



ACT Rugby Referees Association 2020 Annual Report

Sam Whittle
President



CONTENTS

Patron, Executive, Office Bearers, Life Members	3
2020 Award Winners	4
Vale	5
President's Report	7
Chair Coaching & Grading Report	11
U/19 Coaching & Grading Report	13
Brumbies Referee Department Report	15
Welfare Officer's Report	17
2020 Statistics	19
Off-season appointments	20
Record of Matches Refereed	21
ACTRRA Milestones Honour Board	21
Record of 1 st Grade games refereed	23
Season totals	25



ACT Rugby Referees Association

PATRON, EXECUTIVE, OFFICE BEARERS, LIFE MEMBERS

Patron	Peter Lawler, OAM
President	Sam Whittle
Vice President	Mike Dowsett
Secretary (to September 2020)	Rob Whyte
Treasurer	Amy Kilmister
Assistant Secretary	Nathan Mass
Welfare Officer (ex officio)	Matt Huggins

APPOINTMENTS

Chair, Coaching and Grading	Owen Keane
Senior appointments coordinator	Owen Keane
U/19 appointments coordinator	Peter Langford

RUGBY AUSTRALIA / BRUMBIES STAFF

Referee Development Officer, RA	Shane Barr
Community Rugby Manager	Craig Leseberg
Senior Competition Manager	Matt Vowles
Rugby Services Manager	Caitlin Bokor

LIFE MEMBERS

1972	D. M. Blake	2007	B. McCormick
1976	P.J.Lawler	2008	D. Fryer
1988	P. M. Richards	2011	I. Schubert
1991	J. R. Smith	2015	P. Janssens
1996	P. J. Scholtens	2016	M. Keogh
1996	P. A. Larsen	2017	M. Cleary
1996	A. J. Casey	2017	B. Bowden
2006	K. Lees	2018	J. Cunningham



ACT Rugby Referees Association

2020 AWARD WINNERS

Jim Healy Trophy	Nathan Mass
B.A.R. Trophy	Brodie Ingram
David Fryer Award	Dennis Beissner
Peter Lawler Trophy	TBA
President's Trophy	Brodie Ingram
Les Ramsay (Patron's) Trophy	Dennis Beissner
Bruce Hawke Memorial Trophy	Ben Reedy
ACTRRA Executive Trophy	Matt Hogan
Australian Forestry School Trophy	Steve Peak
Life Member's Trophy	Mitch Egan
HB (Barney) Ravenscroft Trophy	Matt Huggins
Old Boys Trophy	Harry Fenton
Monaro Rugby Trophy	Nathan Mass
William Boyle Trophy	Not Awarded
Refereeing Whistle	Sara Mooney
JS Waters Whistle	Jacob Beissner
Bruce Portway Whistle	Harry Fenton
Member's Whistle	Ethan Gumbrell



ACT Rugby Referees Association

VALE

Since the 2019 Annual General Meeting there have been at least four former members of the Association who have died. We remember those colleagues:

Peter Flanagan: 14 October 1940 - 18 October 2019

Peter's name first appeared in the Association's records in 1985 when he was awarded his Members Badge and refereed 10 JRU games.

By the time he gave up active refereeing in 1999 Peter had refereed 84 games of which about 25 were Senior appointments. That is not a large number of games but Peter's contribution to the Association and his influence on the development of so many referees was only just beginning.

In 1998 Peter embraced the concept of Referee Coaching and in 2000 he became the Chairman of the Special Matches & Grading Committee and Director of Appointments. Peter held this position until the end of the 2002 season but remained a member of the Committee until the end of the 2010 season. Peter took to referee coaching with enthusiasm and gusto, and he was very good at it.

During this time Peter developed a simple system by which referees could be compared based on their adherence to 'Flano's Flats'.

F – Fitness

L - Law: knowledge of and application of

A - Advantage

T - Talk (as in communication)

S - Signals.

FLATS became his mantra and if referees embraced the FLATS concept, they would become better referees.

It is as applicable today as it was 2000.

Brian Hurley: 16 April 1925 - 14 January 2020

The Associations records indicate that Brian joined the Association in 1964 and during seasons 1965 to 1969 he was a member of the Laws Committee and the Junior Appointments Board.

Brian was awarded his Senior Badge in 1965 and was also the recipient of the Bruce Portway whistle that year. In 1967 he was appointed to his first 1st Grade game and was the winner the BAR Trophy. Interestingly, earlier in the season, he took over from Ted Hancock who was injured during his 1st Grade game and completed that game.

In the early 1970s Brian was an Australian government official in Geneva so withdrew from the Association.

In 1975 he reconnected with the Association and in 1979 he refereed the grand final of the Under 16 Black Division. In the early 1980s he had another interruption to his career when posted to Washington, USA. While there he refereed in the local competition - Potomac Rugby - covering Maryland, Virginia and Washington DC and on one occasion at a Carnival in New Orleans.

From 1983 he continued to referee a few Senior and Junior games each season till 1990 and from 1983 until 1987 he was an active member of the Senior Appointments Board.

During his career Brian refereed 17 1st Grade games and more than 400 games in total.



ACT Rugby Referees Association

John Dunstone: 16 June 1933 - 23 April 2020

The Association records indicate that John Dunstone joined the Association in 1967 and in 1968 was awarded his Senior Badge and was the recipient of the Bruce Portway Whistle.

The records are incomplete as to when he was appointed to his first 1st Grade game but up to and including 1972, he was a member of the Junior Appointments Board, the Coaching Committee and the Examination Committee. In 1970 he refereed the Grand Finals of the Under 15 (a) and Under 15 (b) competitions. In 1971 he refereed the Under 16 Grand Final and in 1972 the Grand Final of the Under 19 Competition.

