

EDITOR'S NOTES

7.11.06

The International Rugby Board has recently announced that match officials will enforce a zero tolerance policy when it comes to players disputing decisions on the field and indiscriminate use of the boot.

“The growing trend of players to continually question and dispute decisions taken by the referees and touch judges was discussed at a meeting between the IRB, its elite referee panel and Tier 1 referee managers,” said IRB Referees Manager, Paddy O’Brien.

“At the meeting the decision was taken to implement a zero tolerance policy to curtail this growing trend. Referees will penalise teams through means such as free kicks, penalties and even yellow cards. This includes players attempting to influence decision making and appeals to touch judges.”

“The message has to be clear. Back-chat and arguing with a match official will not be tolerated, nor will any attempt to slow down the match through questioning the referee.”

“For example, when a referee awards a free kick or penalty against a team, it must immediately retreat 10 metres.”

“As is customary, captains may request the referee to explain certain decisions but not every one. Common sense should prevail and the referee will make explanation, if deemed fit, at the first opportunity when the play has stopped, such as a kick to touch or during injury stoppage.”

“Referees have also been instructed to take a harsh view of the use of foul language and the sledging of players from the opposition. Again the referee will penalise teams if such standards of behaviour are evident.”

“In addition to the back-chat issue, the area of indiscriminate trampling was discussed at the meeting and referees have been informed to take strong action against the inappropriate use of feet on bodies.”

“The Game has a proud history of fair play and respect and the IRB is determined that such characteristics are maintained. This policy is being communicated to all IRB member unions,” added O’Brien.

This may initially affect only the exalted heights of the elite game, but the measures will, no doubt, filter down to the whole sport in time. You coach a team or club – do these measures ring any bells with what you see each Saturday? Would you pinpoint other aspects that should be policed more rigidly, even ruthlessly?

One trend that seems to be increasing at all levels of the game is the act of trying to deny the opponents quick possession at lineout, free kick or penalty. The player, who tries hard not to give the ball to the opponents who want to get the lineout under way, is deliberately trying to slow down possession – or has the Editor got it completely around his neck? Should not a yellow card be handed out for the misdeed?

Your views will be, as ever, more than welcome. Be as pedantic as you like – just highlight areas of the game that you think need better and stricter management. Replies, please, to Keithrichardson@therfu.com