



All Referee Federations
All Referee Societies

Copy to: Constituent Bodies Honorary Secretaries

4th September 2014

Dear Colleagues

REFEREE STUDIES AND REVIEWS

You may be aware of a number of studies and reviews that have been instigated by the Rugby Football Referees Union (RFRU) and the RFU's Game Development Sub-Committee (GDSC), which has responsibility, along with the RFRU, to oversee and monitor the recruitment, training and development programmes for match officials. The purpose of this letter is to ensure that you and all your members are aware of the various studies, their purpose, and the course they will take over the next few months.

Firstly, the RFRU has instigated 2 Working Groups. The first of these, chaired by Tim Miller from the London Referees Society, is considering the advantages, disadvantages and practicalities of all referees, no matter the level of the game, receiving a match fee (as soccer referees do), as well as expenses. The second working group is chaired by Dave Guerin from the Manchester Referees Society and North West Federation. This group is reviewing the operational costs of refereeing and how they are met. These include the training and development costs met by Referees Societies, Federations and individuals, as well as the various methods employed by Societies of charging clubs for the provision of referees. You may have been asked to provide information for both these working groups. Each will be presenting their reports and proposals to the autumn meeting of the RFRU.

Secondly, the GDSC asked the RFRU to work with the RFU Governance Committee and the RFU Legal Department to look at the governance of match officials and their member organisations to ensure that the RFU's governance arrangements reflect that match officials are members of the rugby family. Graeme Charters, Chair of RFRU, and your RFU Council representative, Jim Coulson, represent refereeing on this working group. It is anticipated that the report and recommendations from this working group will be ready in the autumn.

Lastly, the GDSC and the RFRU are co-sponsoring a study to develop “A Blueprint for the Development of Match Officiating in English Rugby”. Initially, a scoping paper, which is at Enclosure 1, was prepared. The purpose of this paper was primarily to provide all, especially those not from a refereeing background, with an understanding of the current match officials’ landscape. In addition, it sets out, in the broadest terms, what needs to be considered (in terms of supply, retention and deployment) to achieve, over the next few years, the vision to have:

- Every XV a side game from U13 upwards officiated by a trained and qualified referee.
- Trained and qualified assistant referees at every first XV game from Level 4¹ upwards.
- All games below U13 refereed by a suitably qualified person.

This Blueprint will, of course, have to take account of the impact on officiating of the changes resulting from the Adult Competition Review. Graeme Charters and Jim Coulson, together with Tim Miller from the London Society, Nigel Cowley from the Wessex Federation and Rob Linthwaite, a young referee from Notts, Lincs & Derbys, sit on this 12-strong Working Group, which is chaired by Nigel Gillingham, who also chairs the RFU’s GDSC. The Working Group, which includes two independent members from other sports, has met twice and it is anticipated that it will continue until at least Nov 2014, providing a progress report to the autumn meeting of the RFRU.

Clearly, the recommendations from these four studies impact on each other. Furthermore, undoubtedly, you will have many thoughts on each of these studies. Before any of the recommendations are accepted or implemented, it is intended to hold a series of Roadshows around the country to gain input from and the thoughts of Referees Societies and Federations. At the moment, it is anticipated that the roadshows will be held in the New Year, but we will provide you with more information on these in the autumn, when it is clearer when all the work will be completed and the reports compiled.



G CHARTERS
Chair Rugby Football Referees’ Union



N GILLINGHAM
Chair RFU Game Development Sub-Committee

Enclosure:

1. Paper Entitled “A Blueprint for the Development of Match Officiating In English Rugby”.

¹ This Level reflects the re-organisation of league rugby by the Adult Competition Review.

BLUEPRINT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MATCH OFFICIATING IN ENGLISH RUGBY – SCOPING PAPER

BACKGROUND

The recent reviews of adult and age grade competitions along with ongoing efforts to grow the game in the aftermath of England's staging of the 2015 Rugby World Cup will undoubtedly lead to increased demands for, and pressure on, match officials.

There is little doubt that games officiated fairly and well adds significantly to the quality of experience for players, contributes to enhancement of player safety and hence contributes to player retention.

Developing a clear picture of the current numbers of officials along with their availability, assessing where growth is required and developing a better understanding of training and development needs are key steps in ensuring that supply is able to meet demand.

Clarifying roles and responsibilities of the respective organisations involved in officiating is also critical. The landscape for officiating is complex with the roles played by the Rugby Football Referees Union (RFRU), the Rugby Football Union (RFU) professional staff and volunteers, Federations, Societies, geographic Constituent Bodies (CBs) and clubs not always understood and recognised.

This paper sets out an outline plan to develop a blueprint for the development of officiating. Execution of this should ensure that the RFU, the RFRU and all of the stakeholders are well positioned to build a world class Rugby Union officiating system and share a:

- common vision
- clear assessment of need
- clear set of roles and responsibilities
- plan of the resources required

VISION

- Every XV a side game from U13 upwards is officiated by a trained and qualified referee.
- Every first XV game from Level 4¹ upwards has trained and qualified assistant referees
- All games below U13 are refereed by a suitably qualified person*

*(person from a club/school holding a Level one qualification)

ASSESSMENT OF NEED

To ensure delivery of the agreed vision, establish clear roles and responsibilities and develop the consequent resourcing plan it is crucial that a full assessment of need is undertaken.