John is last mentioned in the Association records in 1972 having refereed 23 1st Grade games.

Ross Carlyon: 24 September 1952 - 30 August 2020

The name of Ross Carlyon first appears in the Association records in 2000. The records do not show that he took a Laws exam on joining the Association but as a member of the Royal Australian Navy it is probable that he obtained a Badge in another Association. It is true that Ross was not the fittest or fastest referee in the Association, but he was probably the most enthusiastic. Between 2000 and 2007 Ross refereed less than 30 JRU games and with about the same number of Touch Judge appointments.

Ross and his wife Sue's son, Justin, was also a young referee and Ross spent most Saturday mornings transporting Justin across Canberra so that he could fulfil multiple appointments at grounds sometimes a long way apart. Every Association needs members like Ross.

Bob Newman: 20 July 1929 - 11 August 2020

Although not a member of the Association Bob was a well-known and respected Rugby man in Canberra going back to the time of the once strong Forestry School Rugby Club.

Until subsumed by the ANU in 1965, the Australian Forestry School (AFS), located in Canberra, had an active rugby club in the local ACTRU competition. Bob Newman and other 'old boys' of the AFS proactively sought out the ACTRRA to contribute a trophy in recognition of the qualities and benefits referees brought to their games. In 2004, Bob Newman presented the inaugural Australian Forestry School Trophy to be awarded to the referee of the 3rd Grade Premier Division Grand Final.

Due to changes in the structure of the competitions in Canberra the Trophy was awarded to the referee of the 1st Division 1st Grade Grand Final in 2010 and 2011. With subsequent changes to the Premier Division competition during the last few years the Trophy is now again awarded.



ACT Rugby Referees Association

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2020

I am pleased to report to members of the ACT Rugby Referees Association on the activities of the Executive Committee and events within the Association during the very unusual 2020 rugby season.

No discussion of 2020 can be complete without reference to the Christmas / New Year bushfires and smoke, the devastating hailstorm of 20 January and the complete shutdown due to the COVID pandemic from late March. In short 2020 has not been an ordinary year and our way of life, including rugby at all levels of the game, has forever changed. The pandemic this year has been replete with cliches. No-one could have foreshadowed the dramatic halt to our season in March and the seismic impact on our everyday lives at work and at play. It seemed our very existence was being choreographed by Health advisors and speculation, uncertainty, disruption, and even despair became our everyday life. The community we live in has forever changed and adapting to change has become part of our great game.

We were fortunate that COVID restrictions were sufficiently relaxed by governments at about the same time to plan a shortened season that could include all ACT- and NSW-based clubs in our competition. Brumbies Community Rugby liaison with the Sport and Recreation arms of government allowed restricted training at club level to begin at short notice in late June. Our adjusted season kicked off in mid-July and continued until mid-October.

Training.

As in years past, the season opened with the Will Boyle bridge-to-bridge lake run on 4 February. Attendance was limited with the smoke residue hanging over Canberra. On 6 February we began group training at Brumbies HQ. We were fortunate to secure the services of Isaac Scherer to take our dedicated group through the World Rugby Activate programme. Sessions were planned until the end of daylight saving but like so many activities, were cut short by COVID lockdowns.

On 15 March we held our pre-season seminar. Along with our usual brief on the season's Game Management Guidelines we were treated to an in-depth examination of the scrum with Mr Sam Needs before finishing in time to attend the Super Rugby fixture at GIO Stadium.

COVID lockdowns for sport came into effect almost immediately after our 14 March weekend of trials, making all community recreational activities subject to Government enforced restrictions. For our Association, training became a solo activity. To meet these government restrictions, we distributed Rugby Australia training material for use by individual members, and the Rugby Australia Referees Department held Zoom arranged in conjunction with local talent. Shane Barr managed the almost nightly virtual meetings Australia-wide for Referees and Coaches of all Associations, week by week and often in his own time. Members should be aware that much of this work was done voluntarily by Rugby Australia staff who had limited or no paid employment. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude and thanks to Shane and his colleagues in providing a great variety of relevant topics and discussions for our education and advancement. Thank you.

Early June brought cautious but steadily developing optimism for a local senior and junior competition. Brumbies Community Rugby explored various scenarios but necessarily kept details confidential pending a government announcement on the lifting of restrictions relied upon for any return to competition. However, by late June we were hopeful that a mid-July start was possible for a reduced competition. The Executive agreed to re-institute training under strict COVID provisions. Acknowledging ACTRRA does not have a physical home, we negotiated with Brumbies Rugby to access their HQ pitch one evening per week. I would like to acknowledge Brodie Ingram for agreeing to run these sessions using the Activate programme. A small, dedicated group, including some junior referees took up this training initiative. Sessions ran from 2 July through to the competition finals in mid-October. Our only regret was the inability to have our annual cricket match during the last session because of ground closures.



ACT Rugby Referees Association

Coaching and Grading.

I am extremely grateful that both Owen Keane, (seniors) and Peter Langford (juniors) agreed to take on their respective co-ordinator roles this year. As with all other aspects of our sport, from mid-March we had no knowledge or expectations that there would be an ACT rugby season. During this time there was constant liaison with Brumbies Community Rugby as they acted as our conduit to the ACT and NSW Governments. For many weeks there was no news from Government of a hoped-for start to the season. As such, we necessarily had to be put on hold our pre-season plan to sight all referees, as we had no knowledge of a season structure. Unfortunately, with a shortened season, not all referees were sighted; for that I apologise, however the reality of limited capability persisted as some coaches elected not to attend games, even in our shortened season. These challenges notwithstanding, the huge 'back-of-house' efforts of Owen and Peter, in liaison with Brumbies and ACTJRU personnel, meant that most games were allocated a referee and the competition retained its legitimacy

Owen's and Peter's reports follow.

