that he has a clear and uninterrupted view of the contesting players.

Following the ruck contest his position is determined by the ensuing direction of play. There will be occasions when he remains outside play. If the ball is in dispute in the area of the ruck contest he can use this opportunity to work his way inside play.

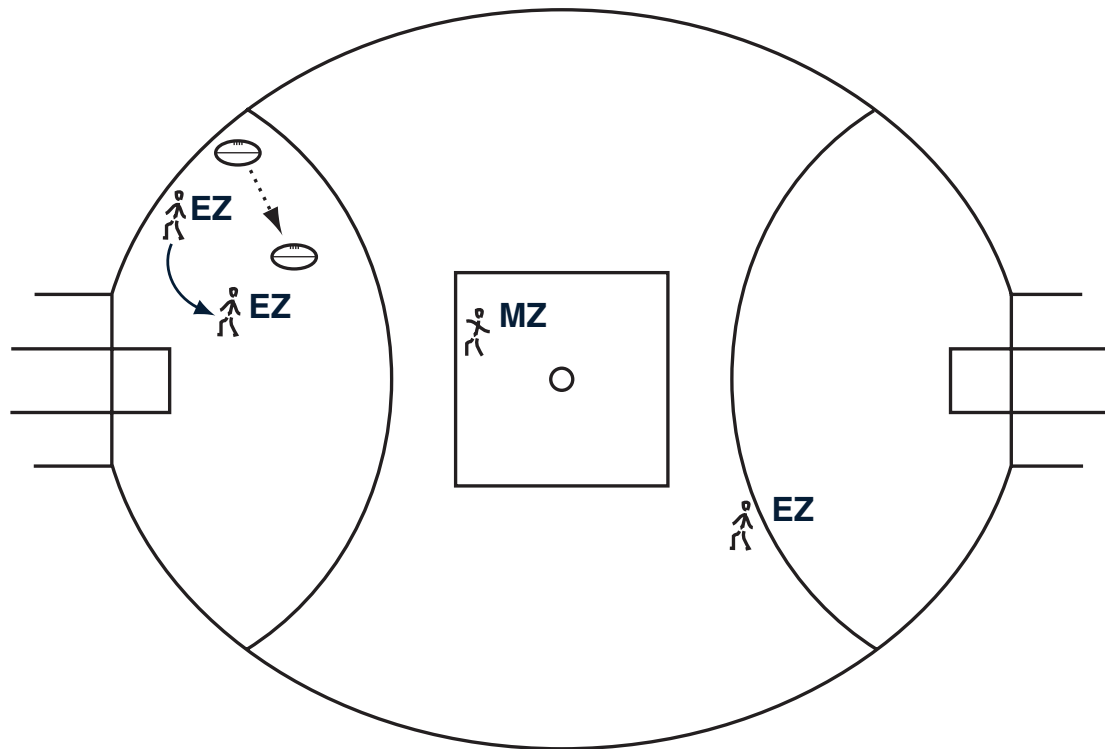
***End Zone Umpires***

The Near End Zone Umpire should take up a position on or outside “the tramline” on the *same* side as the boundary throw in and remain on that side of the ground until a set play situation allows him to adjust position.

The Far End Zone Umpire should take up a position on or outside “the tramline” on the *opposite* side to the boundary throw in and remain on that side of the ground until the next act of play or a set play situation allows him to adjust position.

### (iii) Boundary Throw In End Zone

#### (a) Boundary Throw In 25-50 metres from Goal



#### ***End Zone Umpire (Controlling Umpire)***

The End Zone Umpire should take up an initial position to the front of the contest, 5–7 metres, to the side of the boundary umpire on the **short** side of the ground, anticipating movement to a position 15-20m side on to the contest. His position following the ruck contest will be determined by the ensuing direction of play.

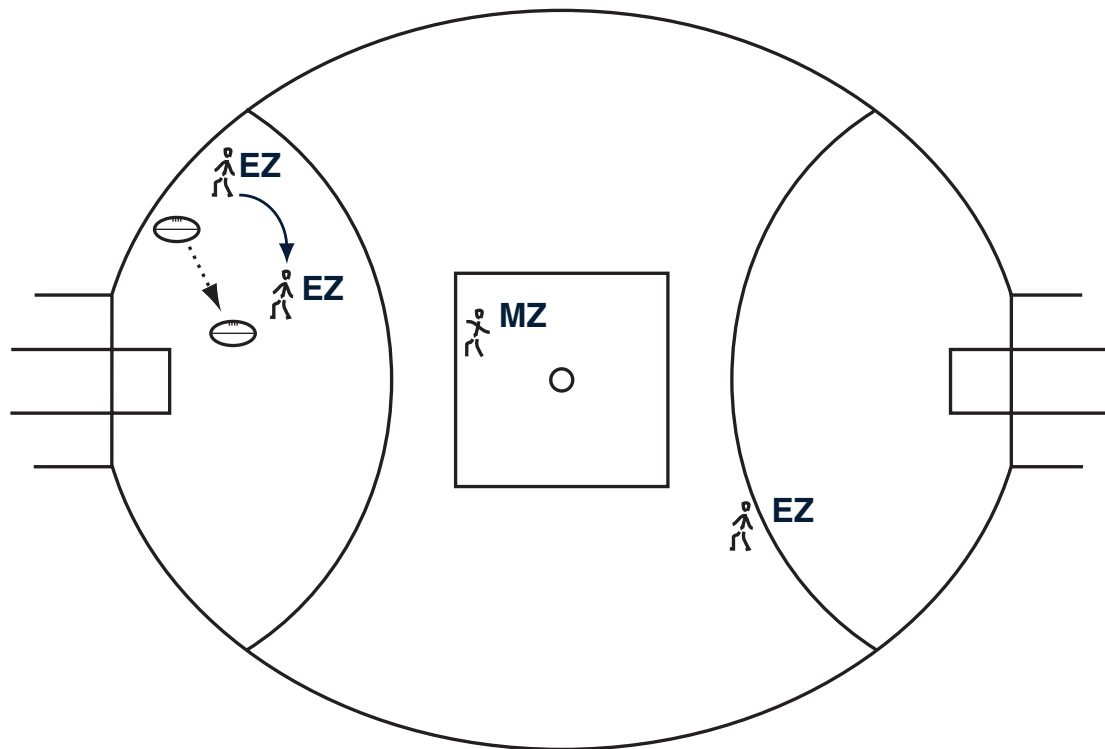
#### ***Mid Zone Umpire***

The Mid Zone Umpire shall be less than a kick away, within “the tramlines” and adjust his position with the movement of play.

#### ***Far End Zone Umpire***

The Far End Zone Umpire should take up a position on or outside “the tramline” on the opposite side to the boundary throw in and remain on that side of the ground until the next act of play or a set play situation allows them to adjust position.

**(b) Boundary Throw In less than 25 metres from Goal**



***End Zone Umpire (Controlling Umpire)***

The End Zone Umpire should take up an initial position to the front of the contest, 5–7 metres, to the side of the boundary umpire on the **long** side of the ground, anticipating movement to a position 15-20m side on to the contest. His position following the ruck contest will be determined by the ensuing direction of play.

