

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY AND DISTRICT
RUGBY REFEREES' SOCIETY

CONTACT

KEEPING YOU IN TOUCH

THE FUTURE OF RUGBY

MAY 2015

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

UNCERTAIN FUTURE	2
FRENCH STYLE	3
THE BIGGS' BREAK	3
NOTE FOR THE FUTURE	3
IF YOU CAN KEEP YOUR HEAD	4
JOIN OUR PRESS CORPS	4
DON'T MENTION THE WAR	5
'46 or ' 50	5
MAKING THE GRADE	6
TOO MANY GOODBYES	6
PROSPECT- US	6

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Excellence is the gradual result of always striving to do better.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday, May 15th 2015

The causes and dangers of concussion

A presentation by medical experts at Shelford Rugby Club at 7.30pm.

Wednesday, May 20th 2015

Annual General Meeting (Election of Officers) at Shelford Rugby Club at 7.30 pm.

Visit
CUDRRS website
www.camsref.co.uk

UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Will the Rugby World Cup 2015 bring about a reversal in the decline of adult participation in our game and will more young people be attracted to it? Questions.

In order to make the answer "yes" to both, the RFU has launched its Festival of Rugby 2015. Rugby themed events will be taking place across the UK. They will provide opportunities for clubs, schools, community groups, organisers of sporting events and others to take part and create a truly festival feel countrywide.

World Rugby (formerly IRB) Chairman, Bernard Lapasset, said " Sport is all about inclusivity, teamwork and having fun. I am sure that through a diverse range of events, the Festival will create a fantastic feel-good atmosphere across the UK and inspire new audiences to engage and feel a part of what will be a very special and record- breaking year of rugby". Fingers crossed, Bernie!

In 2012, the Government announced a plan to link thousands of schools to rugby clubs as it wants to see more children taking up sport. However, public health doctors have warned that this drive to boost participation in rugby in English schools is ill-conceived and risks children getting seriously hurt.

Doctors at Queen Mary University of London say our contact sport is too dangerous. They do not want an outright ban but say the sport must change and safeguards are needed. The RFU responded by saying steps had been and will continue to be taken to make the sport safer.

Recent high profile incidents of players concussed, scrums collapsed, big hits, tip tackles, tackling of players in the air, have all contributed to a feeling amongst many parents that Rugby is too rough and not for their kids.

Not surprising when we see professional players today performing like gladiators in arenas in front of baying hordes as two groups of bulked up, heavyweight athletes clash violently. They train to play hard and hit hard. They get paid for it unlike the amateur schoolchildren, youth and adults who play for fun. It is very dangerous for these amateurs to try to emulate the big boys.

Sadly, some do. What should CUDRRS be doing in particular to protect youngsters from the risk of injury in these circumstances?

Recent emails to our dedicated cadre of youth referees have shown there is a problem that we must address seriously and collectively. Ours is a key role.

John Creighton, coach to Cambridge U15s, is "genuinely concerned about the subject of the tackle and what is legal, for the safety of our children playing Rugby across the region." This season he has "witnessed a lot of shirt swinging tackles and judo throws which I hope you agree are both illegal and unsafe".

He added that there is also an increasing amount of high, head to head tackles seen on TV. He believes such tackles should not go unpunished at Youth or Mini level and he referred to France where, up to Under 14 level, tackles above the waist are penalised. Coach Creighton asked whether it was something we should consider introducing here.

In reply, our John Hanlon said " It seems to me that one of the big problems is the obsession with the smother tackle. At all levels now, but most noticeably in the Premiership, the tackler goes in high on the ball carrier rather than tackling the man around the waist or legs.

Inevitably, when the ball is carried high this means that the tackle is aimed high and may well slip up even higher. The ball carrier often brings up his free arm to protect the ball and this can become a forearm jab".

So, what should we do to protect the young through prevention and persuasion?

UNCERTAIN FUTURE (continued)

John H questioned whether this kind of tackle is being coached or whether the youngsters are just copying what they see on TV. He speculated whether there should be a determined and collective approach by coaches to discourage this method of tackling.