Abuse and Referee Welfare.

The subject of Match Official abuse has been raised for many years, yet improved outcomes are spasmodic and modest at best. With this background and because of his own experiences, Matt Huggins offered his services as a liaison for any ACTRRA referee who needed a 'friend' to talk to where they had been the target of abuse. With the remainder of the Executive's approval, he was granted 'visitor' status to executive meetings. In liaison with Shane Barr and his network of referee colleagues, Matt was able to offer moral support and guidelines on managing the aftermath of instances of abuse. Early success convinced me to suggest this model to the Australian Referee President's forum where it was eagerly supported. After President-forum workshops on Association Governance plus the upcoming requirements for Federal Government mandated policy adoptions, Matt's initiative has been recommended for adoption by all referee bodies Australia wide.

Unfortunately, there are too many examples of abuse remaining un-reported. As with any undesirable behaviour, it is the instances that are ignored or that go unreported that set the standard and become the accepted norm. Any form of Match Official abuse is unacceptable and by not reporting an instance, members are encouraging repeat behaviour that could affect another member. I am extremely disappointed that some instances of serious abuse still went unreported. One particular event prompted me to castigate attendees of an ACT Premier Club President's meeting. We are all aware of the cascade that will eventuate when action is not taken; an instance of abuse issue occurs, is not reported, recurs and the victim eventually decides to give up the whistle. Such instances of abuse can therefore create a downward spiral that leads to fewer remaining referees, which in turn diminishes the quality of our Association offering.

If you suffer any level of abuse - REPORT IT. If you ignore it then you accept it.

Exchange Programmes.

All referee exchanges were cancelled for 2020 given government mandated travel restrictions. We hope interstate exchanges might be possible in 2021. Much will depend on timely government permissions.

2020 Awards and presentations.

Government restrictions around gatherings meant it was impossible to plan an Annual Presentation night for 2020. Thus, we lost our annual opportunity to meet and reflect on the season that was and to honour our award winners. Your executive felt it important to honour our award winners as best we could and with the kind permission of both the ACTJRU and Brumbies Community Rugby, grand final referees were presented their trophies immediately following their match as part of the game presentation process.



ACT Rugby Referees Association

Hopefully government regulations will permit us to meet as a group at the 2021 pre-season seminar so that our remaining awards can be physically given and received in the presence of as many members as possible. All our 2020 award winners are listed later in this report.

Sponsorship.

ACTRRA is fortunate to have a very generous group of sponsors. I extend heartfelt thanks to Brumbies Rugby, Canberra Consulting, Aulich Law, Waidt Services, Keane Consulting, PSC Insurance and McDonalds for their support during the 2020 season. It is most disappointing we were prevented from holding a sponsor's event or inviting our sponsors to our Annual Presentation night. Executive has arranged framed jerseys for presentation to most of our sponsors by way of a 2020 thank you.

Accolades.

I would like to congratulate the significant achievements of the following members:

Reuben Keane was selected to enter the Rugby Australia 'bubble' and was appointed to:

- Super W Referee and Assistant Referee
- Super Rugby Assistant Referee [Debut] and Super Rugby AU Assistant Referee
- Australian Club Championships Assistant Referee
- Shute Shield 2nd Grade Grand Final referee
- Rugby Australia XV-Los Pumas fixture as Referee.

Brodie Ingram was appointed as a Super Rugby Assistant Referee

Evan Nelson was awarded a School Student Scholarship for 2020.

Brumbies Rugby.

It is important to acknowledge the significant and often unpaid support offered by the Community Rugby department at Brumbies. With so many unknowns and variables surrounding the implementation of a 2020 season, it was the leadership, advice and administrative support of Craig Leseburg, Matt Vowles and Caitlin Bokor at Brumbies that allowed a pandemic compliant, albeit shortened competition to take place. The financial restrictions at all levels of Australian rugby will be felt for some time, however much was achieved in 2020 because of the above and beyond efforts of these individuals.

I would also like to personally thank Peter Johnson, Brumbies Chairman for his counsel and advice during the season.

Executive Committee.

On behalf of all members, I would like to thank the Executive team for 2020.

Rob Whyte was the only continuing member of Executive and we would have been lost without his experience and understanding of the Association's business. Rob moved to Melbourne to further his studies and although for a time was able to continue electronically, he advised me in September that he was unfortunately unable to continue and I reluctantly accepted his resignation. With only 2 weeks of competition remaining, Executive agreed that I would assume the Secretary's duties noting there would not be a presentation night and that a potential replacement, Mitch Egan had university exams until late October.

I would like to thank our Vice-president Mike Dowsett for his well-considered and timely advice on numerous matters and for his historical perspective on many issues. Amy Kilmister has been a solid Treasurer whose efforts to get our banking set up were almost thwarted by a period of enforced quarantine and by Westpac Bank. It would be remiss to ignore the fantastic efforts of Nathan Mass as Assistant Secretary, in particular his managing of our new uniform while



ACT Rugby Referees Association

contending with the effects of the summer bushfires on his local south coast community. Finally, to Matt Huggins for his visionary efforts in establishing a welfare officer model for our Association.

Thanks to Owen Keane, Peter Langford and their cohort of referee coaches. Your efforts this year, hampered in so many ways beyond anyone's control, have been greatly appreciated. We look forward to a reinvigorated coaching group in season 2021.

It is with sadness we farewell Shane Barr from the Rugby Australia role as he embarks on a new career teaching in Hong Kong. Shane has given ACTRRA superb support with his depth of knowledge and his relentless work ethic. Best wishes to Shane in his new venture and a heartfelt thank you on behalf of all members. We look forward to working with Shane's replacement, Graham Cooper, known to some of you in ACTRRA from his activities in Rugby Australia.

