

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

11.3.08

There were two responses to last week's articles, particularly on what Ed Morrison said.

Jeff Simm, BAE Systems RUFC and Cumbria U20 coach said,

"I think in a lot of aspects the coach/referee relationship is usually good. I always make a point of seeking out the referee at the end of the game to discuss elements of his decisions that occurred during the game and to discuss the situations where my team transgressed.

I have also sought the services of one of our local refs to attend our training night and to referee the team run as I feel this adds a sense of discipline to the session. He can explain to the players the rights and wrongs of their game but it maintains a game-like culture.

Coaches, I believe, should attend their local referee meetings which would give the coach the opportunity to raise certain points of law. Attendance at these meetings can help to create greater coach/referee understanding.

I think an element of the coaching qualification should involve some refereeing practice, but equally I think there should be some coaching practice built into the refereeing qualification.

However, we coaches have to remember the man in the middle is the sole arbiter of the laws of the game and, without him/her, the game can't be played. So it really doesn't matter what initiatives are introduced for greater understanding and better relationships, we have no choice but to accept the decisions that the referee makes - for better or for worse."

Ian Diddams, Devizes head coach, offered,

"Where do referees need most improvement in their relationships with coaches? I think that Ed Morrison gets it right in that it's not a case of where refs need improvement, but a symbiosis of also where coaches need improvement in their relationships with refs.

The only way to improve relationships is to create an environment where there is a better understanding and appreciation of each other's roles - cross fertilisation of training, as Ed suggests, is a starting point here. Maybe a much better starting point is for a ref and a coach to sit and talk their way through a video of a game they were both involved in so that they can discuss where the other's views come from. However, time is the problem here... as well as the reality of travel for one or the other party.

I am unsure about referee participation in training though; ostensibly it's a fine idea, but I perceive problems arising from it, namely:

- If it's the same ref(s) for each club, then does this mean some familiarity arises which could affect match-day relationships (i.e. when that/those ref(s) officiate in that club's match(es))?
- If it's the same ref(s), does this give a ref a better appreciation of what "their" club is playing - an insight that they will not have for the opposition?
- Mixing refs up constantly (see above) has the same travel implications that video review has.
- Would refs become compromised with regard to "reporting" on one club's tactics, strengths and weaknesses as seen at training to their "home" club (eg a club where they may have played, and are still a member of)? Even if that is only a perception of a rival club and not a reality?

Refs having to try coaching, and coaches also having to ref would go a long way towards improving understanding - but the reality of personal time resource would make this very difficult, in my opinion, at anything but semi-professional or levels above."

You are always encouraged to have your say on any matter, especially on a recent article – just respond by email to keithrichardson@therfu.com

Keith Richardson (Editor).