

Referee Recruitment

Referees are an indispensable part of every game of Rugby. This page provides background to the key role played by match officials, explains why their numbers need to be increased and describes just how easy it is to become a Rugby referee.

Background

“ There is an over-riding obligation on the players to observe the Laws and to respect the principles of fair play.

The Laws must be applied in such a way as to ensure that the Game is played according to the Principles of Rugby. The referee and touch judges can achieve this through fairness, consistency, sensitivity and, at the highest levels, management.

In return, it is the responsibility of coaches, captains and players to respect the authority of the match officials. ”

The words above are drawn from the World Rugby Playing Charter. You'll find a copy of the Playing Charter on our **Resource Library Index** page as well as at the front of the World Rugby Law Book you can download via our **Links** page. The Playing Charter is an easy to read document that **everyone** involved with or interested in Rugby should regularly take time to digest and enjoy.

Every game of Rugby involves enthusiastic, vigorous and ongoing contests for possession and control of the ball across a playing area that can be up to 144 metres long and 70 metres wide. To cater for the wide range of possible player actions and interactions — and to ensure that the contests for possession that are at the heart of the game are carried out safely and fairly — Rugby has, over its long and rich history, assembled a comprehensive and detailed set of Laws. With a view to enhancing the overall playing experience, the Laws of the Game are periodically reviewed and refined.

As a result of Rugby's dynamic nature, individuals with a knowledge of the Laws of the Game are required on the playing area and in proximity to play to interpret, judge and decide in real-time whether actions taken by the players are in accordance with those Laws. The group who carry out this important role — the referee and the assistant referees — are the match officials. Without someone agreeing to act as the referee and apply the Laws, the playing of matches would not be possible and the wonderful game the world knows as Rugby could not exist.

Rugby refereeing as a pastime

You will often hear Rugby described as “a players' game” and referees as “the 31st player”. Both statements are true. The tradition of players and referees openly enjoying the game and each other's company, is one that sets Rugby apart.

The referee's role involves working with the team captains and players to ensure that matches are carried out safely and fairly in accordance with the Laws of the

Game. The broad aim being to minimise the risk of injury and maximise the enjoyment of Rugby for all participants (in particular, for the players and referees).

The payoff for all who undertake the essential match official role is a considerable sense of involvement, enjoyment, achievement and personal satisfaction.

Irrespective of whether you intend to participate at the elite or community levels of the game, Rugby refereeing is an exceptionally rewarding activity in which to be involved. For those who demonstrate commitment, above average ability and a strong desire to develop and advance, refereeing provides career opportunities and a pathway to officiating in international and representative level matches all over the world. Rugby is undeniably a truly global game.

Are you interested in becoming a referee?

Having read this far, it's possible that you or someone you know is considering taking up the whistle. You may be male or female, a player, ex-player, assistant referee, player coach, team manager, spectator, student, parent, supporter or simply a lover of Rugby.

You may have refereed senior, junior or Pathway Rugby in the past and are now considering a return to active refereeing. Whoever you are and whatever your reasons, Rugby refereeing provides many positive benefits and attractions, including:-

Participation: Refereeing offers a unique opportunity to become involved — or to maintain your involvement — in one of the world's great games.

Fitness: Almost anyone can be a referee irrespective of their age, gender, body size or body shape. Refereeing is a great way to keep fit and active while enjoying yourself.

Skills: Our continuing education programs help referees develop their abilities in decision making, communication, people management and game understanding. These are important and useful skills that can be utilised both on and off the playing field.

Camaraderie: As a referee, you're part of the large and supportive team of match officials worldwide. You are also a valued and respected member of the ever expanding local Rugby community.

Development: Your development as a match official is not rushed. We take time to ensure that irrespective of their age or experience, every Sydney West member is nurtured, encouraged and supported in a structured and positive way.

And Best of All: In addition to the benefits outlined above, referees also get to enjoy games from the best position at the ground (or anywhere else for that matter). Ask any referee and they'll tell you that there is simply no better place on Earth to watch a game of Rugby unfold, than when you're on the field with the players as their match referee. A truly rewarding and satisfying experience!

As the number of players and competitions continue to grow ...

[Rugby Australia's 2016 Annual Report](#) indicates that during that year 273,095 people participated in more than five games of Rugby as part of organised competitions or structured activities. This reflects an increase of 5,632 (or 2.1%) when compared to the 2015 season. In addition, a further 275,307 people took part in Rugby-related activities and events in 2016.

Participation in the under 6 to under 11 age groups increased by 3.5% during 2016. Building on its successful introduction as an Olympic sport, Sevens Rugby demonstrated amazing growth in 2016, with the number of female participants increasing by 33% and the number of male participants increasing by 38%.

... so too must the number of referees!

A by-product of the growth in player numbers, teams and competitions, is the strain it places on limited refereeing resources. While the increase in participation numbers is really pleasing, ideally it needs to be matched by an increase in the number of match officials.

The strain on refereeing resources is becoming more noticeable in the new and expanding suburban areas to the west, north west and south west of Sydney. These residential growth "hot spots" are key to the development of Rugby in metropolitan Sydney. They also form part of the large geographical area serviced by Sydney West RRA.