I am also greatly appreciative for the wise council from Peter Lawler OAM, our Patron. Thankyou.

In closing I would like to thank all members for the support you have given me during this most difficult of years. With such an '*annus horribilis*' almost behind us, we hope for a much brighter and better 2021 season. I wish all members and their loved ones the best for a well-earned Christmas holiday period and a prosperous and safe New Year.

Sam Whittle
President
November 2020



ACT Rugby Referees Association

CHAIR of COACHING, GRADING and APPOINTMENTS' REPORT

It is very hard to compare this year to anything we have experienced before. COVID-19 was doing its very best to shut down our season altogether and if it wasn't for the Brumbies office tireless commitment and work, despite being on reduced hours, I highly doubt we would have had a season.

Our preseason training this year was run by a semi-professional trainer from Canberra University and I believe everyone involved really benefited from a more structured approach to the previous 2 years. The turn out to these sessions from Junior and Senior referees brought a smile to the face of the guy tasked with trying to keep referees in shape on our wonderful game week to week.

My second year into the job really hadn't panned out as planned. The strict COVID requirements meant that ACTRRA was asked to limit numbers of non-essential referees at venues, and many of our coaching group, myself included, didn't want to take unnecessary health risks. The compressed nature of the 2020 season also made it far more challenging to keep up with the regular education and information sessions, all of which contributed to reduced sightings from coaches and less face-to-face coaching. Unfortunately, the successful "seen twice" policy of 2019 really did turn into "hopefully seen once" in 2020.

For as long as I have been a referee in Canberra, ACTRRA has had monthly education nights, often held in a classroom at Canberra Grammar school, where referees from Junior and Senior ranks would meet to discuss and share tips on refereeing and trends in the game. This year this style of meeting was impossible. Thankfully Rugby Australia really came to the rescue and provided associations with excellent online national education sessions, while including as much local content as possible. Those that were able to participate found the sessions very useful. Unfortunately, not everyone in the refereeing and coaching fraternity was in a position to utilise or benefit from these sessions but in a very challenging year these sessions were an excellent substitute for no education at all.

It really wasn't all bad news though. Being forced to find new ways to participate in regular education allowed ACTRRA and ACTRU to review, adapt and change the sometimes-tired old processes. Two noticeable benefits of season 2020 was live streaming of all John I Dent games and the maturation of our peer review in the HUDL video portal. These two things largely benefited the referees in our top 3 senior graded panels (35 referees and coaches), but without both these changes, ACTRRA would have really struggled to stay in touch with any local rugby. Going forward, to really gain the maximum benefit of these two enhancements, ACTRRA should consider some procedural oversight and some group training to referees and coaches. This would allow better interactions and potentially allow more referees to benefit from the discussions.

Referee numbers continues to be a problem. This year we started with 8 less regulars than last year, and only 3 new faces. Our saving grace was a reduction in overall weekly games in the ACTRU draw, down from about 33 in 2019 to approximately 23 each week in season 2020.

It is possibly not obvious to the rugby community, but the lack of senior referees actually does most harm to our junior game. Those players that are building their skills and passion for the game in the Under 15s to Under 18s, that really need the guidance of a mature and experienced referee to produce an even and spirited contest, were without a referee on most weekends in 2020. This often resulted in frustrated players and spectators, and the inevitable abuse.

There were opportunities for our referees right across the spectrum of grades this year. Harry Fenton made his debut in John I Dent 1st grade and a handful of referees had their debuts in John I Dent games this year. James Willemsen and Chris Cousins also made their debuts in First XV rugby. Our referee coaches did a great job in ever-changing circumstances. Thanks to Greg Saphin, Bryce Gorrell, Dave Murphy, Dennis Beissner and James Willemsen for doing the heavy lifting this year.



ACT Rugby Referees Association

Pathway opportunities through referee exchanges were drastically affected by travel constraints and we hope that these are re-invigorated when interstate travel allows.

Rugby Australia had a very testing year in 2020 with many of the referee department either stood down or made volunteers. ACTRRA were extremely fortunate that Shane Bar was kept on and his work, often seven days a week around the clock, allowed us to continue online education and coaching sessions that literally didn't exist at the start of the COVID pandemic. Sadly, Shane is leaving Rugby Australia in November and we wish him well in his new endeavours.

Owen Keane
Chair, Coaching and Grading, 2020.



ACT Rugby Referees Association

U/19 COACHING and GRADING COORDINATOR'S REPORT

A season that we thought would never start.

February saw a lot of interest from all sections of the game eager to get the season under way. At our AGM I was nominated by Jack to fill a position I thought was to assist with the junior appointments, referee the odd game here or there and continue with my referee coaching duties. As we left the room Dennis said he would continue doing what he had been doing throughout 2019, keeping Rob honest and appointing the coaches to various referees. How wrong can one be! I had accepted the nomination to be the Junior Appointments person.

Nevertheless, after a somewhat protracted start to the on again off again season we received the word that it would be a shortened season with ten rounds and a grand final between the two top teams in each age group and division. It was also mooted that there would be games involving 3 v4, 5v6 to make up for the loss of games by the players due to the shortened nature of the season.

This year saw Shane Barr continue as RDO. He convened a number of zoom development nights and meetings throughout the season which certainly contributed to our development as both an association and referees. A new initiative this year was to offer a range of accreditation courses online and this certainly led to a number of new, young and not so young referees joining our ranks. I thank Shane for his continued assistance and support.

