

Reacting to Racism

The RFU is committed to promoting the principles of sports equity amongst all affiliated clubs and schools:

"All participants in the sport of rugby football will be given equal opportunity irrespective of their age, creed, colour, disability, ethnic origin, martial status, race, religious persuasion, or sexual orientation. The RFU fully supports this principle and is committed to satisfying these principles in all its activities and publication material."

Sports equity is defined as:

"Sports equity is about fairness in sport, equality of access, recognising inequalities and taking steps to redress them. It is about changing the culture and structure of sport to ensure it becomes equally accessible to everyone in society."

Closely linked to sports equity is the principle of fair play, defined as:

"Fair play is much more than playing within the rules. It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respecting others and always playing within the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just a way of behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of cheating, gamesmanship, doping, violence, exploitation, unequal opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption." (European code of sports ethics, 1992)

Background

The publication of the Macpherson report in February 1999 is regarded by many as a defining moment in British race relations. The report by Sir William Macpherson followed an inquiry into the Metropolitan police's investigation of the murder of a black teenager, Stephen Lawrence. The 18-year-old A-Level student was fatally stabbed in an unprovoked attack as he waited for a bus in Eltham, south London, in April 1993. Nobody has been convicted of his murder. Allegations of incompetence and racism against Metropolitan police officers in charge of the case soured race relations as did two internal police inquiries which exonerated the Met itself. Out of this report a clear set of guidelines were established which identified that people who were the victims of racism often endured victimisation for a long period of time with redress. That as a consequence a great deal of faith was lost in the ability of those in charge to take appropriate actions to ensure that victims were supported rather than vilified.

Definition

It is illegal to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of their race. This includes their colour, nationality or ethnic origin. Unfortunately, it still happens and referees need to be aware how to stand up for such a principle and not let any player or

watcher of a game get away with it. There are different types of discrimination but they are all wrong and all punishable by law.

Direct Discrimination

Direct Discrimination is when a player or onlooker blatantly makes a comment direct towards another person or treats them differently because of their race. This can include applying sanctions based purely on people's race or making direct verbal comments using race as part of their description.

Harassment

Often, there is no one incident that stands out as being racist but is apparent in the way that people are treated. This can be in the form of racist jokes or underhand jibes or physical torments and the perpetrators remain unclear. If this knowingly continues, team captains, manager's etc. are considered to be just as guilty despite them not joining in. If they overlook the behaviour then they are just as guilty.

Indirect Discrimination

This type of discrimination is not quite so blunt but it includes rules or practices that put people at a disadvantage in the sporting arena because of their race. So it may be that clubs or teams institute a new dress code for no particular reason such as health and safety, which discriminates against people from certain ethnic backgrounds. They may try to talk their way out of it and say it isn't racist but if it puts people at a disadvantage because of their ethnicity, then it is.

Disciplinary procedures

If you do experience any complaints or accusations of unfair treatment or discrimination application of a robust disciplinary procedure is required to handle it. This may include the need for a formal hearing, recording of all the evidence from both sides, and the right of appeal. Further details on this can be found in the 1994 Sports Council publication, *Getting it right*.

Recommended Actions

It is clear following the MacPherson Reports guidelines that **anyone who considers themselves the victim of racism is in fact to be believed until it is proven otherwise**. Therefore a Referees reaction needs to reflect this stance.

If a report of any **Direct Discrimination** occurs during a game, the appropriate sanction should be a **Red Card** to the person who is the source of such comments or actions. A comment should be made directly to both team captains to ensure they are clear of the reasoning behind the action. A detailed note of the incident is made immediately. At the end of the match and as soon afterwards an incident report should be sent directly to the Honourable Secretary.

If a report of **any Harassment** occurs during a game, the appropriate action should be that the incidents should be reported to both team captains, if it is happening within

the field of play, or to the most senior official of the club if the apparent sources are on the sidelines. If there is no action taken or matters continue, the game may be stopped and/or abandoned. Both team captains' should be informed of the decision to ensure they are clear of the reasoning behind the action. A detailed note of the incident should be made immediately. At the end of the match and as soon afterwards an incident report should be sent directly to the Honorary Secretary.

If there is a report of any Indirect Discrimination then a comment to the most senior official at the club needs to be made for this to be rectified. A detailed note of the incident is made immediately. At the end of a Referee's time at the club and as soon afterwards an incident report should be sent directly to the Honorary Secretary.

Sources

<http://www.law.cf.ac.uk/tlru/Lawrence.pdf>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/vote2001/hi/english/main_issues/sections/facts/newsid_1190000/1190971.stm

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/1999/feb/24/lawrence.ukcrime12>

http://www.rfu.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/RFUHome.WebSite_Detail/StoryID/249

SUMMARY ACTIONS

If YOU hear clearly racial/discriminatory remarks directed at a player/coach/spectator by a player/coach/spectator RED CARD & REPORT

If someone says someone said , this is hearsay you cannot issue a red card , you need to note who said what about whom ,time and place . Speak to captains , speak to alleged perpetrator if identified ,with his captain/vice captain and tell them the facts WILL be reported.

There are no circumstances here where a yellow is appropriate.