

Leicestershire Society of Rugby Union Referees

October 2016

Next members meeting will be MONDAY 31 OCTOBER 2016 at Vipers RFC, 7pm for 7.30pm.

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Monday 31 October 2016- A Coach's Perspective, Mark will be hosting a Q&A with Dave Morris (Loughborough Students), Dave Johnson (Lutterworth) and Ivan Bills (Vipers). The format will be a directed open discussion and it promises to be a very thought provoking and insightful spectacle!

PLEASE CAN ALL ACTIVE MEMBERS MAKE AN EFFORT TO ATTEND

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Dates for your diary:

Sunday 6 November 2016- President's Lunch at Ansty Hall, more details to follow.

Monday 28 November 2016- Boris Stankovic on the scrum!

Friday 21 April 2017- Annual Dinner at Leicester Tigers RFC.

LSRUR have tickets available for the 2017 SIX NATIONS matches. If you are interested please contact John Hill. If demand exceeds the ticket allocation, they will go to a ballot.

If you received a match shirt which does not fit you correctly, please bring this to the members' meeting on the 31 October 2016 and you will be able to get a replacement shirt.

If you have not already sent your November availability to Mark Elliott and Kerrel Wills, please send it to them now because appointments are now being allocated.

Message from the Chairman

Dear All

A couple of months into the season, I hope that you are all enjoying your refereeing and all that goes with it. All the fixture secretaries are working as hard as ever on your behalf, to ensure the correct referees are on the appropriate fixtures. As always, please do get in touch if there are any issues with what you are being allocated to.

It does sadden me that I have to report an increase in abuse of match officials locally, from players, coaches and supporters alike. This is a subject that rears its head from time to time and has, unfortunately, been on the increase during the start of this season.

We, as the referee, are as much a part of the game as the players and are an integral part of everyone on the pitch having an enjoyable afternoon. We are not there to blame when a player/team does not agree with a decision or when a team loses a game.

This is a subject about which I am very passionate, and I believe that we should all have a zero tolerance to abuse and I mean zero tolerance. I don't mean taking exception to banter and leg pulling, but actual abuse.

When this does happen, it MUST be reported in all cases. If you do let it go, then the abuser will just carry on and perhaps the next referee they abuse may not be as thick skinned as yourself ! Make sure it is reported.

Our secretary John Hill will be writing in this newsletter about the process of reporting the abuse of match officials.

Most importantly is the strategies we, as referee's, can employ to perhaps prevent abuse happening in the first place and/or mitigate the impact if it does occur. Tom Brucciani will also be contributing below, with a description of these strategies and it will also be the subject of the training session at one of the members meetings in the near future.

Keep enjoying your refereeing and remember, LSRUR is your Society. Please contact any committee member to discuss any issues at all that you have.

Mark Elliott

Chairman

Leicestershire Society of Rugby Union Referees.

Message from the Secretary

Dealing with abuse

Referee abuse appears to rearing its head again this season, much to my disappointment. If you encounter any form of abuse Verbal or Physical you must report it directly to me either by phone or email, johnhill01@sky.com.

Please if the abuse is verbal, take note of what is said, time etc and of the person who made the comments, **MAKE SURE YOU GET THE NAME OF THE OFFENDER**, if it is a spectator you can ask them to be removed from the pitch area, this is the responsibility of the club to deal with them, you are quite within your rights not to restart the game until they have left. If it is a player again remove them from the pitch and carry on with the game.

Abuse should not be tolerated at any level we need to stamp it out the only way is to deal with it in the correct manner

John Hill

Message from the Midweek Secretary

Abuse of match officials – a short guide on what we as referees can do

Why, despite all of the recent efforts and measures, do we still suffer from player/spectator abuse across the game? In short, it is because the ingredients for it will always be there. Rugby is a competitive, physical game, often with plenty of passion and emotion and we are all human with all the frailties that that entails. The desire to win, the aggression, the passion, the one-eyed loyalty can all spill over and, triggered by foul play or mistakes, someone may go too far.

This does not mean that we should expect and accept abuse – far from it. It does mean that, as part of our duty as referees, we should understand the risk of abuse occurring and seek to minimise this risk. If abuse still occurs then we

should also know how best to deal with it to ensure the game is protected and standards maintained.

The aim of this article, therefore, is to encourage the reader to consider how they can, as referees, minimise the chances of abuse occurring. Please note it is not comprehensive or biblical in scope or authority – it is one perspective and an attempt to pin down some useful elements of what is, in effect, a subjective art.

