

Leicestershire Society of Rugby Union Referees

March 2020 Newsletter



What an end to the season! The question is now what we do on the days we would normally go out to referee a game or be a match observer. We will keep you up to date, through the Society website LSRUR.co.uk so keep visiting.



This newsletter is coming to you in extraordinary times. The domestic rugby season (excluding Premiership) has been declared over and we await the finer details of what happens now, with regard to promotion/relegation in all the leagues. I'm sure we will receive notice over the next few weeks/months.

(DBS) As a Committee, we are continuing to work away, in the background. I am beginning the long process of DBS applications for all our members. I will contact you all directly over the coming weeks/months and request certain information from you. Following this, I request a DBS check, through the RFU, on your behalf. You are kept informed via e mail, at all stages of the application process and, ultimately, when you receive the clearance. You will then receive your DBS certificate by post.

My aim is to get all applications in by the start of next season. Watch this space!

(AGM) The AGM, normally held in May, has been postponed and we will hold it as soon as reasonably practicable, in the new season. Hopefully this will be in September at the latest. Your Secretary will be contacting you soon with details of Committee posts that are up for election, this time around and any nominations already received. Please contact the Secretary for any further details, once you receive this notification.

(Grading) The end of season full Grading Meeting, at which all members grades are considered, has also been postponed. This is an important milestone in the season and members are, quite rightly, always keen to hear the outcome of this meeting. As soon as we are able to hold meetings again, the Grading Meeting will be first on the agenda.

(KIT) Our new Society kit, for next season is currently in production, with Olorun. I was aiming to have a full 'sizing' set for the members meeting on the 30th March, for you to see. Obviously, this will no longer be happening. Once I have the kit in my possession, I will post some pictures on the website. The shirts will be a lime green colour, with black shorts and green socks. We will also be offering leisure wear for you to purchase, from a new online shop, this will include training tops, hoodies, polo shirts, tracksuit bottoms, gilets etc and will be in a navy blue/maroon design, with gold trim.

This method of providing kit will be a positive step forward and I am sure you will be impressed with what is on offer.

We will initially issue a full set of refereeing kit (shirt, shorts, socks) to those qualifying members; qualification is completing 10 games during the current season. A similar system for assessors/coaches will apply and they will receive padded jacket and trousers, carrying the Society Logo.

(Annual Dinner) Sadly, our Annual dinner due to be held at the Tigers on Friday 24th April has also had to be cancelled. This is one of those milestones of the Leicestershire Rugby Season, that has been running for years. Hopefully, we will hold the dinner, once again, next season and I'm sure it will be as good as ever.

The main priority now, for all of us, is not rugby. It is about keeping ourselves and our families safe and doing what we should all be doing urgently; keeping ourselves to ourselves and heeding the advice of the Government to stay at home. When you look at the potential infection figures if we don't, it is quite frightening.

Please stay safe and I look forward to catching up with you all again, on the other side of this unprecedented crisis. Remember that all Committee members are very approachable, so do please contact us should you have any queries about anything.

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The RFU now refer to Assessors as Match Observers. It certainly sounds less threatening. Could that possibly make you think again about becoming a Match Observer? If you are coming to the end of your refereeing career, but still want to be an integral part of this great sport, willing to share your vast experience to other Referees, then please do consider it.

Don Hope and Bomber Wells have been the bedrock of assessing in County this Season. Then Lance Sullen and John Carr joined the ranks and suddenly we were able to cover so many more matches, both Society and exchanges. But it would be wonderful if we could swell the ranks even further next season. Just get in touch with Geoff Blackburn at refassess@btinternet.com, who would be more than happy to develop your match observing skills. It can be so rewarding, both to yourself as well as the Society. It will certainly ensure that you remain a vital part of the Society.

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Your Society treasurer is looking to help everyone who has been out as a match official over the last few months and is paying your travelling expenses earlier than normal. Many of you will have received your payment, so to other members please get your travelling claims in by Easter.

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March was lined up to be another very busy month with both of the Oakham and Uppingham Schools 7s tournaments, Junior Bowl Finals, Girls Midlands Area Finals and County games plus the usual friendlies, so I would like to thank everyone who made themselves available for any of these events.

