

From, Peter Coulthard, General Secretary, LSRFUR

London Society of Rugby Football Union Referees - Pre-season messages 2024

With August coming to an end, the new season is nearly upon us! There are a number of really important messages in the following email, so please do take a couple of minutes to read this and comprehend it – and please do pass this along to those within your Club that need to be aware of it.

Law Changes 2024

There have been 3 new law changes that have been introduced into the game that will apply to all games this season. These 3 changes are:

- Crocodile rolls banned
- No Scrum option from any form of Free Kick (including where a Mark is called)
- Players offside in front of kicker have to retire; they can no longer loiter and be put onside by the opposition catching and running 5m, or by them passing the ball.

Note there are some other closed law trials and similar being trialled elsewhere that you may see on TV – these are not applicable in our game!

More details around this and details of the wording changes etc can be found on the World Rugby website at <https://passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/laws-news/law-changes-1-july-2024/>.

Technical areas

You will all no doubt be well aware of RFU Regulation 6 (Adult Competitions) and Regulation 6.26 around Technical Areas (which I have included below for reference). Following feedback from officials, clubs and Organising Committees, this year our referees will be more stringently enforcing these regulations, and as such we would welcome you working proactively with referees and match officials on this topic. With the creeping increase in Match Official Abuse and deteriorating behaviour on the touchline that is at times being experienced, it is our hope that by better enforcing this will help with this.

To that extent, as a reminder:

- Two technical areas should either be marked out (note it could be as simple as using 4 training cones to mark each area), or else coaching staff / Permitted Personnel should remain in the area. While the Regulation states no more than 4 individuals overall (including replacements), referees will be able to use discretion here (albeit they have the right to enforce the requirement around 4).
- Replacements should warm up outside the playing enclosure, or where not practical, in/behind the dead ball area of the try line their side are attacking. This should be confirmed with the referee in advance.
- Referees will be encouraged to enforce this throughout the match - please avoid the need for them to do so, by proactively complying with the Regulations (as required by the RFU)

We would be grateful if you could ensure this reaches the relevant personnel within your club to ensure they are aware. Note that this applies across all levels and leagues.

To the extent you have any questions around any of the above, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Technical Areas

26. *The home Club must make provision that two Technical Areas (as defined in RFU Regulation 1) are marked out on the same side of the pitch, one for each team, to which Permitted Personnel (when not undertaking their duties) are to be restricted during the match other than for the period of half-time. At Regional 1 and below, and only where the Club committee is satisfied, it is unnecessary or impractical for Technical Areas to be in place, each Club in a match must (unless the referee agrees otherwise) ensure that Permitted Personnel (when not undertaking their duties remain on the side of the pitch designated by the home Club within an area bounded by the centre and ten metre line on the pitch and two metres from the side line of the pitch at the end of the pitch in which it's team plays the first half of the match.*

27. *Where there are permanent dugouts or shelters, team, replacements and coaching staff must confine themselves to them or remain outside the pitch-side barriers, or if none, the playing enclosure (as defined by the Referee) other than when a player is about to replace a player on the pitch, or when a player is temporarily suspended or for the periods of half-time.*

Permitted Personnel

28. *No more than four people per team acting as water carriers (including medical staff and replacement players), are permitted within the pitch side or perimeter fencing or other barrier. Water carriers may only be permitted onto the playing area for the purposes of taking water to the players at such times as shall be approved by the Referee (on any other occasion players must come to the touchline to get water).*

Captains' Feedback Cards

You are hopefully aware of the Captains' Feedback cards that the Society operates, and which historically used to take the form of physical pink and yellow cards, but are now included on WTR. Noting that the Society doesn't have as many match observers and coaches to watch referees as we would like, and also to act as a way to identify trends in relation to referees, the feedback cards remain a useful way for both the Society and referees to understand to keep abreast of specific issues relating to an individual referee, or our referees more generally.

However, in the last season or so, we have noticed that the quality (and frequency) of feedback in the cards has declined somewhat. To that extent, I wanted to take a moment to remind you of how the cards should be used, who should be filling them in, and what the Society expects around them (as well as highlighting where there are other issues arising, the routes to escalate them). These cards form part of the 2 way process by which we look to engage with you, our member clubs, but to the extent they no longer are fit for purpose they may cease to be used - to that extent please do engage with this over the coming season:

- The cards should be filled in by the captain of the relevant team (or the Head Coach, where a youth/schools game and felt more appropriate), as opposed to other team personnel. To that extent, please can you ensure that the cards are passed on to the captain in a timely manner (so that feedback is specific and based on fresh memories).
- To assist with the above, the Society are looking to try and introduce QR codes, such that referees can discuss feedback with captains and get them to fill in the cards immediately post match. This reflects how the cards used to be filled in and enables a discussion to had around the feedback.
- The cards should not replace a discussion with the referee post-match - which we would encourage both referees and teams to engage in - the cards provide a high level snapshot and do not offer the benefit of a dynamic, 2 way discussion, which hopefully both parties will benefit and learn from.
- The cards should not be used as a means by which to vent / argue one or two points - they should look to the game as a whole. While those points may contribute to gradings on a specific matter, the Society both can see (and will raise) cards where they seem to

have been filled in with such an approach and we will often discount them (and where the tone or use is inappropriate, will follow up with the club involved).

- Where a lower grading is given around an area, further information to support this and to help the referee/Society understand this, should be given as part of the card (as set out on the form).
- If a specific issue or matter arises that gives you cause for concern, from a competence, safety or indeed handling of a specific incident or matter (or anything else), then please contact your relevant Regional Manager, Regional Appointments Manager, or myself directly to discuss it. To the extent you have a complaint about a referee, then again please follow this process (noting that ultimately, if you wish to proceed, per the Constitution and Rules of the Society, we will require such matters to be formalised in writing).

To note, the feedback is visible to both the referee and Society officers - we do not make grading decisions off the back of the cards, but trends in the feedback are used. If there is any questions or queries in respect of the above, then please do let me know. Thank you again for your assistance and help with this.

Confirmation of games and expenses

A couple of quick reminders on this:

- Confirmations of games (including kick off time, venue, shirt colours and any other vital information) should be done by calling the referee and making contact. Do ensure that the referee has received the message and is aware – we still have a shortage of referees versus games to cover, so if you don't confirm properly then there is a chance your referee will be reallocated elsewhere.
- Expenses should, per the Society rules, be paid in cash on the day of the game. If you are going to do this by some form of bank transfer, this should only be the case if the referee agrees, and should be done the same day too. A reminder on what is included in terms of the requirements per the rules is below – the expenses should cover public transport or car expenses (fuel, tolls/congestion charges etc). Should there be an issue with this, please let us know – however, please remember our referees are all volunteers, and they do not necessarily have the ability to fund cashflow for such expenses (and nor should they have to).

Being the home club, to refund the appointed referee their out-of-pocket expenses which must be offered and paid on the day of the match. (NOTE: In no case shall a referee be paid more than a reasonable amount of out-of-pocket expenses, which they must detail and which must not include any sum in respect of loss of earnings. Any application for or acceptance of more than the expenses detailed above must be reported to the General Secretary of the Society).

Thank you and congratulations on reading to the end – there is a lot of vital information in this.

Any questions, please do get in touch.

Pete

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