In order to cope with Rugby's current and anticipated future growth, we need to increase the number of referees and assistant referees across our region. To do that, your help and assistance is required now!

I'm keen to start! How do I become a Rugby referee?

Firstly, you need to know that there are two types of Rugby referees:-

Pathway Referees: who can referee only the modified forms of the game played by the under 6 to under 12 age groups; and

Accredited Referees: who can referee any type of match — up to test match level if they're good enough. Accredited referees can also handle Pathway matches if they're interested in helping out with the younger age groups.

Those wanting to become a Pathway referee attend Rugby Australia's "Refereeing Kids' Rugby U8-U12 Course". This three hour course is somewhat basic and does not lead to formal referee accreditation. The minimum age to register for and attend the Refereeing Kids' Rugby U8-U12 Course is 13 years.

Those seeking full referee accreditation attend Rugby AU's "Foundation Certificate Course". This eight hour course is the entry point for those looking to become either an accredited referee or an accredited player coach. The minimum age to register for and attend the Foundation Course (and therefore to become an accredited referee) is 15 years.

Everyone involved in contact Rugby as either a referee or player coach is required to hold current Smart Rugby certification. Smart Rugby is Rugby Australia's specialised health and safety program and is aimed at minimising injuries in the game. You can read more about [Smart Rugby on the Rugby AU website](#).

Attendance at either the Foundation Course or the Refereeing Kids' Rugby U8-U12 Course provides participants with Smart Rugby certification. This certification remains current for two seasons. At the end of every successive two year period, Smart Rugby certification must be renewed online via the Rugby Learning Centre.

You'll find the Rugby Australia course program on the [Current Courses page](#) of their website. Clicking on a particular course takes you to the Rugby Portal.

For convenience, you'll find an overview of the Rugby Portal — as well as a link to it — on the **Links** page of our website.

After registering with the Rugby Portal and logging back in with the password you'll set up for yourself, the portal then allows you to access the Rugby Learning Centre. It's here that you locate the course you're after (the "Search for Sessions" button comes in handy here), view the course pre-requisites and other details and enrol for the session that suits you.

Having attended the Foundation Course, to become an accredited referee you then need to pass the Level 1 Referee Accreditation Exam. This is a self-paced, open-book, multiple choice exam that is completed online via the Rugby Learning Centre. You will be provided with a copy of the current law book and the other reference materials you'll need for the exam when you attend the Foundation Course.

After passing the online level 1 referee exam, Rugby Australia requires those intending to gain full accreditation to join a referee association in order to undergo an "on-field assessment of refereeing competency" (i.e. a field test). You'll find details of the four referee associations that service the Sydney metropolitan area on the **Other Associations** page of our website.

A similar online, multiple choice, open-book exam (the Refereeing Kids' Rugby U8-U12 Exam) is available for those who have attended a Refereeing Kids' Rugby Course with the aim of becoming a Pathway referee. In order to be appointed to matches and provided with uniforms and the like, Pathway referees are also required to join a referee association.

Once you have passed either the Level 1 Referee Accreditation Exam **or** the Refereeing Kids' Rugby U8-U12 Exam, download a copy of our Registration Form from the **Forms** page of this website. Complete all parts of the form and forward it as soon as possible to the email address shown on the form.

Upon receipt of your completed form we'll register you as a Sydney West RRA member and make arrangements to start appointing you to matches. Refereeing appointments can almost certainly be organised around your availability and any other commitments you might have.

At this point we'll also start the ball rolling to provide you with a referee jersey, shorts and socks to wear once you become a registered Sydney West RRA member and begin to actively referee. If you're seeking full level 1 referee accreditation we'll also organise your on-field competency assessment.

It is a Rugby Australia requirement that competency assessments be carried out on 15-a-side under 13 or older matches having contested scrums. Your competency assessment will be conducted by one of our experienced and accredited referee coaches. In addition to their mentoring and support roles, your referee coach will also provide some positive and constructive suggestions aimed at helping you to develop and improve as a referee.

It should be noted that this final stage in the gaining of level 1 referee accreditation is a process rather than a single event. To enable new referee members to develop confidence and to gain experience in the positioning, communication and management aspects of refereeing, our practice is to have them get a few games under their belt with a referee coach present prior to undertaking a competency assessment.

Gender Equality and Rugby

For many years now, Rugby has encouraged, embraced and welcomed female participation in all areas of the game. It makes no difference whether you are male or female. Our game is open to men and women and boys and girls.

We know from experience that each gender produces competent, committed and reliable referees. A check of the names on our **Honour Board** page confirms that.

Irrespective of whether you are male or female, provided you're at least 13 years of age and keen to actively referee, we will do whatever we can to help you achieve your goals.

Do you need further information?

If you have any queries about the matters outlined above or the process for becoming a Rugby referee or Sydney West RRA member, please do not hesitate to contact either our VP Recruitment & Retention or our VP Registration & Accreditation. You'll find their names and telephone numbers under the **Contacting Us** tab on our home page.

By reading this page to the end, you've already taken that important first step. We strongly encourage you to take your next steps as soon as you possibly can. Rugby — the game we all love — needs you as a referee now!
