



To All Berkshire RFU Rugby Clubs, Schools & Colleges

As requested by a number of Clubs at the Berkshire RFU Annual General Meeting, I am taking this opportunity to provide you all with simple guidelines as to what does or does not constitute Referee Abuse.

It's accepted by all Referees that not every decision made during a game is considered to be correct by players, coaches and spectators alike. Banter and expressions of disbelief/disagreement will happen now and probably forever. It's a natural reaction and nothing we say or write will change this.

However vitriolic, foul language personal comments directed solely at the Referee about a decision or overall performance are increasing and are totally unacceptable. Regretfully the last few seasons have shown that there appears to be more of a problem at School & Club Youth level than Club Senior level. The Society has a Zero Tolerance Policy and each and every incident will be reported to the Referees Society, Berkshire RFU and possibly even as far as the RFU at Twickenham.

Subsequent disciplinary actions, if the case is proven, are far reaching and include touchline bans and periods of player, coach or even Club suspensions. Therefore it is in everybody's interest that Referee abuse is reduced and hopefully eradicated as quickly as possible.

To summarise:-

- Players are required by the Laws of the Game to respect all Referee decisions and these should not be questioned. If they are, sanctions can range from the awarding of a penalty kick against the players team to the player being sent off. Any personal and/or abusive comment made to the Referee about a decision or his/her performance **will** result in the player being sent off.
- Coaches / Club Officials are similarly required to refrain from making personal and/or abusive or foul language comments to the Referee. Failure to do so **will** result in the incident being reported.
- Parents/Spectators are the responsibility of the Home Club regardless of whether or not the abuser(s) is a member of, connected to or associated with that club. If the Referee is unable to stop the abuse by talking to the person(s) involved, the abuser(s) will be required to move away from the playing area by a significant distance before the game will continue. Either a home Club official or the Captain of the home Club playing the game will be expected to help resolve the matter. Failure of the abuser(s) to comply **will** result in the incident being reported.

I sincerely hope that incidents of this kind are rare or non-existent in the coming season but if this is not the case, we **will** instigate disciplinary action for each and every incident of Referee and Assistant Referee abuse in Berkshire and at Berkshire Referees Society affiliated Clubs. A copy of the Referees Society Discipline Policy Document is attached.

Yours sincerely,

Roger Naish
Chair
Berkshire Society RFU Referees

1st August 2011