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**Brian Parkinson presents**

*Management  
of the Junior  
Game*



**For**

**The Youth Group,  
Coaches and**

**Referees**

**Guidance**



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## Preface

In our area the number of Junior games has increased rapidly over the last few years. This has led to an increasing demand for appropriately qualified referees.

Junior rugby is very different from the adult game and this booklet is designed to give some help and advice to all those brave souls taking up the whistle on behalf of the Juniors.

Should it raise more questions than answers please contact the Society Training Officer, or one of the qualified trainers.

*What is needed at the Junior end of the game are*  
**Referees** who know the **LAWS** and the **GAME**

## LET'S START

The most important part of the game and this **MUST** be stressed from the outset, is that the **SAFETY** of the players is paramount. Anything else that follows does not absolve you from this important aspect of the game.

You will find that many Junior teams consist of players with varying degrees of competence and knowledge about the game. From the complete novice to the County player. It is therefore vital that you approach these games realising that you may be required to coach, as much as referee, helping players to understand and to play within the Laws, within the spirit of the game employing all your preventative refereeing skills and techniques.



It is therefore vital that your communication skills are of the highest order so that the players are left with no doubts as to why decisions have been made and what they need to do to stop them happening again. Always err on the side of caution where safety is concerned

**Not your normal  
U -17 Centre**

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## BEFORE THE GAME



Always speak to the coaches or responsible adult before each game. Remember **COMMUNICATION IS A TWO WAY PROCESS**. Listen as well as talk, this could be vital to what happens on the day.

Find out what sort of team they have out that day, it will change from week to week. What system have they in place for replacements. Most importantly what are the arrangements for the Front Rows and Locks and their replacements, if needed.

Check the studs and protective wear and discuss any problems with the coach/ adult., away from the players. The coach/adult is then left to sort out the problem—**NOT YOU**. Advise the coach/adult that they will be involved in any injury problems with the onus on them about the player continuing or being replaced. If unsure then advise them that they should err on the side of caution and have the player removed.

**IF YOU HAVE DOUBTS — ERR ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION - ASK FOR THEM TO BE REMOVED,**

Tell the coaches/adult you will do this.

## DURING THE GAME.

If a game turns out to be one-sided you should consider shortening the half and **MUST NEVER** allow a team to become completely demoralised or despondent. If the scrummages become one-sided then opt for non-contested scrums. This way the weaker side will at least see some ball of their own.

In the competitive environment of leagues and cups the referee cannot exert undue pressure or influence but **MUST** still have regard for the safety and the Under 19 variations are quite clear on what should be done in dealing with this. Especially with the scrum.

Rolling substitutions are allowed in league and cup matches in Junior rugby and are to be encouraged, This will help where minor injuries are concerned as those requiring minor treatment can be temporarily replaced.

## THE GAME ENDS WHEN THERE IS A 50 POINT DIFFERENCE IN SCORE

At the end of the game all (30+) players should leave the field having got something from the game, and for all of them to want to return to play the following week – **AND THIS INCLUDES YOU!**





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## There are three key principles to refereeing

### SAFETY

This is an absolute in all rugby but emphasised in Junior rugby. Nothing **MUST** be allowed to pass that is deemed unsafe in any phase of the game.

**IF IN DOUBT STOP THE GAME**—it is better to have stopped the game to find it is minor than to have played on to find it is serious

### IF IT LOOKS DANGEROUS — STOP IT — IMMEDIATELY

### EQUITY

This is another vital element as players and coaches must see you as being fair to **ALL**.

Players will forgive the odd error or mistake—if you are not then **BEWARE**

With fairness comes consistency—make the same decision, allow the same advantage—wherever it is on the pitch (even a wrong one) but keep making the same one. If you do notice then explain to the players that you are changing and to what. Read-just then for the next game.

### ENJOYMENT

If you don't enjoy it why are you there?