This can be summarised as:

1. SUPPLY – understanding the numbers we are looking for:
 - number of qualified and active current match officials
 - average number of games officiated by those individuals
 - projected number of games to be officiated
 - shortfall in existing/future numbers

¹ This Level reflects the re-organisation of league rugby by the Adult Competition Review.

2. RETENTION – understanding the drivers for keeping people involved in officiating:
 - initial induction and welcome
 - initial training
 - ongoing training, development and support – formal and informal
 - clear opportunities and pathways to progress
 - recognition and value
 - payment, expenses, kit etc
3. DEPLOYMENT – understanding the most effective methods in which to deploy match officials:
 - what officiating roles are required in different environments
 - who manages deployment at what level
 - what level/experience of match official is required in different environments
 - which agency manages deployment of match officials in different environments
 - which match officials are coached and by whom
 - which match officials are assessed and by whom
 - how is talent identified and by whom

CURRENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

There are a significant number of organisations involved with the recruitment, training and deployment of match officials. Whilst there are inevitably local differences in how, and by whom, some of these functions are undertaken it is important to establish some clarity and consistency in the core functions undertaken. These, as currently understood (capturing the average² and not all of the exceptions), are set out below:

Clubs

- Introduce members and non-members to officiating and give them their first experience
- Have a need for match officials to fulfil fixtures
- Engage members in officiating them in the game
- Promote the role of match officials, rules, fair play etc to players and parents
- Provide funding to Referee Societies for the training and deployment of match officials
- Fund payments of match officials fees and expenses

CBs

- Promote officiating and encourage take-up
- As a competition organisers ensure supply of match officials
- Through PFR and self-generated funding provide financial support for the development of match officials (through societies and other routes)
- Ensure that the voice of match officials is listened to and acted upon in the local development and operation of the game

² It is recognised that there are local variations, especially in regard to the tasks carried out at Federation level. However, this paper is intended to describe the approximate shape of the refereeing landscape. The details will be discussed in the development process.

Societies

- Play a role in recruitment – attracting and signing up new match officials both to officiating per se and to societies
- Offer a first formal engagement for match officials, ensuring an effective induction is given and that new match officials are warmly welcomed
- Track numbers of officials and their availability (e.g. Saturday, Sunday, midweek) and identify need for increases
- Signpost and support new match officials through to appropriate training
- Provide a range of training and development opportunities for existing match officials
- Undertake an operational role, matching officials to games and making appointments for Level 7 and below first XV fixtures along with women, youth and schools Rugby. Ideally would want to deploy to all league fixtures at Level 7 and below along with second XV and below adult fixtures, U17/U18, U13, U14, U15, U16 males, Senior, U18/U15/U13 women (club and school/college/university)
- Identify the type of ongoing training required by match officials

Federations

- Prepare top match officials from societies to move onto groups
- Undertake an operational role, matching officials to games and making appointments at Level 6
- Identify additional training opportunities required for fast tracking match officials currently working at Levels 7, 8 and 9

Groups

- Prepare top officials from Federations to move onto panel
- Undertake an operational role, matching officials to games and making appointments at Level 5
- Identify additional training opportunities required for fast tracking match officials currently working at Level 6

RFRU

- As an umbrella body for refereeing act on behalf of the RFU in the governance of match officiating issues across England
- Retain an oversight of match officiating across England, encouraging good practise and advising the RFU on emerging issues and concerns
- Provide a forum between the RFU and the refereeing community and act as a conduit and communication vehicle
- In association with RFU professional staff ensure provision of specialist and technical advice to the RFU, Societies and Federations
- Provide appropriate representation on the RFU Laws sub-committee to advise on community rugby related match officiating issues
- Lead on a standardised development, deployment and assessment (grading) framework for match officials

RFU

- Ensure (as the NGB of Sport) adequate provision for recruitment, training and deployment of officials
- Fulfil the initial training needs of match officials
- Provide a supply chain of tutors to train trainers to run courses
- Employ professional staff to manage deployment of L3/4 Referees and to develop referees to officiate at this level
- Develop, in consultation with the RFRU, policy for refereeing and ensure its flow through relevant RFU channels for approval and adoption
- Promote, through its communication channels, the role of officiating and the work undertaken by officials

ASSUMPTIONS & CONSTRAINTS/OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of things happening in the development of the sport at present that may impact on this exercise and which should be taken into consideration as it develops, namely (but not exclusively):

- Review of adult competition which will be voted on at the June RFU Council meeting – implications include flattening of the pyramid and hence more games at L4, 5 & 6 and the strengthening of the DOC infrastructure to support development of more games at Second XV and below
- Implementation of age grade competition review
- Continued integration of the women and girls game into the RFU and the associated growth plans
- Increasing concerns around player safety (and particularly concussion) and the implications this may have for enhanced briefing/training of match officials
- Work initiated recently on (1) a governance review of match officiating (2) payment of match officials and (3) developing a greater understanding of operational and development costs. These should all be integrated into the development of this blueprint

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

To be added once vision, assessment of need and roles and responsibilities are all agreed. This will need to be complete by December 2014 in order to be properly factored into 2015/16 business planning processes.