

# Expedited Disciplinary Process for Team Officials within the Playing Enclosure

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## PILOT

2026 Season

### Pilot Competitions include:

#### **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

WA Junior Competition(s) (U13 and above)

WA Senior Competition(s)

#### **NEW SOUTH WALES**

Sydney Junior Competition(s) (U13 and above)

Sydney Rugby Union Senior Competition(s)

NSW Suburban Senior Competition(s)

NSW Country Competition(s) (Senior Rugby inc. Colts)

#### **TASMANIA**

TAS Senior Competition(s)

# 1. Introduction and Scope

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Rugby Australia (Rugby AU) is piloting an **Expedited Disciplinary Process for Team Officials within the Playing Enclosure** (the Pilot) to provide clarity to those involved in a match (both players and non-players) when and where the Referee has jurisdiction of the match. The Pilot will apply to players and non-players as prescribed herein and aims to deter (or swiftly manage) behaviours of players and match-specific non-players who breach World Rugby Law or Rugby AU's Code of Conduct during a match while within the playing enclosure.

The Pilot aligns with the World Rugby's Global Law Trial (GLT) with regards to what they refer to in Law as "Additional Persons". Specifically, the GLT aligned with this pilot is:

## ***Global Law Trial***

*Any additional person who fails to adhere to the Laws may be cautioned or sent off and misconduct charges may be issued by the Match organiser.*

**6.30** *No additional persons should approach, address or aim comments at the match officials, except for medical staff in relation to treatment of their own player.*

The Pilot aims to provide, among other things, clarity on who "Additional Persons" are, expected standards of behaviour within the playing enclosure and process to be undertaken in circumstances relating to a breach of these Pilot requirements.

Rugby AU's Head of Community Match Officials, Head of Integrity and Competitions Manager have considered and designed this Pilot to clarify when and how Referees may send a player or non-player from the playing enclosure (so they have no further participation in a match) and the process following such a send-off. World Rugby was provided with notice of the Pilot and provided no objection to its commencement.

This Pilot is designed to expediently address poor behaviour aligned with the [Rugby Australia Disciplinary Rules](#) (the Rules) and the [Rugby Australia Code of Conduct](#) (the Code).

## **Duration and Extension of the Pilot**

This Pilot will commence during the 2026 community rugby season and will operate for the duration of that season unless extended or terminated earlier by Rugby AU in accordance with this clause. The Pilot will apply to the included Competitions during regular the regular season and associated finals series only (i.e. the Pilot will not apply to events, trials, exhibition matches etc). For the avoidance of doubt, the Pilot will not apply to any match where the Match Officials are club appointed.

Rugby AU may, at its sole discretion, extend the operation of this Pilot for one or more additional community rugby seasons by providing written notice to all affected Competitions. Each extension will be subject to review and may incorporate amendments to the Pilot's terms as Rugby AU considers appropriate. The Pilot will remain in force until Rugby AU deems it concluded or permanently adopts it.

## Who does this Pilot apply to?

**Players** – for the purposes of this Pilot, incidents of Foul Play shall continue to be managed under the processes and procedures in the Rules. However, the Pilot will provide clarity to players of where (Playing Enclosure) and when (Time Period of a Match) the Rules apply.

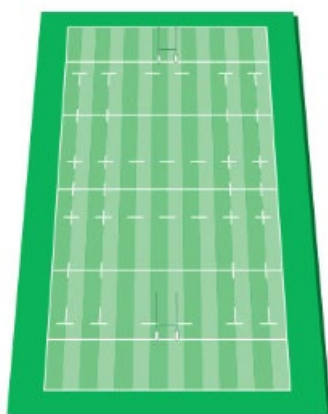
**Team Officials** – for the purposes of this Pilot, Team Officials include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Coaches
- (b) Team Managers
- (c) Water Runners
- (d) Team Medical Staff
- (e) Team Photographers
- (f) Any other team-related role who may have access to the Playing Enclosure during a match.

Team Officials who engage in Prohibited Conduct as defined in the Code within the Playing Enclosure and during the Time Period of a Match will enter an expedited reporting and breach notification process regarding the Prohibited Conduct before following the remaining procedures defined in the Code.