I set about grading the referees together with input from Rob Boyes, Dennis Beissner and Rob Whyte to see where the gaps lay and who we had available. We soon discovered that numbers would be tight, once again, particularly around the 15s, 16, and opens. So, we put in a strategy to advise clubs as soon as practical if they would have a referee or not for the weekend. This meant that we needed everyone, as much as possible, to remain fit and healthy for the whole season. This also meant that some would be called upon to referee multiple games. To all those who did multiple games each week, the clubs and the association owes you a big vote of thanks. The main contributors were James Willemsen, Jacob Mead, Jacob Beissner, Irene Jones, Ethan Gambrell, James Charlton and Hamish Innes.

This year saw the continuing growth of the girl's competition, with teams in the 14, 16 and 18 age groups. Unfortunately, we were not able to cover all their games this season. This should be remedied and not allowed to continue into the future.

It was also good to see the continued growth in numbers and skill level in our regional areas specifically, Batemans Bay, Broulee, Jindabyne, and Goulburn. This season we have seen a number of referees from these areas coming forward to referee for the association on a regular basis.

Our daily relationship with the Brumbies Office around appointments, in particular Caitlin and Matt, meant that final appointments were not always finalised until Friday night. Certainly not ideal, however, we need Rugby Explorer and the Referee Appointment System (RAS) to actually talk to each other.

This year's finals saw a number of changes put in place to cater for COVID. In particular, the use of five different venues to hold the games was the most challenging. We continued the tradition of using senior referees for the U18 and U16 games and pushing everyone down a few levels. This again was a success with no complaints from the JRU about the quality of the Referees. Thanks to all who participated in the Finals series, as either a Referee, AR or assisting at the fields. My congratulations to Sara Mooney and Harry Fenton on their appointment to the Under 18 Girls and Boys Grand Finals respectively and to all who received a grand final appointment.

Thanks, must go to Owen Keane who managed to find referees to cover the 18 Division 1 games from the senior ranks.

A special word of thanks must go to Dennis Beissner who assisted me on a weekly basis, ensuring we put the right people on the right games and that the gradings were right. Together with the entire Junior Coaches who ventured out each week to assist all referees, young and old.



ACT Rugby Referees Association

In closing we need to ensure that Referee numbers increase. A lot of work has been done this season to grow our numbers and this must continue if we intend to improve both our refereeing and the game itself. This can only be done by all parties supporting and developing our junior referee in all areas of the game.

Thanks again to everyone for your patience and support throughout the season that may not have been.

Peter Langford
U/19 Coaching and Grading Coordinator.



ACT Rugby Referees Association

BRUMBIES RUGBY - REFEREE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Introduction

At the start of 2020, the season was shaping up to be a great one. There were concerns over referee numbers for 2020, however, a new committee was formed (appointments below) which brought a lot of change and excitement to the year ahead.

President – Sam Whittle
Vice President – Michael Dowsett
Secretary – Rob Whyte
Assistant Secretary – Nathan Mass
Treasurer – Amy Kilmister
Welfare – Matthew Huggins

The 2020 committee consisted of a new appointed position of the ACTRRA Welfare Officer to help ACTRRA members with issues that arise through the season, and particularly to assist and communicate the process involved with lodging an Incident Report relating to Match Official abuse.

After the challenging times ACT and Southern NSW faced due to the bushfires, the rugby community came together to kick off the year with the Braidwood 7s which saw many of our ACT Rugby Referees involved in helping raise money for the drought and bushfire affected areas.

Referee Kids Rugby programs had over 12 clubs and schools committed to running the program before the commencement of the ACTJRU Season. Super Rugby was also underway with involvement from ACT Rugby Referees and pre-season training was commencing on Tuesdays and Thursdays for all referee's in preparation for the John I Dent Cup and ACT Junior seasons.

Unfortunately, COVID 19 hit just two weeks before the season was scheduled to start which put a hold on the 2020 season. Face-to-face courses were cancelled and there was uncertainty around whether we would have a Rugby season in 2020. Through this time, Rugby was able to adapt to using the platforms they had available to provide updates and courses for the rugby community. The Referee Kids Rugby course was adapted to become the Referee Ready Course that ran online as well as many webinars held by Rugby Australia which helped educate and develop our Rugby Referee community.

After a few months of not knowing if a season would go ahead in 2020, we finally had a kick-off date of July 18th, 2020. With COVID 19 restrictions in place, ACTRRA were able to head back to training on Tuesday nights in preparation for the season to start again. The 2020 season was shortened to 10 rounds and 2 weeks of finals for most divisions, but also new events were created such as the Capital 7s and the ACT Country v ACT City matches which also provided more opportunities and pathways for referees.

Recruitment, Retention and Education

In 2020, ACTRRA had a total of 131 members registered to Rugby Xplorer compared to 122 registered in 2019 (7% increase).

With the COVID 19 pandemic and education restricted to online courses, 2020 was a hard year for recruitment but, a total of 87 ACTRRA members refereed one or more games with 50 of these referees doing juniors only, 9 referees doing seniors only and 28 referees doing both senior and juniors. This shows the versatility and willingness from ACTRRA referees to referee both Juniors and Seniors. 21 referees from 2019 did not referee one or more games in 2020 but 21 more referees were new or returned to ACTRRA in 2020 to referee one or more games. In 2020, due to the COVID 19 Pandemic, some referees chose not to return which shows promising signs for the 2021 season if these members do return once again.



ACT Rugby Referees Association

Rugby Australia, through the year held a number of online webinars and education nights to develop and educate referees and referee coaches further. The new Referee Ready course was held weekly by Rugby Australia with low numbers (7 ACT participants only) from ACT compared to other states. It is hopeful that in 2021, a combination of online and face-to-face courses will see an increased number of people attracted to these courses within schools and clubs.

