

Notes from BSRFUR Meeting held on Tuesday 18th September 2012

Managing Abuse

Stephen Green, an FA Tutor, led a highly interactive session in which he spoke about the FA Respect programme and its impact on the game. He also showed an FA Video relating to unacceptable touchline behaviour of parents and its probable affect on the game.

Respect is an FA initiative to try and drive out of the game what we in rugby term as “the soccer mentality”. If you Google FA Respect you will find a wealth of interesting material, not least the following overall message:

“Respect is the collective responsibility of everyone involved in football to create a fair, safe and enjoyable environment in which the game can take place.”

This applies equally to Rugby football as to Association football.

The FA Video showed a parent losing control of himself and verbally abusing both young players and the referee – as matters got worse so people became disenchanted and subsequently there was no one left for a game to take place.

Base problem is that more aggression and lack of respect for authority in society in general is being translated to the field of play.

Key Messages

Some important key messages came out of the session.

Referees are part of the problem.

Some of us want to be the players’ friend and not appear over fussy or sensitive and show “weakness” in reacting to verbal comments.

- Think about the referee who has to do them next week – he may not be so thick-skinned or able to handle the comments.
- Don’t make excuses on behalf of the players, e.g. “It was part of the pressure they are under”. Adverse comments are a matter of fact.
- Deflect the issues from you and place the onus back on the players; employ the tools at your disposal – 10 metres and yellow card if it persists.
- Ensure any sending off or abuse reports are appropriate and factual. Within this it is permitted to say “I felt ...” as that was a fact.

Overall, be strong, and manage the situation.

Managing spectators/parents

The players, especially youngsters, must be protected from touchline excesses. Not only does it undermine your authority but, especially with the younger players, it disenchant them with the game.

- Do not initially confront the perpetrator but try and identify someone from the touchline from his club to try and calm that person down.
- If that does not work you have to act; ask the person to leave and do not restart the game until that has been complied with.

Working with Captains / Players

A problem here is that in many cases the captain may not have the personality and stature to manage the team. Trying to work with him may be a waste of time – try and identify a player who can fulfill the role.

BSRFUR Stance

Roger Naish followed Stephen's session by giving some firm directives to the society members.

- Help each other by communicating. If you have a “problem” with a team/player, let the referee scheduled to do them next week know.
- In the pre-match brief mention finality of decisions and, if clarification is required it must be through captain or pack leader.
- At the toss, reinforce with the captains their responsibility to manage team discipline and try and get them to work with you.
- Get the “heavy duty” management stuff – 10 metres, cards - in early to quickly suppress any problem.

Comments from John Ford

- beware the captain who always approaches to seek clarification on a decision. Why is he doing this? There are several negative reasons such as to slow the game down and deny the opportunity for the opposition to take a quick tap, or it may even be his subtle way of suggesting you are not getting it right. If you feel it becomes intrusive, withdraw the right – the captain has no right in law to seek clarification, it is a benefit we offer which can be withdrawn if misused.

- regarding the communication with colleagues an incident over the past two weeks shows that this works. Referee A had a problem with a team continually “commenting” on decisions. He contacted Referee B who was scheduled to handle that team the next week and Ref B strengthened his pre-match brief to the teams accordingly. There were no problems in that game.

John Ford
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