## What is the Playing Enclosure?

The playing enclosure is the area within the perimeter fence surrounding a rugby field(s). This perimeter fence typically has a physical barrier (e.g. fence, rope etc) and is usually 5m (where practicable) from any line of the Playing Area (i.e. 5m from the touchline and dead ball line)



**Playing enclosure**

## The Referee's Role within the Playing Enclosure

Every match is under the control of a Referee. Wherever possible, the Referee will be appointed by an independent body (i.e. Referee Association), but there may be circumstances where the Referee becomes "club to appoint" (per Law 6.1). In matches where the Referee is "club to appoint", this Pilot will not apply.

In any case, the appointed Referee **is the sole judge of fact and law during a match** and is required to apply the laws of the game fairly (Law 6.5a).

Other roles which may support the Referee include (but are not limited to):

- (a) Touch Judges or Assistant Referees – are responsible for signaling touch, touch in-goal and the success or otherwise of kicks at goal. In addition, accredited assistant referees provide assistance as the referee directs, including the reporting of foul play.
- (b) Sideline Manager - e.g. 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Official, typically assisting with substitutions and technical zone management.
- (c) Time Keeper - who can keep time for the Referee and support timing for yellow cards and blood injuries.
- (d) Ground Marshal – who will monitor and support all participants in the game e.g. monitoring sideline behaviour, supporting serious injuries/incidents etc.
- (e) Match Manager – oversee the operations of the match.
- (f) Independent Medical – who will support team medical (where available) and have an independent role overseeing player safety and welfare.

## What is the Time Period of a Match?

For the purposes of this Pilot the Time Period of a Match includes:

- (a) The period shortly before kick off (i.e. as teams and the Referee are entering the Playing Enclosure for the commencement of a match); until
- (b) The period shortly after the final whistle (i.e. as teams and the Referee are leaving the Playing Enclosure at the conclusion of a match).

For the avoidance of doubt, this Time Period of a Match includes:

- (a) Breaks in play; and
- (b) Half time (particularly when teams remain in the Playing Enclosure during half time).

The Referee's role as **the sole judge of fact and law** during a match applies within the Playing Enclosure for the entire Time Period of a Match.

## What conduct does this Pilot apply to?

Although the Code covers several types of Prohibited Conduct as defined by the Code, this Pilot only applies to the following categories of Prohibited Conduct committed by a Player or Team Official towards a Match Official, where such conduct occurs within the Playing Enclosure during the Time Period of a Match:

- (a) Physical abuse toward a Match Official (including but not limited to striking, pushing, grabbing or making any uninvited physical contact with a Match Official);
- (b) Verbal abuse or threatening language directed at a Match Official (including but not limited to the use of offensive, abusive, insulting or threatening words or gestures toward a Match Official); and
- (c) Intimidating or threatening behaviour toward a Match Official (including but not limited to conduct that would cause a reasonable person in the position of the Match Official to fear for their personal safety or to feel coerced in the exercise of their official duties).

For the avoidance of doubt, Prohibited Conduct between Players and other participants that does not involve a Match Official, or conduct that occurs outside the Playing Enclosure, remains subject to the usual procedures under the Code and is outside the scope of this Pilot.

# 2. Player Foul Play Process

## STANDARD PROCEDURES

There is fundamentally no change to the processes surrounding foul play of a player, other than providing clarity on where (Playing Enclosure) and when (Time Period of a Match) a Referee may deal with foul play.

- 2.1 The Referee is permitted to caution, show a yellow card (temporarily suspend) or show a red card (send off) a player at any time during the Time Period of the Match, for acts of Foul Play (as described in Law 9 and in the Rules) exhibited within the Playing Enclosure.
- 2.2 Where a player is red carded (sent off) the Referee will submit a send off report via Rugby Xplorer (where possible) and the matter will be dealt with as usual according to the Rules.

