

### **Refereeing Principal – Materiality.**

Before we get technical its important you understand a major principal all referees are trained to abide by – materiality.

Have you ever wondered why referees are slow in making a call?

Next time you're watching (or playing) a game notice how often those standing on the sidelines can call out "OFF-SIDE!" or "NOT RELEASING!" or "KNOCK ON!" before the referee blows the whistle or sticks an arm out to show advantage. You would think that someone 30m closer to the play would be able to react faster!

Some people even believe that the referee makes these late calls because of those screaming from the sidelines... power to the loudest!! Well, it's not the referee's poor reaction time or bad eyesight that creates a time space between the play and their reaction.... It's their training.

Whenever there is action on the field and the referee sees it happen (there is a whole different issue of a referee not being able to see the action), there are two questions that referees are taught to ask themselves (By the way it is said referees have to make these decisions every 2 seconds!).

Firstly, is the action an infringement under the Laws of the Game? If the answer to this question is NO, then of course it's play on! Then, if it is against the Law, the second question is asked: does it matter? If the answer to this question is also NO, the referee will let play go on.

This second question has to do with the concept of "materiality". Though it is not part of the Laws of the Game, materiality is a very basic principle in Rugby. In Rugby, if an infringement of the Law occurs which has no effect on the game... it is ignored. Rugby is one of the few sports that uses this principle.

Example; A ruck has formed 10 metres in from the touchline. The ball is clearly coming out on the blue side, a red player is coming round the blindside clearly offside. The referee is just about to call out to tell him to get back when the blue scrum half passes the ball out to the open side and play continues.

The referee has deemed the red player "immaterial", he didn't have an effect on the play (what he would do, would be to have a word with the red player something like "don't come round the side of the ruck again") play carried on with no interference, if the scrum half went down the blindside it might have been a different thing altogether!

Hope that helps.

Any suggestions or questions contact [enquiry@therugbyclubshop.com](mailto:enquiry@therugbyclubshop.com)