He confirmed that this type of tackle is happening at very young levels of the game and may be its because the players are reluctant to go to ground. John penalises the shirt swinging tackle as dangerous play and finds that once he warns players, they usually respond positively.

But is this approach being applied consistently throughout our Society? Should it not be followed nationally too?

Rugby Union is a sport which involves physical contact. As such it has inherent dangers. So it must be played within the spirit of the Laws and players be mindful of their own and their opponents safety.

It is the responsibility of those who coach or teach Rugby to ensure that players are prepared in a manner which ensures compliance with the Laws of the Game and in accordance with safe practices.

The Playing Charter defines the spirit in which Rugby should be played. It recognises that it is perfectly acceptable to exert extreme physical pressure on an opponent but not wilfully or maliciously to inflict injury. Referees have the responsibility to promote and foster this spirit — Safety, Equity, Law. Remember?

The professional game is played under its own highly competitive commercial ethos. The ethos of the Community game is based on fun and fellowship in sporting contest. There is rising concern at the top level about the increased incidence of injury and the dangers of permanent damage to players.

This emphasises the need for action at Community level to avoid it going down the same route. That need is even greater at youth level, and for action soon, if we are to nip professional tackling techniques and attitudes in the bud.



I have mentioned in previous editions of CONTACT that the Laws Laboratory experimented with tackling restricted to waist level and below. Above waist contact was allowed in maul situations provided the intending tackler used both arms in a “wrap” but no shoulder leading “Big Hit”. The standard of tackling became superb, around the legs, knees and ankles stuff. The coaching maxim “They can’t run without their legs” was proved true. The Cambridge lad in this photo is demonstrating it.

Such tackling requires courage, determination, technique and a will to contribute to team effort, the sort of qualities rugby can bring out in young people. What’s not to like? In my view, that’s better than throwing your weight around and trying to smash your opponent. Rugby is for all shapes and sizes. With tackling round the legs, the good little ‘un becomes a match for the big ‘un, bringing them down to their level.

The Cuppers Final between St John’s and Emmanuel was expected by some to be a forgone conclusion. Champions of Division One, the “Red Boys” were bigger, stronger and faster than Emma, Champions of Division Two, result decided before the kick off. But no. Emma showed how low level tackling can stop bigger, stronger and faster opponents dead in their tracks. No minnows were they but monsters in the tackle reminiscent of that Laws Lab experiment. Emmanuel were always in the game apart from a spell just after half time. Their glorious tackling confounded St John’s who eventually won by 18 pts to 10. No walkover and a thrilling end to the Colleges season.

There will some parents and coaches who will argue that full blooded tackling is what Rugby is all about. Trying to make the game safer by limiting how tackles can be made, some may say, is turning the playing charter into a charter for wimps. I suspect they speak for the physically powerful rather than the slight and skilful.

Children are introduced gradually to Rugby through “the curriculum”. The more physical elements are introduced to the children as they grow up and their bodies are strong enough. Pushing in scrums, tackling and jumping in line-outs are left until they’re much older. The laws of rugby are constantly monitored.

The big question for rugby’s future, as I see it, is whether the devastating injuries in the professional game will be mirrored at Community and Youth levels. Why not remove the question completely by recognising that Rugby is now two games, the “pro “ and the “am”? Why not acknowledge that the professional game ought to have its own set of laws to suit the physique, fitness, size, strength and motivation of its participants and that the community and youth games be played more safely to a set of laws recognising the differences between them. Just extend the U19 variations, the principle has been established. How many serious injuries will it take before the law makers wake up to the risks?

The issue here though is what should CUDRRS do about the dangerous tackling at Youth level. As Mrs Merton used to say “Let’s have a heated debate”. Maybe not a heated one but at least an in-depth discussion at a monthly meeting on how to control the “thuggish” tendency in the tackle and consistent application of the safe standards we are obliged to set and enforce. Training Manager Dave Howell has already noted this issue as a possible topic.

If we decide that law changes are necessary then our views should be conveyed to our clubs, the Central and Eastern Counties Federations and the Rugby Football Referees Union. A joint approach to the RFU would carry more weight and, if effective, secure a safer sporting environment for young players. A safe future.

