

EDITOR'S NOTES 14.11.06

The correspondence is growing and the readers who reply to my pleas do offer many worthwhile opinions. I know that I can bore for England on this subject – but it is you, the coaches from all levels of the game, who have the experience and ideas that are worth handing on to others. It is far better when advice and opinion comes from the people at the chalk face!

Andy Duff wrote, "You ask in your Editor's notes of 7-11-06 what areas of the game need better and stricter management."

"Let's start with the glaringly obvious situation where referees continually ignore a basic law of the game from international rugby to junior rugby – the put-in at the scrum. How many times in a game do we see the ball go in straight down the middle of the tunnel? Few, if any. As a result the hooker on the put-in side has to make only the slightest movement of his striking foot to help the ball on its way back."

"In an era when scrum safety is one of the big issues the administrators/IRB/Southern Hemisphere, who have obviously encouraged and permitted this trend, are, in fact, creating greater danger as teams can get away with playing hookers with the size, shape and strength of props. If this is allowed to continue we will lose a breed of hooker who can actually strike correctly for the ball."

"The hooker on the put-in side already has an advantage in that he is nearer the ball. We have huge contests between props; let's also get back to contests of technique between the hookers."

The game has always been unusual in that it caters for a vast range in body sizes and types. There was a trend not too long ago to pick flankers as hookers to add athleticism and pace to the position, but few actually relished the head-on-head aspect of the scrum and few make the 'dreaded' move now. Yet the hooker enjoys a relatively easy ride nowadays. Since the tap from the hooker came into vogue, it is relatively difficult to lose a strike against the head and few hookers work with their tight head prop to strike effectively against the opposition ball – probably because they know they won't win it anyway! Perhaps a fairer (i.e. straight) put-in will encourage a real contest in the scrum again.

Ian 'Spike' Milligan sent in another letter. "Having just read the Editor's notes I'd like to just to say I'd like to see at least the directions for back-chat and 'sledging' added with *immediate* effect to the continuum."

"Sadly I've seen the sort of behaviour recently from small children, which was once only present in other sports. Continuum Rugby shouldn't always be about winning, but it seems that it is the single motivation of some – and over and above playing the game in the spirit in which it should be played. This generally starts from the



coaching and from the expectation of parents. At this point I would state that I am a parent and I do coach one of my boys and I am very competitive. However, I would far rather be beaten by a team where my boys played as well as they can and go back to the training pitch with something to learn, than win by foul play and bad sportsmanship."

"I recently removed the team in my care from a pitch as the opposition were swearing in their faces and trying to start a fight. The opposing coach and the referee did nothing, so whilst the match was stopped I took my team from the field and loudly praised them for not rising to the provocation - before asking them to continue the game. Ok, this is mini rugby and not the elite game, but the foundations are set here, as are the standards and experiences these players will carry into later life."

"I would include that it shouldn't be restricted to just the players, but also the coaches and supporters. Most clubs have published codes of conduct (all youth/mini sections who have achieved or are working towards their Seal of Approval will have such policies) but they don't seem to be 'living documents' or they reside with some committee somewhere. I read with interest about a club which has introduced yellow and red cards for spectators. Whilst this may be a positive way of containing this issue it doesn't deal with the problem. However, if these rules cascade through the game and are imposed at all levels from the elite to the mini-est of minis, I believe it will work. Having a live mike on the referee and maybe 'citing' players for foul language and sledging with suitable penalties after the match at elite level might be another start."

"As a coach, I introduce my captain to the referee prior to the game and ask the ref to only acknowledge him if he starts any comment with, "Excuse me sir,......". I also ask the ref to ignore any of my other players who speak to him and, if they do it twice, I ask him to penalise them. I know it's harsh but the idea is to ensure that our standards are what the club expects and the referee deals with anything and everything else."

Both correspondents speak a great deal of sense and their contribution is appreciated. How do your experiences and ideas match up against those of Ian Milligan and Andy Duff? Or, have you a view on any of the articles that you have read? Answers, please, to Keithrichardson@therfu.com