



Pacific Northwest Rugby Referees Society (PNRRS) Referee Grade Policy

Overview

PNRRS follows the USARugby (USAR) referee grading system, which has five grades. Grades from lowest to highest levels of proficiency are: D, C3, C2, C1, “B” (Territorial Panel), and “A” (National Panel). As a USAR affiliated Local Referee Society (LRS), PNRRS has responsibility for awarding referee grades from D to C1. Grades above C1 are awarded by USAR.

The PNRRS Executive Committee (EC) awards grades to local referees. The PNRRS Referee Development Committee (RDC) offers grade recommendations to the EC. The RDC bases its recommendations on coaching reports, evaluated on field performance reviews, USAR/IRB certifications, and information provided by senior referees and state-based rugby organizations in OR, WA, and ID. Promotions normally are awarded at the end of the Spring and Fall seasons.

The PNRRS Chairman leads the RDC. Other members include Referee Development Officers (RDO), Performance Reviewers (PR), and Coaches. Some RDC members have dual roles on the Committee. Current membership includes:

- RDOs - Jim Kautz, Oregon; David Pelton, Puget Sound and Eastern WA; and Pat Ryan, Idaho.
- Performance Reviewers - Bernie Brown, Peter Buckley, and Craig Parish.
- Referee Coaches - John Clavin, DJ Heffernan, David Pelton, and Shane Kennedy.

An active PNRRS referee should undertake at least four (4) assignments per season, and eight (8) per year in order to maintain a grade above C3, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Inactive referees are not eligible for promotion to a higher grade.

USA Rugby Membership (i.e. CIPP registry) is a prerequisite for all referee grades. For each grade, referees also must earn the certificates established by USA Rugby and the International Rugby Board (IRB) for the referee training courses outlined below.

Grades

PNRRS uses the guidelines and criteria in the [*USAR Referee Grading Manual*](#), which is updated periodically, to award referee grades. This manual spells out:



- *Match levels* – which range from Level 8 (U 19 women) to Level 1 (Elite Cup Final) with a variety of levels in between. Differing game levels are associated with the expected competency of grade for the referee. For example, a typical PNRFU Div 2 game would be a Level 6 match and a C2 grade referee is expected to be capable to manage such a game.
- *Key elements of referee competence* – which are different for each for each grade of referee. Lower grades have less stringent elements while higher grades have more stringent elements involving all aspects of the game (Tackle/Ruck/Maul/Advantage/Scrum/Lineout/ Open play/Control and Communication). Each aspect has a weighting score (e.g. Tackle weighting score = 4, open play weighting score = 1).
- *Performance Score* - A score of how a ref performs at each element of competence where 5 = meets all key elements and 1= multiple lapses. The score on the refs performance multiplied by the weighting factor for each level of competence = the ref's score for a game. A score of about 70-75 indicates that the ref performed capably at this level.

A summary of the various “C” grade referee characteristics is in the table at the end of this document. C1 is the highest grade that can be awarded by the PNRRS. A C1 referee is considered capable of refereeing all but the most challenging league matches allocated by the PNRRS. Referees with C2 and C3 grades are expected to perform up to the standard for their grade and will be allocated matches commensurate with their ability. Advancing referees may be allocated to higher-order matches to develop and demonstrate their skills.

Not all grades are awarded based on a formal P.R.; grades may be awarded based on coaching reports and the observations of reviewers.

Associate - An honorary member of the Society, who is *IRB Level 1 Officiating* certified, belongs to a club, and usually only referees at that club's venues. These are the only referees not required to pay Society dues, but CIPP membership remains a requirement (through their club).

D Grade - A referee obtains a “D” grade by joining the Society and accepting referee and assistant referee assignments. The *USAR Touch Judge* certification course is required for all “D” grade referees. The *IRB Level 1 Officiating* certification course is not a prerequisite but the new referee will be encouraged to take *that* course at the first opportunity. The “D” grade referee may continue to play rugby and does not have to referee ‘full time’ but as a PNRRS member will be assessed dues.

C3 Grade - A referee obtains the “C3” grade by demonstrating the ability to referee second and third side matches of lower divisions, as well as lower-level youth rugby



matches. Obtaining *IRB Level I Officiating* certification is required. Completing the *USAR Touch Judge* certificate is required before advancing beyond this grade.

C2 Grade - A referee may earn the “C2” grade by demonstrating the ability to referee challenging matches and exhibiting a willingness to improve. The referee must obtain one evaluation and one coaching report, *each from a different individual and involving full length (>30 min halves) games*, documenting his/her ability to referee at this level. These referees should be capable of managing college and club-level games for men and women. Key requirements for promotion to this grade and higher include a primary focus on refereeing rugby instead of playing/coaching rugby, and participating in focused improvement efforts with PNRRS coaches/evaluators. PNRRS recognizes that there may be considerable diversity of ability among “C2” grade referees. A “C2” grade referee must obtain *USAR Assistant Referee* certification before advancing beyond this grade.

C1 Grade - A “C1” grade referee must demonstrate the ability to control the most challenging matches that occur in regularly scheduled PNRRFU competitions and other Northwest league competitions. Lack of fitness cannot compromise positioning or mental alertness. Errors in applying the Law should be infrequent. Offside, Tackle, and Advantage should all be refereed consistently to allow teams to express their skills. He/she should be able to manage the participants arriving after a tackle, but may have problems ensuring the ball is immediately available. He/she should provide concise and specific explanations for penalties, which are clearly understood by players. The “C1” grade referee must be fit and in proper position for all aspects of play with the possible exception of faster-paced tackle situations. He/she should be confident in managing the players, and able to establish clear priorities for all phases of play.

