



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY AND DISTRICT RUGBY REFEREES' SOCIETY

CONTACT

KEEPING YOU IN TOUCH

TOWARDS BETTER RUGBY

APRIL 2015

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

BETTER RUGBY	2/3
GETTING IT RIGHT	4
DOING IT RIGHT	4
SHARED VIEW	5
UPWARDS AND UPWARDS	5
HEALTHY ROOTS	6
GOT IT WRONG	6
NO QUITTER HE	6
IN LAUDEM SPORT	6
CAPTION COMPETITION	7
NEW MEMBERS	7
YOU KNOW IT MAKES SENSE	7
TROUBLED TIMES	8
FITZ THE BILL	8
THE CURTAIN COMES DOWN	9
A DEBT REPAID	10

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Sport is one of the few spaces where people can learn about different cultures in a spirit of trust and friendship. Sport is and should remain a great school of life that supports people in their personal development. It teaches respect for others and also for oneself.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FRIDAY, APRIL 17th 2015

**Annual Ladies Night and Dinner
at Christ's College
ARE YOU IN?**

**Tickets from David Norman
TN: 01223 335068
Email: dn102@cam.ac.uk**

**Visit
CUDRRS website
www.cambsref.co.uk**

**Do so at least weekly to ensure
you keep up to date with the
latest news.**

CHANGE FOR THE BETTER?

The Laws Laboratory ran here for twelve years. Every proposed variation had to satisfy three criteria before we could ask the student teams to trial it. The prime consideration was, as referees would expect, player safety. If the law change was deemed safe, would add to the enjoyment of the game and be easy for the referee to manage, it was a starter. The experimental variations were, of course, intended to solve problems or secure improvements in the game perceived by the IRB, the RFU or ourselves.

Watching the matches in this season's Six Nations Championship, I found myself wondering whether the IRB had exercised equal diligence and foresight in making changes to the Laws, or how they were implemented, in the past twenty years.

Tackling of the player in the air and increased incidence of concussion are currently major concerns arising from changes made to Law 18 and inaction over eliminating the dangers of the Big Hit in the tackle. The increased use of the driving maul excites the crowd but often gains ground through blatant obstruction. Just keep an eye on the ball carriers at the back of it and see how often they are neither caught in nor bound to the maul and Law 17.2 (c) is not applied.

The original requirements for a Fair Catch required the player to make a clean catch, be stationary and dig a heel into the ground. These were gradually reduced allowing players to shout "Mark" on the move and even be airborne. Some such fielding of the ball is fearless and brave but when an opponent makes contact with the airborne catcher, alarm bells start ringing. Fearless can also be reckless.

The practice of jumping up to catch the ball now takes place outside the 22s with kick and chase the preferred option to combat well organised defences and their fast line speeds. Referees are then faced with having to decide whether any foul is committed when two opposing players clash in jumping to catch the same ball. If one tried to pull out but still made contact with the other in air, a yellow card or even a red might be shown. He/she could also run the risk of being cited and banned, severely punished despite never having any intent to hurt.

I refer to the Dan Biggar somersault over the turned back of Finn Russell at Murrayfield. A later article in this issue talks about the same incident. Why not avoid the risk of players being injured or cited? Rather than issue advice about how these incidents should be refereed, the IRB should tackle the root cause not the symptom. Prevention is better than cure. Jumping to catch the ball in open play should be made illegal. Rugby is intended to be played on the feet after all.

The increasing influence of Rugby League is seen in the way Union defences are organised to "attack". The "Big Hit" became a defensive approach developed in the professional game. The defender "smashes" into the chest area of the ball carrier. The impact is usually greeted with a gasp from the baying crowd. The use of the shoulder rather than the arms then had to be controlled but the target area remained the same. Why was the permitted target area not reduced?

The driving maul especially when fully legal is difficult to stop. When allowed by referees to continue illegally, it becomes an unfair contest and impossible to halt.

The Big Hit and driving mauls were subject to Laws Lab research. For the first, we recommended the tackle line be lowered from the neck to waist and below. We recommended a safe way to take the ball carrier in the maul to ground. This was trialled worldwide but dropped after unsubstantiated claims that it was dangerous. The professionals again determined the way the rest of us play.

This issue of **CONTACT** carries more ideas for changing the laws for the better. The debate in CUDRRS is on. Why not join it? We have the space, the time and the desire to hear what you have to say.

