



Berkshire Society of Rugby Union Referees Key points from County reports

As County Representative, I act as a conduit between the CB and our Society. As part of that function, I report to the County on a monthly basis on refereeing matters. Here is a summary of my reports – mainly picking on the key efforts made by other committee members and which will be mentioned in others' reports (for which I take no credit).

Referee Shortages

This was a regular topic obviously. As Simon will no doubt cover, we broadly covered all Men's and Women's first team games, but struggled at lower levels on many weekends, with Sundays particularly difficult. Most adult games were covered but we struggled to cover colts and school games.

Generally we covered the higher level games, with levels 8-10 bearing the brunt of the shortages. This means there are great opportunities for our new referees once they gain experience, however the shortage and unpredictability of the lower level (11+) games means we struggle to provide sufficient meaningful "training" matches for our new members.

We always get retirements and individuals moving away/changing circumstances but Covid destroyed the pipeline of new/developing referees and led to a change in the number of referees willing to be out every weekend.

Julian led a fantastic initiative to get more referees into the system which gave initial training to some 40 club referees. "Taking up the Whistle" was a Society initiative which has now been taken up by the RFU, with another round of sessions being run, with Russ taking the coordination role. There are many referees around – the key will be to harness and develop this talent.

Discipline and abuse

Looking back through my reports I note that in February I said that we were not seeing notable issues with referee abuse that were being seen nationally. However, I did note that there were anecdotal comments on worsening behaviour.

That all changed in March, and we have had three particularly difficult cases that I trust David will comment on. I'm glad to say that our county disciplinary body has dealt promptly and firmly with the one issue they had to handle, but am disappointed that other counties are not taking a similar lead. Nick is taking a prominent role in addressing this national issue and I am sure he will say more.

Club Referee Coordinator (CRefC)

In order to make sure referees are trained and supported at club level, and to be a liaison to the Society and the wider referee network we strongly believe that clubs should have a named individual to be a CRefC. Such a role is similar to the Club Coaching coordinators



that most clubs have. County encouragement has led to 5 such individuals being appointed at our larger clubs, although there are still some notable exceptions.

I apologise for not being with you tonight.

Paul Lee
County Representative
4 May 2022