If everything had gone according to plan, there would have been 28 referees appointed on 7th March which is a tremendous response from everyone involved.

As a result of the premature end to the season, the Junior Cup and Bowl Finals have been cancelled and will not be played at the start of the new season as the players will be in an older age group, so it would not be practicable.

For those of you who are looking forward to next season, I already have a date for your diaries – Sunday 7th March 2021 for the Oakham School 7s.

Finally, I would like to pay a personal tribute to Noel Manchester who is retiring from his role as Recruitment Officer, as rugby in Leicestershire and the Society, have an awful lot to thank Noel for all of his work and dedication in recruiting new referees. All of which, made my role as Sunday Secretary so much easier, as there was a constant flow of new referees who could be 'blooded' on a Sunday.



Looking back, I first met Noel at Hinckley RFC as a mere novice referee (there are probably some who will think that nothing has changed since then) where he watched my first game and due to his diligence and guidance, survived the ordeal (particularly the helpful 'feedback' from the Hinckley coaches). The rest is history!!

It goes without saying, that I would like to thank everyone who turned out on a Sunday – whether it be for one game or regularly – as your support was much appreciated.

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Presidents Lunch on Sunday 25th October 2020

Unfortunately, we have lost the Annual Dinner but make a note in your diary for the 2020 Lunch to be held at Longcliffe Golf Club near Loughborough at 13:00 for 13:30

The Lunch will comprise three courses and conclude with coffee and chocolates. And a bottle of Red & White wine will be on each table, price to be confirmed but a guide is £19.

Excellent day to bring your partner to enjoy a dinner out with great atmosphere and the possibility of hearing the “**Tommy Tuckers**”



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It has been a fairly quiet year/season regarding data, and you'll be pleased to hear that we have not had any data leaks!

The quiet times are going to disappear when we come back for next season, as we have quite a lot of new plans regarding Whostheref (WTR) and our new video portal.

As you may or may not know, we are moving towards utilising some functionality of WTR, which will mean that you will need to enter your unavailability into WTR rather than emailing us utilising the cry-off facility on our existing system. All appointments will still show on our system, but we'll be entering all the appointments through WTR and you will receive your appointments through it. Don't worry, there will be plenty of training prior to the start of the new season. I am happy to screenshare with individual ref's where needed, to help them navigate through the system. We will also provide some instruction/factsheets.

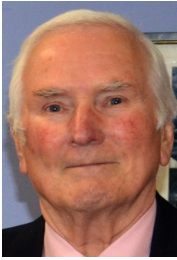
Secondly, we're hopefully going to increase the amount of videoing the Society will carry out during next season. We have purchased some videoing equipment for the Society, so if you don't have a game and fancy watching someone, then feel free to ask to see if the video equipment is available. If we get enough utilisation, we will look at getting a second set of equipment. As a result of this, we're going to update our GDPR policy and you will all be required to re-sign this. The changes will allow the Society to take the videos and these will be uploaded to a portal controlled by the Society. The Intellectual Property and Copyright in the video will be owned by the Society, so don't worry, it won't be distributed outside the Society or its affiliated bodies without relevant authority. Each referee will be able to have a copy of their games that have been videoed and we're hoping to make the portal accessible to stream for all members and we will utilise the same for training – it will be a great attribute to the Society's training – watch this space – more info will follow as it becomes available.

Finally, and most importantly, CURRY! Unfortunately, the planned curries after the Varsity Games and an End of Season Curry have obviously had to be postponed – yes, postponed not cancelled, so watch this space – as soon as we can get a delicious ruby and some beers, you will all be notified.



Stay safe and stay well and if there is anything I can help with in these unprecedented times, please let me know.

Have Balls will travel: a lament for Easter Tours.



Fast approaching my dotage, (all right, I know most members are convinced that it was passed long ago), I tend to look back and reflect on the good (?) old days of rugby. That was a time before leagues when all matches were, so called, friendlies and the only rewards were the pleasures of a good day out each Saturday, for which a match fee and coach hire were charged. Sunday rugby was unheard of and most players were not introduced to the game until they attended Secondary schools at the age of eleven.

