



1 Jun 2018

Dear SJRU participant,

I write to you as we have had a number of incidents involving referees in 2018 which leave a bad taste in the mouth and do not reflect the Respect that all Rugby participants are entitled to (and which we pride ourselves on). Many of these incidents involve referees under the age of 18, as that is the bulk of the referee population doing SJRU, school and minis games in Sydney. We currently have a shortage of available referees at all levels of the game in Sydney, and you will see 'club to appoint' on the appointments list increasingly if this cannot be reversed.

We as a Rugby community have a responsibility to nurture our young referees so that they can develop their refereeing skills, advance to more challenging games, and graduate to refereeing adult Rugby once they leave school. We must understand that, like the players, they are developing their skills. Like the players, they do not respond well to being yelled at. This is likely to increase their stress levels, making it harder for them to referee effectively. In the worst case they will decide that refereeing is not fun anymore and give up. Referee abuse is the number one issue for referees around Australia, in Rugby and all sports, and every year causes referees to hang up their boots for good.

Encouragement and constructive feedback will work, but only if they are given in a supportive way. Adults must recognize that a power imbalance exists when talking with underage referees, and that regardless of how they intend their message to come across, it can be misinterpreted by the receiver. Sometimes it is the messenger rather than the message that is the problem.

Usually the best person to give feedback is a Referee Coach or senior Referee (generally appointed by their association to see them). If you want to give feedback to a referee, please observe the Respect Rugby guidelines and wait at least 15 mins after the game to approach them. This gives them time to warm-down and grab some food/drink. It is suggested that you make an arrangement before the game to chat after the game. If a referee coach is present, direct any feedback through them so as to avoid giving contradictory or superfluous advice.

If no referee coach is present and you do not want to give feedback directly, please use the Referee Feedback form. This can be used for both positive and negative feedback and is very helpful to the association in determining the development needs of their referees and making appropriate referee and referee coach appointments.

When acting as the Assistant Referee, please remember you are there to assist, not to referee the game. In order to build a good relationship with the referee it is recommended that you:

1. Meet with him/her before the game (at least 5 mins, and ideally when they arrive at the ground) to introduce yourself, advise if you are accredited and ask what the referee's particular requirements are.
2. Join the local referee association so that you are kept up to date with law/interpretation changes and invited to their monthly education nights. This is a good opportunity to build relationships with referees away from the field, and to ensure you are on the same page.
3. Support the referee's decisions (even if you disagree with them) and give them encouragement if they are having a tough game.
4. Report issues/incidents to the referee and give recommendations if asked, but accept that the referee may see them differently or have a different view on how the incident should be handled. They are the captain of the Match Official team and they have ultimate responsibility for any decisions, even if made on your recommendation.
5. Observe the Rugby AU code of Conduct. Do not speak down to players, officials or the referee.
6. If you have issues doing any of these things, then you should remove yourself from the role.

Thank you for reading this missive and I look forward to a reduction in the number of incidents being reported as the principles I've spoken of are implemented. Please refer to the next page for some links that may assist. Please pass this letter onto your parents, team officials, assistant referees, ground marshalls, and anyone else who I've left out.



[NSWRU Respect Rugby website, downloadable resources and manual](#)
[Rugby AU Member Protection Policy and Code of Conduct](#)

[Referee Feedback Form](#)
[Referee Association contacts](#)

[Rugby Learning Centre – Assistant Referee, Ground Marshal, Play by the Rules modules and other online courses](#)

[Play By the Rules website](#)
[Play By the Rules Sideline Behaviour section](#)
[Play By the Rules Conduct & Behaviour section](#)

Yours in Rugby,

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