***Mid Zone Umpire***

The Mid Zone Umpire shall be less than a kick away, within “the tramlines” and adjust his position with the movement of play.

***Far End Zone Umpire***

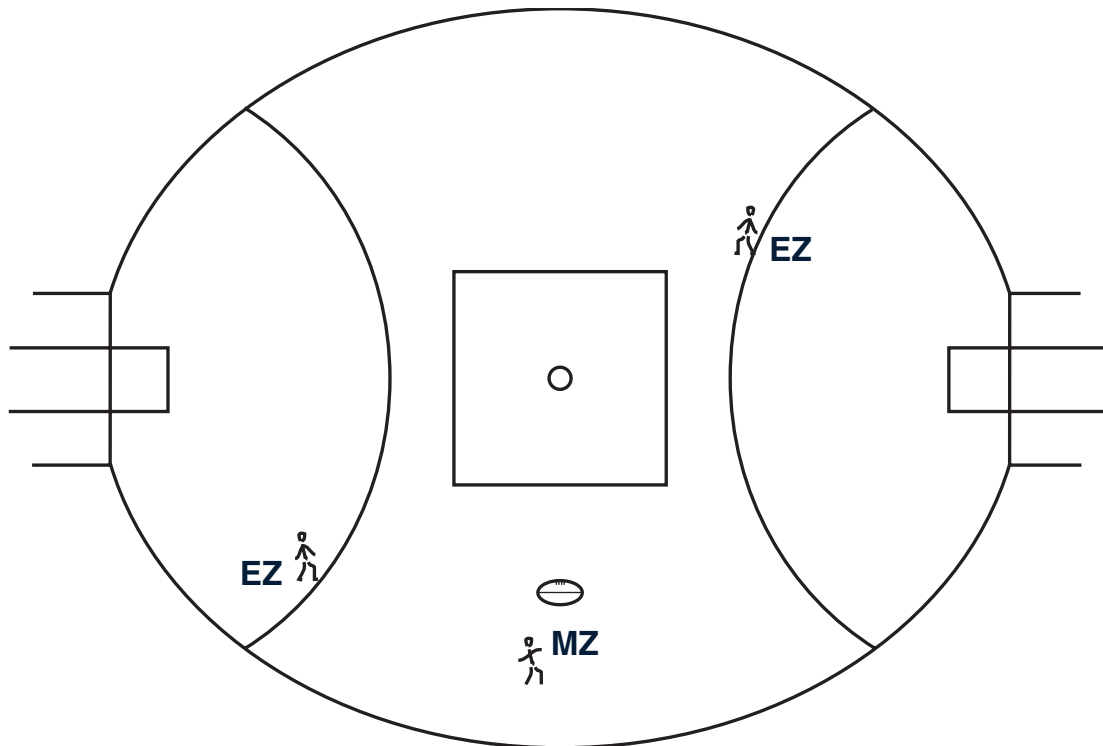
The Far End Zone Umpire should take up a position on or outside “the tramline” on the opposite side to the boundary throw in and remain on that side of the ground until the next act of play or a set play situation allows him to adjust position.

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## Field Bounces

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### (i) Field Bounce in the Mid Zone



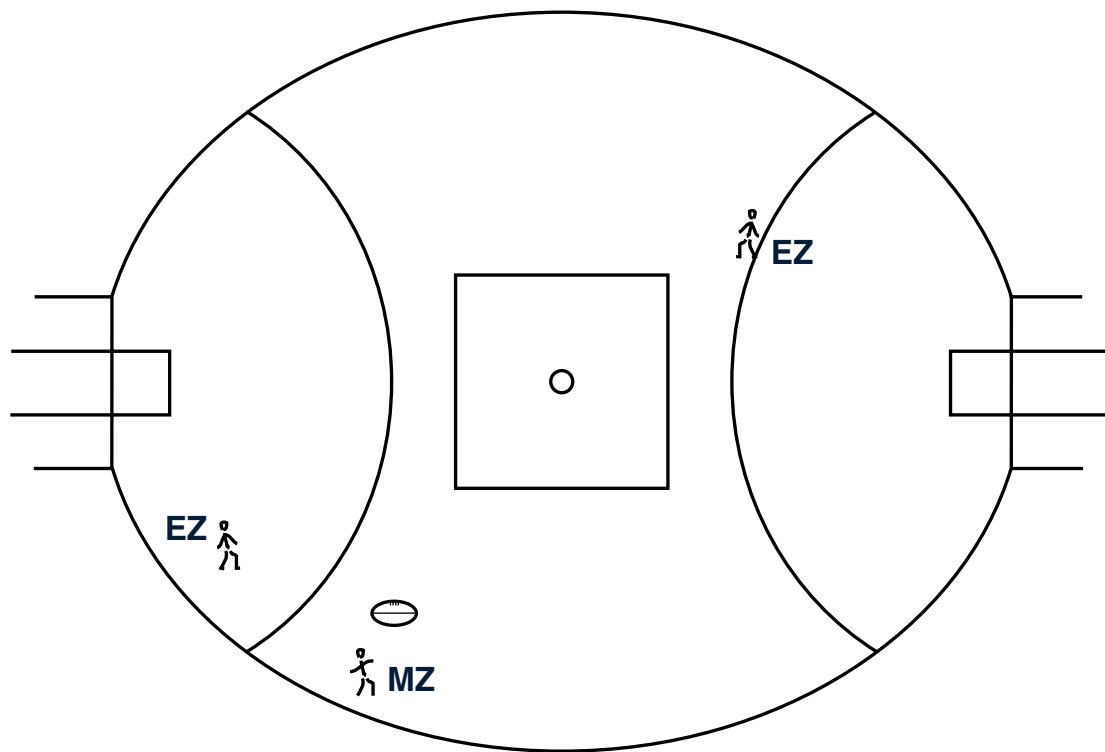
The initial position of the umpire will vary depending on weather conditions and set up of ruck contest. As a general guide the Umpire will bounce the ball with his back to the nearest boundary line.

#### ***End Zone Umpires***

The nearest EZ Umpire must take up a position on or outside the 'tramline' on the same side of the ground to the field bounce and remain on that side of the ground until the next act of play or a set play situation allows them to adjust position.

Where it is not clearly obvious who the nearest EZ umpire is one EZ umpire should initiate a move across to take up a position on or outside the 'tramline' on the same side of the ground to the field bounce.

**(ii) Field Bounce in the Mid Zone Close to the 50m Arc**



The initial position of the umpire will vary depending on weather conditions and set up of ruck contest. As a general guide the Umpire will bounce the ball with his back to the nearest boundary line.