Private car ownership was thin on the ground, so away games were invariably by coach. Absence of the breathalyser was also a major influence on the total package of the day out. You may well ask “if all games were friendlies, they cannot have been that competitive.” Well, I still carry a few small scars and many painful memories of stud marks to reply to that. However, whatever the temper of the game, it always ended in the bar where renditions of traditional Rugby songs were accompanied by copious quantities of real ale. This was followed by a fragmented return home via a number of stops at our favourite pubs en route. To arrive back at our home club before ten o’clock signalled a poor day out. Sadly, all this has gone forever. Most clubrooms empty quite quickly after one or two orange juices (mainly consumed by the first team players) and the majority of away teams, whether by private transport or coach, leave within the hour

The greatest loss, by far, is the Easter Tour. In days gone by this was the highlight of the season. Our club usually toured every alternate Easter whilst hosting touring sides during the others. We tended to alternate between Yorkshire and Devon, travelling out on Good Friday and returning on Easter Monday after the last game. The first task was arranging fixtures followed by persuading some innocent hotelier to accept a block booking from twenty to thirty “young gentleman”. Needless to say, we never attempted to return to the same establishment. Although the copious quantities of beer and spirits sold did go some way to alleviating any damage caused. The remainder was settled by a whip round prior to leaving.

Between matches, we indulged in innocent pleasures including, sliding down the hotel stairs on bar trays, moving large wardrobes to impossible places and raiding the hotel pantry for midnight snacks. The latter once had an unexpected ending when “mine host” was discovered sitting on a chair in the middle of the room with his twelve bore on his lap accompanied by a large dog that looked like an offspring of the hound of the Baskervilles. Needless to say, a hasty retreat was called for.

On another occasion one of the props single handed, moved over twenty enormous boulders marking the sides of the approach to the front entrance of the hotel thus creating a slalom run for all vehicles approaching the front door.

Ah! Happy days.

Sic transit Gloria mundi.

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Jeff Knight has come up with a great idea – he has sent in some photos of our Society members in action and I am sure he will send some more, you can find them here

<https://www.lsrur.co.uk/newsletters-society-events/picture-gallery/event/gallery/Keepingincontact>

If you have any other photos to add to the Gallery called “Keeping in contact” just send the pictures to reapps@lsrur.co.uk and keep looking to see other photos as they get added.

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Whistlers Trophy still only less than 50% of you have not voted, please help us have a really good vote this year, something you can do over the next two weeks when you cannot officiate. This is a rally coveted trophy by the clubs so vote here

https://www.lsrur.co.uk/index.php?option=com_rsform&view=rsform&formId=16

Photo Quiz

Identify the all the past and present members of the Society in the photos below. A bottle of wine to the member who identifies all the members shown (if you have supplied the photos you cannot take part) all answers to reapps@lsrur.co.uk



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Now we have some light entertainment from our Training Officer

“Odd shaped balls.”

Familiar as we are (or should be!) with the laws and terms of our wonderful game, how many of us know their origins and adaptations over the years? Why is a try called a try? Why do we call for a mark? Why do we call “offside”?



The answers lie in rugby’s origins and a read of the first draft of rugby’s laws written in 1845 by three pupils of Rugby school (aged 16-17) -no “old farts” back then, will give some great material to bore dinner guests and win pub quizzes. For those too lazy to google, here are a few gems to fill some column inches

Impact players are for wimps:

Once the game started, no-one could absent themselves from the match except in case of extreme emergency and then only with permission of both captains. *“the punishment for absenting oneself from a match, without any real and well-grounded reason, be left to the discretion of any praepostor”*. That doesn’t sound too bad until you read *“All matches are drawn after five days, but after three if no goal has been kicked”*. Still think you are match fit?

Concussion protocols? Bah!

EVERYONE was expected to join the match – *“in consequence of the great abuse in the system of giving notes to excuse fagging, &c. and otherwise exempt fellows from attendance at the matches, no notes shall be received which are not signed by one of the Medical officers of the school, and countersigned by the Head of house”* If you had lessons, then you had to pitch up as soon as you finished.

