

HAMPSHIRE RUGBY REFEREES

SEASON 2026/2027

Hampshire Rugby Referee (HRR) – Club Protocol

Season 2026/27

This guide explains what HRR expects from referees, clubs, and coaches. This is inclusive of referees who are appointed by Clubs (mainly age group matches).

Referee abuse is becoming a significant issue, particularly in youth games. Abuse can come from players, coaches, club officials, or spectators.

HRR has a duty of care to protect its members and will record and report any abuse.

Referees make mistakes, just like players. However, abuse and poor discipline are leading to more games being abandoned.

RFU guidance: If a game is abandoned, a team can lose 25 league points.

1. Referee Best Practice

- Confirm receipt of communication from the Club Referee Liaison.
- Arrive at least **60 minutes before kick-off** to complete safety checks.
- Meet with captains, coaches, or a club official on arrival.
- Referee according to the Laws of the Game, and expect teams to know them.
- Agree a time with captains/coaches for the **pre-match brief** and stud check (including replacements).
- Check scrum engagement sequence with the front rows.
- All replacements must stay on the same side of the pitch and only enter from halfway with the referee's permission.
- Brief touch judges on their duties.
- Be available for coach questions up to 15 minutes before kick-off (at referee's discretion).
- May speak with captains at half-time if the referee believes it is useful.
- Not available to coaches/officials from 15 minutes before kick-off to 30 minutes after the game (unless referee agrees otherwise).
- Referees will not comment on the safety of pitches with 2 hours of kick-off. During this time, responsibility lies with the captains and will only revert to the referee after kick-off.

2. Coach Best Practice

- Do not approach the referee from 15 minutes before kick-off to 30 minutes after the game (unless invited).
- Communicate with the referee during the game; this should be done only through the captain.

- Stay in the technical area (or between halfway and the 10-metre line if no area marked).
 - Stay behind the touchline at all times.
 - Coaches behind the posts and must be well outside the playing area.
 - Give **positive instructions** to players — do not shout at the referee.
 - Ongoing shouting at the referee can be reported as abuse.
 - Post-game discussions can happen in the clubhouse or elsewhere as agreed with the referee.
 - If unhappy with performance:
 - Speak to the referee 30 minutes after full-time.
 - If still unhappy, email the HRR Secretary (mattedwards.referee@gmail.com) or other HRR Committee Member.
 - There is a [feedback form](#) on the HRFU website; this should only be submitted by a Club official
 - Under no circumstances should a referee be confronted with a video of the match in the clubhouse
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3. Club Best Practice

- Provide a barrier between spectators and the pitch (mandatory for league matches).
 - If no barrier, ensure spectators/parents do not enter the pitch.
 - Follow the HRFU Good Conduct Code and ensure everyone knows it.
 - Have a process to deal with members who abuse officials.
 - Remember: some referees are under 18 — abuse is taken very seriously.
 - HRR & HRFU will support referees who face abuse.
 - Do not name referees in match reports or on social media unless praising them. No negative comments.
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4. Technical Areas, Pitch Barriers & Pitch Encroachment

Technical areas must be marked in accordance with [RFU Reg 6](#). If they are not marked, temporary arrangements can be made using cones. The only personnel allowed outside the technical area are medics and players warming up.

There has been an increase in incidents where non-authorised individuals (substitutes, coaches, and spectators) enter the playing area. Anyone contravening this regulation will be reported to the HRFU Discipline Secretary, who can use VEO evidence to identify offenders.

Clubs are responsible for roping off pitches and managing the conduct of their spectators.

5. Fixture Secretary & Referee Liaison – Good Practice

Appointments:

- Most referee appointments come via GMS or WTR. Tell the appointments team and referee of any changes.
- Fixture secretaries can request access to WTR to raise fixtures.
- Only book HRR referees via GMS or WTR, direct approaches to referees may incur the withdrawal of referees.
- By **2100 Thursday** before the game, clubs must tell the referee or **48 hours** before the match on other days:
 - Teams involved
 - Kick-off time & venue
 - Team colours (including away kit)
- Failure to contact the referee by this deadline means they may be reassigned. Referees will not travel without confirmation.

Match Fees (2026/27 season):

- Adult matches: £41
- U16 Division 1: £26
- All-day tournaments: £70
- Charity event rates available by arrangement.

Late Cancellation Charges:

- £41 plus expenses (for all officials) if:
 - The referee is not told of a cancellation or change by **5 pm Friday** before the game.
 - An “out of county” club cancels after the deadline (home Hampshire club claims cost).
- Repeat late cancellations: extra £15 charge plus expenses.
- “Match Official” includes referee, assistant referees, match observers, and referee coaches.
- No charge if cancellation is due to extreme weather.