



# Introduction to Match Officiating (L1)

## Section 1 – Online Learning Module





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### Introduction and Aims

This module aims to provide learners who have an interest in becoming a match official with a basic level of understanding of how to referee. Upon completion of this module you should be ready to undertake the face-to-face Introduction to Match Officiating (L1) course delivered by licenced World Rugby Educators.

Upon successful completion of both the online module and face-to-face course participants should be able to demonstrate basic officiating skills and to officiate aspects of the game in a modified context.

When you've finished reading all of the sections, there is a test to complete. Upon successful completion of the multiple-choice test, you will be able to download an awareness certificate. It is necessary to complete this test prior to attending the face-to-face course.

### Principles of Rugby

The basic principles of the game relate to playing and coaching, and to the creation and application of the laws.

#### Conduct

Players and referees must always uphold the code of conduct and combine control and discipline when they play.

#### Spirit

The game should be played both to the letter and within the spirit of the laws – it is the responsibility of everyone involved in the game to ensure this occurs.

#### Object of the Game

Two teams, each of fifteen or seven players, observing fair play, according to the Laws and in a sporting Spirit should, by carrying, passing, kicking and grounding the ball, score as many points as possible.

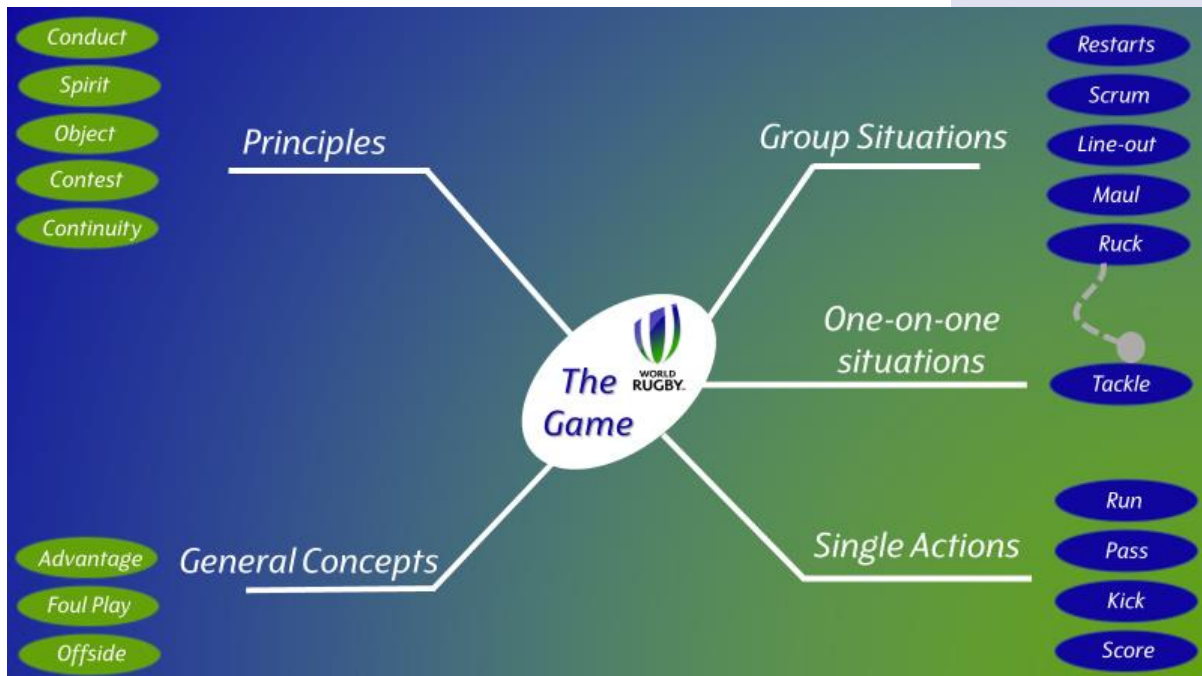
The wide variation of skills and physical requirements needed to play the game mean that there is an opportunity for individuals of every shape, size and ability to participate at all levels.

#### Contest and continuity

The contest for possession of the ball is one of rugby's key features. These contests occur throughout the game and in a number of different forms:

- in contact
- in general play
- when play is re-started at scrums, lineouts and kick-offs.

The principles above are the fundamentals on which the Game is based. They enable participants to identify clearly what makes rugby distinctive as a sport. The diagram below highlights how this relates to a Match Official.



## Principles of the Laws

The principles upon which the Laws of the Game are based are:

### A Sport for All

The Laws provide players of different physiques, skills, genders and ages with the opportunity to participate at their levels of ability in a controlled, competitive and enjoyable environment.

### Maintaining the identity

The Laws ensure that Rugby's distinctive features are maintained through scrums, lineouts, mauls, rucks, kick-offs and re-starts. Also, the key features relating to contest and continuity - the backward pass, the offensive tackle.

### Enjoyment and Entertainment

The Laws provide the framework for a Game that is both enjoyable to play and entertaining to watch. If, on occasions, these objectives appear to be incompatible, enjoyment and entertainment are enhanced by enabling the players to give full rein to their skills. To achieve the correct balance, the Laws are constantly under review.

