



London Society of Rugby Football Union Referees

Advice on writing reports following a red card

Our reports need to be clear and concise. The necessary form is on the Society website. It includes a number of boxes to complete (e.g. time of incident, score,...). Please ensure these are completed and accurate. In addition there is the very important section describing the actual incident.

The report form is usually the main item of evidence at a hearing, so do stick to a few basic principles when compiling the details and the description of the actual incident. Your report must include the circumstances of the offence and the seriousness. The primary object of any report is to provide a Disciplinary Panel with a clear picture of the full facts leading up to, during, and after the incident. It is therefore essential that the Panel have a clear understanding of the nature of the match. Was the incident a complete one off or was 'the' incident an accumulation of previous minor incidents? What was the general atmosphere/tone of the game?

The following points are relevant

- Your distance from the incident, and if partially obstructed or not. How good was your view?
- The weather and pitch condition.
- Statements you heard at the time. It is for a panel to deem if they are subsequently admissible.
- How did other players react to the incident?
- In acts of physical violence (punch/kick) what positions were the players in at the time – standing, facing each other, come from behind?
- Did the punch connect, if so where? How hard was the punch?
- Did the force of the punch knock the person to the ground?
- Did the 'victim' require medical treatment?
- Did the 'victim' resume playing?
- Did the intended 'victim' take avoiding action?
- Was there provocation?
- Was it in retaliation?
- Had the offender run some distance to get involved?
- If you are reporting on blows to the head or contact with the eyes then clarity and detail are even more important.
- If you are subject to verbal abuse then do include the exact phrases used. The panel members will not be offended and full details of what was said, and in what tone, are vital evidence for them.
- Verbal abuse is not limited to the playing time but extends into the clubhouse. Such abuse from players and non-players should be reported.
- If the player apologised at the time of the red card, or subsequently, then mention it. Similarly, mention if a club official subsequently apologised to you.
- It is not your role to advise the discipline panel at the conclusion of a report by writing words such as "in my opinion the sending off is sufficient punishment".

The overarching principle is that you report in detail what you saw and heard. Do not embellish or speculate but let the facts speak for themselves. A detailed description of the moments around the incident is vital. Use the points above to ensure you have included all relevant information.

Video/Secondary Evidence

It is now common practice that Clubs at many levels video their matches. Following any red or yellow card incident you must decline any invitation to view any material.

Similarly if there is evidence about the incident which an assessor on the touchline can add, then this should be submitted separately from the assessor to your discipline team.

- All reports should in this sense be done “blind”, only including information which the referee saw/heard.
- Do not discuss the merits of the red card with any assessor before writing the red card report.

Description of the incident

All descriptions of incidents should start with an introduction similar to:

- *On Saturday 22nd September 2012 I was appointed to referee the London 2 North East fixture, CLUB1 Vs CLUB2. Prior to the red card being issued to PLAYER'S NAME there were no incidents of foul play.*

The foul play incident should be described in as much detail as possible, but should never offer opinion, just stick with the facts. Mention briefly the phase of play that led up to the foul play.

- *As the ball moved away from the breakdown/scrum/lineout I saw CLUB1 No7 and CLUB2 No4 pushing and shoving each other. I then saw the CLUB1 No7 strike his opponent in the face with his right fist which was clenched. There was sufficient force for the player to be knocked to the ground and he needed help to get to his feet.*

In referee abuse cases describe the incident using exact words/phrases used by players/coaches/club members.

Briefly describe what you did.

- *I blew my whistle to stop play immediately and separated the players.*
Report if further players joined or needed to be restrained.

How was the card issued?

- *In the presence of CLUB1's captain I showed PLAYER'S NAME a red card for striking/punching an opponent and directed him to leave the field. (Do ensure the captain is present when you issue a card.)*

What then occurred?

- *PLAYER'S NAME left the field immediately or PLAYER'S NAME stood on the pitch and refused to leave and only went once asked again and with persuasion from his Captain.*

Give a brief summary of any injuries sustained as a result of the foul play.

- *The player punched in this incident sustained a bloodied nose/no visible injury that I am aware of.*

Describe any apology from the player/captain/club official, including in the clubhouse afterwards.

- *PLAYER'S NAME apologised to the player he punched and also to me later on in the clubhouse.*

Do not offer any opinion on the sanction for the offence; that is for the panel to decide, given the evidence you and others supply.

If the incident produced more than one red card or a yellow card as well, then the detail of the report should state clearly any action you took against other players. Two red cards at the same incident will need two separate forms.

The role of ARs

If ARs were officially appointed then include relevant observations about the incident from them.

If the incident was reported to you by the AR then the AR completes the form. Agree the form between you and forward as usual.

The need to report a red card incident applies to all levels of the game

If you are appointed to any game by the society, whether it is adult, youth/school, (including 7s) and you issue a red card, then you must submit a report. Please don't ignore this responsibility or be persuaded by the club to "change your mind" on the incident. If you receive pressure of this type do mention it in your report.

We must avoid situations where reports are late or haven't been completed and clubs or, even more seriously the police, have asked for the referee's report and we are not able to supply anything. Clubs are also required to report any sendings off, and their subsequent actions, to their Constituent Body/County (CB).

Accept an apology from club/player but don't not get involved in any discussions with clubs or outside bodies after a red card incident. The report process will take its course and leave it at that when, at post-match, emotions could be running high – avoid conflict situations.

What do I do with my red card report?

Send a Word version of your report to **all** members of the relevant discipline team as on the Society website (www.londonrugby.com) within 24 hours of the incident. Your discipline team will check the form and forward it as appropriate. Do not forward the report to the club or the CB. The same applies if you have access to training/coaching video of the game. See also above about videos of games.

What happens next?

Any player issued with a red card (including two yellows resulting in a red) is banned until the hearing to decide on their punishment. Discipline panels are generally weekly but the particular hearing may be after the next weekend, so players often miss at least one game before the hearing. Clubs should be aware of this already but you might get asked. If in doubt refer them to their CB's Discipline Secretary.

Unless the club/player contest the report you will not be asked to attend the hearing.

Some CBs list the outcomes of hearings on their websites. Contact John Orr if you do want to know the outcome of a sending off you have been involved in.

Final thoughts

Sending off players is never a pleasant experience but it is important for the Society's credibility that procedures are strictly followed. The Society discipline teams are available to help make the process as easy for you as possible.

John Orr,
SEG/LSRFUR Discipline Secretary

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