FRENCH STYLE

Unsure about what they do in France to safeguard young players, CONTACT turned to a man who should know, our Maxime Guitet.



Max turned up trumps and did some research on the FFR website and found confirmation that John Creighton was right about the French approach to the tackle. It applies to rugby at U14, U12, U10, U8 and U6 levels.

He forwarded a document (obviously in French) with a translation and added "The important part is the following on tackles ("plaquages"):

Le plaquage, exécuté obligatoirement avec les 2 bras, doit être impérativement effectué au niveau de la ceinture.

Toute prise au-dessus ou sans engager les 2 bras sera sanctionnée."

The francophiles in the society will know this means

"The tackle, which must be done with both arms, and must be on the waist. Any grabbing done above the waist or without using both arms will be penalized."

Max said "As a personal testimony, when I was playing (about 10 years ago now) the referees were always strict on the tackles. During this season, I myself had complaints from teams (especially in college rugby) saying I was penalizing tackles which were not high. I guess it must be something which remains with me from my time in France".

He has promised to recount his experience as a Frenchman at Twickenham for the Six Nations. Merci, Max.

Attendez patiemment, mes braves. Who said CONTACT wasn't educational?

THE BIGGS' BREAK



He is about to sit his exams for his Law degree and then is taking a gap year.

Louis Biggs will be having a break from CUDRRS refereeing but ended the season with another classy performance in the Cuppers Final.

Louis will be working as a ski instructor before going down-under to spend time in Auckland, New Zealand. He promises to keep in touch with us and we look forward to seeing him again pursuing his career as an RFU referee.

The team of three for the final was a University based trio of **Louis** from Girton, **Tom Northcote** from Downing and **Calum Worsley** from Emmanuel.

Louis was recently elevated to Midlands Group which meant that he has moved up five levels during his three years with us. His decision to take a year off may have set back his further progression a bit but the effervescent Louis will no doubt overcome this.

Mike Runswick, his coach, has been instrumental in Louis' development and can chalk up more success having coached Wayne Barnes, another lawyer, when Wayne was studying at the University of East Anglia.

What Louis and Calum have achieved here as referees should encourage other students to train and referee with CUDRRS in the future..

IN THE FIRING LINE

Referees are becoming increasingly targeted by players. Players have them in their sights. They are being used as shields by ball carriers to obstruct defences and create gaps. They are truly "in the middle". Referees need to be aware of this, read the play and position themselves out of harms way but still be able to see the ball.

Two examples of this from recent weeks. Lee Dickson of the Saints ran into Craig Maxwell Keys who came off worse but soldiered on. But sometimes the referee wins the confrontation. Wayne Barnes' body check on poor Saracens hooker Schalk Brits ended up with the player coming off clearly second best.



An overthrown lineout resulted in loose ball and Barnes and Brits both ran in different directions but on the same path. The Barnes body check prevailed and Brits tumbled to the floor. Oops!

This tactic is typically used by players in the Forest of Dean (by their supporters too) and by Wayne when he turns out for Bream RUFC.

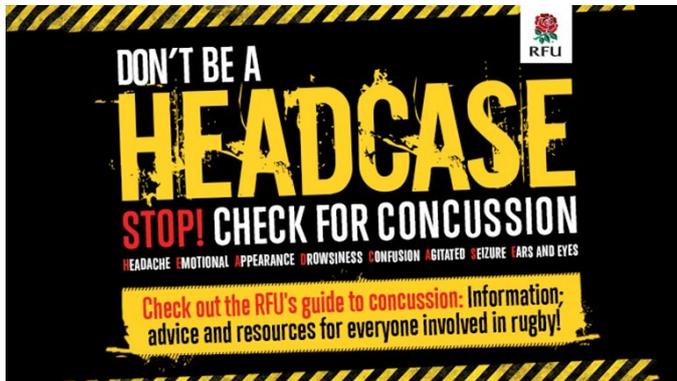
Be warned all you referees. Your name might be on that bullet. If so, unless you are a big boy, **duck**.