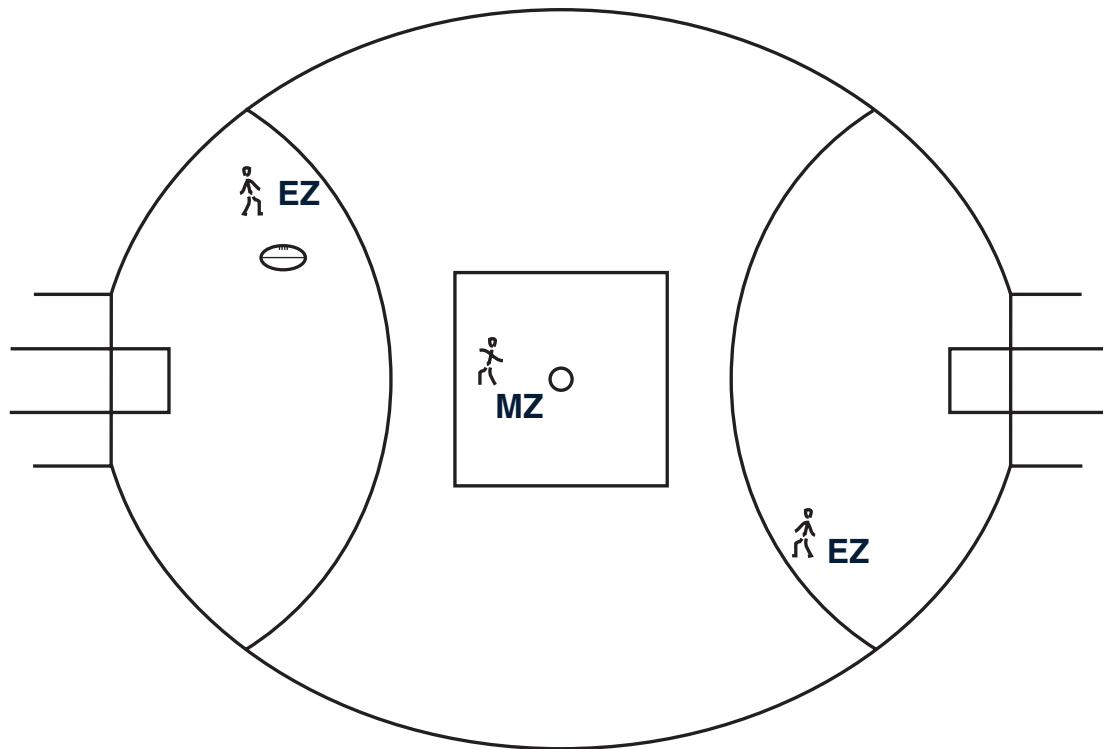
***Near End Zone Umpire***

The Near End Zone Umpire must take up a position outside “the tramline” on the same side of the ground as the Field Bounce and remain on that side of the ground until a set play situation allows him to adjust position.

***Far End Zone Umpire***

The Far End Zone Umpire must take up a position on or outside “the tramline” on the opposite side of the ground as the Field Bounce and remain on that side of the ground until the next act of play or a set play situation allows them to adjust position.

### (iii) Field Bounce in the End Zone



#### ***End Zone Umpire (Controlling Umpire)***

The End Zone Umpire will always bounce the ball with his back to the boundary.

#### ***Mid Zone Umpire***

The Mid Zone Umpire shall be less than a kick away, within “the tramlines” and adjust his position with the movement of play.

#### ***Far End Zone Umpire***

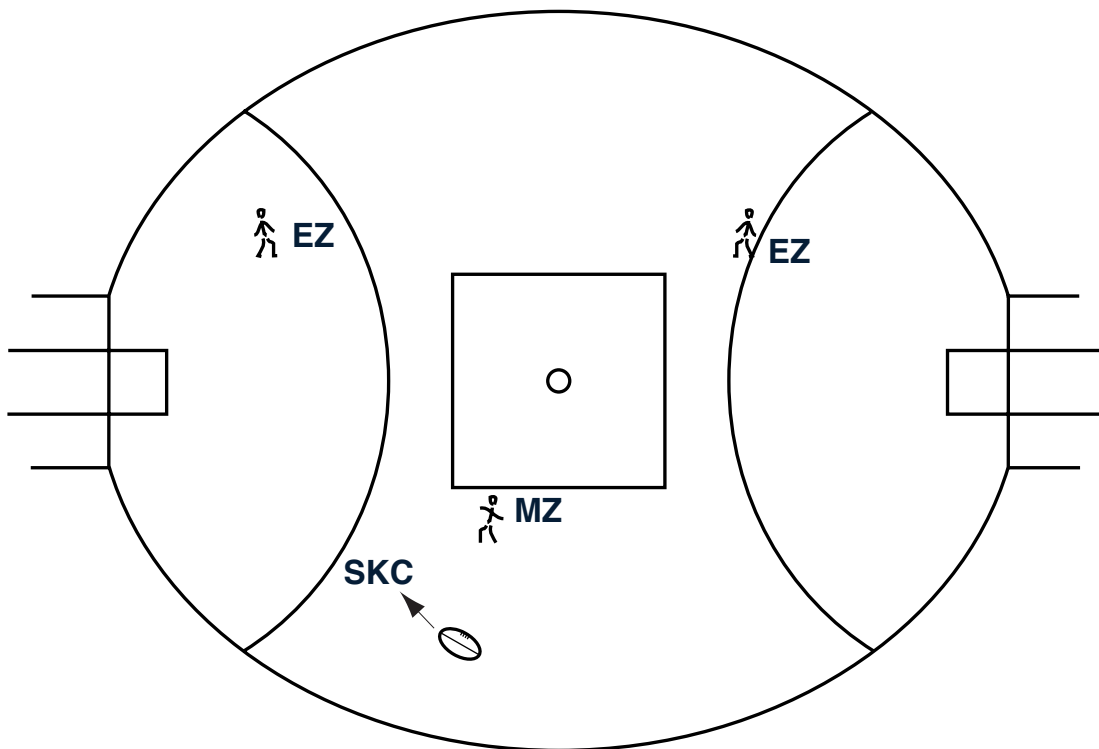
The Far End Zone Umpire should take up a position on or outside “the tramlines” on the opposite side of the ground as the field bounce, on or near the 50m arc, until the next act of play or a set play situation allows him to adjust position.

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## Initial Positioning – Set Play

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### (i) Set Play in Mid Zone with resulting contest in End Zone



#### ***Mid Zone Umpire (Controlling Umpire)***

The Mid Zone Umpire should supervise the set kick from a position 15–20 metres side-on to the mark.