Offside? Onside?

“A player is off his side if the ball has touched one of his own side behind him, until the other side touch it.” i.e. a player was taken “off” his side and unable to participate until he was put back “on” his side

If at first you don’t succeed.....

“A ball touched between the goalposts may be brought up to either of them.....” If you grounded the ball you could have a “try” at kicking a goal – back then, the only way to score. Hence a “conversion” of the try into points

Kick em’ where it hurts....

“A player standing up to another may hold one arm only, but may hack him or knock the ball out of his hand” although to be fair
“No hacking with the heel, or above the knee”

Football is not Soccer!

And finally, just to make a point, “Football” was always of the physical rugby variety rather than the synchronized swimming of soccer. Mostly played in public schools and on village holy days, it was generally brutal and frequently involved brawling mobs. It was in 1847, when the former pupils of public schools, fed up with arguing over which version to play and less than keen on Rugby school’s more violent law book, set up the “Cambridge Rules” which formed in large part the basis of Association Football’s rules in 1863. Softies!

MONSTER LAW QUIZ

Think you know the law? Take this test and prove it!

1. If a team has a squad of 19 players at the start of the match, how many MUST be available to play in the front row?
 - a. 3
 - b. 4
 - c. 5
 - d. 6
2. You are refereeing a match in a park when a player hoists an up and under. The ball hits a high tree branch overhanging the pitch and is then caught in the field of play by a player from the same team as the kicker. The catcher was retreating back to an onside position but was not yet onside. Do you:
 - a. Play on?
 - b. Play advantage/Penalise the catcher?
 - c. Stop the game and restart with a scrum? If so, where and who puts the ball in?
 - d. Stop the game and restart with a lineout? If so, where and who puts the ball in?
3. A player having just been tackled, throws a pass backwards to a teammate from the ground. As he does so, the tackler, just as he gains his feet, tries to bat the ball, which is in the air, backwards towards his goal line. He uses one outstretched hand to do so and the ball goes forward. Do you:
 - a. Play on?

- b. Penalise/Play advantage for offside?
 - c. Penalise/Play advantage for deliberate knock-on?
 - d. Play scrum advantage for knock-on?
- 4. A defender leaps into the air and catches the ball in the air just before the 22m. He lands with one foot on the 22m line and one foot outside his 22m and call for the mark as he does so. Do you award the mark?
- 5. At a scrum, the scrum half throws the ball in which is immediately hooked back to the number 8. He remains close to the tunnel and as the number 8 picks the ball up from the base, he is in the way of the opposition scrum half's attempt to make a tackle. Do you:
 - a. Play on?
 - b. Penalise/Play advantage for obstruction?
 - c. Penalise/Play advantage for offside?

The answers will be on the website 2 days after you receive this newsletter

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And finally, how *It takes someone strange to want to stand in the middle* by Andrew Forsythe

It takes someone strange to want to stand in the middle of a pitch of 30 potentially brawling men, so why do we do it??

Rainy day, November 2014. IRB Laws Certificate – check! ELRA – 15-a-side adults – check! Vipers 3 v Leicester Lions Vets! I turn up in the Vipers Refs room, with a bag of stuff – not knowing what lies ahead. Vipers 1s are being taken by Simon Hincks, who, coincidentally took the game that ended my playing career with a helicopter ride to Walsgrave Hospital – believe it or not, the conversation eased the nerves of the impending game! Cliff arrived about half an hour before the game and I went to my tasks of briefing the teams and doing the stud check – I really had no idea what I was doing, despite having played on and off for over 25 years!

I remember a conversation with my stepfather about an hour before setting off for the game – when he asked me why I wanted to put myself under so much pressure? I was beginning to ask myself the same question. Then it was time for KO.

The game flew by and I was shocking! Complaints from both teams. Having been a forward in my playing time, I had very little understanding of the offside laws, but the other 30 referees on the pitch were delighted to let me know where I had gone wrong! Cliff later told me that he thought he saw my knees knocking at one point! But I survived it!