Conclusion

The 2020 season was a tough year with the region experiencing devastating bushfires which affected many of our communities and members and, the massive impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the rugby season. ACTRRA however, adapted to the tough year and were able to retain most of their members to referee the modified season. Again, for the second year running, some referees in the more junior appointments range were unable to be appointed each week due to a miss-match in the availability of age-appropriate appointments. With new referees refereeing their first game this year, a few returning referees, and more junior referees moving through the age groups, 2021 looks to be a promising year for ACTRRA.

Brumbies Rugby would like to congratulate the following ACTRRA members who were selected by Rugby Australia to perform at a representative level.

Brodie Ingram – Super W Assistant Referee

Reuben Keane – Super W Referee/Assistant Referee, Super Rugby Assistant Referee (debut), Super Rugby AU Assistant Referee, Australian Club Championships Assistant Referee

Evan Nelson – School Student Scholarship 2020

Shane Barr



ACT Rugby Referees Association

ACTRRA WELFARE OFFICER'S REPORT

Introduction

1. At the AGM of 2019, the non-executive position of Welfare Officer was created in preparation for season 2020. The genesis was that it remained clear that issues surrounding referee abuse were not abating and there was no clear or obvious mechanism for referees to seek support. The impact of abuse undermines our members enjoyment and consequently their willingness to continue refereeing.
- 2.
3. I have had the honour of fulfilling the Welfare Officer role and supporting you. I have appreciated the support of Shane Barr, James Williamson, Owen Keane, the President and the wider Executive in fulfilling the role. I thank each of them, and you all, as together we navigate our personal struggles.

Notification

4. The current mechanisms for alerting me to an issue is via a RA Referee Abuse report or Red Card report being forwarded to me by Shane Barr on behalf of RA, another member who may have witnessed or heard of an issue, or very seldomly directly from a member. There is a tendency that our members are not submitting abuse reports for several reasons, including (but not limited to):
 - a. Not being affected by the incident / getting over it,
 - b. Not wanting to create an issue,
 - c. A belief that nothing will happen, or
 - d. Lack of awareness around the reporting process.
5. As members of ACTRRA, I ask you to make yourself aware of the reporting process and take the time to make a report. Similarly, if you are aware of a peer who has been subjected to abuse, please encourage or support them in making a report, or contact me directly. The reason for this is threefold:
 - a. It enables me to check in with the affected referee and if necessary, work with them to find a way that they can continue to enjoy their refereeing,
 - b. It will ensure that the Brumbies, ACTJRU and RA are aware of the incident and their post incident procedures can be triggered, and
 - c. It allows the association to work with Brumbies, the ACTJRU and clubs/schools to ensure that the referee that is appointed to that game next week, is saved from the experience that you had to endure.
6. Most of the time we referee by ourselves, but you are a member of an association and we support each other. Always say hello, introduce yourself and be supportive of each other. ACTRRA is a team.

Trends

7. I have been alarmed at both the frequency and nature of some instances of abuse this season. Further, it has been concerning that the most serious abuse has not been of an on-field 'heat of the moment' nature. Some particularly concerning events that have occurred this season include:
 - a. abuse from Coaches and Club executives,
 - b. off field abuse / threats that have continued well after a game has concluded,
 - c. abuse that targets diversity (be it gender, race, sexuality),
 - d. abuse that targets character, and
 - e. abuse that has continued onto Social Media.



ACT Rugby Referees Association

Way Forward

8. If season 2020 were to be characterised as a year of 'understanding the problem', season 2021 must look at driving towards a solution. It is my impression that the problems and issues surrounding referee abuse have been acknowledged but ignored for far too long. Sound policy and procedures exist, and we are becoming better at reporting abuse, but until players, coaches (and to a lesser degree spectators) are held to account, real progress in minimising abuse will not be made.

9. As our representative, the President has been working hard behind the scene to ensure that all the relevant policies and procedures are being fully implemented at Brumbies, ACTJRU and RA. Where a failure of the system has been identified the President has gone directly to the relevant club/school in order to represent our interests. This direct approach has been successful, but this often leverages personal relationships and is time consuming. Therefore, while Brumbies, the ACTJRU and the judiciary may be acutely aware of our challenges, they must realise that the consequences of not supporting our membership with tangible actions will impinge upon their ability to meet their own objectives. In other words, without referees there is no Rugby.

10. Finally, I welcome your feedback on ways or means you think ACTRRA can develop its member welfare system.

Conclusion

11. I will seek to continue to serve the association and support your welfare in 2021. I implore you to continue to look after yourself and your peers on and around the park. Please enjoy your Christmas break, stay physically and mentally fit during the off season, and I look forward to seeing you in person (COVID-19 permitting) at the 2021 pre-season seminar.

Yours in rugby,

Matt Huggins
ACTRRA Welfare Officer
actra.welfare@gmail.com



ACT Rugby Referees Association

2020 ACTRRA STATISTICS

<u>2020 New or Returning referees</u>				
Anthony Connor	William Drew	Mitchell Egan	Ivan Gavazov	Matt Houston
Chris Iodice	Joshua Leighton	Chris Linden	Harry Linton	Warren Lynch
Oliver Manders	Chris Marshall	Shane Mass	Craig McMahon	Rohan Nishantha
Noah Polishuk	Owen Slater	Jarrold Smith	Nick Stoker	Phil Thomas
James Waddington				

<u>2020 Accolades</u>			
<i>*Debut</i>			
Super Rugby		Super W	
Reuben Keane*	AR	Brodie Ingram	AR
Brodie Ingram	4/5	Rhianna Burke*	AR
Harry Fenton	4/5	Harry Fenton	4/5
Dennis Beissner	4/5	Petrus Van Aswegen	4/5
Owen Keane	4/5	Dennis Beissner	4/5

