THE ARMY RUGBY UNION



**President**

**Lieutenant General John Lorimer DSO MBE**

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**ARMY RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION - SEASON 2015-2016**

**DISCIPLINARY & GOVERNANCE MATTERS**

References:

A. ARU Season Handbook 2015-2016 (To be issued on ARU website: <http://www.armyrugbyunion.org.uk/> ).

B. RFU Handbook 2015-2016, Regulation 19 (to be issued by Sep 15): <http://www.englandrugby.com/governance/regulations/>

C. RFU Website Discipline Section: <http://www.rfu.com/thegame/discipline>

1. In my capacity as the Chairman of Discipline & Governance for the Army Rugby Union (ARU), I would like to welcome all rugby officers, players, coaching staff, commanding officers and personnel involved with Army Rugby to the start of what promises to be another exciting season. A copy of this letter with enclosures will be placed on the ARU website at the link shown at Reference A.

2. The aim of this letter is to keep Unit Rugby Officers (UROs) and all personnel involved in Rugby Union management, coaching or playing informed of their duties, responsibilities and actions with regard to the maintenance of discipline both on and off the field of play and other areas of governance pertaining to rugby management. I would like all personnel involved in Rugby Union to be fully briefed and coherent with the rules and regulations of the game. These rules and regulations are clearly laid out in Reference B, the official Rugby Football Union Handbook 2015-2016[[1]](#footnote-1). An abridged version can be found attached to this letter at Annex A and in the ARU Handbook.

3. The ARU intent is to strive for a discipline/incident free season. This will obviously need buy in from the entire rugby community and continual education of players. Coaches must set an example on the touchline and include discipline within their coaching sessions. It became clear during last season that many clubs and players had not been briefed on the direction given regarding disciplinary and governance issues. Certainly I have had very positive engagement with Rugby Officers and Coaches across the season and this has assisted in keeping the discipine at a manageable level. I hope this year the message is disseminated clearly to all levels!

4. Last season we have convened 22 Disciplinary Panels[[2]](#footnote-2) which included a variety of instances of foul play; most notably – 10 for Striking another Player (Reg 10.4 (a))[[3]](#footnote-3). It is worthy of note that this is also a key trend across the RFU (46% of cases this season have been strikes to the head area) and the RFU Discipline Office is considering issuing a Memorandum on Striking another Player which will attract additional aggravating circumstances at a Discipline Panel and therefore additional weeks suspension. Players must curb their tempers and not retaliate by using the fists or heads. **So – please get this message down to your players and coaches!**

5. Army players continue to be red carded whilst playing for civilian clubs. As a reminder, anyone who receives a ban whilst playing rugby for any club is banned from playing in any Rugby Union fixture, regardless of who they are playing for. This includes bans issued by other Rugby Unions. It should be noted that I am actively engaged with the other RFU Constituent Bodies to ensure efficient and effective notification of bans and disciplinary proceedings against any serving player or coach where they represent both Army and civilian clubs.

6. There are clearly still too many cases of ill-discipline and bringing the game into disrepute, both on and off the pitch. I have increased my pool of qualified Panel members in order to deal with cases as expeditiously as possible and I would like to thank all those who assisted me so far. Discipline Panels will continue to take all disciplinary issues seriously. If players/coaches or spectators are found guilty of contravening regulations there will be little sympathy from the panel. UROs are to ensure they have read and fully understand the RFU Rules and Disciplinary Procedures contained in Reference B and are to ensure that players/coaching staff are up to speed with these regulations. Unfortunately, past hearings have demonstrated that not all UROs, players and commanding officers fully appreciate and understand the complexities and detail of this important handbook.