IF YOU CAN KEEP YOUR HEAD (when all about you etc)

Concussion is the foremost topic of conversation in rugby, boxing, cricket, association and American football, skiing, Formula 1, and horse riding.

There are about one million attendances for head injuries at A and E in the UK each year. Many of these are minor, but some become very serious with long term effects.



The RFU reminds us that

Match officials have an important role in the prevention and management of concussion. Through the correct and consistent application of the laws of the game they are able to influence players and their coaches' behaviour towards concussion.

At certain games, there may not be a coach, so the match official's role becomes more significant.

CUDRRS recognises this and has arranged an event to inform all involved with Rugby about **the causes and dangers of concussion.**

It will be held on Friday May 15th 2015 at the Shelford Rugby Club starting at 7.30pm.

Professor HUTCHINSON, Head of Clinical Neurosciences at Addenbrookes Hospital, fellow of Robinson College and advisor to Formula 1 in the UK will be the lead speaker.

Mr Rikin (Rikki) TREVEDI, MBBS FRCS (surg neurol) PhD, who is a brain surgeon at Addenbrookes and currently researching, "The long term effects on boxers at Cambridge University, of blows to the head" will be the second speaker. He has also recently advised the FA on the subject of head injuries.

The event will be hosted by Mr Richard MANNION, MBBS FRCS (surg neurol) PhD Consultant brain surgeon at Addenbrookes, along with representatives from CUDRRS and Cambridgeshire RFU.

Following presentations the panel will answer questions from the audience chaired by Dr Tom TIDSWELL, MB Chir PhD FRCP, Consultant Neurophysiologist at the Royal Free Hospital in London.

CUDRRS and Cambridgeshire RFU extend this invitation to all in the game of rugby union, and hopes it will interest many people in the Eastern Counties including coaches, referees, players, physiotherapists and administrators.

The event is free, and will provide a great chance to learn more about the subject of concussion in sport.

There is plenty of parking at Shelford Rugby Club, Shelford Rd, Gt. Shelford CB22 5JJ and the bar will be open for refreshments.

There is no need to book a place and for any further information please contact:

David Howell, Society Training Officer (davidhowell61@hotmail.com)

John Tidswell, Event Co-ordinator (johntidswell@gmail.com)

Will CUDRRS members please spread the news about this important event?

JOIN OUR PRESS CORPS

When referees get together to discuss Laws, they don't hold back from expressing their views, opinions and interpretations, often varied and contradictory. When it comes to talking to fellow members through CONTACT, they are reluctant and there is a dearth of contributions from them. Maybe things will change. Access to CONTACT is easy.

Our CO (Charles Osbourn) recently sounded out CUDRRS volunteers about their intentions for the next season.

Your editor is ready to carry on **provided that others will volunteer to provide material on a regular basis.**

The search is on for people to contribute features on the various levels of Rugby we are involved with e.g. Youth, Schools, Colleges, Women's and Men's Rugby. Not every month but at least bi-monthly copy will do.

Already Steve Johnson has come forward to help. Thanks Steve. A few more are needed.

This is an appeal to others to become "cub" or even "ace" reporters in the CUDRRS press corps.

Don't wait to be press ganged. You know whom to contact and how. See below.

There will be an opportunity to put your hand up at the AGM and your editor will be there counting.

CONTACT is compiled and edited by Michael Dimambro, Honorary Member of CUDRRS.

Send your input by email to: michael.dimambro@ntlworld.com or telephone **01223 564459.**

DON'T MENTION THE WAR

Basil Fawly warned us not to do it but with the anniversary of VE Day (Victory in Europe Day) being celebrated on Friday, 8th May 2015, he has to be ignored. The day marks 70 years since the end of the Second World War in Europe and the occasion will be commemorated with events across the UK.

I shall certainly remember it for on the evening before, I was sat in the Whiteladies cinema in Clifton, Bristol, celebrating my tenth birthday with some of my scout friends from the 226 Bristol troop.

The film was **Dangerous Moonlight**, a 1941 British film, starring Anton Walbrook, and best known for its score which includes the Warsaw Concerto written by Richard Addinsell. The love-story plot, with flashbacks of the bombing of Warsaw, is about the fictional composer of the Concerto, a piano virtuoso and "shell-shocked" combat pilot.