Editor

BETTER RUGBY

*CUDRRS members are always on the look out to improve their refereeing and the way the game is played. The March issue of **CONTACT** seems to have stimulated their thought processes and some have commented about the need for change in the Laws. Here, Stuart Graveston sets out his case for changes in key areas to bring back the best of rugby. He says*

Are you, like me, bored with much of the rugby seen on television? Does the playing style of Jamie Roberts, Mathieu Bastarud and Manu Tuilagi leave you cold? Where has the outrageous flair of David Duckham, Phil Bennett and Serge Blanco gone?

The 2015 RWC could be a pivotal moment in the development of the sport we all love. Mike Dimambro alluded to this in the last edition of **CONTACT**. Will this showcase of rugby inspire more to play or discourage the potential Underwoods and Barry Johns?

There have been numerous occasions in recent years when I have refereed on a Saturday afternoon during the Six Nations, recorded the matches taking place whilst I had whistle in hand and then gone home to watch the internationals. Well, that at least was my intention.

So often I have just erased the recordings because what I'd just refereed on the pitches of Cambridgeshire was more interesting and enjoyable. To my mind our game needs to change if it is to grow and prosper, if parents are going to feel happy taking their children to clubs to learn the game and if it is going to continue to attract more spectators and sponsors.

There are a number of law changes I would like to see implemented in an attempt to change the game's emphasis from the bludgeon to the scalpel. Some of you will throw your hands up in horror at my ideas, but it might start some discussion.

1. The sole aim of the tackle used to be to bring the man to ground and generations of players were coached to tackle round the hips and thighs using the ball carriers own momentum to bring him to ground. The current change of emphasis to the smother tackle at chest height has meant that the ball is not made available quickly. It has also lead to the tactic of players being used as battering rams against each other with the hope that one will triumph over the other but the result so often being stalemate.



The result can also be a clash of heads and Jonny Sexton bears the marks of such a clash with Mathieu Bastarud. So my change in the law would be

During a tackle all contact by the tackler must be below the armpits of the ball carrier.

2. The laws state the game is to be played by players on their feet. However, there are a number of places where this is not encouraged by the laws and guidance to referees. The lineout has benefitted from the current use of lifters and I'd not want to change that. However let's get rid of lifting players to catch kick offs where all too often one of the lifters gets away with obstructing the other team.

However the area in which I believe a radical change needs making is the jumping of players to catch a Garryowen. In the recent Wales v Scotland game two players received yellow cards - unfairly and unluckily to my mind - for just being there when a catcher landed on them. If you jump up in the air you should accept the consequences. These jumpers have often been coached to lead with the knee or a set of studs.

The RFU has given its approval to the saddle or alligator roll at the breakdown where a player on his feet is pulled to the ground by a player arriving later. This is totally contrary to the laws on the ruck as well as the principle that players stay on their feet. The result is more players on the ground at the breakdown. It's not pleasant to watch and it does not help the quick recycling of the ball.

My change to the law would be—**Except in a lineout, no player shall be lifted in the air by another.**

In catching a ball which has been kicked ball a player must have at least one foot on the ground.

3. To my mind the maul means that the players have failed. I find no pleasure in seeing a dozen players in a mêlée from which you have very little confidence that the ball will ever reappear. It is not a good sight for this spectator. However I do not believe that the maul can ever be eradicated but there is one phase of the game where it could be removed. We now allow lifting at a lineout in order for the ball to be won cleanly and play to continue. In return for this I'd like the maul following a lineout to be disallowed. My change to the law would be -

The ball must leave the line out within five seconds of being thrown in.

Sanction - FK to the team not in possession.



Read on there's more!

BETTER RUGBY (continued)

4. I have never understood why a team 15 metres from scoring a try will have no gain in ground if they kick directly into touch, but a defending player kicking from the identical spot in his 22 leads to a lineout but with gain in ground. The defending side is given an advantage despite us being so often exhorted to reward positive and attacking play. How many times have we refereed on a poorly marked pitch, without a team of three and had to decide whether a kick occurred inside or outside the 22? In one of the recent internationals (France v Scotland?) the AR made the wrong decision on whether the ball had been taken backwards into the 22 or not. If they can't get it right what chance have we. One decision fewer has to make for better refereeing. My amendment to the laws is

Except in the case of a penalty kick there is no gain in ground from a kick directly into touch.

5. We often see players take the ball and a colleague binds on them as they both charge forwards. I would ban this. Is it not a form of the flying wedge which was outlawed some years ago? It is also another example of the battering ram approach to the game. Frequently the ball carrier goes to ground with the attached player still 'latched' onto him preventing any competition for the ball. I would propose that this tactic be banned as it is a flying wedge. The law change would read something like.

A player may not, in open play, bind onto a player of his own team prior to contact with an opposition player.