Prevention is better than cure

By far the best way to control abuse is to stop it occurring in the first place.

If we can understand why someone might let loose at match officials, we can look at ways of removing contributing factors and thus prevent the offence rather than have to deal with its aftermath.

In simple terms, abuse usually occurs when someone's frustration builds, and a spark is applied. Of course, you may get the odd idiot or drunk who can't help themselves, but in the main it is the result of things coming to a head and a loss of self-control. Or put it another way.....

**FRUSTRATION + TRIGGER + LOSS OF CONTROL = POSSIBLE
ABUSE**

As referees, we can influence these three causes to some degree. By managing in the correct way we can minimise the build up of frustration. By keeping a good control of the game we can reduce the number of triggers. By maintaining the standards of discipline we can contain a loss of control. Because no two games and no two people are identical, it is impossible to give absolute guides to how we do this. What follows are some tips that I hope will help you to think about the way you manage and control games.

Minimise frustration

The dictionary defines frustration as

“the feeling of being upset or annoyed as a result of being unable to change or achieve something”.

To understand what may cause players, coaches and spectators to become frustrated, we need to appreciate what it is they are trying to change or achieve and how they want to do it (this is what we mean by empathy). Simply put, they want to play in a certain way to achieve their goal for that game (usually victory). They also have an expectation that the game will be a fair contest.

Our job as referees is to make sure that whatever a team is trying to achieve, they are operating within the laws of the game (so that we provide the fair contest everyone expects). If their play is legal, then we should be allowing them to execute their play as freely as is safe to do so. If it is illegal, then we should be clear as to what our expectations are and consistent and fair in enforcing them. The way in which we do this is crucial to limiting the levels of frustration that can build during a game. It is the ultimate dark art of refereeing – Game Management!

Game management is a topic in itself, but in a nutshell it is the way in which you handle the people and events on match day to (hopefully) make each game safe, enjoyable and fair. It involves judgements of materiality and empathy. It is unique to you and your style, but it should always include certain key elements:

- i) **The right demeanour** – this is how you present yourself and your decisions. It is key to your credibility. How you come across to players, coaches and spectators has a massive impact on how they will treat and respect you. All you do and say, all of your mannerisms and behaviours should convey the idea that you are competent, confident and committed. Do appear professional and approachable; do not appear aloof or too casual. Do manage the game and players

firmly; do not become over officious. Always be conscious of how you project yourself.

- ii) **Consistency** – Never, never be inconsistent – if you penalise one side for an offence, then you really should do the same for the other. If you penalise something at minute 10, you should do so at minute 60. If you let something go before, you need a good reason to start pulling rabbits out of the hat. Equally, be wary of backing yourself into corners – don't demand something in a briefing and then ignore it in a game. Don't threaten and then fail to follow through. Inconsistent refereeing is the shortest route to raising levels of frustration.

- iii) **Accuracy** – Never guess. The best way to be a consistent decision maker is to get the first offence and to get it right. Work on your fitness, your running lines and your law. Each element of the game has its own challenges. Have a checklist for them so that you use the same thought processes each time (eg. Scrum – body positions, binds, angles, etc...Breakdown - tackler release, tackled player release, etc). Know what to look for and how to recognise it.

- iv) **Materiality** – Some offenses leave no option as to how you must sanction them (eg. Punch, tip tackle). Most are much more open to management. Ask yourself if an offense has had a material effect on a team's chances to play. Do you really need to intervene? Is a penalty the correct sanction? Perhaps you should have penalised that? Can you manage it without the whistle? There is no set answer but good referees can sense when they need to intervene and at what level. Get it right and the game flows; frustration ebbs. Get it wrong and teams are held back and frustration builds. It's a difficult one to master. Accuracy, consistency and empathy are all crucial too.

- v) **Communication** – use all the tools at your disposal. Whistle tone, voice (colour, number, offence), signals, downtime player management, captains' briefing, front row briefing, talking to coaches if needed. Your aim is to leave no doubt as to the who, what and why of each decision and your expectations of the players. No-one likes a mystery and leaving people guessing will lead them to think that that is exactly what you are doing.

- vi) **Empathy** – try to understand what the players want. Use advantage if appropriate. If they want quick ball, make sure you police the tackle area. Both sides should be given the chance to exploit any advantage fairly won. A stronger scrum should not be frustrated by

illegal play such as folding in. A quick openside should not be prevented from turning the ball over by opponents sealing off.

