



Notes from Society Meeting Tuesday 15th November 2011

Pre-Match Briefing

At the Society meeting Andrew Beckett spoke to us about his pre-match routine and again about his approach to the team briefing. Each was followed by a healthy discussion amongst the members present. This document attempts to summarise the outcomes as an aid to all members in preparing or reviewing their pre-match briefing.

There is no set formula for a good pre-match briefing, and each person will have his/her preferences. The following key points emerged:

- Keep the briefing concise and relevant – too long and you lose them.
- For health and safety reasons you must brief the front rows (and replacements) on the scrum engagement.
- Finish off the whole team brief by stressing that you want clarifications requested through the captain and/or pack leader.
- Any other item you may wish to add is optional and possible topics appear below.
- Anything you include in the briefing must be followed throughout the game, so do not compromise your flexibility in managing the game by including more than is necessary. For example if you tell the SHs you want the ball straight at the scrum, you must give the FK for the first and any subsequent violations.

Another key point is whether to do all the briefing to all the team or to make it specific. For example if telling SH that you want quick PK/FKs in front of you, do you do it as part of the group briefing or a separate individual exercise? This may depend on the level of the game – full team briefings may be better at lower levels – and also on how much you want to say as those not being addressed will quickly switch off and you may lose some of the goodwill that your pre-match routine has worked hard to achieve.

Possible additional items to brief the players on include:

- What you are looking for at the tackle – tackler away, and making a positive effort even if he cannot move away.
- Players to stay on feet on arrival at breakdown, especially at junior matches where this is an offence by fact rather than intent.
- No 10s responsible for back line offsides, marking the 5 and 10 at scrums/lineouts.
- That you will endeavour to raise your arm at lineout if the ball is caught to indicate that the lineout is not over.
- Props to set the gap and lines at lineout (but this could be established at the first lineout rather than adding to the length of the briefing).

Do not go into detail on subjective issues such as when the ball is out of a scrum/ruck or whether the SH can reach in to play it. If the players are concerned they usually raise this as a question at the end in which case give them an answer – but beware of committing yourself to a situation you then have to apply throughout the game.

In planning the briefing it may be helpful to ask the following questions about each item:

What am I going to say?

To whom am I going to say it?

Where/when will I say it?

Why am I saying it?

What are the implications on my game flexibility as a result of saying it?

A pro-forma is available which you may like to print off and use as an aid in planning your briefing.