If you enjoy it you will bring enjoyment to those taking part, coaching and watching.

### LAWS

These are what we play by, only by knowing them and understanding them can you do the job properly.

**LEARN** them so that they become second nature—this adds to your confidence. Review weekly areas you are not sure about.

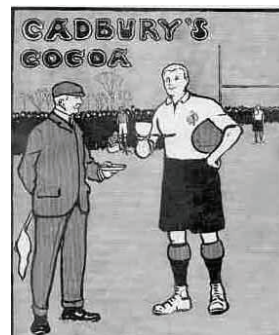
**KEEP** Learning.

**LEARN ESPECIALLY** the Under 19 Variations and **KNOW THEM**.

Once you know them you can apply them.

### KNOWLEDGE

brings confidence to you, and to the players, coaches and spectators.





**INSIST** on the correct height for the front row engagement, that players at rucks and mauls remain on their feet and be severe on anyone who collapses any of these.

Deal with **DANGEROUS PLAY** in a similar manner, firmly and promptly. High tackles at this age are often the result of carelessness or poor skills, but must still be dealt with strongly.

It is a major part of your role to encourage players to play the game on their feet. Players on the ground are a hazard for everyone, including themselves, and unless the ball is available immediately, the **BLOW** your **WHISTLE**.

The RFU ruling is quite clear for Under 19 rugby and below—Players **MUST** play the game on their feet, a player going to ground is **DEEMED** to have done so deliberately.

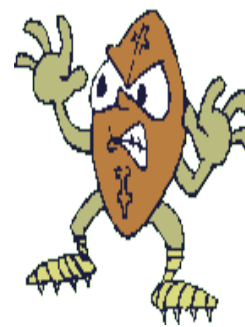
There is no advantage to be played, the game stops and the player is sanctioned. This is far less tolerant than the Senior game. What do you need to do—**WATCH** carefully the body positions of the players at scrum, ruck and maul. Shoulders above hips. If they are lower it is only going one way and that is **DOWN — stop** it immediately.

### **APPROACH THE GAME WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THE PLAYERS ARE TRYING TO DO.**

*This will ensure the:-*

- your decision making is more accurate
- your communications are more relevant

Experience brings with it an increase in your knowledge of the game, and as you progress, will assist you to identify and prioritise aspects of your refereeing more clearly. Know and use the language of the players and coaches. Familiarity with such terms and phrases will enhance the players and coaches perception of you and your ability



### **APPLICATION OF THESE POINTS WILL INCREASE THE PLAYERS AND COACHES CONFIDENCE IN YOUR ABILITY AS A REFEREE**

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We have looked at the Referees' responsibilities from the referees viewpoint. Now let's look at it from the players and coaches expectations of you.



## **WHAT DO THE PLAYERS AND COACHES EXPECT OF REFEREES**

### **HONEST & INTEGRITY**

Praise players when they do well or for good play/sportsmanship.  
**DON'T** talk down to them—treat them as equals

### **EMPATHY & EQUITY**

Show an interest in what players are trying to do — help them to achieve it.

Show sympathy but with firmness.

A thorough understanding of **THEIR** game at large.

An accurate knowledge of the Laws as it applies to them.

Be **FAIR** to both sides.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively, clearly and concisely with **WHISTLE, VOICE, BODY/SIGNALS**

### **FITNESS**

Be fit for the game, don't just use the game to get fit. Be fit both mentally and physically. Remember 13 and 14 year olds can run very fast and you need to keep up with them at the very least!  
(That's why God gave refs whistles!!)

### **CONFIDENCE & CONSISTENCY**

Knowledge brings confidence as does experience. Both these help with consistency too. Make your decisions with confidence, stand proud (not aloof).

But never be afraid to listen too, especially if they believe you have made an error. Explain the decision if necessary.

