



USA RUGBY

***Assistant
Referee
2009***



Assistant Referee - 2009

This document outlines a foundation as to the ARs duties, and additional points to improve your Assistant Refereeing, awareness of the game as an AR, and what you can look at to assist the referee.

The referee will instruct Assistant Referees as to the extent of their duties.

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Firstly, you are the AR, NOT the referee. What is expected of you is different to refereeing. Do not try to referee the game from the side of the field.

Be aware of what each referee expects from you. They differ, and it is of utmost importance that you are able to work within each referee's requirements. These are specific to each referee and they should instruct you before the game. Be clear on how, when, and to what extent the referee wants your input.

Keep running time and score.

Lead and trail (e.g. if you split the field in half between the two touch lines, the half on your side is what would more or less determine whether you lead or trail). If the game is on your side, lead, on the other side, trail. Always be aware to ensure that players that remain when the ball and play has moved away, resume play without incident – clean up behind the referee.

Do not react to sideline comments. If you are having problems with certain people, and they do not comply with your requests, bring it to the referee's attention.

Communication

Be very sure, and precise if you need to communicate with the referee. Timing and importance of the communication is imperative. Always be calm, accurate and concise. If you feel the need to say something – a good opportunity is at a lineout or if there is an injury near you – be sure to be specific, i.e. “Blue number 6 is coming off the scrum early”, or “Red backline is pushing the offside line at the rucks and mauls”. Do not say something vague like “scan more”, or “the tackles are getting high”, however, do bring up negative tendencies such as “ball availability is slow”. You are there to assist the referee – if you feel that the referee is not open to your comments, etc., do not take it personally, continue with your duties.



Kick Off

AR nearest forwards to take up a position on the 10m line, the other AR on the 22m. Focus on the ball receiver, are they allowed to land before they are played. If the ball is kicked directly out, raise your flag, then point it to the halfway line. If the ball is kicked dead (touch-in-goal or over the dead ball line, wave your flag from side to side horizontally, then point it to the halfway line.

Touch / Line out

Immediately raise your flag as soon as the ball is in touch, and keep your flag raised. Ensure that you know the laws of when the ball is in touch, and when a quick throw-in is allowed. Discuss this with the referee beforehand, but at times, a referee could just relax for the split second that the ball has gone into touch, so if a legal quick throw-in does occur, drop your flag and call "play-on".

Be aware that players keep the gap throughout the match – if it is not maintained bring it to the referee's attention when you have the opportunity – the referee should instruct you before the game on your involvement here, as some would not want you to start telling players what they should do. The hooker must throw in the ball on the line of touch. Be aware of delayed throw-ins, a double movement or stepping into the field of play before throwing (this would be better to communicate to the referee at the next opportunity, unless requested otherwise by the referee). Look for line-out obstruction, whether the ball travels 5m, is the ball thrown in straight (again as requested by the referee). The AR on the far side must mark the 10m for the defending backline. Be aware of players moving up before the lineout is over.

If there has been an infringement in the line-out, the AR on the line of touch must keep the line of touch mark for the referee to come back to if need be.



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When running along the touch line, be aware to keep your head as still as possible to ensure you get the touch call correct. Many people's heads "bobble" around when they run which makes it difficult to focus on a specific point. It is always best to either have play coming towards you and you are standing still or if you are running that play is ahead of you and you can clearly see if there is contact with the touch line. Running next to players close to the touch line makes it more difficult to get the in touch call correct, especially when a player passes the ball as they are about to go into touch.

Open Play Kicks

Watch for the late tackle, then obstruction on players following the kick. Remember where the kick was taken from, in the event that the kick goes dead and you need to mark the scrum back position. Ensure the receiver is not illegally challenged in the air. If the ball goes dead at a kick or in any event, always indicate this by waving your flag horizontally.

