

**Australian Rugby Union Match Official Communication Protocol**  
(for use in Community Rugby within Australia)

**Adapted from the IRB Match official Communication Protocol**

***‘LESS IS BEST’***

**OBJECTIVE**

*To provide a consistent approach and guidelines for communication for referees and touch judges in Community Rugby level matches within Australia.*

**1. Referee Communication Guidelines**

**It is important to note that referees communication style is part of the personality of the referee and it is vital that the referee is able to utilise his unique style. The following represent a set of guidelines to assist referees in communicating in an acceptable manner.**

- 1.1 When explaining decisions, referees should be succinct and wherever possible use the language of the Law Book e.g.
  - a. blue 6 offside” or penalty kick to white”
  - b. “Knock on by blue 6, no advantage, scrum white throw in.”
  - c. “Blue 6 in front of ten metre line, penalty kick here or scrum back to white.”
- 1.2 The explanation should be accompanied by the appropriate secondary signal.
- 1.3 **Preventative statements should be used as single accurate statements and used sparingly throughout the match.**
- 1.4 Whilst the ball is in play the preferred communication method is to use the team’s name or colour plus the number of the player. The use of a player’s name should not take place.
- 1.5 Referees **may** say “play on” when the ball can be played after rucks and collapsed mauls i.e. artificial offside lines should not operate.
- 1.6 Referees should not engage in conversation with players other than the captain and then only to address specific issues. Referees should make this clear to the captains before the match. Offenders should be penalised. Referees should use down time to address specific issues with individual players.
- 1.7 Foul language should never be used.

## 2. Team of Three Communication Guidelines

### 2.1 Referee Responsibility

The referee has responsibility and the accountability for the match and for his decisions. He may take assistance from the touch judges in accordance with the protocol, but the match referee has the ultimate responsibility for all decisions.

### 2.2 Touch Judge Duties

The primary and secondary duties of a touch judge relate to the decision in respect of

Touch  
Touch – in – goal  
Dead ball line  
Kicks at goal  
Foul play

Any other forms of assistance to the referee are tertiary and must not intrude on the primary and secondary duties. Touch Judges must be aware that their positional play relative to the primary and secondary duties often precludes other assistance.

Touch judges should not give visual signals to confirm or negate tries.

The touch judge should remain in touch-in-goal.

### 2.3 Communication

*The touch judge shall*

#### 2.3.1 Signal for foul play irrespective of whether the touch judge believes that the referee has seen the offence(s).

2.3.2 Communicate to the referee when the flag has been raised where electronic communications are available

2.3.3 The touch judge and referee must then communicate in the following manner

#### 2.3.4 Touch Judge gives number and Team of offending player (or team only if the player cannot be identified. However, it is important for touch judges to concentrate on the offence/offender until the number can be identified.)

2.3.5 The touch judge gives a precise and accurate description of offence. The referee will paraphrase the offence back to the touch judge.

2.3.6 Referee may request a sanction recommendation i.e.

- Severe reprimand
- Formal caution and temporary suspension
- Send off

Only then should the touch judge advise referee of any recommendation.

2.3.7 Referee repeats number and team of offending player and confirms the sanction.

2.3.8 Referee takes the required action and delivers the sanction.

This procedure is designed to ensure:

- Correct information and action
- Clarity and speed of communication

2.3.9 Always consult:

- touch judge may have extra information on an offence which the referee has “seen”.
- Referee never overrules touch judge without consultation.

### **The touch judge may**

2.3.10 At stoppages in play (re: stoppage for injury/substitution), advise the referee of trends e.g.

- (a) “Blues backline close to offside line, preventative warning necessary.”
- (b) “Check tackled players to ensure release.”

2.3.11 Communicate to the referee any clear and real infringement to which the referee is un-sighted and where the infringement has a critical effect.

2.3.12 Communicate to the referee on replacement and substitutions.

### *The touch judge should not*

2.3.13 Communicate to the referee the Touch Judge’s view on marginal decisions relating to forward passes, knock-ons, off-sides, crooked-in to scrum/line-out etc.

2.3.14 The referee retains the responsibility/accountability for these decisions.

2.3.15 The touch judge must *not* shout instructions at players at ruck and maul; Particularly at ruck post tackle –e.g. “roll away”, “on your feet”. In these areas touch judge should concentrate primarily on foul play, and then offside lines. This does not preclude a Touch Judge from communicating with players in an unobtrusive manner to prevent further infringements relating to foul play.

## **2.4 Additional Comments**

2.4.1 Scrum management remains the responsibility of the referee. Assistance, if requested, may be given.

2.4.2 Referee will confirm “close” touch down awards with the touch judge by eye contact and verbal confirmation. The touch judge remains on the touch in goal line while try is signalled.

- 2.4.3 Communication equipment is not always reliable. Therefore, teams of three should not be totally dependant on them.
- 2.4.4 Referees should maintain their work rate in all areas of the game particularly mid-field off-side and not become lazy through use of the flags.
- 2.4.5 Touch judges by placing themselves correctly and by discreet communications with players, will be able to assist in the preventive management of off side lines at scrum and line-out and to a lesser extent at ruck and maul.
- 2.4.6 This protocol does not preclude touch judges from providing encouragement and positive support to the referee.
- 2.4.7 If requested by the referee in his pre-match briefing, the touch judges are also permitted to use key words/phrases that assist the referee with match management.