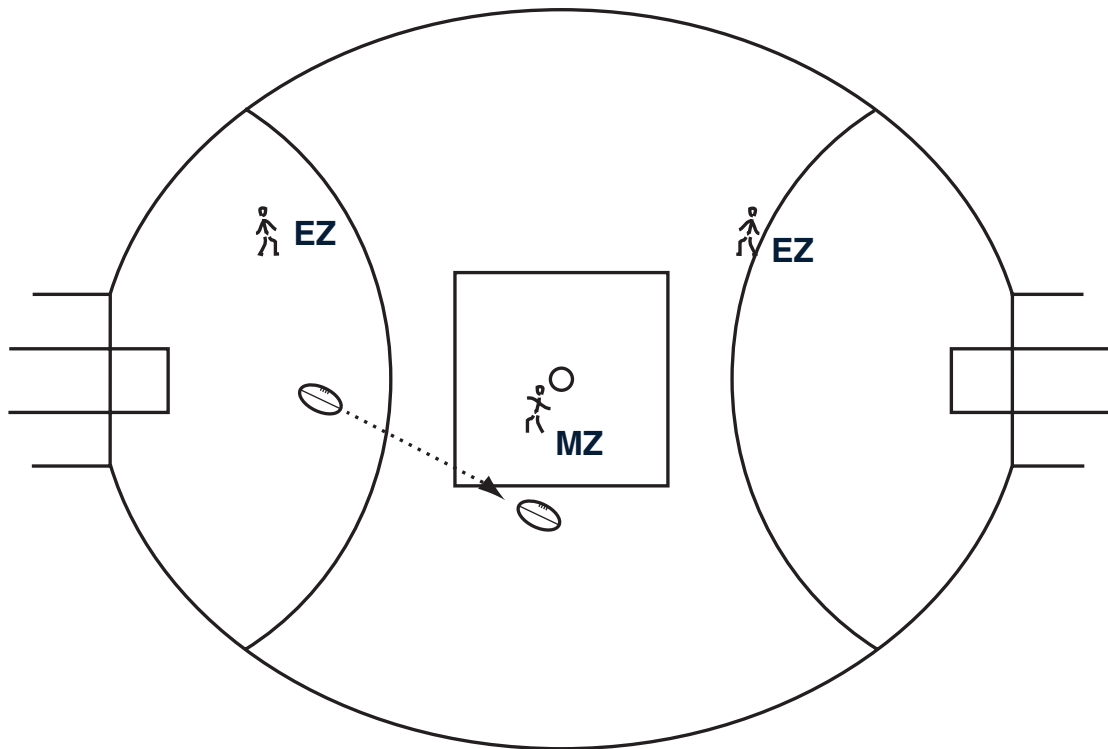
#### ***Near End Zone Umpire***

The Near End Zone Umpire should take up a position on or outside “the tramline”, inside the 50m arc and on the opposite side of the Set Play, and remain on that side of the ground for the next contest.

#### ***Far End Zone Umpire***

The Far End Zone Umpire should take up a position on or outside “the tramline”, on or near the 50m arc, on the opposite side of the ground to the Set Play, and remain on that side of the ground until a subsequent act of play or set play situation allows him to adjust position.

**(ii) Set Play in End Zone with resulting contest in Mid Zone**



***End Zone Umpire (Controlling Umpire)***

The End Zone Umpire should supervise the set kick from a position 15–20 metres side-on to the mark.

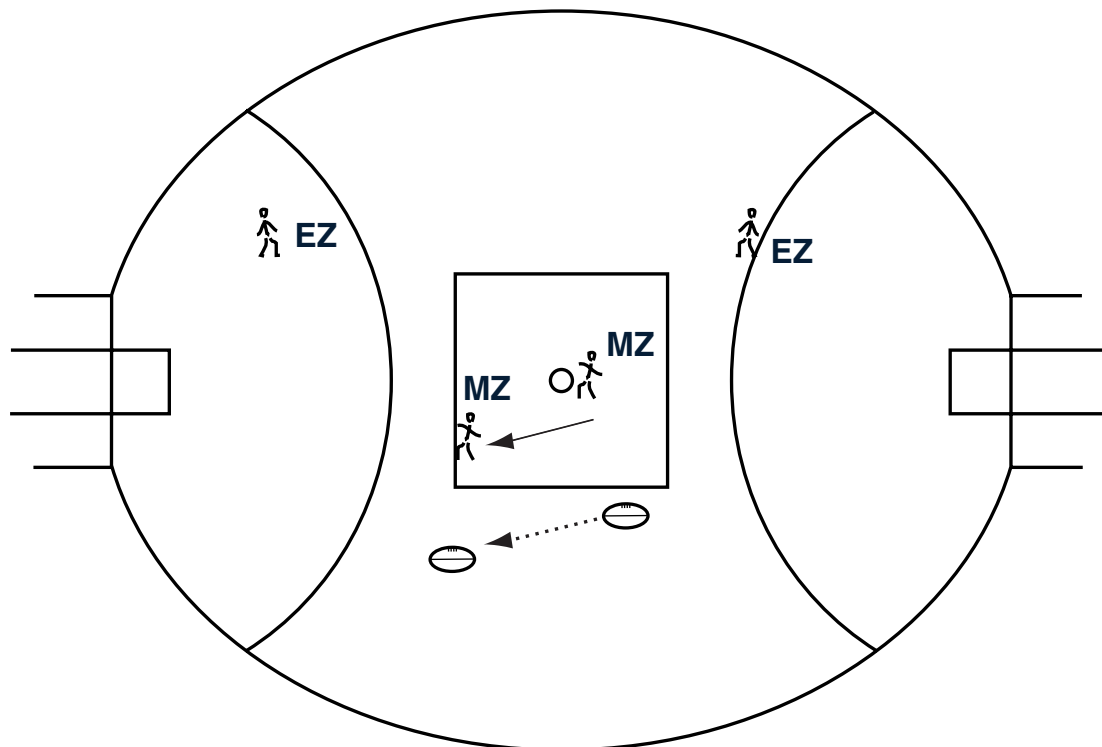
***Mid Zone Umpire***

The Mid Zone Umpire should position himself less than a kick away within “the tramlines” and adjust his position with the movement of play until he becomes the Controlling Umpire.

***Far End Zone Umpire***

The Far End Zone Umpire should take up a position on or outside “the tramline”, on or near the 50m arc, on the opposite side of the ground to the Set Kick and remain on that side of the ground until a subsequent act of play or set play situation allows him to adjust position.

(iii) Set Play in Mid Zone with resulting contest in Mid Zone



***Mid Zone Umpire (Controlling Umpire)***

The Mid Zone Umpire should retain control of the resultant kick. His initial position should be approximately 45 degrees forward of the mark, 20-25 metres away, to enable him to have verbal control of the players. His subsequent position will be determined by the ensuing direction of play.