What can be so difficult about this refereeing malarkey? Surely, it's just about enforcing the laws and I have seen so many referees on TV make it look soooooo easy!

So, I go on to complete my probation period and am proud to turn up and collect my kit. I have done it! I am now a LSRUR member! My journey begins!

I keep my head down and start to amass a number of games. The more I can do, the better I will become, surely! Then I get told I am being assessed – what is that?? I remember it well, with Aylestone Athletic 1s v Vipers' 3s (my original foe!). Take a look, the assessment is attached <https://www.lsrur.co.uk/images/AF-January-2015-assessment.pdf> . I told you I didn't know what

offside was! Following this I was given a Level 10 grade! It was great chatting to Don, I gathered as much info from him as I could. Don is a seriously experienced assessor and I managed to understand loads more about the society and what refereeing is all about. Again, I kept my head down and did my games. I also managed to get involved with some of the Society training courses and found the AR CPD course particularly informative, not only to help me enforce the law (because that's all refereeing is about), but also all the practical stuff!

As time went on, I realised I was going nowhere without putting my head above the parapet! I had made some friends in the Society and two, Duncan Chandler and Paul MacMillan helped me to get some help and I asked Paul (who was Training Officer at the time) if I could get a coach – I didn't know there was a difference between coaches and mentors.

I didn't get assessed in 2015/16 season, but I was appointed a mentor, who has become a great friend, Dave Edkins. He came to watch me in February 2016. We got on well and Dave was my appointed mentor for the next season too. He told me two things 1, change your body shape (which I think equates to lose weight fatty!) and 2, get fit! So, I did. I began my journey to losing 3 stone (yes, 3 stone) and more than likely being fitter than I had ever been, thanks to the help of a very good friend. I did my part; it was up to Dave to do his! And he did, I got promoted to L9 at the end of the 2015 season on his recommendation and with the promise of L8 for the end of the next season! Dave kept his promise and I was promoted to L8 at the end of the 2016/17 season. Nick Houghton was appointed as my coach. This is where the real fun began!

Level 8 – now where do I start! Everyone is a referee – the older players have normally played at higher levels and still think they can – it is suddenly first team rugby – the leagues matter – and so the list goes on and on..... Master L8 and your game management will have improved tenfold! My season was not great – I did exactly the opposite! I did not master game management and I got some very mediocre assessments – I was sent on exchange and loved the opportunity! I grasped it with both hands, but my eagerness exceeded my ability. There were times when I wondered what the hell I was doing! Then I saw Tom Brucciani's video on his management nightmare at Leicester Forest! It all clicked, but could I put it in place?? I was so pleased it wasn't just me – Tom, a L6 ref had been through the same shit as me! However, these L8 games were going to take more than a season to master – and did they!

I slowly started to get the hang of game management, whilst still getting stuff wrong – no ref is perfect! The problem is that I would beat myself up about what had gone on – especially when on exchange! The thing to remember is that you can't polish a turd! Sometimes it is just shite and you cannot, even with every tool in your bag of management skills being utilised, get some teams to work with you. Take a look at my Alcester report <https://www.lsrur.co.uk/images/AF-October-2017.pdf> . Would they listen??? Not for love nor money. Luckily Nick had come with me and listened on the comms! There was no changing what was happening. Luckily both Nick and the assessor agreed! (Take note of the comment: *Andrew read the game well just lacking a bit of speed at times but made up with the reading of the game and his decisions helped the game flow* - this all came from a comment the Alcester chairman made to the assessor, the assessor had no issue prior to this! This is what is commonly known as being HIJACKED).

Take a look at my Wigan report. I had a shocker. As a result of my original exchange game being called off due to flooding, I ended up turning up for this game about 25 minutes beforehand. What did I learn? – don't ever be underprepared – I should never have accepted the game if I was going to be so late! I have never left myself such little time to prepare before a game since.

Things started to get better and I started to analyse my games a little differently and stopped beating myself up (well less, anyway). I now look at the set plays over the park (something that was drilled home from my assessment at Norwich, which is also attached)

<https://www.lsrur.co.uk/images/AF-October-2018.pdf> and recall how many are successfully completed. Scrums, line-out, ruck, maul etc. etc.

