



Berkshire Society of Rugby Union Referees County Rep report to Society AGM 2023

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, and vice versa where relevant. 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).

Is worthy of note that, except for the addition of tackle height, all topics are the same as in prior year.

Referee Shortages

This was a regular topic obviously.

Simon will discuss the detail, but we really struggled on several weekend during the year and great thanks are due to the appointments team in solving issues.

There has been a great deal of recruitment activity, with ERRA courses at the beginning of the season and Introduction to Refereeing towards the end. The issue is how to make sure attendees pursue their refereeing careers (many are YMOs and were from out of county); that clubs generate referees for club games; and also encourage onward membership of the Society.

I have reiterated to club Chairmen this need – some clubs are very active but others less so. I have reminded them that they need to enrol candidates on the ERRA courses in October otherwise they lose the ability for a year. Almost all our clubs will fund the course for their members.

Of course, once qualified we need to be able to give referees experience, and lack of lower level games continues to be an issue.

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 almost all clubs having such a role this year, with Russ taking a lead role in their coordination.

Discipline and abuse

I will not repeat Nick's report, suffice to say that I report to County on specific issues, particularly abuse.

Tackle Height

Your ExCom position on the revision to tackle height can be summarised as:



- Broadly supportive of reducing the tackle height (despite vocal objections of several Society members and many of our club Chairs)
- However – issues around definitions, sanctions and implementation timetable create large challenges.

Kirk and I attended one of the discussion forums.

Berkshire clubs unanimously voted against the change and instructed their RFU Council Rep to vote accordingly. Whilst they were broadly supportive of reducing tackle height (with more reservations) they were very worried about implementation and its impact on players, and the refereeing challenge.

Despite this as you know Council voted for the change, and implementation materials have now been issued. I suspect there are going to be challenges as the new season starts.

Personal

I now have both children in Australia, and hence spend a large part of the season travelling. I think I can continue with my role but am happy to discuss any concerns.

Paul Lee
County Representative
4 May 2022