

YORKSHIRE RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION LIMITED

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Disciplinary Issues involving junior players

Since the start of the season a number of clubs and junior sections have been seeking advice and guidance in dealing with disciplinary issues that have arisen and a number of incidents have occurred which have suggested that some clarification of procedures and expectations would be welcome. It is hoped that these notes, references and contact details will help clubs and individuals to follow the appropriate procedures and enable them to seek further help when they feel that is necessary.

The Yorkshire RFU follows the Disciplinary Regulations as set out in the RFU Handbook 2009-10, in particular **Section 10 Schools and Youth Disciplinary Matters** on pages 372 to 379 and **Appendix 3** on page 394 which sets out **Recommended Sanctions** – note there are three age bands in this appendix.

It has become clear that many mini and junior sections do not have ready access to a copy of this handbook. Often the secretary of the senior section holds the Club copy and some clubs do not get extra copies so that key sections of the Club can have their own. In fact the information is available on the RFU website but accessing it needs some perseverance.

www.rfu.com then onto rfu home page then scroll down to the bottom half of the page where there are a range of topics listed. Under **The Game** click onto Regulations (not Discipline !) then onto the menu list on the left hand side of the page and choose Section 10 **schools and youth discipline**

Responsibility

It is important to remind Clubs that the Senior Club is responsible for the management, organisation and discipline of their junior section. This may have a discrete management and organisational structure with separate individuals undertaking specific roles but overall responsibility lies with the Senior Club. The secretary of the senior club is the Club contact for disciplinary matters and ultimately sanctions could affect the whole club and all teams.

Players up to and including Under 12.

In the spirit of developing the culture and ethos of the game in youngsters and trying to develop self discipline and good habits it is expected that misconduct at this junior level will be dealt with by sensitive refereeing and coaching with coaches withdrawing players (perhaps on the advice of the referee) before dismissal becomes necessary. Coaches are expected to be aware of misconduct, foul play and unacceptable behaviour whether or not it is seen by the referee. Clubs are expected to deal with such

issues informally in terms of advice and guidance but should keep a brief note of any actions in case of subsequent enquiries about “what has been done”

Junior Players from under 13 to Under 18 and all schoolboy players in inter-school games.

When players in this category are dismissed from the field of play, practice has been variable and the following simplification is designed to ensure that everyone is dealt with equably.

All referees, whether or not they are members of a Society; club referees or coaches/teacher filling in to make sure the game goes on must complete the standard **RFU Discipline Report** for a player sent off the playing enclosure. This form is available on line via the referee societies and the RFU website and Clubs/Schools are requested to have some copies available in the Clubhouse/School for the use of any referee who cannot access these on-line copies. Indeed it is an expectation that both the clubs/schools involved will ensure that a report on any such incident is submitted.

Society referees will continue to follow the Society guidelines for submission but all other referees should send a copy of the report to the Schools and Youth Disciplinary Secretary – this may be done electronically by e-mail or by post.

Under normal circumstances, having received details of the referee's report either directly from the referee or indirectly via the Schools and Youth Disciplinary Secretary, the Club will convene a Disciplinary Panel, and following the guidelines in **Section 10 Schools and Youth Disciplinary Matters**, reach a conclusion about action and apply sanctions in accordance with **Appendix 3** which sets out **Recommended Sanctions** - note there are three age bands. The Club must then report to the Schools and Youth Disciplinary Secretary on the outcome of the disciplinary panel meeting. Note there is a form for making this report – available on the RFU and Yorkshire websites. Headteachers take the place of a Disciplinary Panel in the case of schools.

Good practice suggests that a Disciplinary panel of three members should comprise at least one representative of the Club's senior disciplinary panel; one member of the junior section and possibly someone with a Child Welfare brief or expertise. The Senior Club must be aware of disciplinary issues involving the Junior section and this representation should ensure that the main committee is kept fully informed.

The Schools and Youth Disciplinary Secretary is available to offer advice and guidance regarding procedures and sanctions. It is recommended that any suspensions should usually be expressed as a number of games.

Sometimes problems arise with discipline and misconduct in a Club context rather than during a game and some Clubs find it necessary to discipline youngsters for what are usually contraventions of the Club's Code of Conduct, behaviour policy or equity policy. The guidelines in Section 10 based on principles of natural justice provide an excellent framework for dealing with such issues – especially 10.5.5. Once again the Schools and Youth Disciplinary Secretary is available to offer advice and guidance

Abuse of Officials

Hopefully good preparation at junior levels will reduce the incidence of this from players but the referee does have the ability to dismiss players and players should be made aware that the sanctions for such offences are significant and that it will not be tolerated. A player will be dealt with according to the sending off procedure and the referee completes the appropriate section on the standard RFU Discipline Report and submits it in the normal way.

However, there have been incidents of officials being abused by spectators; parents and coaches from the touchline or after games and all Clubs, Schools and referees should be aware of the Match Official Abuse Incident Report form. This is available on the RFU website and Clubs/Schools are asked to keep copies available for referees to use if required. Society referees are already aware of these forms but it is important that all referees know that they are available for use. Such misconduct is extremely serious and must be reported to Richard Matthews, the Disciplinary Secretary for consideration by the Senior Disciplinary Committee. For non-society referees he will arrange for any further reporting that is necessary; society referees follow their standard procedures. Such misconduct will be an issue for the Club.

Abandonment of Games – games blown up significantly before time.

From time to time it may be necessary to abandon a game or blow the final whistle well before time and there may be good reason for this – a serious injury; one side badly outclassed or losing heart. Such decisions are well founded. However, it is also clear that some games have been abandoned or finished early because they have become impossible to control due to the actions of players or those on the touchline and to avoid a possible serious incident.

Any game that is abandoned or stopped early **must** be reported to the Disciplinary Secretary and **both** Clubs **must** ensure that such a notification is made. The referee should give a brief explanation of his reasons for stopping the game prematurely.

In addition on Page 362 of the Handbook

ACTIONS PREJUDICIAL TO THE INTERESTS OF THE GAME	RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEALING WITH REPORT
Coaches, parents and other adult supporters reported for ill discipline on the touchline at a School or Club Youth match	CB (County) Disciplinary Committee

Perhaps the most serious issue in this respect is adults going onto the playing enclosure - “to break up a fight/defend their player/son. Such behaviour puts everyone at risk – not least the adult going onto the pitch and there can be significant child protection issues and consequences. Any such incident must be reported promptly and where possible individuals responsible identified. Inevitably details of the incident

leak out, rumours begin and the failure to properly report the incident may become as serious as the incident itself.

Clubs may find themselves under pressure from parents to make sure that the matter “is dealt with properly” and if they believe that it has not been taken seriously or responded to then they often want to take it further – often far further than is reasonable to expect. The best defence a Club has is to make sure that an incident has been properly reported and properly dealt with under the RFU Guidelines. Taking advice from the appropriate disciplinary secretary is just good practice. It is also important that there is no delay – knee jerk reactions are not helpful but delay is equally damaging.

Misconduct contrary to the Spirit of the Game

Sadly there have been incidents which have been contrary to the spirit of the game including abuse, threatening or racist comments; offensive chanting; trashing of changing rooms and offensive or disrespectful comments on web-sites. Such issues need dealing with firmly and promptly as they have no place in our sport. There is an expectation that all clubs and schools will fulfil their obligations in this respect. In the past clubs may have sorted matters out between themselves but it is important that such problems are reported – with the outcome if appropriate so that trends can be monitored and problems anticipated and dealt with.

Key Contact Summary

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