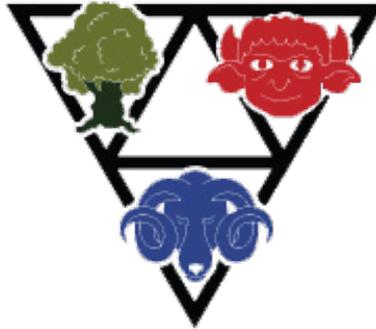


The Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire & Derbyshire RFU Referees Society



Advice on Discipline Report Writing

Referees have to earn respect both on and off the field. Part of earning respect off the field can be affected by the manner and accuracy of report writing when you issue a yellow and red card. If your reports are not accurate, and correctly completed, you may lose some hard earned respect which you have achieved whilst on the field. Regrettably, the standard of report writing - at all levels - is causing the Constituent Body Disciplinary Committee concern.

You must submit a Red card Report on every player you send-off – even for Schools Players.

Reports are not required for Yellow cards given to Players at Level 5 and below.

It is important to remember, particularly at Premiership and Senior level, that the reports which have been submitted will be scrutinised by experienced lawyers. At local level some players are now being represented by experienced Solicitors or Barristers. Inaccuracies in the form or in the report of the detail of the incident can affect the Referee's/Touch Judge's credibility, and may create doubt in the minds of the Disciplinary Committee, where really there should be none.

New sentencing guidelines were introduced by World Rugby (Regulation 17) and the importance of detailed and accurate reports becomes even more important because the sentence imposed upon a player will depend upon the circumstances surrounding the incident and the seriousness of it, therefore your reports must be accurate and complete. Within the last 12 months the following are examples of inadequate reports which have resulted in either the

player being found not guilty, or have created difficulties where there should have been none or possible incorrect decision making:

1. Yellow cards issued when they should have been red. (e.g. stamping and punches from the side or behind)
2. Errors made in the completion of the form - for example the incident allegedly happening in the first half and not the second half, other apparently minor details being incorrectly completed but which affect the credibility of the Referee's report when it comes to the substance of the report, and which is seized on by lawyers representing the players, e.g. timing, weather conditions, players positions etc.
3. Incorrect identification of players - that is the wrong player being sent off/incorrect identification of other participants.
4. Alleged offences which never happened - for example stamping on the body and when compared with the video the stamping never actually took place. The player's foot never came into contact with the body. With this type of problem the golden rule of *"am I 100% certain that the offence was committed?"* should be applied. In this case, the Referee could not have been certain because what he says happened, never happened. If you are 100% certain as to the offence and the circumstances, it is unlikely that your report will ever be successfully challenged.

The primary object of any report is to provide an accurate factual record of what took place. It should not be opinionated. It should provide the player and the Disciplinary Panel with a clear and accurate picture of the facts leading up to, during and post incident. If you are 100% certain, then it is easier to state that which is clear in your mind and then present that clarity to the Disciplinary Panel. The Disciplinary Panel need to have a clear picture of the incident, the temper of the game, whether this was an isolated incident or the culmination of previous minor incidents, or an incident arising from the ongoing warfare between the teams.

The Incident

"I saw Smith, the Number 7, throw a punch violently at their Number 9. I had no hesitation in sending him off".

"The Assistant Referee informed me that the player was verbally abusive so I sent him from the field of play".

These two genuine examples are woefully inadequate and did not assist the Disciplinary Panel at all.

Points to Include

To elaborate on the above and use as a model for similar foul play incidents the following points are relevant:

- Where on the field did the incident take place?
- What was happening in terms of play at the time, was the ball in open play, was a ruck taking place?
- Your distance from the incident, and if partially obstructed or not.
- The weather and pitch condition.
- Statements you heard at the time. It is for a panel to deem if they are subsequently admissible.
- Did the punch connect, if so where? Can you recall whether it was a right handed or left handed punch?
- Was the victim in a vulnerable position?
- Did the force of the punch knock the person to the ground?
- Did the "victim" require medical treatment?
- Did the "victim" resume playing?
- Did the intended "victim" take avoiding action?
- Was there provocation?
- Was it in retaliation?
- Had the offender run some distance to get involved?
- If the player apologised at the time, or subsequently, then mention it. However, it is not your role at the conclusion of a report to write words such as *"in my opinion the sending off is sufficient punishment"*.
- Best practice suggests you obtain the players name before sending him off, unless you are "certain" of his name.

The Report - Process

Within 24 hours – e-mail [Paul Carroll](#) with brief details

Within 48 hours – e-mail **ALL** reports to the NLD Disciplinary Secretary [Tom Murrie](#) with copy to [Paul Carroll](#). This includes Reports on *Out of NLD* Players – Tom will send them to the relevant Society

The report **must** arrive with the Disciplinary Secretary within 48 hours of the sending-off. Delaying submission beyond that is unacceptable. If there are genuine reasons for late submission then a courtesy call to the Disciplinary Secretary should be made. If the report has

been instigated by an Assistant Referee then he/she must complete and sign the rear of the form, which must also be countersigned by the Referee.¹

Video Evidence

It is now common practice that Clubs at many levels to video their matches. Following any red or yellow card incident you must decline any invitation to view any material unless sanctioned by the Disciplinary Secretary.

It is customary for nearly all offences dealt with at National level for a video of the alleged incident to be available, which can either corroborate the Referee's version of events or completely exonerate the player.

The Hearing

Whenever possible please make every effort to attend. Your attendance greatly affects the outcome in many cases. If you are unable to attend, please be prepared to give evidence via telephone.

Summary and Training Issues

Clarity and brevity are essential for a good report. A report for a caution or sin bin should be as full and factual as that for a sending off. Appeals, requiring full hearings, are now more frequent for sin bin/yellow card offences.

¹ Do not presume that the number on the players' shirt corresponds to his name on the team sheet or in the Programme. It is the Match Officials duty to confirm his/her identity after the match.