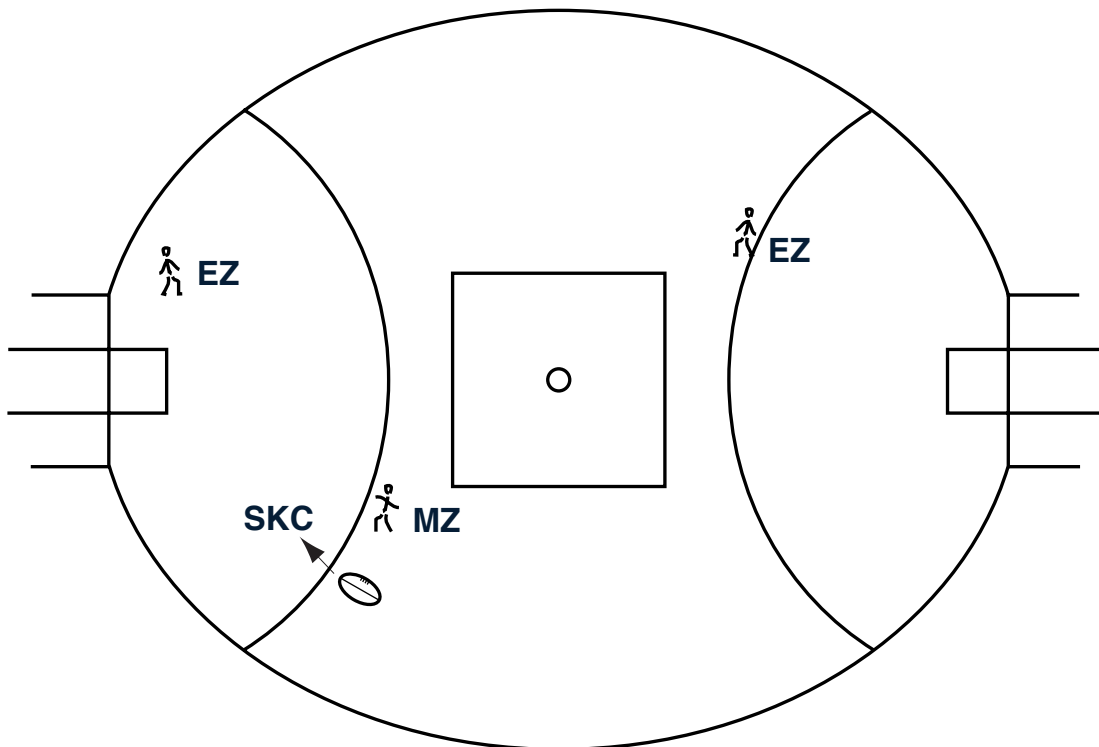
***End Zone Umpires***

Each End Zone Umpire should take up a position on or outside “the tramline” on the opposite side of the ground to the Set Play and remain on that side of the ground until a subsequent act of play or set play situation allows him to adjust position.

Position within the 50m arc for the ***Near End Zone Umpire*** will be determined by the direction of play.

The position of the ***Far End Zone Umpire*** is to be on or near the 50m arc.

**(iv) Set Play greater than 40 Metres from Goal not likely to Score**



***Mid Zone Umpire (Controlling Umpire)***

The Mid Zone Umpire should supervise the set kick from a position 15–20 metres just backward of the mark.

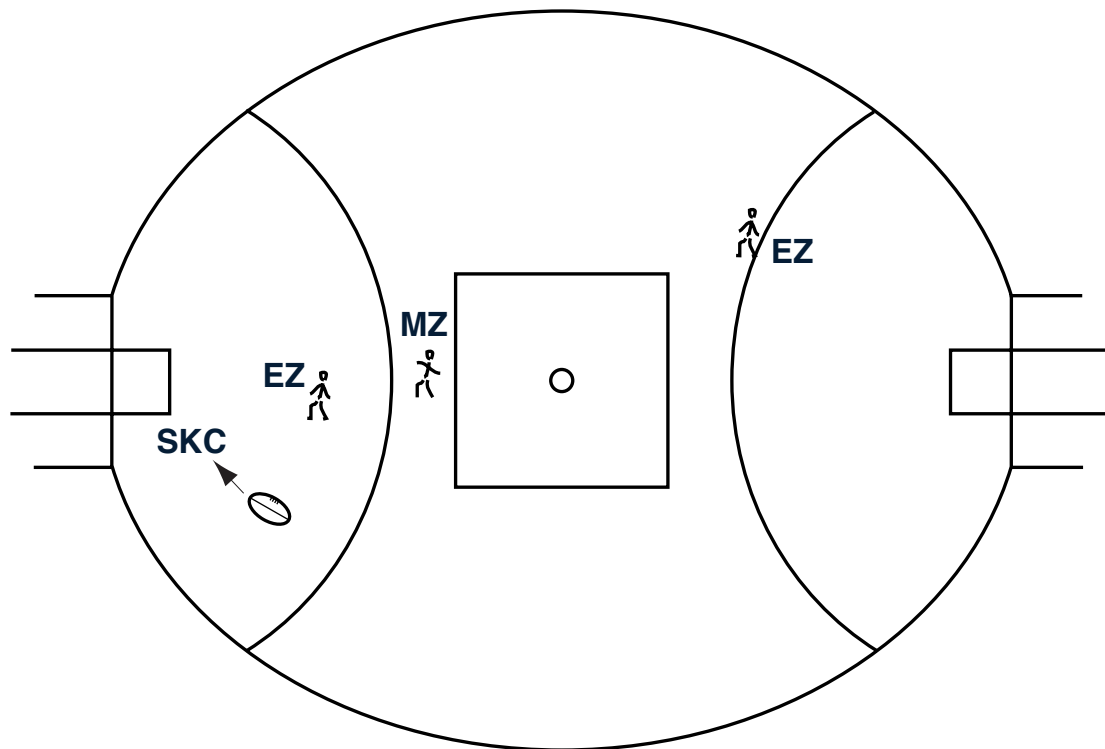
***Near End Zone Umpire***

The Near End Zone Umpire should take up a position on or outside “the tramline” inside the 50m arc and on the opposite side of the ground to the Set Play and remain on that side of the ground for the next contest.

***Far End Zone Umpire***

The Far End Zone Umpire should take up a position on or outside “the tramline” on or near the 50m arc, on the opposite side of the ground to the Set Play and remain on that side of the ground until a subsequent act of play or set play situation allows him to adjust position.

**(v) Set Play less than 40 Metres from Goal likely to Score**



***End Zone Umpire (Controlling Umpire)***

In this situation, the End Zone Umpire should move in to line up the player with the ball.

After lining the player up, the End Zone Umpire should position himself close enough to have verbal control of both the player taking the set play and the player on the mark. This position should be at an angle of at least 45 degrees to the anticipated line of kick (the shorter the kick the greater the angle), and forward of the mark (so he can control the set play and allow adjudication of the resulting contest or score).

