



NSW COUNTRY RUGBY UNION

REFEREES ASSOCIATION

MATCH OFFICIAL DEVELOPER RESOURCES

Grading Our Referees

As we move into the second half of our regular competition seasons, in coaching our referees we will also start to think more seriously about grading processes. Grading, the process of 'ranking' our referees against others in our Associations, plays a large part in making appointments to finals series games.

Now is the time we need to start thinking about the grading process. What have we used in the past? Has it been effective? More importantly, has it been **FAIR**?

There's no doubt that we have all had referees feel hard done by come finals time when they miss out on their 'expected' appointment. We've all seen the disappointment, hostility, anger, and yes - even the 'dummy spits'.

Different Associations use different methods and this generally comes about by the number of referees to be graded. In our smaller Associations, often referees are graded from 1 - X in a single group. In the larger Associations, they might have 'groups' or 'panels' of referees, with referees graded within their group. For finals appointments, graded referees in those smaller Associations might be appointed to each game based on its rank e.g. Referee 1 appointed to First Grade, Referee 2 appointed to Second Grade, Referee 3 appointed to Womens XV's, Referee 4 appointed to Third Grade In those larger Associations with groupings, it may be: Referee 1 Group 1 appointed to First Grade, Referee 1 Group 2 appointed to Second Grade, Referee 2 Group 2 appointed to Womens XV's, Referee 1 Group 3 appointed to third grade.

These are purely examples.

No matter what 'system' your Association uses, what is important is **HOW** referees are graded or ranked.

With our RefReview reporting system, we now have a very effective databank of information on our referees. The five point Likert scale: Not Shown, Needs Attention, Competent, Good, Excelling are a good start. We need to ensure that this scale is 'marked' based on the experience and level of the referee. We should expect more 'accuracy' from our senior, experienced referees. Excelling means just that, well above the 'ordinary'. There wouldn't be many of our community based referees across NSW Country Excelling in too many areas.

In RefReview, the comments too can provide insight into the allocation of points in the Likert scale. Reports should be written to give that overall picture, to provide support to referees AND to provide information for other coaches.

Of course, when decisions have to be made around grading of referees, coach (selector) discussions also form an important part of the process. Many years ago, in selection meetings that I was involved in, we spoke of the referees '*X Factor*' - that special attribute that a referee might have that can't be easily measured. It might be around attitude, empathy, understanding ... something that makes that referee suited to that game/grade. This '*X Factor*' might be the point of difference between two referees that are equal across all other measures - and generally it's pretty accurate.

I urge all of our coaches to be both accurate and realistic in their assessment of referees' performance. We are not there to 'stroke the egos' of our referees, as it is often those egos that cause issues come finals time. In the words of a very astute boss I worked with years ago, we need to be 'firm but fair' in our assessment, and hence ranking, of referees.

Now is a good time to look at your ranking and finals selection processes. Let your referees know what that will be - what it looks like. Do you release the referee rankings at various times through the season? How do referees know where they stand in their group? The more information they have now, the fewer problems we might face come September.