6. The scrum! This is the big one! Before I launch forth I've not yet worked out why coaches don't tell their packs NOT to push at all when they go down. If they get shunted backwards because the opposition are pushing they get a free kick. To me it's a classic Game Theory problem like the Prisoner's Dilemma. When I've had scrums pushing when they go down I've explained this to them and, lo and behold, no more pushing. Let's not beat about the bush, lots of international referees are just guessing when the scrum collapses. So why, when the ball is not put in straight don't they just penalise. Blow the whistle, and any scrum problem just disappears.

The scrum is inherently a system which is in unstable equilibrium. Any perturbation away from the equilibrium position will be magnified. Try putting two rulers end to end and start pushing them together. As you push more they are more likely to 'break' at the point where they meet. There are two solutions to this. Firstly, bind another ruler over the joint i.e. make a lap joint and the second is to push less. Thinking of our own refereeing, even on a pitch with the consistency of liquid mud, it is more than likely that we will have no collapses in a game with more scrums than many an international (because of more errors). Why no collapses? Because our props have straighter binds and the forces are less.

To produce this lap joint in the scrum requires all the props to have long straight arm binds.

My two proposed changes to the laws are

All props will bind with a straight arm. Any crookedness will be penalised.

The number in a team will be reduced to thirteen and the scrum will be made up of six players.

Gasp! I can hear the cries of "Sacrilege!" already. This proposed change has a number of potentially positive benefits. It reduces the forces in the scrum and so reduces the likelihood of a scrum collapse. It also creates more space in which players can run and boy do we need it. Perhaps we'll once again see the likes of a Shane Williams on the international stage. Players have become fitter and faster but the size of the pitch has not and so the opportunities for creative, running rugby have been reduced.

Professional rugby requires clubs to have larger squads than soccer teams. Nor can rugby teams play the 40+ games that soccer teams do and so take more gate money. Sponsors will not pay out for an unattractive product. Hence a smaller squad can only be good for the survival of the professional club game.

Getting together a side of 13 is easier than one of 15 so perhaps we will have fewer cancelled games. The stresses and dangers experienced by front row players will be reduced and this might encourage more players to play in those positions.

The reduction in numbers should lead to a game with more running. To support this I would like to see unlimited rolling replacements at all levels.

I believe it is no accident that the form of rugby that will be played in next year's Olympic Games is Sevens. Many countries, some without a long heritage of rugby, will be entering teams and the 'old' rugby nations will need to watch out for the likes of Portugal, Spain and Russia. So a move towards a game which is closer to Sevens can only be a good for the 'big' game in the long term.

It seems that any match on TV is now attended by more commentators and pundits than players on the field. Many of them do not know the laws ("You've got to let him up!") unlike Brian Moore who has made positive efforts to do so. Too many of them are fresh out of professional rugby and parrot the meaningless phrases they've heard from coaches. The language they use is inappropriate if we are to attract new players to the game especially the community game. To hear them talk of tacklers 'smashing' the opposition is not what a nervous mother of a potential player wants to hear. There is the need to educate and develop a cohort of commentators to match the likes of Bill McLaren or Cliff Morgan.

Stuart Graveston

GETTING IT BETTER

Editor's comment: Not one to hold back, Stuart has opened a debate and made several proposals. What do you think? Not just about Stuart's ideas but about the way the game is being played and how Rugby should be played for the best of reasons in safety, fairly and with less brutality. Do the laws need to be changed and, if so, how? His suggestion about the binding of the props was tried out in the Laws Laboratory. They disliked it and said it was impracticable because arms varied in length. This experimental variation had a short life.

It may very well be that the views CUDRRS members express carry less weight these days because the Laws Laboratory is no longer operating and the RFU Laws Sub-Committee does not visit Grange Road any more. Nevertheless, our views on how the game should be played can influence the way we referee the existing laws by ensuring our interpretation of them upholds the true spirit of rugby. We can also spread our gospel to players.

"Bored with the slow pace of the game, William Webb Ellis picked up the ball in his hands and ran with it".

DOING IT RIGHT

Another regular contributor to CONTACT, Guy Mulley, adds to the discussion about refereeing standards and seeks help with the Laws. Your newsletter provides an information service as well as being a forum for the exchange of opinion and ideas. He wrote with grammatical precision (almost, as it still needed editing),

Thanks for yet another thoughtful edition of **CONTACT**.

In your lead article "Who's Game Is That Anyway" (should that have been "Whose"?!), I expect that I was not the only one to notice your prefacing remark about Neil Hennessy: "Neil won his Blue as a prop..."

