

## Communication - Use of down time

The style of refereeing over the years has evolved from being a policeman, when the referee said little apart from announcing what the sanction was, to a counsellor where he helps the players play within the laws. In achieving the latter state, the amount of talking done by the referee has increased enormously.

Within this evolution referees have adopted the principle that, unless the offence is obviously damaging to the game, we go through the sequence of talk -> warn -> penalise.

It is argued that this interaction helps the flow of the game as well as educating the players, and leads to greater enjoyment for all involved, players and spectators alike.

So how and when does the referee go about this?

### During play

Whilst play is in motion there are two types of communication, Preventative and Informative.

Preventative communication tries to stop the player from committing an infringement, or if he is in a marginal situation, compounding it, and urges him to do something positive to redress the situation.. Such calls usually occur at the breakdown when we urge players to release the ball and or other players, to get out of the way, and to heed the offside line. They can, of course, occur at other stages of the game. The document *Communication - Preventative Refereeing* on the society web site has more on this subject, including the need to take care that we do not just generate “white noise” which the players will disregard.

Informative communication helps players decide on actions. The most common occurrences are advising whether the ball has been taken back into the team’s own 22 metre area as a warning about kicking directly to touch, or if there has been a fumble or flat pass where teams may think the ball may have gone forward and we let them know that in our opinion that was not the case.

### Whilst play is stopped – down time

Down time provides opportunities to talk to the players in a more structured manner. It occurs mainly whilst waiting for scrum/lineout to form, after a score, or during injury stoppages, water breaks and half time.

These opportunities are often overlooked.

If we use these opportunities, what do we talk about? The most common subjects are to:

- clarify decisions and explain what we expect to see at the situations;
- explain non-decisions (materiality);
- enhance preventative calls and issue warnings;
- after “advantage over” to explain what the original offence was;
- encourage what is going well, an often overlooked element of our game management.

Again, we need to be careful that we do not just generate “white noise” which the players will disregard.

### The objective

The main objective of all this talking is to try and get the players on your side, working with you for the benefit of the game rather than against you if all you do is penalise. This hopefully, as stated above, will add to the enjoyment of all.