

## Coaching hints for newer referees

Developed by Peter Flanagan (ACTRRA) for the use of new referees.

**Read the Law Book:** know the Law Book. Emphasis must be on safe play within the Laws and within the spirit of the game

**Pre game:** ensure you have your kit ready, including coin for toss. Have a notebook for recording the score. Check that you know where your game is to be played and how to get there. When should you arrive? You need to allow time for ground inspection, boot inspection, talk to teams, etc What should you cover in team talk? What is correct procedure if one team tells you that they do not have a properly trained front row (i.e. they ask for uncontested scrums?) If one team does ask, what are the options for the other team on the occasions when they would normally be awarded a scrum?

**Before kick-off** ensure you have a touch judge from each side and don't start the game without them. Remember to allow the teams to take the field before you: don't stand in centre of field blowing whistle and waiting for teams to come out. After the toss, the winning captain gets to choose either to kick off OR which way his team will run (not both). Note which team kicks off - the other team restarts after half time.

**Kick off:** where to stand, what you can see (e.g. kicker, forwards) and what you can't see (backs behind you); which is more important? i.e. what is likely to have the most impact on the game: a forward in front of kicker or the blind side winger being a half a metre off side? Body angle of referee - maximize use of peripheral vision.

**Drop outs:** as above: keep kicker between you and the forwards - but at every kick be alert to the need to get out of the way if he decides to reverse direction

**PK or FK:** Don't turn your back on the offenders at any stage during the penalty process. Once penalty process is complete (i.e. Whistle, signal, speak - then signal again) ensure that offenders are back 10m or are moving there. How do you handle the opposing captain who tries to slow things down by constantly asking for clarification? (Should be unnecessary if you have used "whistle signal speak") Be alert for the team that wants to take a quick tap and don't let opposing captain frustrate this. Make sure you yourself don't prevent the quick tap through your inattention.

If the kick is for touch, keep kicker between you and the touchline he is aiming for. Why? What are you looking for? Where do you position yourself if the kicker is looking to take a quick tap?

**Scrum:** Which side is the scrum fed from? Why? Coach younger half backs to ensure they know which side to stand. Ensure that the opposing half does not go beyond the last feet on the blind side (quite common with younger players). Where to stand while setting the scrum (centerline on the same side as the feed); allow half back in and then move back with ball in scrum to A line. (What is the A-line and why do we prefer it in most instances?) Optimal is on or half a metre in front of A-line with shoulders at about 45 degree angle to the goal line; why there and why that angle? When might you go to the other side of the scrum? (If you do make sure that the feeding half does not follow you!) Set a good standard for straight scrum feeds and stick to it.



**Line out:** where to stand. Why is front on throwing side generally preferred? Why is zipper almost always a poor choice (backs out of sight, offences at front of line out undetectable, etc) What cues can you use to help you judge the straightness of the throw when you are standing at the front? Know when the lineout ends (at which point the backs can move up).

**Tackle/ruck/maul:** get to the A line quickly to manage first offences: watch first for tackler not releasing, thus denying the tackled player his legal options. Then watch for tackled player failing to release or play the ball. Remember that an opposing player on his feet has rights to the ball which the tackled player may not frustrate. Watch for players diving over and sealing off: manage through appropriate communication of phase. Body angle, scanning and when to do it. Be strict on high or dangerous tackles and remember that shoulder charge is prohibited. In what circumstances might you prefer to go to the D-line? Remember that the absolute priority is to know where the ball is in the ruck or maul, and the second is to anticipate where the play is likely to go next.

**Running lines to next breakdown:** if play gets away from you, better to be in line with the ball even if you are some distance away from the action, then swerve in. Ball line running means being on the ball line or no more than a metre ahead or behind it.

**Kicks in general play:** don't look at the ball. First check safety of kicker then look for offside players in kickers team; manage them and penalise them if they move forward. Watch for offside players within 10m of where the ball is going to land: they **MUST** move back towards their own goal line.

**General:** remember to stay alert when ball is out of play (e.g. after a try has been scored or when ball has been kicked into touch): always keep maximum number of players in your field of view and be alert for niggles.

**After the game:** allow players to leave the field before you at the end of the game. Be prepared to have a brief and friendly chat with a player or coach after the game if you are asked politely to explain a point of law but do not be intimidated. Dealing with abuse from either players or spectators: know what support is available from your Referees Association and Union.

Do not engage in criticism of another referee's performance, especially when you are in your referees uniform. Even if you think an error may have been made, remember that it is quite possible the referee has seen something that was not obvious from the sideline.

