

The Referee Appointments System

Guidance for Sydney West members on when and how to access and update what is arguably our most important IT system.

Background

The appointment of referees and referee coaches to matches is one of the most basic yet important tasks for any referee association. When considered against the wide range of possible member interactions, limitations and restrictions, the complexity of the referee appointments process is strikingly obvious.

Further, to ensure that referees are appointed to as many of the matches needing them as possible, refereeing assignments for the four Sydney metropolitan associations are coordinated centrally from within the NSWRU office. The arm's length nature of this arrangement adds to the complexity of the appointments process.

The Referee Appointments System

To assist the Central Appointment Officer (or CAO for short) in carrying out this essential and challenging task, an IT system — Rugby Explorer (RX for short)— has been developed to help coordinate, organise and control the appointment of referees and referee coaches to matches. The Appointment Notice referees receive each week providing details of their match and coaching assignments, comes to them via RX.

RX is at the very heart of the referee appointments process. It draws on information downloaded to it from its members, everything from unavailability and other details referees provide during the registration process and throughout the season. Given the size of our refereeing workload and the diverse nature of the competitions we service, without RX the appointments process would be almost impossible to carry out.

In addition to its key role in the referee appointments process, RX also comes into play whenever a player is shown a **red card** and ordered from the field. In these cases, the match referee is required to lodge a written Send-Off Report in connection with that incident as soon as possible after the match. A facility within RX enables the preparation and submission of Send-Off Reports. This process is described below.

As is the case with every IT system, RX works best when the information available to it is comprehensive, accurate and up to date. And that's where the co-operation and assistance of every referee and referee coach becomes essential.

Accessing and Updating RX

To enable members to take responsibility for the timeliness and accuracy of appointments-related information held for them, active referees and referee coaches are able to access RX and input particular items of information direct to the system.

After logging in via Rugby Explorer you will be able to carry out the following tasks online:-

- Add, delete or adjust those days or times when you are **not available** for appointment. This ensures that you're not assigned to matches when you are unavailable.
- Add, delete or adjust details of any **team relationship** you have with a club or school (as either a player or as a parent) that needs to be taken into account when refereeing appointments are being considered for you. This feature allows you to be appointed to matches around your playing commitments or your child's playing commitments.

- Prepare and submit **Send-Off Reports**. This allows you to satisfy the requirements of Law 6.18 in connection with **red card** incidents.
- View your appointments history. This enables you to quickly draw any discrepancies as to matches you have or haven't refereed to the attention of the CAO.

Once you have logged in to RX, from the home page select the task you wish to carry out. When carrying out these tasks, the processes outlined below must be followed.

Updating Unavailability Details

The recording of unavailability for appointment to matches is an **"opt-out"** process and is compulsory for all referees. Where dates or times are **not** marked in RX as being **unavailable**, the system assumes, by default, that you must be available and it may list you for appointment.

IMPORTANT: Irrespective of the associations of which you are a member, **ALL** weekend match day periods — that is, Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays — for which you are **not** available to referee **MUST** be entered into RX for **each** association Appointing Board to which you are attached as an active member.

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE: If the only weekend period for which you are available to referee is Saturday mornings until noon, then you need to **"opt-out"** of appointments (i.e. record that you are **not available**) on Friday evenings, Saturday afternoons from 12.00pm onwards and all day Sunday. You can do this on RX by clicking the "Add Recurring Unavailability" button. In doing this you simply need to nominate the times on Fridays when not available (ie all day) and repeat for Sundays. For Saturdays however, you would nominate a time frame (ie 12noon to midnight). Failure to enter **every** period of weekend unavailability or to select **every** Appointing Board to which you are attached, may result in you being assigned to matches that you are not able to carry out.

HELPFUL HINT: Sydney West members who are registered with NSWRRRA or another referee association are also attached to that other association's Appointing Board. When entering details of your unavailability, you can click "All Appointments Boards" -this enables the simultaneous updating of multiple Boards.

The procedure ALL members MUST follow to record or report a period of unavailability, is summarised in the three dot points below:—

Ideally, the CAO would like 2 weeks notice for unavailability. This allows for adequate planning for appointments.

However, unexpected events, injuries etc often prevent such early notice. In these cases:

- **After becoming aware that you will not be available on a particular date or range of dates that are still three or more days away:- you must access RX and input details of that period of unavailability.**
- **If the date or period of your unavailability is two days away or less and the appointments for that weekend have not yet been circulated:- you must immediately email or SMS the CAO and advise him of the dates or times for which you are no longer available.**

By this stage of the appointments process, an entry may be present for you in the draft appointments list (and possibly for a referee coach assigned to work with you). It is for this reason that unavailability dates that are either one day or two days from today's date, can only be input to RAS by the CAO. Upon receipt of your message, the CAO will update RX to reflect your unavailability and make any necessary changes to the draft appointments list.