I wonder how many of Neil's detractors have ever played in the front row. Not many, I suspect. Therefore, I wonder if Neil's appointment meant that, for a change, a senior game of rugby got refereed by someone who actually knows about scrummaging and thus inevitably got refereed in a different way. We are particularly fortunate in CUDRRS to have referees who have been experienced scrummagers, such as our Hooker-President, Jon.

It is always interesting to hear such people speak. For example, I still remember from one of my first CUDRRS' meetings a comment made by Noel Woodgate, when the topic was the scrum. Noel made the simple – and, I believe, entirely correct point – that the alignment of a scrum inevitably causes it to wheel. The fact that the two loose heads are in effect pushing against only half of an opponent means that a scrum will, all else being equal/normal, go forwards faster on its left side than its right side. With both loose heads advancing thus, wheeling is an inevitable outcome.

As you intimate in your article, few referees at CUDRRS (or elsewhere in the amateur game) subscribe to the way things are done on TV. Your good question "Why didn't the players adapt to the ref?" can be simplified a stage further: "Why didn't the players adapt to the Laws of the game?"!

Having just checked my Laws Handbook while writing this email, I am now wondering about the whole business of 'deliberately' wheeling a scrum. It's not obvious from the Laws that is an explicit offence here, is it? Or am I missing something? If you agree that the Laws are not explicit about an offence of deliberate wheeling, let me know and I'll write you an article about the subject (which no doubt will require rummaging through the IRB's interpretation pronouncements).

CONTACT replied to Guy

Your comments are most welcome and I will use them in the April edition. Like you, I cannot find any reference in Law that makes the wheel an offence per se. It is a legitimate action. It depends though on how it is contrived. It could be an offence against Law 20.8(g) if any of the actions mentioned there cause it.

I used to coach the wheel by getting one prop to drive forward hard and the other less so depending on whether we wanted to wheel to the left or right. Useful to do this with the added advantage of a slope or to manoeuvre their back row towards touch.

Some referees do not get the scrum straight from the engagement. It has a natural swing to the right which can be avoided by getting the tight heads to lead into the "Set". This helps to start off with the centre line of the scrum parallel to the goal lines.

My cynicism about the top referees failing to adhere to the laws is such that I believe that when their matches are televised they do not mind the scrum angling as this can hide the tunnel from the lens. No chance of viewers seeing the ball put in crooked then. Look forward to receiving more material from you. It gives my typing fingers a rest.

The satisfied customer replied

Thanks for checking, I was fearing that I had missed something completely obvious.

Good point about getting the tight heads to lead into the set. And justified cynicism about TV referees being happy with angled tunnels.

I don't think that I'll have time to get anything penned before the end of this month; but I should have time to start on 'wheeling' article in early March. So, hope to send through at least a draft by mid-March. Guy.

SHARED VIEW

*Stirred by the message attached to the delivery of the last issue of **CONTACT** Steve Johnson wrote*

Completely agree about the not straight. When I think about how we were threatened with life-time bans if we allowed crooked feeding, it is very disappointing to see the blatant feeds in this tournament. Why is it allowed? It surely is one of the easiest offences to pick up on.....

I can't help thinking a lot of the other things we see on television are "allowed" because (a) they occur so quickly the refs almost don't have time to reflect on what they have seen, and the game has moved on, and (b) they still want to avoid dragging the game down by excessive penalties - almost as if "as long as it doesn't hamper the non-offending team too much, let it go."

Cheers, Steve Johnson

UPWARDS AND UPWARDS

Louis Biggs continues his development and was appointed to the Norfolk v Suffolk sub-county championship match at Thetford on 11th February 2015.

He was supported on this occasion by Jon Evans and Calum Worsley. CUDRRS has given Louis excellent support since he started his law degree course at Girton College three years ago.



Further big games have come his way. He refereed the Blues match against Penguins International at Grange Road and then the Quarter Final of the NatWest competition for Under 18's between St Josephs College, Ipswich and Wilmslow High School. These were RFU appointments, hence the purple (turned blue) shirt he is wearing.



Guy Mulley and Stuart Graveston assisted Louis with Charles Osbourn having a watching brief. **CONTACT** enlisted the help of GCHQ the intelligence and security organisation working to keep Britain safe and secure in the challenging environment of modern rugby to intercept emails going between them post match.

G2L -So skilful was your prosecution of the game that you didn't need to call your ARs as witnesses. Watching how you handle sporting encounters, it seems that competition law is a most apposite career choice.