USAR “B” and “A” Grades – Promotion to Territorial (B) and National (A) panel referee requires above-grade performance reviews by USAR Certified evaluators. These rigorous performance reviews will involve higher-level competitions than are typically available in the Pacific Northwest (e.g. USAR Level 4/5 matches). While PNRRS does not have the authority to issue these grades, the Society will take active steps to help well-qualified referees obtain the training and development necessary to earn these grades. Referees interested in advancing to these grades should consult the *USAR 2010 Referee Grading Manual* for descriptions of the requirements and standards, and work with their RDO on a program to help their development. Age, fitness, and availability are factors that may affect ones progress toward achieving a “B” grade.

Grading Procedures

The PNRRS Board appoints the RDC, which meets regularly during the season and as needed out-of-season. RDC members are expected to participate in committee meetings and be actively engaged in the development of referees. Grade



recommendations should occur twice a year after the fall and spring seasons. Recommendations are forwarded to the PNRRS E.C. for confirmation.

Promotion recommendations to C3 and C2 are made by consensus. There needs to be at least two RDC members that actively favor promotion, and not more than one member who oppose promotion. Should anyone oppose a promotion, a thorough discussion of all reasons for which promotion is opposed shall be conducted among the RDC members before a final recommendation to promote or not is reached.

Referees are encouraged to review the [*USAR Referee Grading Manual*](#) for a list of the expected key areas of competency so they are aware of the performance expectations for their grade.

C3 - Promotion to C3 will be based on a reported observation of *referee performance in a full length game (>30min halves)*, which must be documented in a PNRRS Coaching Report and circulated among RDC members. The observer should confirm that the referee met each of the key elements required of a C3 referee. These include managing a "game that was safe and looked like rugby."

C2 - Promotion to C2 will be based on at least one P.R./ evaluation and one PNRRS Coaching Reports, *each written by different individuals, in full length game (>30 min halves)*, which suitably test the referee's abilities – i.e. be in a level of game at or above his/her grade. Documentation shall be shared with RDC members and prepared by a PNRRS Coach or PR, or by a recognized Coach or PR from another USA Rugby LRO. *The referee should achieve a score of at least 70 on the Key Elements required for a C2 referee.*

C1 – C1 referees must be able to demonstrate continuing commitment to refereeing and competency to achieve and maintain a C1 grade. It is expected that a C1 referee will get at least one at-grade evaluation each year. C1 referees also are expected to obtain an at-grade coaching/P.R. from outside the PNRRS. All C1 referees are encouraged to obtain *IRB Level II* certification within two years of advancing to the C1 grade. The C1 referee must secure this certificate before advancing beyond this grade.

Promotion from C2 to C1 requires two (2) above-grade evaluations, written by different people in games of a match grade suitable for or higher than the match standard established for a C1 grade referee. Promotion to C1 will confirm the referee met each of the key elements required in the *USAR Referee Grading Manual* for a C1 referee, and a score of at least 75. The evaluation reports shall be written by accredited PNRRS evaluators, or by other USAR accredited evaluators, or by a recognized evaluator/coach from outside the United States. Evaluations shall be circulated among RDC members.

Promotion of a referee to C1, regardless of the existence of two above-grade evaluation reports, will not occur should any of the following reasons exist:



- The referee has attained a Unit Score of 1 in any of the key elements of competency for an evaluation report no higher than an at-grade performance.
- A committee member objects to the promotion for reasons outside of the referee's skills in evaluation reports; those reasons being based on the referee's lack of fitness for promotion due to such factors as misconduct, demeanor unbecoming of a member of PNRRS, or other such conduct drawing into disrepute the game of rugby union.

Should a RDC member object to a referee's C1 promotion, promotion can then only go forward by consensus of the committee members, where at least two RDC members actively favor promotion and no more than one member opposes the promotion.

Requirements for PNRRS Performance Reviewers

All PNRRS Performance Reviewers (P.R.), who are sometimes referred to as evaluators, must meet the following qualifications.

- Be registered in the USA Rugby's CIPP program as a referee.
- Be knowledgeable and respected by referees and evaluators within PNRRS.
- Complete the USAR certification requirements for Touch Judge, and the Assistant Referee course, or their recognized equivalent.
- Have completed the certification requirements for IRB Level 1 Referee course or the equivalent.
- Complete the USAR certification requirements for Level 1 Coaching Match Officials (IRB course) and the USAR Referee Evaluation Course.
- Local P.R. are nominated by PNRRS and confirmed by the Territorial or USAR accrediting body for a local P.R.
- Complete any other P.R. requirements established by PNRRS.

An RDC member may challenge the efficacy and/or accuracy of any Performance Review/Coaching report upon which a promotion will be based. That committee member will cite the report's perceived deficiency, which will then be reviewed by the RDC chairman. Should the report be found not to meet the standards required by USA Rugby due to the lack of supporting data, the author of the report will be given the opportunity to amend the report with the required supporting data. Otherwise, the evaluation report in question will not be considered a viable report for use in the promotion of the referee.

Local P.R. *must* submit their written evaluations report to the referee and fellow RDC members within 1 (one) week of the reviewed match. For events that generate more than one report (e.g. championship weekends, tournaments) the first report should be completed within one week and all other reports must be completed in



three weeks. These reports should reflect the local assessor's ability to differentiate between the capabilities requirements of C1 through C3 local union grades. Reports submitted should be coherent and instructive to the referee.

Written evaluation reports should be sent to the referee, to his/her RDO, and made accessible to other RDC members.