- **If upon receiving your Appointment Notice you determine that you're not able to accept that appointment OR having recently accepted the appointment your circumstances change and you are no longer available:- you must immediately select the "Click to reject all or some appointments" link on the Appointment Notice email you received.**

Upon receipt of the RX email message, the CAO will cancel or adjust the appointments made on your behalf, update RX to reflect your unavailability and attempt to re-cast that weekend's appointments to cover your absence. If a replacement referee cannot be found, the match in question becomes a "Club to Appoint" fixture (or CTA).

NOTE: Guidance on things to consider if approached to referee a "CTA" is provided in the "Informal Refereeing Appointments" document available from the **Resource Library Index** page of our website. Make sure that you also read and understand that document.

The CAO, **Todd Cummings**, can be contacted by email to Todd.Cummings@nsw.rugby or by telephone or SMS to **0419 311 636**. Should you ever need them, these details are also available on the **About Appointments** page of our website.

Updating Club and/or Team Relationships

If your refereeing appointments need to take into account **either** your commitments as a player **or** the playing commitments of your child, please ensure that your team relationship (whether they be for a school or club team) is recorded fully and accurately in RX. This allows the CAO to take those details into account when considering appointments for you.

IMPORTANT: RX accesses the latest version of the competition draw provided by match organisers. When updating your details make sure that you select the correct team name, age group and grade from the dropdown list. This is particularly important when the team in question is a composite team made up of players from a number of clubs **or** when a team is re-graded or withdrawn from the competition. (This matter is discussed further under the "Potential RX Change Triggers" heading below.)

Send-Off Reports

HELPFUL HINT: If you have yet to prepare a Send-Off Report — or it has been some time since you prepared one — it is strongly recommended that you read the document titled "Preparing a Send-Off Report" available from the **Resource Library Index** page of our website. At the same time, it is suggested that you run an eye over the layout of the Send-Off Report form in RX. Doing these two things will help to ensure that should you ever need to prepare a Send-Off Report, you'll have an idea of the information you'll need to complete your report. Keep in mind that you will be required to collect some of that information prior to leaving the match venue.

To enable the judiciary process to get underway, your Send-Off Report must reach the CAO no later than 10.00am on the first working day after the match. That being so, as soon as possible after the game, login to RX, select Appointments, click "Send-Off Report".

Complete every information box on the form and ensure that all relevant facts are recorded clearly and in detail. Most people find short sentences easier to compose and easier to read than long sentences. Make sure that you report the facts as you witnessed them.

Check your completed document to ensure that it reads correctly and says precisely what you intended. When you're satisfied as to content, select our Appointment Officer's name (i.e. Stuart Wright) from the dropdown list at the bottom of the page and then

click "Submit". Your completed report will then be transmitted to Todd (and the NSW Referee Manager) for attention.

Although RX works well on most occasions, unusual circumstances can result in an error situation that requires outside assistance. Should you encounter a problem that you're not able to resolve, please don't hesitate to contact Todd.

Confirming Your Appointments

As part of the computerised appointments process, RX immediately updates your appointments history to confirm the game that you just accepted. The Appointment will have a changed status of "Approved".

All referees and referee coaches are asked to click "Accept/Reject" for their weekend appointments. Doing so assists the CAO to check that as many matches as possible have referee coverage on game day.

Potential RX Change Triggers

We know from experience that there is an endless range of reasons why referees and referee coaches may need to update their RAS record. The more common change triggers include:-

- the team for whom you play **or** for whom your child plays is re-graded or withdrawn from the competition.

NOTE: At the conclusion of Round 4, SJRU re-grade some teams in their competitions up or down based on early season results. If a team with whom you have an involvement is re-graded (or perhaps withdrawn from the competition completely), it is essential that you update RAS to reflect the team's new position in the draw.

- you become unavailable for appointment due to sickness or injury;
- as a result of business or holiday travel, changed shift or other work arrangements, attendance at school camps and retreats, changed family arrangements, you're no longer available on particular dates or times;

As mentioned earlier, because the appointments process commences in draft form two weeks out from match day, the sooner you're able to record your unavailability details in RAS, the better the result for all referees.

The association website contains a wealth of helpful procedural documentation and other information.

Bob Watson

www.sydwestrugbyrefs.org.au