As Charles mentioned, the game was at times ludicrously fast and you did fantastically well with the length-of-the-pitch tries that followed one another in the 37th and 39th minutes of the first half. (As did Mr Graveston – glad it wasn't on my side of the pitch!) It was - largely by the Penguins - a feast of rugby and the refereeing of these Barbarian-

style games is not always easy, because it can look like an absence of control.

However, given that neither captain (or the players) were giving you any stick shows that you got the balance right. Having seen you referee a quite different style of game, the Colleges Varsity match, it is clear that you are able to adapt your approach to suit the game.

C2LMS -Well done all three of you. The game was played at a furious pace and you all did very well to keep in good positions. The fact that there was not much input from Guy and Stuart shows how little Louis was missing, but a vital tool in the support needed in such a match and good experience for regular AR use in the future.

L2GS -I am just emailing to thank you both for your excellent support last night. Although perhaps you were not often involved, you made the right call when it mattered (Guy - First Try, Stuart - 12 Penguins Offside) and provided that support that I certainly needed to get through the game. Good luck with the rest of the season and I am sure I will see you soon. *(Surveillance to continue as Louis threatens to bomb along on his way to the top)*

HEALTHY ROOTS

If you are concerned about the future health of the game, our youth refereeing supremo writes of a recent experience that should reassure you that at the grassroots level in our area, all is well. John Hanlon writes

A reflection on my game last Sunday. We may have frustration and problems on the College rugby front but at the lower levels some things are great.

I arrived at Saffron Walden on a rather foggy but fresh morning to find a parking space reserved for me right next to the club house [Hurrah].

The pitch was less than perfect with standing water in some areas. If you stood for too long, the mud was up to up to your ankles. But the two U14 teams, Saffron Walden v Ely, were there and raring to go. Ely only had ten players but Walden had plenty and were happy to lend all that Ely needed.

I did tell the teams that I might have to blow very quickly in the flooded areas but, in fact, that was never necessary. All the players showed a maturity beyond their age in dealing with the conditions. Particularly in the muddy areas the ball was always laid back quickly at the tackle and everyone remained on their feet. The tackle area was brilliant with hardly any infringements, release of ball and man excellent and players actually staying on their feet. What a contrast to international/premiership rugby.

The penalty count was very low throughout the game. There was not one high tackle and no collapsed scrums despite the slippery ground. But more than anything, what made it such a great game was the attitude and spirit of every player on the field. Everyone gave 100% especially those Walden players who played for Ely. Both Ely tries were scored by Walden players.

All the players showed great respect for one another and for me. On just one occasion a player let slip "Forward" and immediately apologised to me. Likewise the touch line support was impeccably behaved. Skill levels were high and I was impressed with the way that the Walden players were able to fit seamlessly into the Ely side.

I felt privileged to be part of this match and congratulate all the players coaches and spectators on a brilliant and very satisfying morning in the very best traditions of rugby.

Editor's comment: *A very heart warming account of a match played for the sole purpose of having fun and making friends. It is a testimony to the efforts CUDRRS referees make each week to give youngsters better refereeing in a safe and disciplined environment. This is surely what parents wish for their children and when they see it, they are content to be quiet and respectful of the match official. Long may it continue, indeed throughout the whole of the playing lives of these young people. (That includes JH too).*

GOT IT WRONG

CONTACT was guilty of misinforming its readers about the date of the investiture of Tony Kennedy as the next President of the Cambridgeshire Rugby Union. The ceremony will take place at the County's Annual General Meeting to be held at the Shelford Rugby Club on **Wednesday, June 10, 2015.**

Thanks to reader, Alec Motts, for pointing this out.

NO QUITTER HE

*Nil desperandum (I shall not give up) could well be adopted by the Tyrrells as their family motto. It seems that **CONTACT** was premature in concluding that our Honorary Secretary had withdrawn from his first marathon due to injury. He sent an "I will not give up" message wishing to correct the impression that was given.*

Having just read Contact I would just like to say that I haven't totally given up on the marathon in Rotterdam yet. Still haven't totally shaken off the injury but managing to do a bit of running again. With eight weeks to go there is still an outside chance, particularly if I give myself no time target for finishing.

*No doubt readers will want to join **CONTACT** in wishing David a good recovery and a credit worthy run.*

IN LAUDEM SPORT

One of the objectives of CUDRRS is to promote a sporting spirit. Why is sport, and amateur Rugby in particular, regarded so highly. What makes it so praiseworthy? Here are a couple of opinions.

Pope Francis speaking passionately about sport said that it is "a significant means of fostering the integral growth of the human person, of creating friendships and of surpassing borders, languages, races, religions and ideologies. Sport is harmony, but if the immoderate pursuit of money and success takes over, this harmony can be lost." Simply put, sport is a power for good.