# 3. Team Official Prohibited Conduct Process

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## EXPEDITED PROCESS ALIGNED WITH THE CODE

This section explains an expedited process aligned with the Code that will be enacted when a Team Official is removed from the Playing Enclosure during the Time Period of a Match.

- 3.1 The Referee is permitted to remove a Team Official from the Playing Enclosure at any time during the Time Period of the Match, for acts of Prohibited Conduct (as described in the Code) exhibited within the Playing Enclosure.
- 3.2 Where a Team Official is removed from the Playing Enclosure, the Referee will complete a Team Official Prohibited Conduct Report (TOPCR - see Appendix 1) and the TOPCR will be sent to their Referee Association lead for review.
- 3.3 Once reviewed, the Referee Association lead will send the TOPCR to the Competition Manager within the same time frame as required for a player's send off report, or where no time frame is determined then no later than midday of the next business day.
- 3.4 The Competition Manager (or their delegate) will assess the TOPCR and conduct any required further investigation into the matter, aligned with Sections 6-10 of the Code.
- 3.5 Where the Competition Manager determines that the Prohibited Conduct may have occurred (on the balance of probabilities), then a Breach Notice (per the Code) will be provided to the Team Official and their Club, including a proposed sanction.
- 3.6 The Team Official can respond to the Breach Notice by:
  - (a) Responding within 48 hours to accept the alleged breach(es) and proposed sanction contained in the Breach Notice; or
  - (b) Responding within 48 hours to attend a Code of Conduct Committee hearing.
- 3.7 Following a response to a Breach Notice, the remaining processes outlined in the Code will be followed (including the right to representation and appeal processes as set out in the Code).

## TEAM OFFICIAL PROVISIONAL SUSPENSION

- 3.8 A Team Official who is removed during a Match is provisionally suspended until:
- (a) The Competition Manager (or their delegate) advise no Breach Notice will be issued; or
  - (b) A Breach Notice is issued and the proposed sanction in the Breach Notice is accepted and served; or
  - (c) The matter is heard at a Code of Conduct Hearing, where a determination of sanction (if any) will be made. In such cases, the Code of Conduct Committee will treat the TOPCR as an accurate account of what occurred. The respondent Team Official may submit evidence to challenge the TOPCR and the burden of disproving its account rests with the respondent. That is, on the balance the respondent Team Official must prove why the TOPCR was incorrect or incomplete.
- 3.9 The Competition Manager (or their delegate) must advise the Team Official and their Club of the outcome of their assessment of the TOPCR no later than 5 business days after receiving it. Where a Breach Notice is issued, it must be provided to the Team Official and their Club within the same timeframe. Where exceptional circumstances prevent this, the Competition Manager must notify the Team Official and their Club of the delay and the expected timeframe for resolution.
- 3.10 Provisional suspension means the Team Official is not permitted to occupy or perform any Team Official role for any match. Provisional suspension takes effect immediately upon removal and where no Breach Notice is issued, ceases automatically upon notification by the Competition Manager under clause 3.8. Where a Breach Notice is issued, provisional suspension continues until resolved under clause 3.8(b) or (c).
- 3.11 Where a Team Official responds to a Breach Notice by electing to attend a Code of Conduct Committee Hearing, the Competition Manager must arrange the hearing as soon as reasonably practicable and in any event within 7 business days of receiving the Team Official's response. Where exceptional circumstances prevent the hearing from being held within that timeframe, the Team Official and their Club must be notified of the delay and the expected hearing date.

# 4. Examples

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This section provides some examples of both player foul play and team official prohibited conduct which may now be captured in this Pilot.

## FOUL PLAY BY A PLAYER DURING A BREAK IN PLAY

- During half time, teams have remained in the Playing Enclosure and are separated and speaking amongst their respective team.
- A player from Team A walks past Team B to retrieve the football. A player from Team B punches the player from Team A.
- The referee is permitted to caution, show a yellow card (temporarily suspend) or show a red card (send off) the player from Team B as appropriate in Law (depending on identifying the offending player and consideration of the offence against Law).
- Where the Team B player is red carded (sent off) the Referee will submit a send off report via Rugby Xplorer (where possible) and the matter will be dealt with as usual according to the Rules.