Things started to get better for me, and I was given my first in-county L7. Oadby Wyggs v Mkt Bosworth. Cracking game and close. Report attached <https://www.lsrur.co.uk/images/AF-December-2017.pdf>. I had tasted good first team rugby and wanted more. I didn't get a lot more that season, but the games started to come in the following season. I finally thought I was starting to get it whatever "it" is! My exchange reports were starting to make sense to me, and I was getting as much refereeing as I could possibly fit in; regularly taking games on Saturdays, Sundays and a game mid-week. I ended up with a L7 grade at the December 2018 grading meeting – but you can never take your foot off the gas!

L7 went by like a bit of a whirlwind. Great games at this level and most teams in the league to battle it out! I had some great exchanges having taken Kidderminster both in the RFU Intermediate Cup as well as in the League, both reports are attached <https://www.lsrur.co.uk/images/AF-January-2019.pdf>, <https://www.lsrur.co.uk/images/AF-October-2018.pdf>. I felt good about my refereeing, all the input from Dave and Nick was kicking in, as well as the invaluable lessons learnt from assessors. Not all assessors are as good as the ones we have in Leicestershire – be careful not to take too much to heart from some of these. Again, I remember a game at L8 I had at Oxford – Nick had travelled with me and the assessor had, in fact, assessed Nick some 15+ years ago. After the game I understood why Nick was fairly disparaging about the guy! We later found out that he had his own view on what is right and wrong in the game and what referees should be doing – to this end he went on to tell us about how the RFU had made him shut down his own personal website for some bizarre reason – hence to say my report made no sense! I won't show you that one, in case he ever assesses you in the future!

So, still onward and upward. I had been told, on my ELRA course, that if I was lucky (this was by Claire Daniels – the most capped female international referee and Adam White - then a Nat. 1/Championship referee) I might make it to L7.

So, what the heck is going on? Here I am, being allowed to take L6 games. I was appointed Mark Elliott as my coach from the summer of 2019 and the rest is pretty much history. Mark and I started to work on fine tuning, and I had a couple of L6 out of county games culminating in my final report as a L7 doing a L6 at Lichfield, report attached <https://www.lsrur.co.uk/images/AF-December-2019.pdf>.

How had I got this far; goodness only knows!?! But I cannot rest on my laurels.

I was awarded the L6 grade at the 2019 December grading meeting and I cannot thank everyone who has helped me, enough. My coaches, Dave, Nick and Mark, all of the Committee both current and past, my friends (and I have made plenty of them within the Society) and everyone who has had a positive impact on my refereeing. Most importantly, I need to thank my wife, for being so understanding and not demanding that I join her for the Fosse Park away fixture!!!

I am at the bottom of L6 and want to get to the top of L6, so there is a lot more work to be done, plenty more fine tuning. This was borne out by my recent game at Syston v West Bridgford. Did the right team win, yes, was I at the right place at the right time, yes, could I have done better – oh yes, most definitely! I failed to shut down both teams and this created issues for me, and this was

my own fault, no-one else's. Will I learn from that – most definitely. It is amazing what games present which challenges. You can turn up to a game and think that you should have this in the palm of your hand, and it is far from it. Then games that you think will be difficult are not so bad!

Also, I have been fortunate that my PT was a former England Women's Rugby International and as a result I have ended up with games I never thought possible. A pro-invitational with Stimpson captaining one side and Shayne Byrne the other! Luckily the floodlights were so poor, the crowd could only see half the game! I was well out of my depth, but I survived. I have also had the honour of taking England Police v England Fire Service on two occasions. The games were a year apart and my game was a year better. I will always remember the games at Leicestershire's hallowed ground, Tigers, having been AR on two occasions and in the middle once – fantastic!

I am a firm believer in what you put in, you get out and I believe what I have achieved is testament to this. Work hard for the Society and the rewards come. I hope this open and frank insight into my journey helps.

And finally, I know why I put myself under so much pressure in that first game at Vipers – because I love it – we all do!