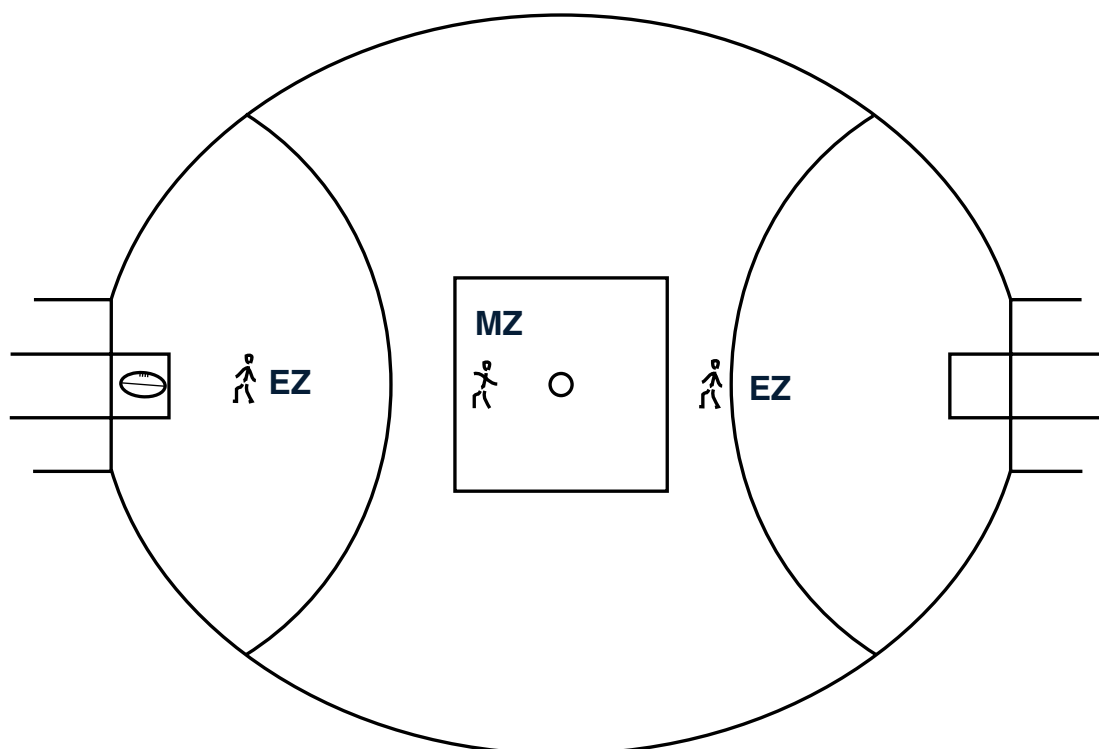
***Mid Zone Umpire***

The Mid Zone Umpire should move to a position along the 50 metre arc, which allows him an unhindered view of all the area forward of where the set play will be taken. This allows the End Zone Umpire to establish initial control of the mark with the knowledge that all the area forward of the set play is under observation.

***Far End Zone Umpire***

The Far End Zone Umpire should take up a position on or outside “the tramline” on or near the 50m arc, on the opposite side of the ground to the Set Play and remain on that side of the ground until a subsequent act of play or set play situation allows him to adjust position.

## (vi) Kick-In From a Behind and Set Play from Deep in Defence



### ***End Zone Umpire (Controlling Umpire)***

For a kick in following a behind the End Zone Umpire should position himself on the major axis 15 metres from the kick off line.

- (i) In the instance of the ball being played on, kicked short or kicked wide to the flanks, the End Zone Umpire retains control.
- (ii) In the instance of the ball travelling clearly into the change of control area as a result of a long kick, using the 50 metre line markings as a guide, the End Zone Umpire will relinquish control except for a kick wide to the flank.

After allowing a reasonable time for the defensive player to bring the ball into play, the End Zone Umpire supervising the kick out shall indicate by blowing his whistle, gesturing that he is required to bring the ball into play promptly.

For a Set Play from deep in defence such as from out of bounds close to the behind post, the End Zone Umpire's initial position will be determined by the location of the Set Play. The provisions of (i) and (ii) apply.

### ***Mid Zone Umpire***

The Mid Zone Umpire should be positioned near the major axis and adjust to the resultant kick or act of play. He should be alert to the possibility of a change of control directly from the kick out and if he is required to adjudicate at the contest he should do so from a position 20–25 metres side on to the contest.

### ***Far End Zone Umpire***

The Far End Zone Umpire should take up a position on major axis on or near the 50m arc. Following the kick-in he shall adjust his position to “the tramline”, on the opposite side of the ground to which the ball was brought back into play and remain on that side of the ground until a subsequent act of play or set play situation allows him to adjust position.

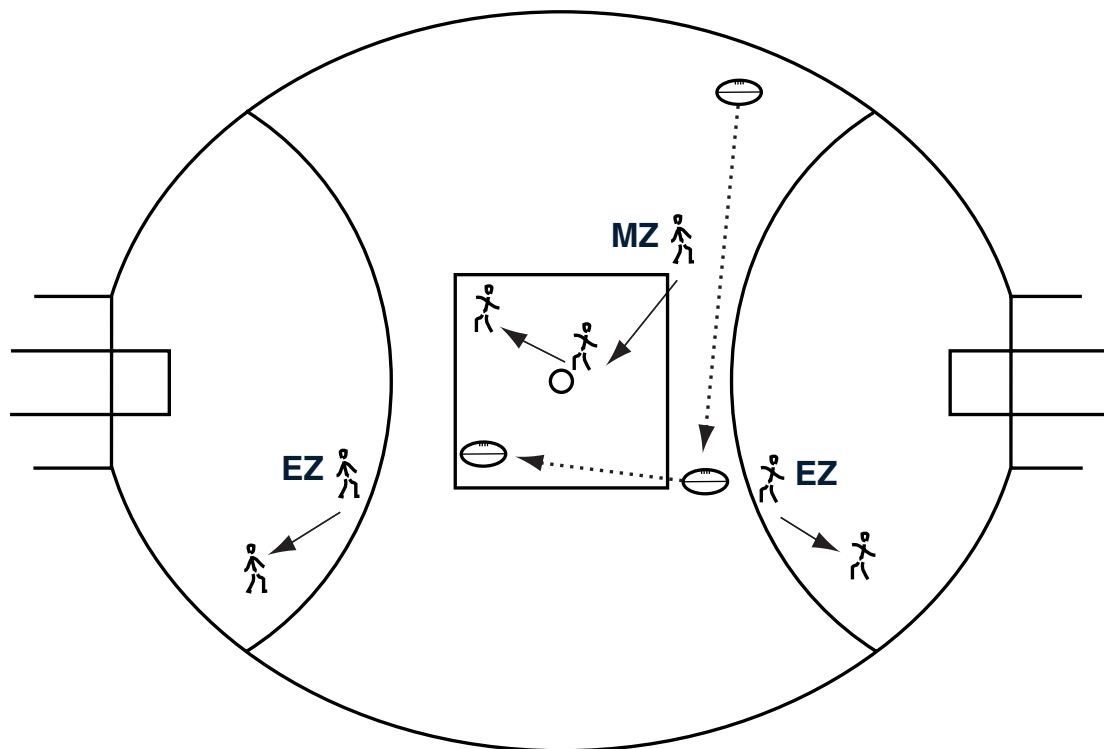
If the ball is brought back into play down the centre of the ground the Far End Zone Umpire must quickly commit to one side of the Major Axis and take up a position near to “the tramline”.

