

Irish Rugby Football Union

Referee Coaching Guidelines

Coaching Objectives

- Assist development of the referee.
- Identify and reinforce positive refereeing.
- Identify aspects of performance which require improvement and suggest solutions.
- Measure overall quality of performance.

Coaching Requirements

The coach should be competent in the following four areas:

Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Excellent knowledge of the Laws of the Game and up to date on current law application guidelines.▪ Strong understanding of current IRFU coaching philosophy.
Tactical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Strong understanding of the game and what players are trying to achieve.
Observational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ability to form a valued judgement on the overall performance of the referee.
Developmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ability to identify areas for development and suggest solutions based on observations.

Coaching Report Form

The report form is designed to be user friendly and easy to complete.

Fact based detail

- Name of Referee.
- Name of Coach.
- Attendance or Video Review – Did the coach attend the game or review on video?
- Date of Match.
- Match Venue.
- Teams and Score.
- Level of match e.g. AIL Division 1A, 1B etc., Senior Schools, Junior League Division 1 etc.

Observational detail

- Conditions (weather and ground).
- Challenge/Difficulty Level – how easy or difficult was the match to manage? The options to choose from are Low, Medium or High. The coach can also opt for mid-range descriptor e.g. Low to Medium.
- Referee Performance – how well did the referee manage the match in an overall sense? The options are Unsatisfactory, Fair, Good or Very Good.

The main body of the report should reflect the post-match debrief between the referee and coach. The aim is to highlight positive aspects of the performance and why they were good, while also identifying areas for development. The coach should also include suggestions as to what the referee can do to improve performance. A maximum of six main points should be included, with a guideline below as to how the number of points raised can reflect the overall standard of refereeing achieved in the game.

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10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

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IRFU

Performance Rating	Positive Points	Development Points
Unsatisfactory	1 or 2	5 or 4
Fair	2	4
Good	4 or 3	2 or 3
Very Good	5 or 4	1 or 2

Other minor points can be discussed in the debrief but should not be included in the report.

The Positives – What Worked Well

In this section the coach should outline the main things that the referee did well in the match. Consider in particular the areas where the referee was challenged and succeeded in changing player behaviour. It is important that the referee understands why something worked well so he/she can continue to build it into his/her match plan.

Development Points – Areas for Improvement

This is the most important section of the report. Even if the referee has performed very well overall, there will always be something to work on. What were the main challenges that the referee faced and why did he/she not succeed in overcoming them? What does he/she need to do differently to improve in these areas?

Coach to Referee Feedback Process

Match Attendance: When the coach attends the match, they should speak to the referee in person at an appropriate time after the game. This gives the opportunity to clarify any grey areas prior to writing the report. Only issues raised in the post-match discussion should be included in the written report. Report to be submitted within 48 hours after the match.

Video Review: The referee and coach will be sent the footage as soon as it becomes available. The match should be reviewed by both no later than 48 hours from receipt of the video. A telephone call, video call or face to face discussion should happen within 72 hours of receipt of the video, with the written report due within 96 hours. The process should be completed within four days of receipt of the match footage.

Key Areas of the Game

The key areas of the game are listed below with a brief description of what the referee is expected to achieve in each facet of the match.

General management

How was the referee's overall game and player management? Did he/she build a rapport with the captains and other influential players?

Positioning

The referee should demonstrate a high work rate and ability to be in the optimum position throughout the game. Good lines of running from phase to phase and in general play are required to maximise the ability of the referee to identify infringements. From time to time he/she may end up out of position due to an unstructured passage of play or unorthodox decision making of the players. If incidents of being out of position are isolated with no impact on decision making the coach should avoid referencing. A general trend of poor positioning in a particular area or areas should be noted.

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Breakdown

The referee should be achieving an appropriate balance between contest for possession and quick ball in any given match. Ability to identify material offences is vital.

- Tackler – release and roll away without obstructing arriving players.
- Tackle Assist – clear release.
- Both must enter through 'the gate' before contesting possession.
- Arriving Players (ball carrier's team) – endeavour to stay on feet, no diving in or sealing off.
- Arriving Players (tackling team) – remain on feet, no hands or arms on ground. Contest legitimately for the ball, don't take space or obstruct arriving players.
- All arriving players (both teams) must come through 'the gate'.
- Tackled player – quickly make the ball available to players on their feet. Release the ball once isolated. One dynamic movement permitted post-tackle.

Maul

The first priority is to generate a fair contest by ensuring the maul is legally formed. Obstruction at the formation will lead to an unfair advantage for the team in possession and illegal play from the defending team. Once formed, the referee should be able to identify material illegal play and sanction accordingly.

Touch & Lineout

The referee should always be alert to the possibility and legality of the quick throw-in.

The setup is all important for the lineout. Ensure the numbers are correct and establish and maintain the correct gap to reduce problems, which should lead to offences being easier to detect. Always set-up from the front and be in position before the ball is thrown.

Scrum

A high level of awareness is required in this area;

- Whose put in and the role of each team.
- The context and position of the scrum.
- What has happened in previous scrums? Have either team established dominance?

Get the set-up right to ensure a square and steady scrum pre-feed. If there are problems post feed is it due to a lack of awareness at the C-B-S sequence? Did the scrum plan work?

Post-feed key priorities – push straight and maintain a correct bind. Were the sanctions applied accurate and did they succeed in changing player behaviour?

Space

Contact areas – we now have the potential for offside lines to be created at the tackle as well as scrum, lineout, ruck and maul. The referee should be able to manage the players at each phase to ensure space is available for the team in possession. Accurate judgement is required in order to identify and sanction material offences.

Control

Control should be established and maintained through accurate refereeing (management and sanction) and good communication. Control issues will be minimised if this is achieved. If foul play occurs the referee should be alert to flashpoints, detect all foul play (with the assistance of the touch judges where required) and sanction appropriately according to IRFU guidelines, and in the context of the match itself.

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Communication

Correct whistle tone and clear signals should be utilised. We are also looking for;

- Timely and accurate preventative communication.
- Good use of downtime.
- Well timed warnings and escalation.
- Clear delivery of cards.

Advantage

The referee has wide discretion in this area and should demonstrate an ability to understand the game and what teams and players are trying to achieve. Appropriate and consistent application is crucial, as well as the ability to identify when/when not to play advantage.

Open Play

The referee should;

- Be in a position to make accurate judgements on knock ons and forward passes.
- Be alert to and facilitate quick taps when appropriate.
- Be aware of offside players ahead of the kicker and manage or sanction appropriately.

Law Knowledge and Application

- Excellent knowledge of the law and its practical application should be evident.
- Minor errors can be discussed post-match.
- Serious errors to be noted on the coaching report.
- The gravity of the error can be judged by the impact it had on the outcome of the match.

CONTROL

COMMUNICATION

CONTEST FOR
POSSESSION

QUICK BALL

SPACE

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