Super A			
Reuben Keane	AR		
Dennis Beissner	4/5		
Rob Whyte	4/5		

<u>ACTRRA Grand Final Appointments - Seniors</u>			
Grade	Referee	AR1	AR2
Women's 10s	Trevor Hancock	Geoffrey Palmer	William Barker
South Coast Monaro	Nathan Mass	Chris Cousins	Steve Peak
Monaro Cup 1 st Grade	Matthew Huggins	Joseph Whyte	Petrus Van Aswegen
Monaro Cup 2 nd Grade	Joseph Whyte	Petrus Van Aswegen	Trevor Hancock
Premier 4s	Mitchell Egan	Petrus Van Aswegen	Mitchell Tummers
Premier 3s	Steve Peak	Nathan Mass	Matthew Huggins
Premier Colts	Ben Reedy	James Hagan	Joseph Whyte
Premier 2s	Dennis Beissner	Nathan Mass	Phil Thomas
Premier 15s (women)	Matthew Hogan	Amy Kilmister	Rhianna Burke
John I Dent Cup	Brodie Ingram	Harry Fenton	Dennis Beissner



ACT Rugby Referees Association

<u>ACTRRA Grand Final Appointments - Juniors</u>			
Grade	Referee	AR1	AR2
U16 Div 1	Amy Kilmister	Owen Keane	Clair Greenwood
U16 Div 2	Stuart Hodge	Matt Houston	<i>NO Assistant</i>
U16 Div 3	Kevin Cullen	Craig Lynch	James Charlton
U10 Div 1	William Drew	Mason Henderson	Campbell Wyche
U10 Div 2	Fraser Lehmann	Bryce Gorrell	Owen Slater
U11 Div 1	Campbell Wyche	Mason Henderson	William Drew
U11 Div 2	Joshua Hancock	Bryce Gorrell	Owen Slater
U12 Div 1	Mason Henderson	Gregory Saphin	Campbell Wyche
U12 Div 2	Evan Nelson	Ethan Gumbrell	Joshua Hancock
U13 Div 1	Jacob Beissner	Trevor Hancock	Hamish Innes
U13 Div 2	Ethan Gumbrell	Evan Nelson	Joshua Hancock
U14 Div 1	Jacob Beissner	Kevin Cullen	Trevor Hancock
U14 Div 2	James Charlton	Craig Lynch	Jake Rath
U14 Girls	Jake Rath	Craig McMahon	Clair Greenwood
U15 Div 1	Craig McMahon	Jarrod Smith	Clair Greenwood
U15 Div 2	Matt Houston	Nick Stoker	<i>NO Assistant</i>
U16 Girls	Hamish Innes	Nye Konig	Geoffrey Palmer
U18 Div 3	Greg Corin	Stuart Hodge	<i>No Assistant</i>
U18 Div 2	James Willemsen	Nye Konig	Jacob Beissner
U18 Div 1	Harry Fenton	James Willemsen	Amy Kilmister
U18 Girls	Sara Mooney	Amy Kilmister	Hamish Innes

2020 OFF-SEASON REFEREEING (7S TOURNAMENTS, OFF SEASON GAMES, ETC)

UC 7s

Ethan Gumbrell Mason Henderson Dave Murphy
Trevor Hancock Ivan Gavazov James Willemsen

Capital 7s

James Willemsen Dave Murphy

ACT Country v ACT City Men's

James Hagan – Referee
Phil Thomas – Assistant Referee
Mitchell Egan – Assistant Referee

ACT Country v ACT City Women's

Amy Kilmister – Referee
Caitlin Bokor – Assistant Referee
Sara Mooney – Assistant Referee



ACT Rugby Referees Association

RECORD OF MATCHES REFEREED

During 1991 it was agreed that referees should be given recognition for the total number of matches refereed. It was decided that this would be provided for members who reached milestones of 100, 200, 300 (etc.) games refereed in the ACTRU competitions (including juniors, midweek, school and other association appointed matches).

The association's manual reports back to 1954 were used as the basis for the number of games referred. Prior to 1954 details of games refereed cannot be located. The following is a listing of members who have reached milestones. Current active members of the association are marked*.

Members reached milestones this year:

50 Games

Jacob Beissner	Stuart Hodge	Jess McLeod
Jacob Mead	Matthew Murphy	Ben Reedy

100 games

Matthew Hogan	Geoff Palmer
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150 Games

Ben Reedy

200 Games

Dennis Beissner	Brodie Ingram
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450 Games

Peter Langford

ACTRRA MILESTONES HONOUR BOARD

100 Games

Baker, John	Foster, Bob	Littlewood, Viv	Perkins, Hayden
Beck, Damien	Foster, Louis	Logan, Gary	Petersen, Robin
	French, Peter	Long, Nicholas	Piazza, Glen
Beissner, Mitchell	Gane, Ron	Lonie, Michael	Quoye, Chris
Billett, Graeme	Gentleman, Neville	Lulham, Brian	Reedy, Ben*
Birss, John	Giffard, Peter	Lyons, Ray	Ridley, Andrew
Boorman, Clive	Gilks, David*	Margules, Ray	Rush, Michael
Boyes, Robert*	Gorrell, Bryce*	Martin, John	Ryan, John
Boyle, William	Gregory, Bill	McCarthy, John	Saphin, Greg*
Burnell, Chad	Gwynn-Jones, Brian	McGee, Dominic	Scholes, Gary
Burton, Michael	Hawkins, Brian	McGurk, Gordon	Sek, Michael
Buseski, Chris	Healey, Jim	Meszes, Jim	Shelley, Andrew
Caldwell, Keith	Hefren, John	Mills, Chris	Snell, Scott
Capon, Geoff	Henshaw, Reece	Moriarty, Len	Snow, Mark