### **WHAT REFEREES SHOULD NOT DO!!**



**Be Officious**

**Have an over fussy attitude**

**Have an overbearing attitude**

**Be a Prima Donna—**

**you ain't the star !! The Players are**

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## SOME OTHER BITS OF COMMON SENSE

1. Behave and dress appropriately. In a manner and style that becomes your role and responsibilities
2. Know the Laws and apply them to the match and skill levels presented to you on the day (Laws are there to interpret and adapt).
3. Vary the tone of your whistle so that it talks to the players. It is a tool to aid control, not a tool of domination. Use humour rather than scorn
4. Play and use advantage whenever and wherever possible to assist the game to flow. Inform the players of this using signals and voice, and when it is over. Be clear in your own mind what is tactical and territorial.
5. Use preventative refereeing techniques—Don't be afraid to advise/guide as you go. Tell them, give them time to respond, don't just blow and penalise.
6. Ensure that you are fit for the game. This will ensure you are in the correct place at the correct time to make the best decision. *Job Well Done.*
7. Look carefully where you position yourself in Junior games. They do not necessarily follow the "normal" patterns of play. Be prepared for and expect the Unexpected. Headless chickens springs to mind at times.
8. Explain your decisions clearly and concisely. Be consistent in wording, be objective, be friendly (it is not illegal to smile) and be courteous.
9. Penalise **Foul Play** as unsporting and advise accordingly. Be **HARD** and **FIRM** but not officious. This aids player respect for you and the Laws of the Game.
10. The younger the age group the more encouragement is needed, especially for those who make an error. **NEVER RIDICULE**, nor allow others to. Applaud good play.
5. Condemn and penalise bad behaviour and bad language, from what ever source. The law requires players and spectators to observe fair play codes and good sportsmanship.
6. **ALWAYS** be prepared to answer questions from players and coaches. At times it may be better in the clubhouse after the game. Be honest with your answers. (Even spectators have been known to express an opinion during and after a game)



### **Respond politely**

You will learn a lot from players about the game and their views of it and your performance. It gives you an ideal opportunity to correct many misconceptions that they may hold.

It is also worth remember that some of the Junior players are under coaches from the Senior version of the game who may not be fully conversant with the U 19 Variations game.

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## POINTS TO REMEMBER IN JUNIOR GAMES

1. Playing time **IS NOT 80 minutes**—ensure you know what it is for your match. !!
1. Scrum — **Remember - CROUCH — TOUCH — PAUSE — ENGAGE**
3. At the scrum the No 8 is the only person allowed to detach and pick up the ball, when it is at his feet, but only when he is the **BACK FOOT**. Flankers cannot pick it up under any circumstances.
4. When there are less than 15 players on the field for any reason the scrums for both teams reduces to 7 with the number 8 position being lost.
5. Check position of number 8—he may only pack between the two locks.
6. Ball **MUST** be released once it is at back of scrum and under control — no delay **TELL THEM to USE IT**.
7. 45° turn scrum over re-scrum ordered. **NO TURNOVER**.
8. Maximum travel of scrum is 1.5m the **stop pushing** is command.
9. At penalty no cavalry charge at all, no one may move until ball is played.
10. Under 15's Lineout —  
no support for player until back on ground  
Under 15's scrum —  
scrum half not allowed to follow ball round.
11. Squeeze Ball at Under 18's and below is illegal.  
At Under 19's use Laws 14.1, 15.5 & 15.6 to stop it
12. Players who go to ground in junior games are deemed to have done so deliberately, unless you know otherwise.
12. Once a 50 pts difference in scores exists the match is over, regardless of time.
13. Rolling substitutes at all times (during stoppages of play). Substitutions could be used as an alternative to Yellow Cards, talk to the coach Especially for a difficult player.
14. You are there to help develop the players, use the Captains, get them involved, as well as the coach. It is good experience for them.



**Definition**—The Junior Game is played from 13 to 19 years of age



Then there is  
always the bar  
afterwards.

**ENJOY**

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