There he was on the screen, tinkling the ivories, with a flaming Warsaw in the background when the auditorium was plunged into darkness. Up came the lights, down came the curtain and the cinema manager walked on the stage to announce "Ladies and Gentlemen, Wonderful news. The Germans have surrendered. The war is over". There were lots of cheers, tears, clapping and hugging before the film resumed.

The act of military surrender was signed on 7th May in Reims and in Berlin the following day. It was a most welcome birthday present for me.

Why mention this? Well it meant that Rugby could start up again and in September it did. I used to go with my uncle to see him play on Durdham Downs after he and his team mates carried their goal posts from a house near Blackboy Hill half a mile to the pitch. They returned to the house for a wash after the match. No clubhouses then.

Next season, I started playing at my grammar school as a hooker and then scrum half. Irish Christian Brothers regarded Rugby as a main element of a full education. So much so, that RE classes were prefaced by ten minutes of questions on the Laws of the Game. Know the Laws to play better Rugby was their message and that has stayed with me to today. That may also explain why I have been involved with refereeing for so long. And, it is claimed, in 1946 Cambridge University and District Rugby Referees' Society was formed. See below.

My war experiences, being bombed by the Luftwaffe and evacuated, never deterred me from making friends with Germans. I learnt a few phrases of their language to use for travelling and eating. I refereed a Colts match between Cambridge and Heidelberg and was able to expand on why I had penalised a Heidelberg player for using his boot carelessly. In guttural tone I said "**Es ist verboten**". He smiled at me and said "**Sorry Sir**". Can't win 'em all.

'46 or '50

To many, the date of their birth matters a lot. It determines when you can drive, drink alcohol, vote and get a bus pass. It is important to know when you come of age and can celebrate accordingly.

But how old is CUDRRS? In 1998, just prior to federalisation, we tried to find out when we were founded.

Jimmy Crowe, an Essex man, an acknowledged authority on the Laws and the history of Eastern Counties Rugby, did some research and told us that he had found evidence of our existence in 1950 in a handbook but nothing before that. Jimmy was at the time a co-opted member of the RFU Laws Sub Committee when the Laws Laboratory was set up here. We didn't, nor dared, argue with the oracle.

Readers may recall that new evidence about the exact date when University and District referees joined forces came through London based Jack Lewars (Trinity) and Ian Mackintosh (St Johns), University Honorary Secretary in 1946/47. Further evidence was supplied by Peter Ogden (Pembroke), a former member of CUDRRS in 1964, who produced a copy of the menu of the society's annual dinner at the University Arms Hotel in 1966.

The menu stated "**The Society was formed in 1946 for the purpose of providing referees to Colleges within the University of Cambridge and the Clubs and Schools in Cambridgeshire**"



The Hon Sec that season was Alan Walker (Wolfson), a vet student and a member of a family of vets that for 340 years and nine generations, were a much-loved fixture amongst animal lovers in a rural Oxfordshire community.

Alan was featured on The One Show recently as the veterinary dynasty has finally ended with his retirement at 68 and whose two children chose not to follow in his footsteps. CUDRRS members lead such interesting lives.

Why do I resurrect this year of formation issue? I wish to persuade the Society to accept 1946 as our birth year and begin preparations to celebrate our 70th anniversary at the end of the coming season with a special "do".

Selfishly, I would hope to be there to join in because who knows whether I would make it four years later. Depending upon the reaction I get to these thoughts, I will either forget it or ask the Management Group to consider adopting it or failing that submit a motion to the Special GM later this year.

This is not a Constitutional issue requiring formal adoption but merely an historical one. Who will support me?

MAKING THE GRADE

The better performances shown by the following referees this season have been rewarded in the latest grading review.

Louis Biggs has been elevated to Level 5 (CUDRRS), **Roy Phillips** to Level 10, **James Pepper** and **Sam Vail** to Level 11

Martyn Langley and **Luigi Murton**, two new trainees, have proved their competence and been graded at Level 13
Thomas Sayer, a student at Fitzwilliam College, did the same in March.

