



The Future of Rugby Refereeing

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The Future of Rugby Refereeing: PART ONE

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PART ONE – Principles of Refereeing: Tactical

I have been involved in rugby as a referee and manager for over 30 years, in both South Africa and the USA. As the professional game moves into its third decade, there are fundamental aspects of refereeing that could positively transform the game, enhancing its global appeal. Those concepts are detailed in this ten part series, “The Future of Refereeing”, sharing best practices to overcome the ongoing struggle of inconsistency amongst whistle blowers.

PRO Rugby launches in the USA this year. What a wonderful opportunity for coaches, players and of course, the officials.

Remember that book, “Laws of The Game, Rugby Union”? Well, Law 6.A.4 (a) states: *“The referee is the sole judge of fact and of Law. The referee must apply fairly all the laws.”*

The key word is “fairly”. That Law makes it essential to provide match officials development, support and opportunity to be successful and to achieve greater consistency and accountability, delivering an exciting, fast-paced and probably a high-scoring product. The referee’s ultimate goal is to provide a fair environment so teams can compete with integrity and on a level playing field.



all referees. It goes without saying that you need to know the laws and be able to identify them in practice.

TACTICAL is supported in three areas:

1. **Establishing BEHAVIOR**

2. **Effective ADVANTAGE**

3. **Making BIG DECISIONS**

1. There are still buzzwords flying around about “changing behavior”. If you can set up the game well, there will be no need for that. **Establishing BEHAVIOUR** is to set standards early in the match to communicate the parameters of the referee’s Law application. Identifying opportunities to best send your message. This applies to:

1. **Breakdown:** Generate quick ball availability by penalizing tackle infringements early and quickly as they occur, rather than playing advantage or allowing players to slow down the recycle until they are cleaned out. Quick ball availability means that the ball is available to be played by the team in possession, however they see fit.

2. **Space:** Keep players onside:

1. Rucks/Mauls: last line of feet,

2. Scrums: 5m offside line and scrumhalves,

3. Lineouts: 10m and keep players from crossing the 15m before the lineout is over,

4. Kicks in General Play: 10m from where the ball lands and no offside players moving forward to take away space.

3. **Scrum:** Set it up for success, be patient and ensure stability before each instruction. Prop’s bodies straight, binding long and on the opponent’s body.

4. **Foul Play:** Put the onus on players rather than debate dangerous or foul play. Quick whistle is often required to avoid further transgressions.

2. **Effective ADVANTAGE** helps to achieve momentum. It is easy to identify an infringement and stick your arm out, but it is more important to assess the situation and the opportunity for advantage to accrue rather than to play advantage on a hope

standards to establish behavior first, unless there's a clear opportunity to gain advantage, notably when there's a scoring opportunity.

3. **Making BIG DECISIONS** can be easily achieved by improving one's game knowledge. This enables the referee to understand the "probable outcome" as the situation unfolds. When the game moves into the final quarter and the scores are close, it is even more important that the referee makes decisions that are clear to everyone. You never want the outcome of the game to rest on a debatable decision.

NEXT:

PART TWO – Principles of Refereeing: Strategic

- 1. **Empathy & MATERIALITY**
- 2. **Refereeing in CONTEXT**
- 3. **Attaining BALANCE**



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