In a nutshell, you want to make sure your decisions are credible. All of the above will help you to achieve this. If you or decisions lack credibility, the feeling grows that you are not in control and that it is not a fair contest. Frustration builds, making the situation you are in charge of much more volatile and abuse becomes more likely.

Prevent the triggers. Keep the safety catch on at all times. Maintain control.

Minimising the frustration of players and spectators goes a long way to removing the volatility from a game. However, given the hard, physical nature of the sport, there is always the danger that something may spark an incident.

By maintaining good control during the game we reduce the chances of a flashpoint occurring. If the trigger is still pulled, maintaining good discipline minimises the fallout and the chances of other people losing control.

- i) **Temperature** – Be aware of the temperature of a game and of individual players. Is the scoreline close? Are you in the last quarter? Is Green 7 winding every one up? Is the scrum getting feisty? What you are looking for are indicators that warn when someone may lash out or take a cheap shot. Does a team want to raise the tempo of a game but is being prevented from doing so? (enter our old friend frustration). If you sense a rise in temperature, you need to up your game. Be ready to tighten up where necessary and maybe even slow things down a little when the ball is dead. Take your time when making decisions and be ready to accelerate your sanctions if necessary. Recognise and manage the pressure.
- ii) **Sanctions** – These are a key tool in our game management toolkit, (but always remember that they are not the only tools). Use the appropriate sanction for the offence. Sometimes advantage is the right call, sometimes an immediate blast is needed. Sometimes you can avoid sanctions through a well-timed call/downtime management, other times you need to move from encouragement to enforcement. For repeat offenses do not be afraid to use a card, but make sure you build up to it - accelerate your sanctions from telling

(may be a penalty), warning (some penalties), insisting (team warning + penalty), enforcing (card). You want to be like Goldilocks – not too strong and not too soft – just right!

- iii) **Chat** – key to your credibility during volatile games is the manner in which you respond to chat. Never tolerate dissent in any form, but do not go nuclear as soon as it occurs. Be firm but calm and insist on the right behaviours. Ideally because you are consistent, accurate and fair, this should not be a problem. If it is, accelerate your sanctions. You are entitled to respect and you should not give it up by allowing players to challenge your authority (but nor you should not wear it like a badge)

In conclusion, the softer skills of refereeing are absolutely key to maintaining control. The more we work on these, the better we will become. One important way you can do this is by taking time to reflect on your performance after each game, especially the difficult ones. Ask yourself questions about the game and what you did. What was making the scrums wheel? Should you have penalised more or less? What do you wish you had said when the captain kept badgering you? What will you do next time?

Another valuable way of improving your game management is to watch and learn from others. Listen to what good referees say during a game. Try to spot patterns. Ask yourself if you would manage the game in the same way. Always seek to learn and practise your learning until it good habits form.

Our game management has a major bearing on the strength of feeling of those around us on match day. If we are credible, competent and in control, we will be playing our part to stamp out abuse.

A solid refereeing performance is the best retort to any idiot that thinks they have the right to abuse us.

Tom Brucciani

Midweek Appointments Secretary

SADO

Why not consider assessing?

If concerns about fitness or injury are bringing about the decision to stop refereeing, then why not consider becoming an Assessor/Advisor? It ensures continuing the close involvement in the sport and will be so helpful to the Society. For the more ambitious Members, it could also be a possible alternative route to achieving higher levels of rugby. Please contact SADO (Geoff Blackburn) if you would like further information or to discuss the possibility.

Sundays

September saw 50 referees appointed during the month, with all of the games being covered, and October is following a similar pattern with 39 referees being appointed to date - thank-you to everyone who has helped out.

Looking ahead, Super Sunday 2 on 6th November (Junior County Cup quarter finals) is only a couple of weeks away and thank-you to the 14 referees who have confirmed their availability but another 5 referees are still required, so please let me know if you are available - morning or afternoon.

If you do not have a game on a Saturday and can spare a couple of hours to help support Junior rugby in the County on a Sunday (either refereeing or watching one of the new referees), then please call me on 07896 202382 or by e-mail Sunday@lsrur.co.uk to

I will be on holiday at the October members meeting but can still be contacted as above.

Duncan

Christmas Curry

Andrew Forsythe is kindly organising a Christmas Curry night on the 05 December 2016. Members are invited to meet at the Parcel Yard pub

on London road around 6.30 and then to head to Clowes for 8pm for a curry.