Kimberley Crow, an Australian world champion in the single sculls has said "Trying to win and training to win is vitally important. But aspiring to win is vastly different from winning at all costs. True sportsmanship is also about respecting your opposition for the commitment they have shown, irrespective of who wins. Sport is about training to know how to do your best, doing your best, then working out how you can do better". **Praise be.**

CAPTION COMPETITION



This month's offering features the Mulley family. Luke Mulley, aged 18, seen here with his year older sibling, sister Natasha, along with father Guy formed a team of three for the match between Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds at Under 14's in December last year.

What would be a suitable caption for this photo?



Please send your text to **CONTACT** before the end of March 2015. There will of course be a prize awarded to the best entry as judged by the editor.

NEW MEMBERS

Two more successful candidates from Level 2 – Refereeing the 15-a-side game courses have joined our ranks for on-going training, support and development opportunities. They are Alun Bedding, a former prop for ten years and a coach to the Under 11's at Shelford and Martyn Langley who is in the Army and lives near Saffron Walden. We welcome them to the society and to the readership of **CONTACT**.

YOU KNOW IT MAKES SENSE

As the season draws to a close, we should take time out to reflect on what we have achieved during it.

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, said "An unexamined life is not a life worth living". If refereeing is worth doing, an examination of our lives as members of CUDRRS should be axiomatic. You know it makes sense so there should be no question about the necessity to examine how we prepare to do our roles and how we perform them.

We should have a positive attitude towards the process of continually reviewing why we are members of this society, what we are trying to achieve and how we might improve the outcomes. Without such examinations we will drift off course.

Presumably most of us are always looking to experience that peak performance, moments of excitement and extraordinary events. This is what keeps us going when sometimes, for example, the game we are involved in leaves us feeling ordinary and even bored. This applies to match officials as well as players and spectators.

The real trick is to appreciate that even bad days have something to teach us, have some good in them if we bother to look for it. This is where membership of CUDRRS provides us with help to see the hidden benefits of every experience. That is one of the purposes of our monthly meetings, generally reasonably attended but ought to be attended by more.

Fellow members, like family and friends, are on hand to help us persevere through our difficulties and are generous in their support with advice. This togetherness is the sure path to better refereeing for better Rugby.

Whether next season is your first or your last, remember Aristotle and begin to look forward to it with a plan, containing a review element and a commitment to share your experiences with other members.

Roll on September 2015

BETTER TOGETHER

CONTACT is compiled and edited by Michael Dimambro, Honorary Member of CUDRRS. Opinions expressed here are his personal ones, but not exclusively, and not intended to conflict with those of CUDRRS elected officers.

Members (and other readers) are invited to contribute articles, comments and issues for discussion and share the ownership of this newsletter. Thanks to those that do and to the other sources of material and ideas used.

Send your input by email to: michael.dimambro@ntlworld.com or telephone **01223 564459**.

TROUBLED TIMES



Dave Howell, Calum Worsley and Guy Mulley tuck in whilst other CUDRRS members socialise with student players and grounds staff. Deborah Griffin chats with some of the ladies players. Inset: CRDO John Naylor. Thanks John and CURFU

It's no secret that College Rugby is not in a very healthy state at the moment. Our referees turn up to find teams short of players and scrummages that have to be waged uncontested.

Not very satisfying but a situation that has waxed and waned over the past twenty years. I recall early in my refereeing career going to do Emmanuel and Caius at Wilberforce Road. The kick off time arrived with Emma able to field a full team but Caius had only four players. There had been communication problems I was told.

What to do? Twenty of us there eager to play, a nice day and it would be a shame for them to go back to college and for me to go home. Their season had only just started and they needed to get into it.

Responding to the Emma captain's suggestion that we ought to do something, I offered them a coaching session and a seven a side game to follow. They accepted and with crossed fingers I started.

The drills I set up were new to many of them and they were particularly wary when I got them to practice

rucking "All Black" style at a tackle. Two players on the ground to simulate a tackle and then in pairs they had to run, bind and drive over them to clear out pretend opponents. I stood with a touch flag in my hand, held out horizontally about waist high to set a height below which they had to approach the tackle area. If they arrived too high, they got a tap on the head. We ran and passed, tackled and had small games to give the session a competitive edge. We ended with Sevens and the hour or so of practice was enjoyed and profitably spent.

I mention this simply to illustrate that College Rugby needs referees to be as accommodating as possible. Usually those who volunteer to do these matches give up their time hoping that the students will provide them with a decent game without the cynical cheating that is prevalent at some levels. The value of the contribution referees and others make to College Rugby this season was recognised by the University Constituent Body in hosting a College Rugby Reward evening.