## FOUL PLAY BY A PLAYER AFTER THE FINAL WHISTLE

- The Referee has blown the final whistle for the match, and teams are shaking hands in the Playing Enclosure and starting to walk off. A player from Team A verbally assaults the Referee while walking from the Field of Play and before exiting the Playing Enclosure.
- The referee is permitted to caution, show a yellow card (temporarily suspend) or show a red card (send off) the player from Team A as appropriate in Law (depending on identifying the offending player and consideration of the offence against Law).
- Where the Team A player is red carded (sent off) the Referee will submit a send off report via Rugby Xplorer (where possible) and the matter will be dealt with as usual according to the Rules.

## PROHIBITED CONDUCT BY A TEAM OFFICIAL DURING BREAK IN PLAY

- The Referee has blown the whistle following Team A scoring a try. A water runner from Team B has entered the Field of Play to take water to Team B. As the Team B water runner moves past the try scorer from Team A, the water runner changes his running line and shoulder charges the Team A player with significant force.
- The Referee, considering the circumstances of the prohibited conduct, may remove the Team B water runner from the Playing Enclosure.
- The Referee will inform the Team B captain and notify any other available support roles (e.g. Touch Judge/Assistant Referee, Ground Marshal etc).
- Where the Team B water runner is removed from the Playing Enclosure, the Referee will complete a Team Official Prohibited Conduct Report (TOPCR) and send the TOPCR to their Referee Association.

## **PROHIBITED CONDUCT BY A TEAM OFFICIAL AFTER THE FINAL WHISTLE**

- The Referee has blown the final whistle for the match, and teams are shaking hands in the playing enclosure and starting to walk off. The coach from Team A enters the Playing Enclosure and verbally assaults the Referee.
- The Referee, considering the circumstances of the prohibited conduct and following any attempts to resolve the matter if suitable, may remove the Team A coach from the Playing Enclosure. In doing so, the Referee will clearly inform the Team A captain and any other available Team A Team Officials.
- Where the Team A coach is removed from the Playing Enclosure, the Referee will complete a Team Official Prohibited Conduct Report (TOPCR) and send the TOPCR to their Referee Association.

## **PROHIBITED CONDUCT BY A TEAM OFFICIAL FROM OUTSIDE THE PLAYING ENCLOSURE**

- During a match, the Team A Head Coach, who is clearly positioned outside the Playing Enclosure, loudly and repeatedly verbally abuses the Referee. The Referee has taken steps via the Team A Captain, including on-field sanctions (e.g. penalty against Team A when abuse is heard) and via reporting to the Ground Marshal.
- The reporting process in this circumstance, where the Team Official is outside the Playing Enclosure, would be via the Report a Concern process, and the matter will be dealt with under the usual procedures as set out in the Code.
- For the avoidance of doubt, any player or team official misconduct which occurs outside the Playing Enclosure and/or outside the Time Period of a Match will be dealt with via Report a Concern and usual procedures as set out in the Code.

APPENDIX 1. TEAM OFFICIAL PROHIBITED CONDUCT REPORT (TOPCR)

**TEAM OFFICIAL PROHIBITED CONDUCT REPORT**

<b>Name and Role of Team Official:</b> <i>Or a detailed description of the Team Official</i>	
<b>Club of Team Official:</b>	
<b>Date of Match:</b>	
<b>Home Team:</b>	
<b>Away Team:</b>	
<b>Name of Venue:</b>	
<b>Name/Grade of Competition:</b>	

<b>Approx. Time into Match the Prohibited Conduct occurred:</b>
<b>Where within the Playing Enclosure did the Prohibited Conduct occur:</b>
<b>Where were you in relation to the Prohibited Conduct:</b>
<b>Detailed description of the Prohibited Conduct:</b>
<b>What was the Team Official's reaction to being removed from the Playing Enclosure:</b>

<b>Names of any Witnesses who were present/involved:</b>
<b>Any attempted informal resolution, or warnings/caution provided to the Team Official.</b>

<b>Referee Name:</b>	
<b>Date Completed:</b>	