



Notes from Society Meeting Tuesday 15th November

Pre-Match Management

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 routines.

It is important that from arrival at the club to kick off you create the right impression – organized, professional, calm and in control. Get this wrong and you may struggle to win over the players, coaches, and spectators during the game.

There is no set formula for a good pre-match routine, and each person will have his/her preferences. Timelines will vary depending on events of the day, team captains' wishes etc. The key tasks to consider are explained below. You may wish to add tasks to the list depending on your personal preferences but in so doing remember that any interaction with the teams/players may disrupt their pre-match preparation so additional items in that respect should be added with caution.

Aim to arrive in plenty of time. How long before kick off? This depends to a large extent on the level of the game and on the clubs involved – too early and there will be no one there and too late and you will have missed the opportunity to set the tone. It is suggested that when the club confirms the match and kick off time you indicate when you anticipate arriving. It is suggested that you aim to arrive at least an hour before kick off, and this may increase up to an hour and a half or longer as the level of the game rises.

On arrival, first get your bearings. Find out where the referee changing room is, which rooms the teams will be in and where the pitch is.

Meet the captains and coaches of the teams – it may be worth discussing their season with them (do your research before by looking at club web sites and the league tables) as this will often highlight potential issues or areas where the teams have had problems with referees in the past. At this point,

- synchronise watches with the captains
- agree times for the toss, stud/clothing check, and team briefings
- find out if they are coming back in after warming up and if so say that you will give them warnings re time to go – suggest 5 minutes and call them out at 2 minutes
- for league games clarify the situation regarding replacements, especially front row, and exchange team sheets
- do the toss – note the team that won and ask them to choose later.

Exchange pleasantries with members of the club – those around the dressing rooms and, if there is plenty of time, visit the bar.

Get the journey out of your legs – walk/jog the pitch at the same time checking that the surface is safe and also noting key reference points such as trees, shrubs, advertising hoardings or whatever that will help you better judge where on the field of play events are occurring (such as location of the 22 metre lines). Do this in plenty of time so that if there is a pitch problem the home club has time to resolve it.

Locate physios/first aiders and arrangements, should it unfortunately be necessary, for outside assistance such as calling an ambulance.

Identify the TJs and indicate what you want them to do. Minimum is adjudge touch and kicks at goal. In addition you could ask them to mark the 5/10 metre lines at scrum/lineout and kicks.

Do not compromise your preparation – getting changed, pre-match diet/hydration, stretching and warm up.

When the teams come in, ask the captain of the team that won the toss what option he has chosen and notify the other captain.

At the agreed times carry out the team briefings – see separate document.

At the agreed intervals, warn the teams re time to go and then call them out. As they emerge from the changing room it does not hurt to establish your presence and wish them a good and enjoyable game.

Follow the second team out, ensuring you have the match ball which you place on the centre spot when you get there.

Footnote regarding TJs.

Remember they have no authority to advise you of incidents though you may ask them to make you aware at the next lineout on their side.

The occasional “Thank you, TJ” when he indicates touch does not go amiss.

At half time, if the TJs approach you for a chat, fine if it is both but beware of perceptions if only one does it.