

HELP THE REFEREE: Key pointers for coaches who have to referee

Unless you are extremely lucky, you already referee a number of games a year. If you don't, then the chances are you will have to ref a game soon. So I asked two qualified referees for their advice to give the novice referee, with key pointers for the pre match briefing. The article assumes that the under 19 laws and continuum variations apply throughout.

By Alan Davies and Nick Jones

What should you cover with the front rows?

- The scrum engagement sequence (crouch, touch, pause/hold, engage).
Tip: Tell the players to let you know if they are not ready when you call "crouch".
- Scrum wheeling (if it's not deliberate and not more than 45 degrees).
Tip: Tell the players to keep the shove straight, as there is no turnover ball and continual resets will just get frustrating.
- Scrum lifting/dropping. This is dangerous and will be penalised.
Tip: Tell the players to keep the hips low and backs straight.
- The scrum shove (if it's not more than 1.5m).
Tip: Tell the players to take two steps forward, then hold.

What should you cover with the lineout?

- Ask the players to step back half a metre from the mark to form the gap. You can do this in the pre match briefing or leave it to the first lineout in the game.

What should you cover with the scrum half?

- At scrums. Have a quick, straight put in.
Tip: Tell the players to use your mark as the guide.
- The scrum offside line.
Tip: For the first few scrums, tell the players to make eye contact with you and ask if it's okay. This also can lead to a positive rapport with these key players.
- Quick tap penalties. These must be visible, near the mark and safe. Tap within one metre of the mark, but this must be in front of you. If they deliberately run into an opponent who has not retreated 10 metres, you'll play on.
Tip: Tell the players you will shout "no quick one" if there is a pile up or the front rows are still engaged.

What should you cover with the fly half?

- Scrums, rucks, mauls. Keep your backs behind the back foot until the ball is out.
Tip: Don't commit yourself to letting them know when the ball is out. It's their responsibility.
- Lineouts. Let the players know if/how you will signal/call if the ball is held and when they can advance beyond the 10 metres. This is not usually an issue at youth levels, as the

"no supporting" law means the ball usually comes straight out.

Tip: Raise the arm vertically when the ball is held and drop it when the lineout ends.

What should you cover with the captains?

- Discipline. It's the captains' responsibility to keep discipline, not yours.
Tip: Tell the captains to ensure that their teams listen to your instructions and accept your decisions. Any questions or issues should be fed to you via the captain at the next scrum, lineout or stoppage.