

Pacific Northwest Rugby Referee Society

Updated policy on referee abuse, effective 1/1/2016 until superseded.

Background:

Despite progress being made by unions throughout the Pacific Northwest, abuse of match officials remains a significant issue both in our game and in our region.

In the Pacific NW region across all leagues, for the 2015 season, we averaged roughly one report per week of referee abuse; this ranged from over enthusiastic sidelines, through direct abuse from players and coaches, to physical confrontation between player and referee.

Nationally, this is a significant enough issue that in 2015, USA Rugby issued clear and specific guidelines to be followed by all referees in the USA on dealing with certain incidents of referee abuse.

Referee abuse remains one of the top reasons why rugby referees decide to stop refereeing, and is a major barrier to recruiting new match officials.

Updated policy:

It is clear that this is a situation that PNRRS must deal with. The numbers of incidents are too high, and in a scenario where we already have difficulty retaining competent match officials, having them retire due to actions of others is unacceptable.

However, it is also the strong opinion of PNRRS that operating a Disciplinary Committee is not the role of the Referee Society, and that any discipline of players, coaches, other officials, or teams is the purview of the leagues and unions to which the relevant clubs belong.

With that in mind, PNRRS has adopted the following policy update for incidents of referee abuse.

- 1) All incidents of referee abuse, be it verbal, physical, or any other form of abuse, will be cited by the referee society to the relevant disciplinary committee using the formal citing process in place for the appropriate DC, usually those specified by World Rugby, and endorsed by USA Rugby.
- 2) If a particular club has multiple incidents for referee abuse in a single season that are reported to the referee society and are determined to be real, the Referee Society shall consider those to be repeat infringements by the club.
 - a. In determining what action to take, the principles of law 10.3 shall be applied.
 - b. Where repeated infringements have been deemed to occur, the Referee Society shall, at their sole discretion, decline to require their members to referee matches involving that club (either home or away) for the remainder of the season. The Referee Society is not disciplining the club, simply declining to put their members into a hostile or dangerous environment.

- c. Such sanction will terminate at the end of the relevant season, or upon receipt from the club of evidence of practices put in place to reasonably ensure that the behavior will not recur.
 - d. For the purposes of administration, a 'club' is considered to be an entity registered as a club with USA Rugby's CIPP system.
- 3) Realizing that adequate reporting of incidents of abuse is dependent information provided by the appropriate match official so that the Disciplinary Committees can do their work with full information, match officials shall be required to report incidents of abuse in the Match Report Form
 - a. Officials that supply inaccurate, misleading, or omitted information shall be subject to internal discipline by the Referee Society, including suspension from refereeing matches.
- 4) As a matter of practicality, any incidents that took place before January 1 2016 are not subject to this policy update.

Ratified by PNRRS Executive

January 21, 2016