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## Positioning – General Play

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### (i) Ball in Contest in Midzone



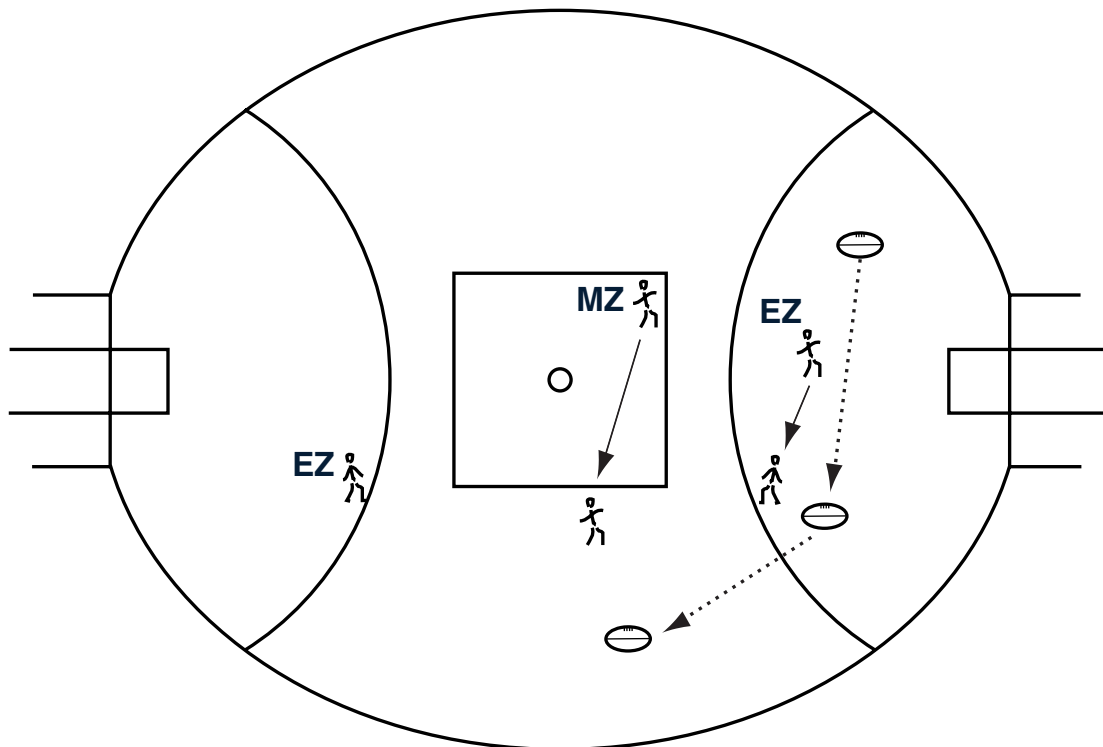
#### ***Mid Zone Umpire (Controlling Umpire)***

As the Controlling Umpire, the Mid Zone Umpire should always aim to be inside play, 20-25 metres away and side on to the contest.

#### ***End Zone Umpires***

End Zone Umpires should take up a position on or outside “the tramlines” and remain on that side of the ground until the next act of play or a set play situation allows them to adjust position.

**(ii) Ball in Contest in End Zone**



***End Zone Umpire (Controlling Umpire)***

The End Zone Umpire should always aim to be 20-25 metres away, inside play and side on to the contest.

***Mid Zone Umpire***

The Mid Zone Umpire should be less than a kick away, within “the tramlines” and adjust his position with the movement of play.

***Far End Zone Umpire***

The Far End Zone Umpire should take up a position on or outside “the tramlines” on the opposite side of the ground to play and remain on that side of the ground until a set play situation allows him to adjust position.

### **(iii) Change Of Control**

The fundamental principles governing Change of Control between umpires are:

- *The Controlling Umpire at all times relinquishes control.*
- *The Mid Zone Umpire shall keep the play if he can achieve a position as good as or better than the End Zone Umpire provided he will not place himself under undue pressure in doing so.*
- *Long Kicks from the end zone clearly into the change of control area, must instigate a Change of Control.*
- *Short passages of play controlled by the Mid Zone Umpire into the Change of Control area should not instigate a change of control however short passages of play (e.g. short, clear handballs, kicks, knock-ons or runs) out of the End Zones controlled by the End Zone Umpire into the Change of Control area should instigate Changes of Control where possible.*

Umpires are not restricted to their zone. Umpires should maintain control until a clear opportunity to relinquish control arises. Short passages of play are not always clear opportunities for Change of Control.

The Controlling Umpire should maintain control of the running player until that player clearly disposes of the ball into another zone or if the player clearly runs into another zone and is unlikely to be tackled or lose possession of the ball.

#### **(a) Changing Zones – 50 Metre Penalty**

The Umpire who awards the 50m penalty should maintain control of play and should set up the amended set play. If the resulting penalty extends into another zone, the Non-Controlling Umpire should move around play into the zone from which the Controlling Umpire has come. As a result, there is no Change of Control.

#### **(b) Field Bounces / Boundary Throw Ins**

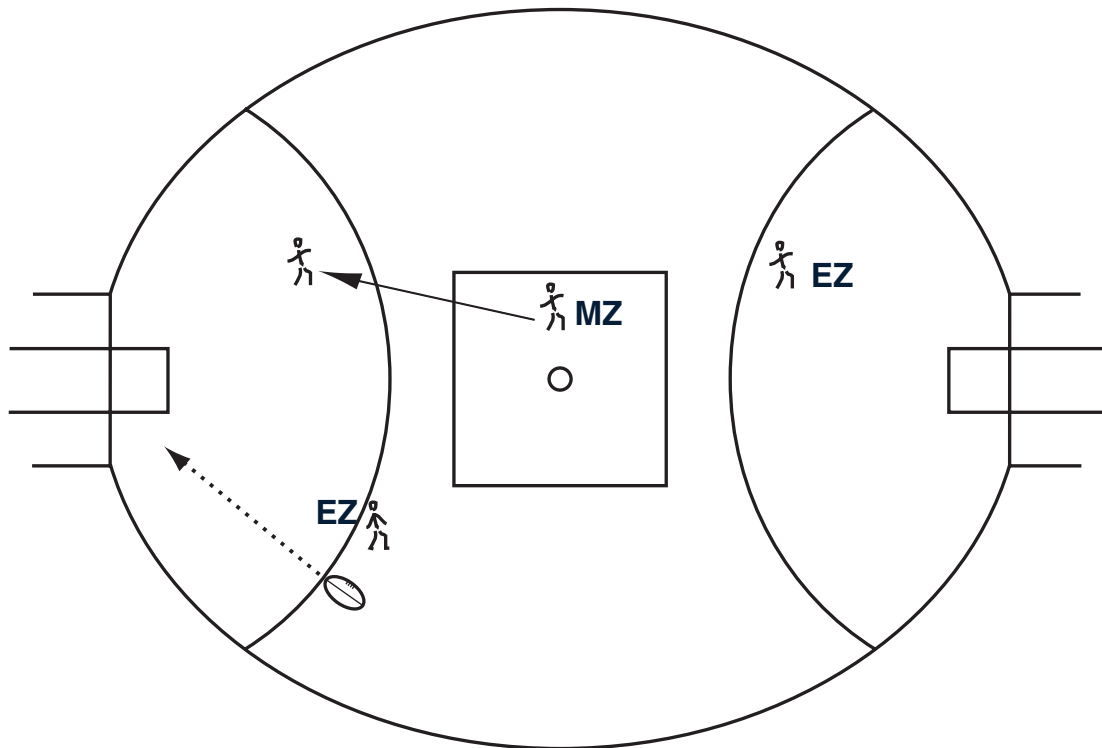
The umpire who calls for a field bounce/ boundary throw-in should maintain control of play.

