

HAMPSHIRE RUGBY UNION REFEREES' SOCIETY



(Chairman – Simon Thomas)
Member of the Southern Federation of Referees' Societies

www.hantsrefs.org.uk

“BETTER OFFICIALS, BETTER GAME...”

Chairman's AGM Report Season 2007-08

Ladies and Gentlemen

This has been a long and demanding season for us all, and at the end of it I, your Committee and Hampshire Rugby thank you for your time, effort and the continuing improvements in your performances as referees.

We have a high reputation as Hampshire Referees, and as a Society, both within and outside the county, which is a testament to your hard work and commitment. Attendance at our Monthly Training and Development Squad meetings has been high and we must all thank Mike and Jim for the preparation work they put in to make them successful events.

Without new members, the Society will age gracefully and fade away eventually, so I am delighted to announce that this season we have gained 28 active new members, with some 'returners' too. Maybe I am just getting older, but I do believe our average age profile has dropped this season. Our RFU Trainer Dave Hayward has achieved a staggering ELRA record in Hampshire, and has trained the highest number of new referees for any county in the South West Region through the ELRA courses he plans, arranges and runs. Well done Dave and the results far outweigh some of the frustrations.

This season Doug Neagle took on a Recruitment & Retention role and he will continue to develop it next season – in the first few months and even for the whole first season, the matches and the 'Society process' can be quite challenging for new members. We recognise this and so will continue working to provide more information, more mentoring and better communication for them all, plus of course those who join us next season after an ELRA course.

Most of you are involved in 'grassroots' rugby matches and the Committee recognises this and aims to address the needs of you, the majority. However we do have to commit resources in line with RFU Referee Department requirements for Referee Pathway progress, where we support the existing, and develop future, potential National Panel Referees and Touch Judges, through the Society & Federation Development Squads, and then up through South West Group. The balance we achieve in mentoring, advising, coaching and formally assessing all of you is the envy of many other Societies, many of whom have a far more limited number of advisers and coaches. The time put in, advice given, and results achieved by Jim and his large dedicated team each and every week is wonderful.



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Last week I was delighted to learn that Paul Bridgman was appointed to assess Nigel Owens at the Heineken Cup Final (and will wear his Hampshire Committee tie he promises). The next day Keith Page was announced as being appointed to the National Panel of Assessors for 2008-09. Congratulations to them both.

On the active referees' list, we have two Elite Premiership TJs as members of HRURS – Roger Bailieff and Stuart Terheege, two National Panel Referees in Keith Lewis and Paul Kimber, plus three National Panel TJs Paul Burton, Tim Bailey and Mike Priestley. Richard James and Doug Neagle are members of South West Group, whilst James Gregory is a Southern Federation Squad member. Our own Society Development Squad has worked hard over the season and with the new input of dedicated referee coaches significant progress has been made which has been reflected in the end of season re-gradings. But it is the bulk of our membership who cover the lower London Leagues, the Hampshire Leagues and Merit Tables, Universities and Colleges, RFUW Ladies League and Colts League matches, plus an eclectic mix of Vets, 4th XV and friendly games. Your enjoyment and motivation is crucial, getting that perverse satisfaction from being a referee and helping 30 guys or ladies play a rugby match, safely, fairly and just about within the Laws. The Society will continue to work with Hampshire RFU and the Clubs to clamp down on the few thugs, 'red misters', and the isolated cheats (flankers we call them), who go well beyond acceptable behaviour, and of course the very small number of serious abusers on the pitch and the ill-informed and ignorant on the touchlines. 99% of players, coaches and spectators are involved in rugby for the same reasons we are, and we have an integrated Game here in Hampshire.

The Society appointed to only 1,500 matches this season which is down on last season, and we are increasingly dependant on Club Referees to appear at 3rd XV and Vets on Saturdays and U16, U15, & U14 League matches on Sundays. In parallel we face a declining level of club administration and ever increasing numbers of late (or non-communicated) cancellations. These mess about both yourselves and especially your long suffering re-appointments secretary Dave Davies. Word can never express the thanks we owe Dave and Sylvia for the time and care they take in matching the right referees to matches. At original appointment or on re-appointment we cannot always offer matches at your grade level, but we do try very hard to be fair to give everyone a wide range of matches, experiences and challenges. We are looking always at ways to make your refereeing as enjoyable and challenging as we can, and to meet your personal aspirations. However with Hampshire clubs not performing well in the London Leagues and senior club's 2nd XVs often withdrawing or getting opposition cancellations in for example the Canterbury Leagues, we have very few matches at these levels to go round. In 2007-08 each of our active 103 members did an average of 14 matches, one less than last season, so I ask that we reverse that trend next season \! Please make yourselves available more often, and perhaps aim for one match a week (35 or so weeks in the full season).

The standard of our Teams of Three in the recent County Cup Finals, League playoffs, and at the Siam Cup in Guernsey was very high and has been commented on by a number of people. Well done to all concerned.



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We keep your membership subscriptions low, as well as the match charges we make to Clubs for your services as qualified trained Society Referees. The grassroots clubs do not have deep pockets and we try to support the efforts to promote the Game and get more players on pitches each week. Richard Showan will cover the financial details in his report, so I just acknowledge formally, and thank our sponsors this season, FX for their generous support which enabled us to subsidise your match kit, training equipment and radio systems for most advisers. We hope that in these difficult economic times they can continue their generosity next season. We are aware that there have been delays in paying travel expenses to some of you this season and Richard is reviewing the apparently failing online bank system we had used without problem for a number of years. The Committee apologises if you are still awaiting a travel claim to be settled, and we hope to be back to past efficiency levels next season.

The new ELVs come in on August 1st 2008. With the RFU Referees Department and Hampshire's Coaching Committee, we have arranged two evening discussions sessions on August 4th and 11th at Tottonians (maybe Winchester) and Basingstoke respectively, one of which I urge you to attend. The Southern Federation meeting on Sunday 17th August at Newbury RFC will feature the new ELVs, as will our Society Training meeting at Winchester RFC on Monday 15th September. Ignore the media hype and scare-mongering, the impact of and refereeing implementation of the ELVs will not be a major issue, and in July we will start to get RFU guidance for both adult and youth implications. Please look at our web site www.hantsrefs.org.uk for updates and general information.

My thanks go to all the Committee, both those I have mentioned personally above, and all the others who give their spare time freely to administer and run our Society. I especially ask you to acknowledge those who are standing down from Executive Officer roles (Geoff Paice and Mike Gill) for their hard work over a number of seasons - as well as both appearing over 30 times each on a pitch this season. The key Committee positions are elected and the list was notified to you in advance. No other candidates were notified to the Secretary. As well as those continuing in their Executive Officer Committee roles, I commend to you the candidates for Appointments Secretary and Society Training Officer (Keith Page and Keith Lewis respectively) and ask that you approve them. Additional members will be co-opted to the Committee to fulfil other crucial responsibilities such as re-appointments, recruitment and retention, web-site,

Have a great summer, re-charge your batteries, enjoy watching the various overseas tours, and come back in August for what will be a terrific 2008-09 season.

Yours in rugby

Simon

