



# Leicestershire Society of Rugby Union Referees

*February 2016*

**Next Meeting- 29 February 2016 @ Belgrave RFC- 7.30PM**

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## Dates for your diary:

1. 2 March 2016- Leicestershire U17s v NLD U17s @Syston RFC  
KO 7.30PM Referee: Paul Tilley
2. 9 March 2016- Leicester University v DMU @ Welford Road  
Ladies' KO 6.15PM Referee: Duncan Chandler  
Men's KO 8PM Referee: Louis Massarella
3. 15 April 2016- Annual Dinner (see flyer)
4. 16 May 2016- AGM



# LSRUR Annual Dinner



You are cordially invited to apply for your place[s]

on

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

Arrival at 19.00 for seating at 19.45

"The Honours and Legends Room"

Tigers Stadium, Welford Road

Our guest speaker is **Martin Corry**, the former Tigers, England and British and Irish Lion, he will be supported on the night by comedian **Ian Richards**.



Tickets are £37.50 per head or £350 per table of 10 – Current Society Members £35

**Dress code is lounge suits or blazers**

### Menu

Starter	Cream of vegetable Soup
Main	Supreme of Chicken stuffed with sausage and sage farce, topped with Shallot and herb sauce <i>A vegetarian option will be available. Please indicate where required-</i>
Sweet	Apple and Blackberry Tart Cheese Board with complimentary Port Tea and Coffee

Please reserve [            ] places at the LSRUR Annual Dinner on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016

Name:-

Club:-

Home address:-

Email address:-

Contact number:-

Return applications with remittance to :- John Haggart, 64 Tennyson Road, Lutterworth, LE17 4XA

or email Applications or enquiries to [johnhaggart64@sky.com](mailto:johnhaggart64@sky.com) or 01455553167

Remittance is required by Friday 1st April 2016. Cheques payable to LSRUR or we will email details for those wishing to pay by BACS transfer.

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## Fergus Slattery: Survival of amateur rugby is a real concern

Lifeblood of the game must be protected by charter if it is to survive

© Sat, Feb 20, 2016, 08:00

Fergus Slattery



I know rugby has a serious problem with concussion. We all see what's happening. This is a global problem for modern sport. Rugby Union is not American Football but it is moving in that direction.

That makes the problems encountered by the NFL pertinent to our game, So we can't ignore them.

What concerns me though is the survival of amateur rugby. There has been no amateur club game in America for 50 or 60 years. It was wiped out by professionalism. From what I see as a guest speaker travelling to all corners of Ireland and Britain, that will happen to rugby unless an amateur charter is introduced.

My issue, and it relates to concussion, is if the clubs in this part of the world don't embrace an amateur charter, as we had in place before 1995, the game will die a death below the professional ranks.

There are so many strands to this. Our teenagers, who view only the professional model, are taking supplements with plenty of schools in denial about their widespread use. They mimic their heroes knowing that power and size is essential if they are to be competitive.

There is no testing below underage representative level, so if you are taking A, B and C why not cross the line and ingest X, Y and Z. Sure who will find out? We don't know what our children are taking. That's an issue that must be addressed before we can get near concerns about concussion at schoolboy level. Because they are directly related.

### Chalk and cheese

The other problem, as I see it, is kids are coming out of school with the option of playing only one game yet rugby is both amateur and professional – they are chalk and cheese yet the same rules are in place for both. That's a problem.

The talented players who miss out on academy contracts wander around the clubs seeing what money they will be given to play under-20s and eventually for the First XV. Not every single 19-year-old, mind, just the most ambitious players. The clubs are saying they will not pay players but some emphasise the foul over the fair means of recruitment.

That's another problem.

There are a set of rules about non-payment of players and the amateur clubs are expected to implement them. This is extremely difficult to police. There is no paper trail to find the money that is being doled out. So it does not exist? You bet your life it does.

I have tried to address this but it's a full-time job to get out among all the clubs. A large majority of the clubs agree with me but these volunteers are stymied by the same time constraints.

All these problems go into the same melting pot – paying amateur players, supplement use, the growing size of players and increased number of concussive blows.

If not addressed the amateur game will slowly but surely sink into oblivion.

### 50% decline

Generally speaking, across Ireland and Britain, rugby numbers are down 50 per cent in urban areas. Granted, a huge boon for Irish rugby is the increase in participation in rural areas.

I get invited on occasion to club dinners and lunches. The average age can be up around 65. I made a quip at one recently that there will be nobody attending these functions in 15 to 20 years time. On returning to my seat the host of the event, an old friend, looked at me angrily and stated: “How dare you suggest such a thing! There will be nobody at this lunch in three years time!”

In my experience people play amateur team sports for two reasons: what happens on the pitch and what happens afterwards – the friendships made with the man you just tried to beat up.

That was always the spirit that drove the game. Once money comes into it, like in any other aspect of life, it is no longer about camaraderie – it’s only about what happens on the pitch.

Tours, once the lifeblood of rugby union, are now a rarity, weekly club games are no more and the craic synonymous with the club house is barely in existence.

I went to New Zealand with the Lions in 1971 while my club, Blackrock, went on a tour of East Africa. They played Uganda in front of 12,000 people (Idi Amin was a rugby man) but that touring culture is almost entirely gone.

What we are seeing, at all levels of the game, is plenty of what I call door-bashing rugby. That’s not sustainable, certainly not below the professional ranks.

An amateur charter, in agreement with the IRFU, is not a magic wand but the beginning of a long, hard struggle for survival. It would provide the tools to examine how we begin to protect the club game, and how we begin to protect our players.

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