



DORSET & WILTS SOCIETY OF RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION REFEREES

Hints & Tips from an Adviser (revised 1 September 2008)

1. Remember – Safety, Equity, Law, and Enjoyment!
2. Read the Law Book as often as you can – and parts certainly once a week during the season.
3. Learn the Definitions clearly described in the Law Book, and their implications.
4. Understand the practical interpretations of “immediately” and “delay” from the Law Book at your level/pace of match. Especially in relation to the tackle, Scrum put-in, and the Lineout throw-in. At a double infringement at the lineout, blow the whistle, warn both sides and throw again.
5. Learn the areas on the pitch inclusive/exclusive to certain activities – e.g. tackle, scrum, mark.
6. Revise all primary and secondary hand signals in the Law Book, and remember that you are signalling for the spectators as well as the players. Secondary signals are no less important and should be delivered swiftly, definitely and clearly. The sequence is whistle-signal-talk (explain), and the latter two should not be transposed.
7. At the tackle watch for, in order, the tackler, the tackled, and other arrivers. Timing is critical here – do not leave messy play too long before you whistle.
8. Know the differences between the free and penalty kick infringement awards.
9. Know the current U19 variations for all age groups and confirm you know them before a relevant game at a particular age group.
10. Know the variations for Women’s rugby at the relevant level
11. In the 7-a-side season, learn the variations, and always check on first arrival at the tournament what the particular regulations are for that competition.
12. Learn the differences in the Ruck and Maul between referee actions on “ball unplayable” situations.
13. Learn the five circumstances when the Lineout is deemed to have ended.
14. Leadership, body language and presence are as vital as the correct application of the laws.
15. The first ten minutes of a game and the last ten minutes (especially when the score is close and teams are tired) are critical periods in the game.
16. If you are new to refereeing tell the team skippers and coaches, and say that you expect their support, and any constructive and helpful criticism would be welcome after the match.
17. Differentiate your whistle pitch, volume and timing – if the players were blind (and you may consider some of them are!), they should be able to know what type of stoppage you are blowing for, simply by the difference in your whistling. An exception to this may be during a danger point or handbag session in the game, not necessarily leading to a penalty, when a loud, long whistle may be appropriate.
18. Understand the elements of your movement and positioning during a game:-

Motor:-

- a. Acceleration
- b. Top speed
- c. Overall fitness and stamina
- d. Agility

Mental:-

- e. Anticipation
- f. Quickness off the mark
- g. Selection of running lines.

- h. Speed of thought as well as of body.
 - i. Reading the game and the players. The higher the level of game, the faster should be your pace of thought and area coverage. Keep your head up and your vision wide as well as close and focused.
19. Remember to “dwell” for a few moments on the player having kicked the ball in open play – to watch for late/high/dirty tackles.
 20. Be fastidious at the straight scrum put in and lineout throw in.
 21. It is easier to start the game strict and tight, and “loosen the reins” if the players permit you to do so – the other way around is not an option.
 22. Off-side towards the end of a maul – when a player who is the rearmost of his own side holds the ball, disengages his arms from the maul (ending the maul), and then momentarily pushes against his own side, he is effectively using them as a shield and putting all players in front of him off-side. At low levels of game an immediate shout of “use it” should suffice. At higher levels of match (or if your shout is ignored) a penalty should be the result if the illegal action is prolonged.
 23. Lineout positioning and actions.
 - a. Angle yourself in a position where, with the minimum of head movement, you are able easily to see the thrower-in, the participating players and the non-participating players.
 - b. For most of the time you should stand to the front of the lineout, off to the side of the throwing-in team. Exceptions to this could be near the line of touch, when the (flat) sun is in your eyes, or when you see/sense trouble at the back of the lineout. Judge the straightness of the throw-in from the direction the participating players jump.
 - c. As soon as it is comfortable and appropriate to do so, indicate the continuation of the line-out to the non-participating players with a vertical arm only when the lineout fails to end immediately after the initial throw-in. It is not necessary to hold the arm raised for the whole duration of the lineout.
 24. When putting both arms out diagonally to the front to encourage opposition players to stay onside at a set scrum, ruck or maul, the referee should also glance quickly to eyeball any fringeing players – otherwise they will slowly start to infringe if they know they are not going to be seen until possibly too late. Players will take full advantage of this situation!
 25. Watch the off-side and type of kick at the kick off – use a backward outstretched arm and/or your voice to indicate prevention of “in front of the kicker”.
 26. Kicks not taken at the mark – watch for the cunning gain of one large pace from experienced players under the illusion they can get away with it. Make sure the kick is taken in front of you and position yourself accordingly.
 27. Blow the whistle suitably early when play around the goal-line ceases and the ball becomes effectively dead.
 28. At the scrum vary the pause before the “crouch & hold, pause” and “engage” to exert control and prevent anticipation of the engagement sequence. The scrum must be steady before the put-in, difficult sometimes if the players are tired/irritable! Warn of this at the briefing.
 29. Memorise and understand the differences in penalty awards for a foul tackle (Law 10), a late charge (choice of where taken) (Law 10), and offside under the 10 Metre Law (Law 11).
 30. Learn to make maximum use of the lines marked on the pitch, e.g. as an aid to gauge forward passes; at the lineout to help players keep lines straight.
 31. For season 2008-2009 learn the Experimental law Variations, including those laws which require stricter application. For a full list of the ELVs to be trialled worldwide and guidance, visit the RFU Official Website: About the RFU, Experimental Law Variations. Note the ELV application to U19, U18 and Women’s Rugby.