

Informal Refereeing Appointments

Guidance for situations in which a Sydney West member referees a competition match to which they were not formally appointed. The procedure required to be followed should you be appointed to a match you are not able to carry out, is also provided.

Background

Every Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday throughout the season, Sydney West RRA members are appointed to a multitude of SJRU, NSWSRU and schools fixtures across Sydney. We share this refereeing workload with members of the three other referee associations that service metropolitan Sydney.

Despite the relatively large pool of referees, on some weekends there are more matches requiring referees than there are referees available to handle them. To ensure the best possible use is made of scarce refereeing resources, the bulk of appointments in the Sydney metropolitan area are made centrally from within the NSWRU office.

Under what authority are referees appointed to matches?

The authority for the appointment of referees to matches and the procedure to be followed in the event that no referee is formally appointed to a match or the appointed referee is unable to continue, is contained in World Rugby Laws 6 (1) and 6 (2). Most competition organisers have playing rules relating to the appointment of referees that are based on those two laws. If they don't, then the requirements of Laws 6 (1) and (2) apply.

The procedure that SJRU requires its affiliated clubs to follow in connection with the appointment of referees is dealt with in their Competition Playing Rule 10.1. Should you ever need to read them, you'll find a link to the SJRU website (and to their competition rules) on the **Links** page of our website.

In the overwhelming majority of cases the teams in question and the appointed referee turn up at the required time and venue and the match takes place without any problems. On occasions, however, the referee formally appointed to a match may fail to arrive at the ground in time for kick off or, for a variety of reasons, may simply fail to turn up at all.

In a small number of cases, it may be that a referee has intentionally not been appointed to the match in question. This may be because the Appointments Officer has not been able to identify a suitably graded referee who is available. These become what are known as "Club to Appoint" matches (or CTAs).

However, there may be other valid reasons why a referee does not arrive for a game. Teams, for example, sometimes vary match times and venues between themselves but fail to provide sufficient notice of that change to either the competition organiser (e.g. SJRU) or the Central Appointments Officer (CAO). The inability of the CAO to subsequently provide a referee at the new match time or venue is a risk the teams in question take.

Sometimes the CAO only finds out about these "unofficial changes" when he receives a phone call or text message from an irate referee who turned up at a ground in accordance with his or her appointment only to find no one else present.

Which brings us to the decision referees are sometimes asked to make. That is, an approach by a club or a match organiser for them to step in — often at the very last

moment — and control a competition match to which they have not been formally appointed. This paper provides guidance in connection with those situations.

I've been asked by a team to referee their competition match. What should I do?

We're all familiar with the scenario: With kick-off fast approaching, someone realises that the match referee has not yet put in an appearance. Following an urgent request by the teams, another referee already present at the ground is approached and asked to act as a substitute referee to get the game underway on time.

The theory is that when the appointed referee eventually arrives, he or she will take over from the substitute referee at an appropriate break in play. The more than likely scenario, however, is that the appointed referee never arrives and the substitute referee controls the game from start to finish.

Firstly, referees should never think that by declining a request to referee a match, the players are going to miss out on their game of football. As explained above, the Laws of the Game and the various competition playing rules ensure that simply doesn't happen.

In the case of SJRU matches, for example, their competition playing rules authorise the teams to appoint any Smart Rugby certified person to referee the match. In order to be involved in contact Rugby, Rugby Australia requires every referee and every player coach to hold current Smart Rugby certification. Although the player coach or other Smart Rugby certified person may not have the same depth of law knowledge or game management skills or fitness as a trained referee, this arrangement allows the players to have their game of football.

All of that being so, if you are asked to step in as a substitute referee there are a few questions you need to quickly and honestly ask yourself, including:-

- *Am I truly available to handle this match or am I needed elsewhere (e.g. will handling this match make it difficult for me to make it to my own appointment in a safe and timely manner)?*
- *Am I confident that I have the requisite skills, knowledge, experience and fitness to handle this particular match? and*
- *Is controlling this match likely to impact adversely on my refereeing performance or on any injury I may be carrying (e.g. will increased fatigue be a factor either in this game or when I carry out my own appointment)?*

If you're 100% satisfied with your answers to these questions and you would genuinely like to referee the game, then feel free to accept the offer and act as the substitute referee for the match. The decision is personal and it's yours to make.

Just don't be afraid to say "Sorry, I'm not able to do it today". Rest assured, the match in question will still take place.

The appointed referee didn't show up so I refereed the game. Do I need to advise someone?

If you referee a competition match to which you were not officially appointed, it is important that you advise **both** the CAO **and** the association as quickly as possible after the game. This enables appointment records to be adjusted so that the referee who actually controlled the game (i.e. you) receives payment for that match and not the formally appointed referee who failed to appear (and for whom you substituted).

Timely reporting also allows follow up action to be taken to determine why the “no show” occurred. Referees who make a habit of failing to appear when appointed to matches or who repeatedly fail to follow the procedure for advising their unavailability, will be asked to justify why they should be considered for future appointments.

I’ve been appointed to a match that I’m not able to carry out. What do I need to do?

As mentioned earlier, teams are sometimes forced to find and appoint a substitute referee because the person officially appointed to their match simply didn’t turn up. This sort of “no show” behaviour is irresponsible, it reflects poorly on all referees and it creates unease between referees and other members of the Rugby family.

IMPORTANT: If you have received your Appointment Notice but you’re not able to accept the appointment made for you **OR** you have confirmed acceptance but are no longer able to carry out that appointment, you **must immediately** select the “Click to reject all or some appointments” link provided on your Appointment Notice email.

The Referee Appointments System (RAS) will then seek information as to why you’re not able to carry out that appointment and whether an appointment at some other time on that day might better suit you. RAS then emails your responses to the CAO.

Upon receipt of the RAS email, the CAO will update RAS to reflect your unavailability and attempt to re-cast the appointments to cover your withdrawal. If a suitable replacement cannot be found, then the referee appointment process prescribed in the Laws of the Game and in the various competition playing rules will apply.

Notwithstanding our objective of providing referee coverage to as many games as possible, some of these matches may end up as “Club to Appoint” fixtures.

You’ll find an overview of the Referee Appointments System in the document of that name available from the **Resource Library Index** page of our website. That document contains the detailed procedures that **every** active referee and referee coach **MUST** follow to record details of their unavailability and team relationships.

The CAO, **Stuart Wright**, can be contacted by email to swright@nswrugby.com.au or by telephone or SMS to **0422 532 961**. Should you ever need them, these details are also available from the **About Appointments** page of our website.

To ensure you have a clear understanding of RAS and the procedures in place to support it, please take a moment to download a copy of “The Referee Appointments System” document. For RAS to operate at peak efficiency, the cooperation of all referees and referee coaches is essential.

Bob Watson
VP Registration & Accreditation

association website: www.swrra.sportzvault.com
