



FOREWORD

I am delighted to post RFU Referee Trainer Steve Womersley's "Touch Judge's Mental Checklist" and his introduction note to what he has written. It is a very interesting and challenging topic and one that I am sure that TJ's and Referees will find beneficial!

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October 2004



I guess that for some of you there is a break in your rugby activities approaching, but even so there is still time for reflection and preparation. I came across the attached mental checklist that has been used by panel referees in England as they get their minds round the switch of management task from refereeing to touch judging.

As we all know touch judging requires something different from the refereeing role. It is, indeed, sometimes difficult to focus on this distinct role, particularly when there is a very watchable game of rugby right there in front of you, one that, if we were refereeing we would be right in the middle of. But as a TJ we often have to look at different things, take up different positions, sometimes turn away from play (when we are trailing) to deal with unresolved situations far from the action etc. Fulfilling the very different priorities of a TJ is especially difficult when we have not done it for a while, when we have been refereeing several matches in succession. The automatic comes into play, we are used to following the play, reading the options that are opening up for the players, predicting where you are going to need to be next and starting to make the necessary adjustments. How easy it is in these situations to do the same when you are operating as a TJ.

So the CHANGE OF ROLE and the DIFFERENCES in what we are required to prioritize in our actions as a TJ need to be thoroughly prepared for. This checklist has been put together with this role transition in mind.

Please have a look at it. It is very likely that it could just bring together elements of discussions you have had between active officials in your Societies; for the same issues affect referees making this role change worldwide.

STEVE WOMERSLEY
RFU REFEREE TRAINER



TOUCH JUDGE MENTAL CHECKLIST

KICK OFF/RESTARTS

- Is it a split kick?
- Watch the contact not the ball.

OPEN PLAY KICKS

- Is there a late/dangerous challenge on the kicker? (Keep watching!)
- Where was the kicker?
- Are chasers or defenders impeded?
- Is the airborne catcher challenged before he lands?

TOUCH

- Has the ball crossed the vertical plane of the touch line?
- Has the ball carrier touched/crossed the touch line?
- Is the catcher in the field of play?
- What happened to the ball after it crossed the touch line?
- Is a quick throw possible/legitimately taken?

LINE OUT

- Is the gap established and maintained?
- Is the hooker stood in the correct place?
- Is he delaying the throw?
- Is a jumper or support player taken out or impeded?
- Did the ball go 5 metres?
- (If requested) was the throw straight?
- Is a defender obstructed (hooker in 5m channel)?
- Look low, across the line (get wide)
- If ball caught inside 15 m, do both sides respect 10 m?

SCRUM

- How are the front row players engaging and binding?
- How are the back row players binding (fully, on second row – no crutch binding on prop)?
- What are the body angles of the front row players?
- What are the body angles of the flankers (obstruction)?
- Are the scrum halves' hands on each other and onside?
- Are the backs onside?
- How much attention do I give when the scrum collapses or when it ends?

RUCK

- Are joining players coming through the gate or in the side?
- Are joining players cleaning out legally?
- Is rucking legal?



- Are the guards in an onside position?
- Are the “backs” onside?
- When is the ruck over (am I certain the scrum half has hands on / ball out)?
- How much attention do I give when the ruck collapses or when it ends?

MAUL

- Are joining players coming through the gate or in the side?
- Are players pulling opponents heads/legs?
- If collapsed, by which number?
- Are the guards in an onside position?
- Are the “backs” onside?
- When is the maul over (am I certain the scrum half has hands on / ball out)?
- How much attention do I give when the maul collapses or when it ends?

OPEN PLAY

- Has the passer been challenged late?
- Has a receiver/support player been tackled early/obstructed?
- Is it a legal tackle?
- Is a defender being obstructed?
- Is the referee unsighted when a clear “offence” occurs?

FOUL PLAY

- Can I prevent this? (If not, I must be able to see it)
- What exactly did I see?
- Do I assume wrongly that the referee has seen the same offence?
- Do I need to advise the referee to stop the game?
- If play continues, do I watch and concentrate sufficiently?
- What will I say in my report to the referee? (team(s), number(s), offence(s))

PENALTIES/FREE KICKS

- Is it safe to leave the players at the point of the offence?
- Are they aware of our 10 metres?
- Do I need to get deep to judge a kick to touch (especially to the corner post)?

KICKS AT GOAL

- Can I see the ball, the post, my fellow TJ?
- Whose primary responsibility is the call?
- Is there anything relevant I can say to player(s), the referee, the other TJ?



COMMUNICATION

- Is this a trend or key incident?
- Does the referee need to know it?
- When should I tell him?
- How should I phrase it for maximum clarity (Calm, Accurate, Concise)?
- Can I help him to position a penalty /scrum award accurately?

OVERALL

- Am I touch judging or refereeing?
- Am I duplicating the referee's view or complementing it?
- Am I ball watching, ball-carrier watching?
- Is my body language positive and professional (Relaxed, Assured, Confident)?
- What are my priorities? What are my priorities? What are my priorities?

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list. We hope that you will personalise it to suit your own needs to enhance your performance the next time you officiate.

If you have any points that you think would benefit others, please let us know.