Foul Play

Always ensure that you continue with your duties, with your flag raised horizontally until the play has stopped, and you can communicate to the referee, the team that infringed, the player number, and what the offense was. If you do not have a number, still communicate this to the referee. The referee will repeat what you said and suggest the course of action – only if you are sure the course of action is not appropriate, then repeat the infringement to the referee. Often you may be an Assistant Referee at a match that may be a higher level to what you have refereed - understand that the referees are in charge and will ultimately manage the game as they see fit. If an incident occurs, especially fighting, the referee should, in most instances, see if you saw anything different. If play continues after a foul play incident, ensure that fighting, etc. does not continue.



Scrum

Look at the front rows' binding. In the event of a collapsed scrum, only communicate with the referee if you are sure who is at fault. Keep an eye on the back row players for early unbinding and sliding up the scrum, as well as props grabbing flankers. The ARs need to determine before the match, with the referee's input, which 5m offside line they will control at the scrum.

Tackle/Ruck

See if players are entering the breakdown through the gate, joining correctly, cleaning out legally, staying on their feet, releasing the ball in good time. Look for stamping on players, the short offside (offside around the fringes of the ruck/maul), players creeping up, backlines onside. Always stand on the last line of feet of the defending side to see if they are pushing the boundaries of the offside line.

Maul

See if players join correctly. Look for players grabbing legs or collapsing the maul, and try to get the number. Look for the short offside, players creeping up, backlines onside. Always stand on the last line of feet of the defending side to see if they are pushing the boundaries of the offside line.

Open Play

Be alert for late tackles, especially from a pass. Early tackles or obstruction on the receiver of a pass. Look for obstructive running, holding players back, high tackles, spear tackles, stiff arm tackles, no arms tackles, etc. Never assume the referee saw an incident and let it go, unless you see the referee indicate 'play on' and you assume the incident need no further attention – if you feel it was dangerous/illegal, raise your flag horizontally for foul play and bring it to the referee's attention at the next stoppage.

Always be aware when the referee is playing advantage, and keep the reference point for the referee. If advantage does not accrue line up the referee to the mark where the infringement occurred.

Knock-ons and forward passes – the referee will be very specific on your input here – remember, the referee will make the final judgment as they are on many occasions in the better position and closer to play.



Penalties/Free Kicks

First ensure that as the nearer AR that you have the mark for the referee if they are playing advantage. Mark 10m. If players are kicking for touch and are anywhere near the corner flag you have to be on the flag to make the call – players do kick 50/60m. The AR on the far side will mark 10m.

Kicks at Goal

Make sure you have a clear vision of the ball, your post (be right in line with the ball and the post), and the other AR. The AR who is closest to the post that the ball passes, leads the call. The AR nearest the kicker should take a position close to the post and the other AR take the other post but stay back from the post, beyond the dead ball line. The reason for the AR positioning at the kick is, if play continues near you at a missed kick, you need to stay out of the way – if you are at the post, you can ensure you are out of the way, if you are beyond the dead ball line, you are out of the way. Resume your duties asap.

Use this opportunity if you need to communicate /share something with the other AR – sometimes play is predominantly on one side of the field, and you have noticed tendencies/problem areas in the game that you want to communicate to the referee but have been unable to do – tell the other AR to tell the referee.

If the kick is successful, communicate with the other AR and raise your flags simultaneously. If it is not over, do not indicate anything, however, at a missed penalty goal, and the ball goes into touch in goal or over the dead ball line, indicate this by a horizontal movement of the flag.



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In-goal

Most referees will be precise about your positioning here. I find the best option is to tell the ARs to get into the best position to see whether a try has been scored, however, being right next to the referee is not efficient team work. All angles need to be covered and always be in a complimentary position to the referee. Cover the area where the referee would not be able to. If a try is scored be precise in your communication – there is no rush, the importance is to get the call right.

Often at attacking lineouts close to in-goal the referee will take up a position at the back of the lineout – the front becomes your responsibility. Again, it is most important to get the call correct in a scoring situation.

Conclusion

Assistant Refereeing is very different to refereeing, and a good Assistant Referee is always aware of what is happening on the field, wants to be part of the game, NOT referee the game from the sidelines, and understand that they are there to assist the referee, and SUPPORT the referee.