



Berkshire Society of Rugby Union Referees Training and Development report

It has been particularly pleasing to see most of the membership return to officiating this season.

I'd use the opportunity to thank Crispin for taking on the Society Trainer role, and delivering some good sessions this season.

Dave Elliot also deserves mention for putting up with my demands for social media input. Furthermore, Russ Clark has been an excellent point of reference for referee development. It would be also remiss of me not to include Andy Green and Dave Marsh for supporting our course delivery.

Finally, there is ExCom who have given me outstanding support on a variety of matters.

With the challenges arising from the pandemic, it has presented many issues to resolve, while at the same time offering opportunities to deliver to the membership, and the clubs, in different ways.

Training

The ability to live stream events has been trialled with muted success. We realise improvements need to be made, however it has allowed us to include members who find in-person attendance difficult.

Crispin has delivered very good sessions, ensuring they reflect the width and breadth of experience within our cohort.

We'd always remind the membership the sessions should reflect THEIR demands and needs, so don't be shy to put forward ideas for next season.

We had the pleasure of Lee Goodall delivering his scrum sessions. The attendance was excellent, including many of our new referees.

Courses

The scheduling of the ERRA course continues to cause frustration due to narrow window of opportunity.

We've made our feelings known to the RFU, as have many other Societies, and we ran some successful informal 'Take Up the Whistle' sessions at Maidenhead and Tadley before Christmas. This, as similar courses run by other Societies, has prompted the RFU to roll-out the "Introduction to Refereeing" module - a step in the right direction, which shows what collective, positive pressure can achieve.

Dave Larham (RFU Development Officer for Berks, Bucks & Oxon) needs specific praise for his unwavering support.

Safeguarding

As members are now required to complete a DBS check for youth rugby, it has required us to adapt. We have done some admirably.

Going forward, members are reminded of our guidance to take the formal 'RFU Play It Safe' module, with the costs covered by the Society.



As an interim measure, everyone should take the shorter on-line course which can be booked through GMS.

I'm pleased to report no member has been subject to a Safeguarding complaint, however the issue of abuse is still with us.

The clubs and county are responding to the concern by issuing deterrent sanctions for transgression.

Please continue to be vigilant.

Club Engagement

The need for clubs to identify a suitable CRefC is ongoing. Paul Lee continues to raise at county level with gradual progress being made.

We are getting there, slowly – and thank those who have stepped up so far, within clubs.

Fitness

We will again be using the services of Ben Clayton, for pre-season fitness. Sessions ran from the first opportunity lockdown restrictions allowed and will start again in the first week of June, at Reading RFC.

It is important for many members as possible to attend to ensure the investment can be sustained.

But until then, please enjoy a well-earned break!

Julian Rainford