Three more trainees are scheduled for assessment early next season to start them on the first rung of the ladder. Congratulations to one and all. Onwards and upwards. Future prospects looking good for them and the Society.

TOO MANY GOODBYES

Making friends in the rugby world isn't hard and some of the people you meet become friends for life. That's one of the joys of Rugby no matter what part you play in it. You end up belonging to an extended family.

However, it is hard when you have to say goodbye to friends and the phrase "Rest in peace" has passed my lips too often in the past few months.

In October, it was said to Bryan Mallyon and then in January to Jamie Stafford when he died suddenly and young. Both received a good send off from their sporting friends.

In April, I attended the funerals in Bristol of two of my old club team mates. Our friendships had lasted for over half a century. Both were Welshmen with whom I played and shared a love of Rugby. They taught me the meaning of "hwyl", and they, too, were surrounded by many friends from the sports they played.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the funeral of another proud Taff, Roger "Disco" Lewis who died in November. He was a lovely, chatty, fun character who captained Shelford Thirds in the 80's and 09's. I almost persuaded him to take up refereeing. Like Clive Norling and Derek Bevan, Roger would have done Wales proud. We had to wait until Nigel Owens came on the scene. Our game is full of characters that we remember and smile.

As I was putting this issue together, news came that Shaun Gadsby, a true stalwart of the Cambridge club for many years, had died after a long illness. Our condolences have been conveyed to his family and the club.

Shaun played with passion, pride and a smile. He always gave of his best for his team. He didn't take a backward step and his tackles were felt but fair. With his farmer's arms he mauled many a ball away. Good to watch.

In his later days with Cambridge Vanguards, Shaun, set a good example to his teammates showing respect to our referees especially when we used their games to blood new referees. He realised that they too were doing their best in CUDRRS tradition to create better rugby. For the older ones, like Charles Osbourn, he had a way of tut – tutting their decisions trying to make them think they'd made a mistake and then grinning cheekily.

After the game, he was ready to chat with them over a pint. He would offer them advice and explain what players were trying to do. By improving their awareness of the game, he hoped referees would understand and manage play accordingly. When I assessed at Grantchester Road, I often asked him to supplement my advise to referees.

He was a pleasure to referee and talk with. He was someone who bothered about how well he played and not how well he was paid, a true Corinthian spirit. Rugby brings you into touch with people you just have to admire and like.

Too many goodbyes but I suppose that's the consequence of having made so many friends in this wonderful sport. Maybe I will make some more next season. As a member of CUDRRS, that's almost guaranteed.

As long as Rugby remains a team sport that generates friendship and camaraderie between players and referees, its future is bright. Referees have a special duty to protect the future. Keep it safe. Keep it fair. Keep it Lawful.

(Same message as on Page 2, I know, but worth repeating again and again)

PROSPECT- US

Our clubs will look back on season 2014-15 with mixed feelings. Cantabs won promotion to London NE 2 (Well done) which means tougher challenges for them. Shelford dropped into National 3S but aim to get back up quickly guided by Rory Finlayson. Ely just failed to make it into the London leagues and no doubt they will raise their game in September. They each face the prospect of a lot of hard work but have it within them to achieve their goals.

The rest of our affiliated clubs had varying success. Saffron Walden and Newmarket finished high in their leagues. Walden hopes to build on their two County Junior and Intermediate Cup triumphs and growing numbers to attract more sponsorship. Renegades won The Whistlers' Trophy again. Close finishers Wendens Ambo and Wisbech, as well as March, Sawston and Mildenhall will again give them a run for their money next season in keener competition with the prospect that referees will receive more three cheers at "no side" and even warmer welcomes. We wish Cambridge well under the chairmanship of Malcolm Watson, a CUDRRS Honorary Member.

The top priority for Cambridge University is to rekindle the fire in College Rugby. Good luck to them.

Local Rugby won't stand still next season with County President Tony Kennedy around to encourage us.

The Society working together with our clubs will ensure more enjoyable and better Rugby. Good prospects-us?