

ABUSE OF MATCH OFFICIALS

CODE OF CONDUCT

Dear Colleague,

This document has been produced by the Leinster Branch of the IRFU in response to serious concern expressed by the ARLB (Association of Referees Leinster Branch) across Leinster about the growing incidence of Abuse of Match Officials. It describes the part to be played by clubs in helping to deal with the problem. The term 'clubs' also includes youths, schools, colleges and universities.

Clubs are responsible for the behaviour of their members, players, coaches and supporters towards Match Officials, and are expected to take steps to protect Officials from any form of Abuse. Abuse of Match Officials is defined as:

'Individual perception of personal degradation be it mental or physical, before, during and after the game including (but not limited to)

- verbal or physical assault
- intimidatory conduct
- racial or sexual harassment'

The IRB Code of Conduct Regulation states that a person

- '- shall not abuse, threaten or intimidate a referee, touch judge, or other Match Official, whether on or off the field of play (20.1.10) and
- shall not use crude or abusive language or gesture towards referees, touch judges or other Match Officials or spectators (20.1.11)'

Failure to comply can result in the player (if during the match) or the Club (if members, coaches, players off the field or supporters) being brought before the Branch Disciplinary Committee. Sanctions include suspensions, loss of league points, fines or loss of International Tickets. All the above sanctions HAVE been handed out to different players and Clubs in the recent past.

All members and regular supporters of clubs should be made aware of the provisions of this Code, and might need to be reminded that abusive behaviour is also harmful to the reputation of the club.

Clubs are expected to adhere to the Code. In so doing, clubs will commit themselves to take all reasonable steps to ensure that Match Officials are protected from Abuse.

The following guidance is provided to enable clubs to publicise the Code:

- This notice should be displayed on club premises and should appear in match programmes
- All spectators should be prevented from being in close proximity to touch lines by means of permanent or temporary barriers, wherever possible.

- Replacements, coaches, medics and water carriers must comply with game regulations as to the areas they are restricted to during the match, namely either marked technical areas of those areas designated by Match Officials as being technical areas.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours in rugby,