College Rugby Development Officer, John Naylor, invited student players, referees and grounds staff to a get together in the Bodger's Room at Grange Road before the Blues v Spoon Anti Assassins match. Deborah Griffin, the CB's Honorary Secretary, told the gathering that the support they had given to College Rugby was greatly appreciated. She said that the CB realised that College Rugby was going through difficult times but that it was determined to deal with the problems they faced stemming from insufficient student participation. John Naylor told **CONTACT** that they would be approaching the issue with a blank sheet of paper and a willingness to consider all options.

Whatever, the CB comes up with, no doubt there will be a role for CUDRRS. Whether it be refereeing College Rugby in the format of Sevens or Tens, under floodlights, at weekends instead of midweek, training and coaching more student referees, it is hoped that the seventy years long association between University and District Rugby will prove equal to the challenges and be strong enough, flexible enough and resourceful enough to help nurse College Rugby back to good health.

When you are in trouble, you find out who your true friends are. CUDRRS indeed will prove to be a good friend.

FITZ THE BILL

Fitzwilliam College claims that its men's rugby team is very friendly and relaxed. It welcomes players of any level, complete beginners or accomplished ones. It has had success in recent years and currently holds the University Plate. In keeping with its motto, *Ex antiquis et novissimis optima* (the best of old and new) the club advertises that it is a great way to relax during term and it also has an excellent social life. This fits the bill for the true amateur as to play rugby together for fun and party together afterwards in friendship is one of the best of the old traditions that new generations should preserve. Long may it last in student rugby in Cambridge and elsewhere.

Not for the first time the College has shown the true spirit of Rugby that the CUDRRS **Fair Play Trophy** was intended to promote when it was inaugurated in 2003. **Fitzwilliam has once again won the FPT** and on this occasion just managed to fend off the challenge from Downing College. Congratulations to Captain Joe David and his team and thanks to them for showing respect to referees, a sporting attitude, team discipline and their appreciation of the referee with three cheers and a hand shake. Stuart Graveston has notified Joe about his college's success and invited two of his team to be our guests at our Annual Dinner and Ladies Night.



THE CURTAIN COMES DOWN



The party's over. It's time to call it a day. This Jule Styne song has been used to close a number of shows and seems appropriate to quote as the curtain comes down on the refereeing career of Tony Kennedy.

Some may suggest that **My Way** would be more appropriate. The lyrics of that song tell the story of a man who, having grown old, reflects on his life as it nears its end. He is comfortable with his mortality and takes responsibility for how he dealt with all the challenges of his life whilst maintaining a respectable degree of integrity.

Or would **Unforgettable** be an even better choice to sum up TK's years of whistling? Whichever the choice, it is right to sing the praises of someone who has given 25 years of his active life to CUDRRS and whose refereeing had those distinct qualities of honesty, confidence and fairness. It was delivered in a unique style that brought him respect, renown and recognition within and beyond the boundaries of Cambridgeshire.

Tough game. Firm control needed. Send for Kennedy. This was the solution often used by appointment secretaries within the Central Federation and Eastern Counties when they had problems in getting the right person for the job.

Twenty two members turned up to the monthly meeting at Shelford to hear Tony recall his experiences.



The plentiful food and drink Tony provided was devoured with relish as he related how his membership of CUDRRS had taken him around the world to San Francisco, Bangkok, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. He told his story like a performance of Joseph and his Multi Coloured Dreamcoat as he used the multitude of jerseys he had acquired on his travels as props. Afterwards these were donated to Kit Aid along with items from other members.

Tony expressed his concern about whether the society would be able to recruit sufficient members to replace the senior ones like himself who retired. He felt that the close knit Cambridgeshire rugby community made refereeing a joy especially when the clubs were so welcoming to CUDRRS referees and appreciative of the service they gave.

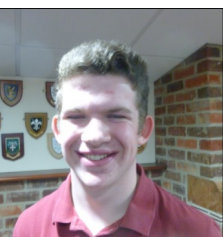
There was much discussion about how the image of rugby was being damaged by the failure of the professional game to scrummage correctly and supposedly top referees failing to apply the laws effectively. Fortunately, the disease was not spreading down to the levels CUDRRS refereed and there was general assent that we should continue to do a **proper job** as the Cornish would say.