If you are interested or would like to come please inform Andrew as he may need to book in advance.

Please register your interest by emailing Andrew at andrew.forsythe@wplcdigital.com or by text on 07831265954.

Game Management, Part 4.

So far we have looked at Contextual Judgement & Materiality and Managing Critical Incidents as part of a wider Game Management approach. This month I'd like to explore Control & Communication, the final piece of the puzzle.

Control.

What do I mean by control? Ultimately I want to be able to consistently manage players at each phase of play; this means that I have to have an anticipation of what could happen, an understanding of what players want to achieve, a clear mental picture of my expectations and to be in a position to see what is happening.

Let's break that down in to parts and methodically look at each.

Anticipation. By understanding how the game is played and what particular game plan a team has, will allow a referee to plan for what may come next. For example a team with a strong maul set up may choose 5m out to catch and drive at the lineout, where as a team with better handling backs may look to use phase play instead. Or individual members of the front row may have different agendas at scrum time. Do your homework, talk to players, coaches and spectators begin to understand 'the game'.

Understanding Players actions. Why do LH props like to hide their inside shoulder at the scrum, a flanker go hands to ground beyond the ball or a tackled player want to hold on to the ball for that extra few seconds? If we understand what they are trying to achieve we can see how that fits in with our model and understand what part we may need to play in that situation.

Clear mental picture. To be able to get a desired outcome you have to have a clear picture of what you want. Personally I have video clips that show me best practice / outcome for different elements of the game. By watching them regularly I build up a good mental image which I then use as a template. If the picture I'm then seeing in game time doesn't match, I know I have to manage the situation in some way.

Positioning. For me to be able to see what is happening and deliver any intervention, I have to be in a position that gives me the best view. This will vary depending on the scenario but the very minimum is to be able to see the ball and manage any offenders.

Communication.

Human communication is quite a complex model, which is made up of both verbal and non-verbal communication. For ease let's split this up. It is important to remember first impressions count.

Non-verbal communication. This covers voice tonality & type of language used, body language, eye contact and both primary and secondary signals. We can't not communicate; by that I mean what we do and the manner in which we do it always sends out messages. As a referee we need to be confident in what we are doing, to do this we have to be sure we are making the right calls and to that we have to be in control. If we are not the non-verbal cues will give you away.

Also as the saying goes a nod is as good as a wink to a blind man, use your body language correctly and you will get a better outcome. For example, the guard at a ruck is in front of the back foot. Getting eye contact and a wave of the hand could save you having to instruct him verbally. Or you may give a knowing glare to the No7 who has tackled the flyhalf marginally late after a clearing kick, which will point out that you saw his actions.

Verbal communication. This covers the pre-match brief, identifying players or phases of play, issuing instructions or warning to players and captains; it helps a referee to manage players and prevent penalties which ultimately allows the game to flow.

Your pre-match needs to reflect your expectations and the level of players' ability. As a player I found those that talked too much rarely acted upon it on the pitch, so make what you say succinct and meaningful. Also there is no point in me telling Dan Cole how to scrum; I would however establish my expectations of him.

By letting players know what phase of play we are in, they have a better chance of complying to the law, for example tackle, ruck & maul. A simple call of 'ruck' would identify to players that the tackle situation is now over and they must now adhere to the ruck laws.

Issuing players with instructions that clearly identify who and what you want them to do is the ideal model. A good example would be 'Red 7, hands away' when he has his hands on the ball in a ruck. This should hopefully allow you to manage some penalties out of the game.

Having a clear strategy to deliver messages and warnings to captains and players is vital. I personally use a three stage of Go to, Meet & come to.

Go to: If I need to deliver a quiet message to a player or captain regarding non material offences I can go to the individual and have a quiet word. **Meet:** If I want to deliver a warning to a captain or player I will call them towards me but meet them half way and deliver a clear succinct message. **Call to:** This is used when delivering a stern warning to a captain or issuing a card, I will move away from the situation and call the player / captain to me. The message should then be delivered in an appropriate manner; this is not time for a discussion but time for the referee to deliver a clear & concise, one way, message!

I hope over the last few months to have given an insight to what a 'Game Management Strategy' looks like.

As always if anyone would like to discuss this further, or indeed any other area of refereeing, please feel free to contact me. (Details are in the Society Handbook).

Greg Garner

LSRUR Referee Development.