#### **(c) Changing Zones – Play into Adjacent Zone**

If the play has extended well into another zone as a result of the preceding passage of play, the Non-Controlling umpire moves into the zone from which the Controlling Umpire has come.

#### **(d) Changing Zones – Set Play Unlikely to Score**

When play moves from the Mid Zone into the End Zone and the End Zone Umpire awards a set play which is unlikely to score, the Mid Zone Umpire runs in quickly to control the set play, allowing the End Zone Umpire to turn and run forward when appropriate, (e.g. delay in play) to a position just short of the anticipated destination of the kick, thus being able to observe all the area / players forward of his position.



The Far End Zone Umpire should stay within 50m arc on the opposite side of the ground as the set play.

This situation may also apply in the reverse when the Mid Zone Umpire awards a set play from a kick out of defence into the change of control area and which is marked by a team mate of the defender.

The End Zone Umpire should run to position to control the set play. This will allow the Mid Zone Umpire to run to the appropriate position, just short of the resultant contest, keeping under observation all the area and players forward of his position.

**Where the mark of the set play is wide on the ground – near the boundary line for instance – and the End Zone Umpire has to run out to line up the kick at goal, he must be alert to the possibility that the player with the ball may kick or play on quickly. He should ensure that he is not caught out of position. The important thing is that the Umpire must be alert and anticipate the next act of play.**

#### **(e) Changing Zones – Set play in EZ**

Where an End Zone Umpire is required to attend the set play in his zone (that is, he is required to show a *presence at the mark* and there is an *anticipated delay*), the Mid Zone Umpire must be alert to a possible change of control. This can only be initiated by the End Zone Umpire (the controlling umpire).

The End Zone Umpire will indicate this change by clearly tapping his buttock.

The Mid Zone Umpire will quickly run to the far side of the End Zone to a position just short of the anticipated destination of the kick, and become The Controlling Umpire once the set play has been taken.

Prior to the set play being taken The End Zone Umpire will assume a position backward of the mark for the resultant play and subsequently become the Mid Zone Umpire once the set play has been taken.

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## Special Provision Covering the Awarding of Free Kicks

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### (i) Infringements in Play/Just Off Play

A Non Controlling Umpire should award a free kick when he sees a clear and obvious infringement of the laws which is not penalised by the Controlling Umpire.

### (ii) Implementation of Free Kicks Awarded by the Non-Controlling Umpire

Free kicks awarded by Non-Controlling Umpires should be implemented under the following guidelines:-

- (a) Blow the whistle for the infringement
- (b) (i) Where there is to be a set play resulting from the free kick, the Non-Controlling Umpire indicates the free kick, blows time on (if appropriate), runs to the incident, becomes the Controlling Umpire and controls the set kick.

The Controlling Umpire prior to the incident becomes the Non-Controlling Umpire in the zone from which the umpire awarding the decision came.

- (ii) Where an advantage play is to apply after the free kick, the umpire awarding the free kick is to indicate the advantage signal.

Following the advantage signal/call, control of play reverts to the umpire controlling the play before the infringement. The umpire who awarded the free kick again becomes the Non-Controlling Umpire and adjusts his position for the next act of play.

**Note: The umpire not awarding the free kick would not be expected to call advantage but should be alert to having control returned to him immediately after the advantage call is made by the other umpire.**

- (c) Clear indication of the infringement, both verbally and with the appropriate signal, also indicating the direction of the resulting free kick if no advantage applies: or if advantage is to apply, the advantage call and signal.

This guideline also applies to infringements awarded after a goal has been scored and those occurring at centre bounces.

### (iii) Infringements Forward of Play

- (a) A Non Controlling Umpire should award a free kick when he sees a clear and obvious infringement of the laws.
- (b) The position of the resultant set kick is either the place of the infringement or where the ball is at the time of the infringement, whichever is of the greater advantage to the team offended against.
- (c) Where a team has a set kick and a team member is infringed forward of play, a 50 metre penalty can apply from the set kick if it would be a greater penalty than awarding the free kick at the place of the infringement.

- (d) The position of the resultant set kick is either where the infringement occurs or 50 metres from the original set kick, whichever is of the greatest advantage to the team offended against.

**(iv) Infringements behind Play**

- (a) Non Controlling Umpires should penalise infringements of the laws when the free kick is obvious, e.g. prevention of player commencing his run to position, holding, pushing off, blocking, reportable incidents etc.
- (b) Non-Controlling Umpires should attend behind play incidents providing it does not compromise their ability to be involved in the next act of play should they be required.
- (c) Where a team has a set kick and a team member is infringed behind play, a 50m penalty is to apply from the set kick.
- (d) Where a team with a set kick infringes, a free kick is to be awarded against that team at the place of the infringement or at the set kick whichever is of greater advantage to the team offended against.

Umpires should use their judgement in deciding whether to attend to behind play incidents. A guideline for umpires in such situations would be: attend the incident if it appears that play is unlikely to return to their zone quickly. If an Emergency Umpire is in attendance there would be no requirement for the Non-Controlling Umpire to attend the incident.

In matches in which there is no Emergency Umpire and an incident occurs behind the play in the Mid Zone, one of the End Zone Umpires should attend the incident if at all possible (it would be appropriate for the umpire for whom it is least likely to be involved in the next act of play to attend the incident).

Should the incident occur in one of the End Zones, all umpires should be alert to having one umpire attend the incident whilst one umpire and the third umpire are in position for the next act of play. This process will need decisive and clear communication to ensure we have one umpire at the incident, one umpiring and one in position for the next act of play.

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## **End of Quarter – End of Match**

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### **(i) End of Quarter / Game (Refer Law 10.4.2)**

Play in each quarter shall come to an end when any one of the Field Umpires hears the siren. Any umpire may signal the end of the quarter however it is usual for the Controlling Umpire to do so. If there is any doubt, any Non-Controlling Umpire hearing the siren should inform the Controlling Umpire immediately.

### **(ii) Set Kick at Goal After Siren**

The umpire awarding the free kick shall retain control of the mark and is the Controlling Umpire (this may be the End Zone or Mid Zone Umpire). After the mark has been set the Controlling Umpire controls the mark from an adjacent position 15-20 metres away.

The Near End Zone Umpire controls the likely contest area and gives any required “all clear” signal resulting from the kick.

The Far End Zone Umpire shall move down and control the area directly behind the mark and assist the Controlling Umpire who is controlling the mark.