### The Principles of Attack and Defence

The principles of attack and defence give an indication of what a team is attempting to achieve at different stages in the game cycle.

#### Attack

When the team is in possession of the ball (which is different to the Law book definition which refers to a team in the opposition half):

The team in possession tries to advance the ball, by carrying or kicking the ball forward, in the direction of the opposing team's goal line.

The players of the team in possession can use both the lateral space across the field of play, and the linear space down the field to perform an attack, to eventually score.

A team in a possession maintains continuity of play by keeping the ball and advancing the ball towards the opposition's goal-line.

#### Defence

When the team is not in possession of the ball (the team in their own half in the Law book):

The initial task for the team not in possession is to deny their opponents space and time to advance the ball down the field.

If they are successful they may regain possession of the ball and launch their own attack.

#### Contest for possession

The contest for possession is a key principle in Rugby. Various forms of this contest take place throughout all stages of the Game. This may be in dynamic play e.g. when a player of one team is in contact with the opposition or static play at restarts - scrums, lineouts, or kick-offs.

All of these contests must have a degree of fairness for both teams, so that each team has a chance to gain and/or retain possession. At restarts the initiative to commence the restart is given to the team that has not made an error. This gives the team an advantage in gaining possession when play is re-commenced.

### A Game of many aspects

The cumulative effect of the first three principles is to create a multi-faceted game in which all the players have the opportunity to perform a wide range of individual and team skills: running, passing, catching, kicking, tackling, rucking, mauling, lineout play, scrummaging and so on.

In this way, the game offers players of very different abilities and physical characteristics the opportunity to participate in a team together. Individual players will have many skills in common whilst at the same time they will also be able to specialise in positional skills.

### Rewards and penalties

If a team plays within the Laws, then they will be rewarded. If they play outside the Laws, then they are likely to be punished.

#### The Rewarded Team

Being able to gain territory, retain possession and eventually score points are rewards a team that is able to penetrate through an opponent's defence may gain.

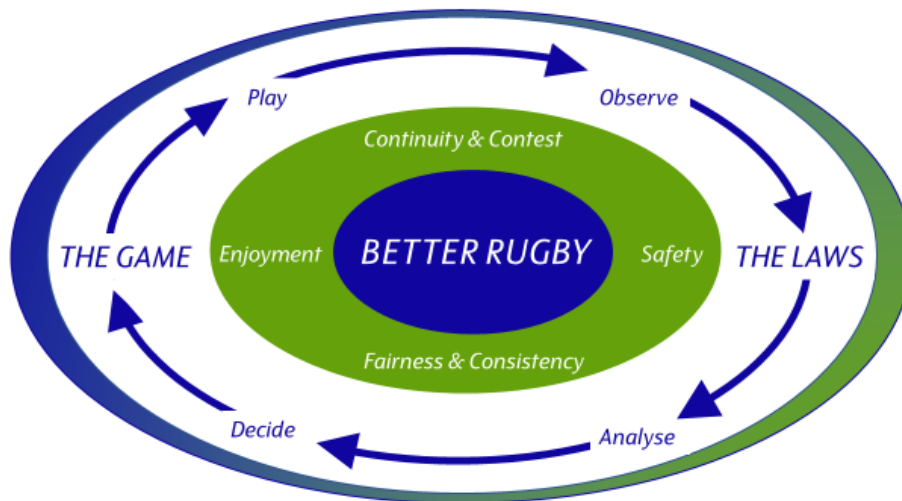
Even though they may not have the throw-in, a team's scrum may be able to push their opponents off the ball and regain possession. For this 'superior' skill, regaining possession of the ball is the reward.

#### The Penalised Team

The players of a team in defence who do not comply to the Laws of the Game when their opponents have begun to play with the ball from scrum, lineout, ruck or maul and whose actions reduce their opponent's options will be penalised by the referee.

### Officiating

Match officials use their knowledge and skills to observe the game situation in front of them, analyse the players' actions, and decide if play should continue or be stopped. The model below outlines the refereeing process and shows that the referee has to observe play, analyse what is going on and then decide what action is required.



*The Refereeing Process*



### Role of the Referee

For the novice official, the Laws of the Game mirror the complexity of rugby and cover so many details that it is a challenge to remain focussed on the simplicity of the basic principles of the Game.

