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## DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

The Disciplinary Committee has met on 18 occasions during the past season. Its members must be complimented on their stamina for we had some lengthy meetings - the last two each being in excess of five hours in length!

The County is indebted to them all for the efficient manner in which they carried out this important duty, none more so than Chairman Clifton Barker who has spent many hours outside of actual meetings on both County and RFU disciplinary work. The RFU Disciplinary Regulations are now framed in such a way that in order to apply them correctly Disciplinary Committees need expert legal advice and we are indeed fortunate to have Clif to do just that.

With Clif assuming the role of Senior Vice-President in the near future, we must plan for the future and it would be ideal if the vacancy on the Disciplinary Committee occurring at June's AGM could be filled by a qualified solicitor who could then work with Clif over the next season or so to gain the experience necessary for Chairing this important Committee. If you have anyone suitable - and willing - let us know before the AGM. Our retiring member this year is Bill Hopkinson. Bill has been a valuable member of the Committee and, on behalf of the County, I would express our appreciation of his splendid contribution to the proceedings.

The total number of cases - 79 actual sendings off plus 4 x 5.12 cases - shows a decrease of two on last year's figures. The breakdown is slightly different with a decrease of 3 in the number of sendings off and an increase of 1 in the number of 5.12 cases. These figures do not include Lancashire players sent off in National League matches as they are dealt with by the RFU Disciplinary Panel. The number of clubs involved has decreased from 41 to 38 with two schools being involved.

I can report that the number of School and U17 players sent off was 15 against 20 last year. This decrease can be chiefly attributed to the decline in actual U17 players being sent off - just 4 against 13 last year and 14 the year before that. Having been critical of their coaches in the past, I am more than happy to say well done to them all with the sincere hope that things continue to further improve next year. However, I am somewhat alarmed to record that we had two U13 players sent off during the season! I must compliment the Lancashire & Cheshire Colts League - chiefly through the auspices of Secretary Jon Kitchen -for their campaign to improve the discipline of all their players - and, more important, of their parents whose behaviour at times is quite appalling. This has also been taken up by the RFU with a very active publicity campaign directed at all clubs with Junior Sections. Discipline at senior level is pretty good but the future could well be tarnished if all clubs do not make a conscious effort to nurture our young in the true ways of Rugby Union.

Over the past year, we have published generalised details of disciplinary hearings - such as those given below - on the County Website. Next season, it is our intention to "name and shame" miscreants who appear before the Disciplinary Committee. So, I would ask clubs to advise their players that if they do not want to be embarrassed do not get sent off!

Finally, as ever, my thanks go to all the members of the Liverpool and Manchester Referees' Societies. They have again provided an excellent service to our clubs particularly at Junior level where it is becoming more and more important for games to be handled by qualified referees. With the RFU Disciplinary Regulations now stating that clubs must specifically request the attendance of a referee if they want him at the hearing, we have not seen as many referees as usual at our meetings - possibly because clubs making the request are responsible for the referee's travelling expenses! To those who did appear, I would proffer our appreciation for their contribution to the proceedings. Their presence can be so important.

### **BRIAN LEIGH**

*Hon Secretary*

*Lancashire County RFU Disciplinary Committee*