Tony and Jeff Miles, also present, were trained in 1989 by the Daniel and Dimambro tutelage. All four want Rugby to be played for fun. Tony said this would be one of the themes of his presidency of Cambridgeshire RFU. The other would be to help the society maintain and improve the standards of refereeing. His visits to clubs would be used to spread the messages to players to "Lighten up and enjoy the game" and to clubs to "Encourage more people to referee as you can't play without them".

The night's dialogue gave members plenty to think about particularly how the society could ensure that future members had the same degree of commitment as the current ones enabling it to provide referees to the same extent as now. **CONTACT** wishes Tony a happy and successful Presidency. It should be fun!

TURN OVERS

As one ref leaves, others arrive. At the March meeting, it was goodnight from TK and welcome to JD and JM.



John Doak (left) introduced himself and announced his intention to become a referee. He is 16 years old, a Bottisham schoolboy who plays No.8 at the Ely club and is desperate to get on a RFU ELRA course soon.

Josh Marks (right) is a language student at Emmanuel College who has passed the ELRA Part 2 and has already worked for John Hanlon.

No doubt both listened to TK's revelations with incredulity hoping that they will enjoy refereeing as much as he did. With CUDRRS they will!



A DEBT REPAID

SATURDAY PEOPLE

Dimambro plans five year debt payment

Mike Dimambro, one time utility back and now coaching organiser of the Cambridgeshire Rugby Union, begins a new career next season.

He is taking up refereeing with a five-year target and then retirement, of reaching first class status having paid his debt to rugby.

"I am a bit tired after seven years as coaching organiser and I am now finding it difficult to get the time off work for the mid-week matches," he explained.

"I want to have a go at refereeing and put a little more back into a game that has given me so much enjoyment. I have some little ambition to referee a first class game and I will give another five years before my debt to the game is paid.

"Several local referees have said they will watch my progress next season and advise me and I feel that my technical knowledge of the game will help me understand what is going on," he added.

His debt to the game includes the first meeting with his wife at a Cambridge Rugby Club function.

It was 11 years ago that Dimambro, a Bristolian by birth and instinct, arrived in Cambridge to take up a post as a Public Health Inspector with the Cambridge City Council, and he was soon involved with rugby — first as a player and official with Cambridge and afterwards as coach.

Then, four years ago, he was asked by the then chairman of the county selectors, John Soulsby, to add the job of coach to the Cambridge-shire side to his other duties.

With this appointment he quickly grew in stature and was soon in demand all over

By David Hallett

the Eastern Counties. He was appointed coach to the Counties Colts and ran a course for coaches in Essex.

He has strong views on coaching, which he regards solely as a means of improving the enjoyment of rugby.

"Coaching leads to better play and better play leads to more enjoyment," he explained.

"The biggest danger, however, is bad coaches. Coaching out flair is bad coaching. The idea is not to make robots but rather to harness individual flair to the benefit of the team.

"We aim to equip players for the game by developing their skills and techniques," he added.

It is the desire by players at all levels to play the game better that has led to the coaching revolution in rugby, he maintains.

Despite his stated desire to sever his connections with the game after another five years it is doubtful whether his threat will become a reality.

His pedigree — St. Fendans School and St. Mary's Old Boys — is the sort that many of the greatest names in British rugby have thrived upon, and it is hard to believe that so much enthusiasm will be allowed to die in one of the most respected figures in Cambridgeshire rugby.



● MIKE DIMAMBRO

This article and photo appeared in the Cambridge Evening News on 5th April 1975.

What I originally planned to be a five year repayment period has, by my own choice, lasted far longer. Forty years on, I continue to contribute to refereeing although the debt I owe to Rugby has more than been paid in full.

Whilst my enthusiasm for the sport has not diminished, my physical ability limits my participation more to thought and word than in deed. I'm not as fit and fast these days.

My ambition to referee a first class game was not fulfilled because I was unable to commit sufficiently to achieving it. I took up the whistle too late in life but enjoyed it for 26 years.

My refereeing days ended in March 2001 when at 65 years old I suffered a mild stroke whilst refereeing University College Sevens.

I had reached the pinnacle of both my professional and refereeing careers in 1979.

In June, I was promoted to Chief Officer of the City Council's Environmental Health Department. In October, I refereed at my highest level of appointment, the Town v Gown match, then Level 4. The University fielded two future England internationals, Marcus Rose and Paul Ackford, and two England reserves Ian Peck and Ian Metcalfe.

Commitment to my work took priority over my Rugby for the next ten years. However, I found time to run annual referee training courses and boost recruitment.

Since 1991, I have been part of the leadership of CUDRRS helping to set up its management and planning processes and to gain recognition as a fully independent society.

All good things must come to an end but, who knows, there could yet be more good Rugby days to come for me. I have plans. MJD