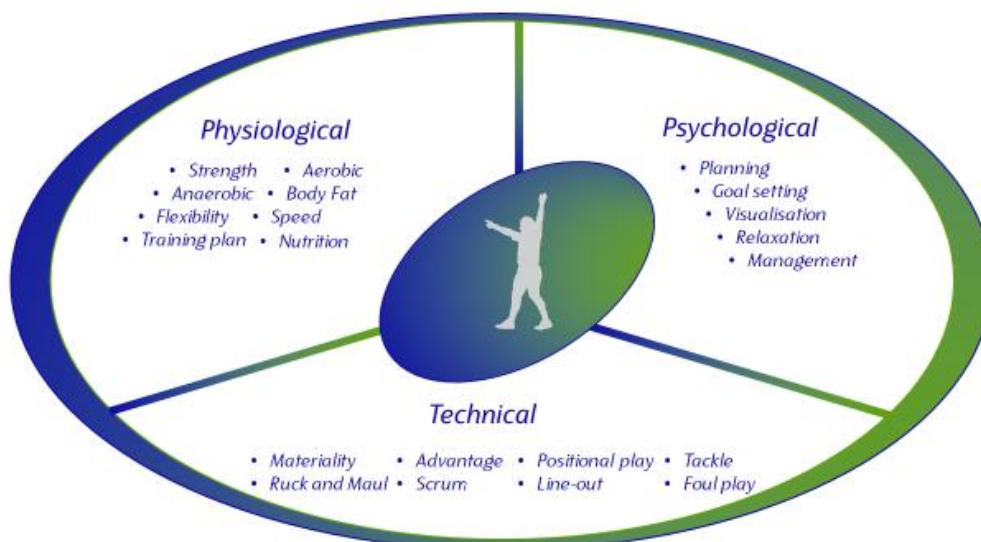
The questions arising are fundamental to the understanding of the game of rugby and remain equally important at a grass roots level through to highest levels of officiating:

- why can continuity stop?
- which Laws do we use to referee continuity?
- what is the role of the referee?

Match Officials are an integral part of the game. The modern game asks match officials to be able to encapsulate the demands of athletic performance and the execution of fair and unbiased officiating.

Referees should present a positive image by taking opportunities to be friendly, good humoured, approachable and by being seen to be enjoying the role. If you referee matches in a common sense you will be seen to be an integral part of the game and empathetic to the needs of the players. You should acknowledge your mistakes and be prepared to explain why you may have made them. When players, coaches and spectators appreciate the role of the referee it is more likely that the right environment will be created, not only for making difficult decisions, but also for the development of the game.

The model below outlines the three areas that makes up the whole referee.



*The Whole Referee*

### Referee preparation

Preparing to referee a game means being ready for the challenges ahead and the possible situations in which you will find yourself.

Match preparation has many elements: the appointment to the match, the organisation of travel, the packing of equipment, thoughts about the two teams and their players and the actual preparation in the changing room just after arrival. Match officials will not perform well in a game without preparation, regardless of the level or grade. Here are some elements of proper match preparation:

- Physical Conditioning. This includes endurance, speed, flexibility, strength and recovery.
- Nutrition. Eat and live healthily. Ensure your diet is balanced.
- Understanding the game - Try watching matches, attending practices, talking to coaches and players, and discussing laws and application with colleagues, etc.
- Studying the laws - After you have made yourself familiar with the principles of the game, you should start studying the laws. Try using [www.worldrugby.com/LAWS](http://www.worldrugby.com/LAWS) as a revision tool.

#### Referee's packing checklist

- Boots
- Laces
- Socks
- Shorts
- Shirts
- Track suit
- Jogging shoes



- Coin
- Whistles
- Watches
- Pencils
- Scorecards
- Red & yellow cards
- Touch judge flags

- Rain jacket • Towel • Toiletries • Water • Food • Sunscreen
- Cap • Law book • Local competition rules
- Contact telephone numbers

Always remember that unexpected things are bound to happen, both before kick-off and during the match itself.

Remember: stay calm, concentrate, and try to find a sensible solution for whatever you need.

### Referee support

As a match official you must quickly become self-sufficient for your learning. You are responsible for accumulating, absorbing and analysing feedback on an ongoing and long-term basis. But it is the infrastructure that surrounds you - your refereeing colleagues, the referee society, the Union or a Referee Coach - that has the capacity to support your development.

After each game, it is good practice for you to seek feedback by trying to speak with the coaches, captains and players of both sides and eventually a Referee Coach who may be appointed by your local Union.

Where coaches or players seek you out for explanations on your decisions, try to keep your responses open and brief. Gaining feedback is important, but the drawback of these informal clubhouse discussions is they are often lacking in structure and context. Even if you disagree with the feedback, thank the person for the feedback and say you will think about it. Notwithstanding this, **don't be afraid of criticism. It is part of the job.**

Going home after a match and dwelling on problems you had with your refereeing in a match can often be counter-productive. Instead of being stuck with a problem or negative feelings about your performance, try to answer the following questions to yourself:

- what are some criteria you as a referee want to be observed on?
- how can you best record information?
- how can you best learn from the feedback given and what would you do next?

Many Unions have a number of qualified Coaches of Match Officials (CMO). If available to you, the CMO can play an important role in your development as a match official by:

- identifying skills and knowledge that you can develop
- assisting you with your application of the law and advantage in context
- creating an environment to motivate, encourage continued participation and increase your enjoyment.

When working with a CMO it is important to remember that the coach is there to assist you and not do the work for you. The good coach will make you work out your own solutions and not necessarily what you should do. Self-discovery is proven to be a better way to learn for most and commits you to the desired outcome. See diagram on the following page.

### *Change and Self-improvement*

