

DIRECTIVE

To: All Competition Managers

From: ARU/ National Judicial Committee

Date: 21 June 2017

Re: Conduct Towards Match Officials

1. The ARU and National Judicial Committee have recognised the need to address the increasing prevalence of abuse and disrespect shown towards match officials from participants in the Game. This form of conduct undermines and erodes the core values of Australian Rugby including respect and integrity, and all efforts should be made to remove it from the Game.
2. Such conduct involves any action directed at a match official, before, during or after a match, by a player, coaching staff, club official, volunteer, spectator or other participant which would be considered unacceptable behaviour in accordance with the Australian Rugby Code of Conduct (the **Code**) [Click on link to Code](#). This behaviour includes abusive, threatening or intimidatory language, unnecessary obvious dissension or disapproval, crude or abusive gestures, negative or detrimental public comment (including via social media) and any action or conduct directed at a match official which impairs the public confidence in the honest and orderly conduct of matches and competitions.
3. For all participants, other than players, the Code governs the conduct referred to in paragraph 2, above. However, with respect to players, such conduct could be captured by both the Code and the Australian Rugby Disciplinary Rules (which reflect World Rugby Regulation 17) (**Disciplinary Rules**) [Click on link to Disciplinary Rules](#). The Disciplinary Rules should typically govern conduct within the playing enclosure during the match and the Code of Conduct should govern conduct at all other times.
4. It is the intention of this directive that sanctions are imposed that act as an appropriate deterrent to all participants.

Disciplinary Rules

5. Determination of the appropriate sanction for a player charged with 'Match Official Abuse' in accordance with the Disciplinary Rules is matter for the judgement of the Judicial Committee/Judicial Officer in accordance with the sanction regime in Appendix 1 of the Disciplinary Rules. Judicial Committees/Judicial Officers should however have regard to this directive as an **aggravating factor in accordance with Rule 87(b)** of the Disciplinary Rules and, where appropriate, impose a sanction which demonstrates the seriousness of this conduct.
6. If a player is charged for an offence unrelated to 'Match Official Abuse', but it becomes evident that such an offence may have been committed, the Judicial Committee/Judicial Officer may add to or vary the original

charge. If this occurs, the alleged offending participant must be given the opportunity to answer the amended charge. However, to limit the need for the Judicial Committee/Judicial Officer to take this step it is important to advise match officials to add a charge for verbal or physical abuse (10.4(m)) where appropriate.

Code of Conduct

7. The Code does not have a provision in terms identical to rule 87(b). However, aggravating factors can be dealt with by applying Annexure 1, rule 3.4(a)(v) of the Code. Again, whilst ultimately the determination of the appropriate sanction is a matter for the judgement of the Code of Conduct Committee/Judicial Officer, all Code of Conduct Committees/Judicial Officers should treat this directive as an **aggravating factor in accordance with Annexure 1, rule 3.4(a)(v) of the Code.**
8. If a notice of breach issued to a participant does not include such conduct of the type referred to in paragraph 2 above, but it becomes evident to the Code of Conduct Committee/Judicial Officer that such an offence may have been committed, the Code of Conduct Committee/Judicial Officer may, pursuant to Annexure 1, rule 2.2 (i) (iii) of the Code, determine that such a breach of the Code has occurred. The alleged offending participant must however be given the opportunity to make submissions and provide evidence in relation to the new alleged breach of the Code.

Yours sincerely,



Terry Willis
Chairman
National Judicial Committee



Stephen Schmidhofer
Head of Integrity
Australian Rugby Union