7. **All personnel must be made aware of the following:**

**a. The referee’s position as sole judge of fact and law during a match is unassailable. The referee’s decisions on the field of play shall not be altered or overturned by the ruling of a Disciplinary Panel. The purpose of the subsequent review of an incident that occurred during a match by a Disciplinary Panel is to determine whether there should be any disciplinary sanctions for an act of Foul Play as provided for in IRB Law 10. (Reg 19.5.1).**

**b. A Player ordered off may not take part or be selected for any match until his case has been dealt with by a Disciplinary Panel. The player (or any other individual) is not entitled to play the Game or be involved in any on-field match day activities anywhere in the world until his/her case has been finally resolved. This includes during any Appeal process. (Reg 19.5.2).**

**c. Offenders should be made aware that the standard of proof in all disciplinary cases is the balance of probabilities. For the avoidance of doubt there is no sliding scale. (Reg 19.5.6).**

8. Annex A is the disciplinary section extracted from the ARU 2015/2016 Handbook. It contains an outline of the disciplinary procedures and sequence of events from when a player is sent from the field of play all the way up to his/her disciplinary hearing. It gives guidance on sanctions available to the Disciplinary Panel.

9. There are also several governance issues that all involved with the management of rugby should observe. These include:

a. **Eligibility of Players**. Teams playing players from other units (particularly in 1 day competitions). Ensure you comply with the rules of the competition and do not be found “cheating”. The ASCB Regulations have specific rules on the affiliation of players.

b. **Health and Safety at Work – Duty Holders**. Rugby Officers are reminded of the Duty Holding responsibilities in sport and are to make themselves familiar with the following via the ARU HASAW page - <http://www.armyrugbyunion.org.uk/game-admin/health-safety/>. Rugby officers are to read the FRAGO at Para 1, the relevant First Aid information in Para 2 and complete the  ARU Rugby Union Match Safety Check List and MOD Form 5010a – ARU Generic Rugby Risk Assessment approved by the Governing Body, the RFU in Para 3 for all matches. Completion of the risk assessment and endorsement by the unit HASAW CO’s representative will follow good practice as detailed in the FRAGO.

c. **Army Navy Fixture Behaviour**. Inappropriate behaviour at the Army v Navy match at Twickenham is still a hot topic with the chain of command. To your credit, during this years match, out of 6 arrests on the day only two servicemen were cautioned by the Police for minor incidents. Please continue to communicate the need for the highest behaviour at Twickenham or we will lose it!

c. **Sports Supplements Policy**. The use of sports supplements and performance enhancing drugs is still an issue across the sport and clear guidance has been produced by Army Headquarters. As a reminder, if an RFU drugs test is proved positive, it will generally mean a ban from playing ALL sport for 2 years. There was an incident of an individual being caught by both a military CDT and sports CDT whilst playing for his civilian club. As a result, that individual is no longer serving. (<http://defenceintranet.diif.r.mil.uk/libraries%2Fcorporate%2FDINS%20Archive%2F2012%2F2012DIN01-124.pdf>)

10. In summary, the number of red cards last season was still too high. There is no place on the rugby pitch for foul or abusive play on or off the field discipline/governance issues. I would like to wish all players and teams the very best of luck for the coming season; I hope your players will not have to attend a disciplinary hearing! Myself and my Discipline Secretary, WO2 Stuart Scott are always available to answer any queries you may have on RFU Discipline. Our Points of Contact are:

a. ARU Chairman of Discipline and Governance:

**Lt Col Paul Stannett RLC**

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*Paul Stannett*

P R STANNETT

Lt Col

ARU Chairman of Discipline & Governance

Annex:

A. ARU Disciplinary Procedure Sequence & RFU Recommended Sanctions for 2015/2016.

B. ARU Sanctions Summary Season 2014-15.

Distribution:

Sec ARU – For distr to all ARU Voting & Non-Voting Clubs

Chairman BA(G) Rugby

HQ BFC – Secretary of Rugby

Chairman of Corps Rugby Committee – for dissemination

Chairman of Premiership/Championship – for dissemination

To all Directors of ARU rugby sides

ARU web

ARU Management Board/ARU Council

RN RU Secretary/RAF RU Secretary

1. Any amendments to the RFU Regulations will be disseminated to all Clubs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Annex B – Season 14-15 Sanctions Summary [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The ARU issued an ARU Discipline Memorandum on 10.4 (a) on 3 Feb 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)