

Managing Discipline - BSRFUR Society Meeting 15th September 2015

What do we mean by/include in discipline?

As a starting point we should use Law 10 as the basis for the definition. The law states as its introduction that foul play is anything a player does within the playing enclosure that is against the letter and spirit of the Laws of the Game.

The introduction then goes on to say that foul play includes:

a) Obstruction,	d) Dangerous Play,
b) Unfair play (including time wasting, deliberately throwing the ball into touch),	e) Misconduct prejudicial to the Game,
c) Repeated infringements,	f) Acts contrary to good sportsmanship,
	g) Disputing referee's decision

Regarding e) & f), feedback groups suggested:

i. Offensive lineout calls and teams trying to "shout out" opponent's calls;	iii. Undermining the referee's authority, e.g. No 9 constantly whingeing;
ii. Contriving penalties, urging the referee to apply sanctions, and feigning injury to make incidents appear worse than they were;	iv. Bad language and gesticulations;
	v. Delaying the start by being late from the changing room;
	vi. Abuse.

Note: Re ii. See <http://www.rugbyworld.com/tournaments/world-cup/rugby-world-cup-referees-set-to-crack-down-on-diving-and-faking-48660#MDKDXeH1Bjh9Ykvp.99>

What tools are available to us to manage discipline?

Again, using Law 10, we should admonish, caution (YC) or send off (RC) anyone who is guilty of foul play. So that we are clear, the dictionary shows "Admonish" as to warn; reprove mildly; counsel earnestly.

We often quote the sequence of "talk – warn – sanction", but if the offence is serious we may move in straight to sanction.

Who is responsible for player discipline?

The individual players are responsible for their discipline.

The captain, as the on-field team manager, should be used to help manage individuals. Managing the miscreant via the captain also has the beneficial psychological effect of "isolating" the miscreant who is thus seen as having let down the captain and his team. That impression helps deflect the impact from you as the enforcer of the Law.

Do we wait for an "event" before acting or do we pre-empt potential situations?

We try and prevent situations, as with "preventative refereeing" to avoid the need for penalties. The key is to spot changes in mood of the players, tiredness near the end of the game etc. and talk/warn as appropriate. However, it has to be accepted that some incidents of ill-discipline appear from out-of-the-blue and could not have been foreseen.

There is only so much one pair of eyes can pick up, but just try and catch/mentally record little one-on-one "niggles" off the ball (likely at first to be "verbals" between the players) and manage within the flow of the game. A quiet word at downtime ("I saw that: just cool it and concentrate on playing the game") is an effective form of prevention.

If we pre-empt, how and/or when do we do it?

Use stoppage time to talk to individuals or the captains about how things are going and any trends you have spotted. During an injury stoppage, after checking on a player to see if he is alright, use the time he is being treated to talk – especially if all is going well to encourage the players to continue in the same vein. Time waiting for players to arrive at scrum/lineout can similarly be useful for a quick word.

If using the voice alone appears to have minimal impact, there are techniques available for slowing the game down and taking the heat out of it – the subject of a separate session.

See also the document <http://www.bsfur.co.uk/discipline/> on the Society website.