



To Berkshire Club Secretaries

I am writing on behalf of the BRFU Disciplinary Committee following the changes made by the IRB to Disciplinary Regulations to assist you, your teams and individual players understand the revised key issues and the way that the discipline process will be managed.

Players' status after sending off and before a disciplinary hearing

As you may be aware, IRB Regulation 17.1 sets out the Core Principles that must be applied as mandatory provisions by Unions at all levels of the Game. In particular, IRB Regulation 17.7.1 (k) provides that: ***'Players Ordered-Off or cited by a Citing Commissioner shall be provisionally suspended pending the hearing of the case'***.

The RFU challenged the IRB on this and sought dispensation for clubs playing at levels 5 and below, this challenge was rejected. Therefore Core IRB Principle has to apply to the RFU at all levels and RFU Regulation 19.5.3 has been amended from the 1st August 2013 to reflect this:

"A Player that is subject to an Ordering off or citing by a Citing Commissioner in a domestic or any other match is not entitled to play the Game (or any form thereof) or be involved in any off-field match day activities anywhere in the world until his/her case has been finally resolved. For the avoidance of doubt a player cited by an opposition team in matches at Level 3 and below may play the Game pending the resolution of his/her case."

Therefore, from 1st August 2013, any player sent off by the referee is **NOT PERMITTED** to play under any circumstances until their case has been considered by either the BRFU or under the schools/youth Disciplinary Process. Your club disciplinary committee should continue to consider any sending off ASAP and make its own judgment as to whether the offence is proven or not. And the sentence to be imposed. However the player will remain suspended, until after the case has been fully resolved by either the BRFU or schools/youth disciplinary processes.

Any player cited by an opposition team in matches at Level 3 and below may continue to play the Game pending the resolution of his/her case.

RFU Regulations 19.6.1 & 3 specify that the match referee and the club secretary for the player sent off must submit their referee report to/or inform the CB Disciplinary Secretary of the match within 48 hours so that they can take control of proceedings at their earliest convenience.



Compliance with these regulations will be essential to avoid unnecessary periods of suspension.

In relation to prompt case progression, the regulations are to be amended to allow for a greater use of pleading guilty by post (or more usually by email) in appropriate cases. Berkshire had by and large adopted this procedure over the past year. This will enable the disciplinary panel to deal with the offence based on the papers and without having to hold a formal hearing. The disciplinary panel will continue to hold a hearing where a player indicates a not guilty plea and they can also decide to see the player (e.g. in serious cases or where the player is a persistent offender etc) and adjourn paper consideration. Again you are reminded that, whatever the approach or plea, the player will remain suspended until the case has been resolved either by the BRFU, RFU or school.

To facilitate the effective implementation of this change the BRFU Disciplinary Secretary will arrange a hearing as soon as possible, normally within 7 to 14 days of receiving all the information. There may be a case where the Club feels that a player is not guilty or that sending off is sufficient punishment. If that is the case the Club should ring me as soon as possible and send me all the papers it has by email so that I can expedite a hearing/decision in the hope that if indeed the Club's view is agreed that the player can play again as soon as possible.

Players who appeal against the sanction imposed by BRFU will remain suspended and appear in front an RFU Disciplinary Panel the following week (or as soon as is possible).

Illicit Drugs

You may also be aware that the RFU have introduced a formal [ILLICIT DRUGS POLICY](#)

This new policy has been based on models of good practice from other sports, such as the Australian Football League and National Rugby League in Australia.

The RFU policy is effectively a two-strike policy, meaning that for a first positive test (or first admission of use); the matter is kept confidential between the RFU illicit drugs staff, the player and his club's medical officer. The problem is dealt with as a confidential health-related issue with the focus firmly on how to help the player deal with and be treated for his drug use.



Clubs may request drug awareness presentations from the RFU and there have also been some press releases. If you believe there is an issue with the misuse of any substances within your club you should speak to the RFU Anti – Doping and Illicit Drugs Programme Manager, by phone or email, at the earliest opportunity. [0208 831 7603 or stephenwatkins@rfu.com]

Abuse of Match Officials

Last season we had a reduction in the number of cases of abuse of match officials referred to the County. Anecdotal Information from the Referee's Society is that there are a large number of cases which are not reported, particularly in Sunday youth matches. Clubs are reminded that they have a direct role in controlling the behavior of their coaches, spectators and players on the field. Failure to take responsibility for this or **repeat offending will lead to Disciplinary Action being taken and could ultimately lead to a loss of league points for your club.**

Bad Language

We have received a number of complaints from spectators, several having been accompanied by young children, concerning the high volume of bad language coming from the players. We have also had complaints relating to abusive language from spectators being directed to the referee (treated as '*match official abuse case*')

Bad language abusive or not is not in keeping with the rugby image we want to display as part of the game. Referees will be consulted and asked to report such language. Clubs must please take ownership of this issue and take appropriate steps to ensure that spectators, players and officials are not subjected to this sort of behavior.

CAN YOU PLEASE CIRCULATE PUBLICISE THIS LETTER AND DRAW IT TO THE ATTENTION OF ALL PLAYERS COACHES AND TEAM MANAGERS

For and on behalf of Berkshire RFU Disciplinary Committee

Dated 18th August 2013.

David Bolton
Hon. Disciplinary Secretary of Berkshire