ACT Rugby Referees Association

Carlyon, Justin	Hogarth, Bob	Mould, Alastair	Spencer, Col
Carnahan, Michael	Howard, Warwick	Mrdak, Michael	Stone, Jeffrey*
Carroll, Simon	Howden, Bruce	Murphy, Charles	Symonds, John
Carruthers, Ian	Hughes, Owen	Murray-Jones, Alan	Tanzer, Michael
Cassidy, Fred	Hurwitz, Steven	Nelson, Anne	Temby, Warwick
Coonan, John	Hogan, Matthew*	Nelson, Benjamin	Thompson, Greg
Corboy, Alan	Ireland, Rosh	Nixon, Peter	Todhunter, Paul
Cousin, Christopher*	Jamieson, Michael	Norris, Max	Toirkens, Michael
Cousin, Jac	Geoff Palmer*	Nutt, Doug	Tonge, Alan
Cremer, Ron	Jones, Jennifer	O'Connell, Barry	Tummers, Mitchell*
Crossman, Scott	Keane, Owen*	O'Connor, Peter	Vallance, Gus
Daly, Grant	Kedge, Jerry	Ohlmus, Fritz	Vest, Wally
Daniels, James	King, Liam	Onus, Adam	Vincent, Rod
Darby, John	King, William	O'Reilly, M	Waddington, James*
Davidson, Geoff	Knight, Ray	O'Shea, Tony	Walker, Ross
Dey, Ian	Leach, Tony	Owner, Tim	Whyte, Joseph*
Dunsmore, John	Lee, Mal	Papas, Steve	Whyte, Robert
Dunstone, Chris	Lee, Trenton	Patterson, Patrick	Wickham, Glen
Dunstone, John	Leggoe, Ken	Payne, Eddie	Willemsen, James*
Fleming, Graeme	Lehmann, Peter	Pearce, Bob	Williams, Geoff
Forsyth, Peter	Littleton, Jim	Peak, Steve*	Wood, Ken

200 Games

Agnew, Michael	Gibson, Alan	Kitchen, John	Richards, Peter
Bayliss, Chris	Glasgow, Ian	Louttit, John	Rumble, Stephen
Buckley, Brian	Gorham, Robert	Matthew, Graeme	Smith, Louise
Burns, John	Hamlyn, Karl	McGurk, Gordon	Sylvian, Stephen
Cheetham, Carl	Hanley, Michael	McLachlan, Damien*	Thomas, Greg
Cook, Brian	Hibberson, Gary	McLennan, Bill	Thomas, Rodd
Corin, Greg*	Hillsdon, Dick	Morris, James*	Vest, Bert
Cunningham, Jack*	Hosking, Peter	Nelson, Adam	Wallace, Robert
Dale, Brad	Hughes, Shane	Nelson, Robert	Ward, Brian
Davidson, Robert	Izod, Scott*	Nishantha, Rohan*	Whitfield, Ray
Dodds, Cliff	James, Don	Norman, Barry	Whittle, Sam*
Donoghoe, Phil	Johnson, Geoff	O'Keefe, Michael	Wilkinson, Kevin
Dowsett, Mike*	Jones, Doug	Overy, Stuart	Woodfield, John
Duffy, Tony (AD)	Jones, Irene*	Paloni, Robert	Beissner, Dennis*
Duffy, Tony (AJ)	Kearns, Nathan	Peck, Mal	Ingram, Brodie*
Edelman, Andrew	Kirkland, John	Quinn, Joe	



ACT Rugby Referees Association

300 Games

Bowden, Brett	Davis, Neal	Jones, Brett	McGrath, Damien*
Casey, Allan	Fryer, David	Keogh, Michael	McPhillips, Peter
Corrigan, Sarah – OAM	Gilmore, Len	Kimber, David	Nichols, Bede
Cowie, Rob	Hall, Michael	Lawler, Brian	Pook, Eddie
Daniels, Tony	Heaney, Brian	Madden, Shane	Poole, Bill

400 Games

Blake, Doug	Curtis, Leigh	Hedley, Wilf*	Langford, Peter*
Buttsworth, Ian	Girdlestone, John	Hurley, Brian	Sheville, Bernie
Conway, Peter	Hancock, Ted	Jones, Paul	vanGelder, Malcolm

500 Games

Cleary, Michael	Lawler, Peter – OAM*	Scholtens, Paul*
Humphrey, Elton	Lees, Kim	Janssens, Peter*

600 Games

Larsen, Paul	Smith, Jim
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RECORD OF FIRST GRADE MATCHES REFEREED

The following is a list of Association members who have refereed first grade matches in the ACTJRU competition from 1953 to 2020. The list is based on Association Annual Reports. Prior to 1953, details of first grade matches refereed are not available. Current active first grade referees are marked*. Referees on exchange to the QRU and NSW club competition (1st Grade) have their matches accredited to their first-grade total.

Name	Total	Name	Total	Name	Total
Agnew, Michael	16	Duffy, Tony (A J)	108	Lonie, Michael	46
Shane Barr*	2	Dunstone, John	23	Louttit, John	71
Battle, Michael	1	Hagan, James*	35	MacPherson, Jim	3
Blake, Doug	202	Hall, Michael	102	Mitchellmore, Damien	7
Beissner, Dennis*	15	Hamilton, Caleb	1	Morris, James	69
Bowden, Brett	200	Hamlyn, Karl	62	Mould, Alastair	5
Bower, Doug	2	Hancock, Ted	190	Nelson, Benjamin	5
Boyle, William	11	Heaney, Brian	95	Nelson, John	12
Buckley, Brian	65	Henshaw, Reece	22	Nishantha, Rohan*	2
Burnell, Chad	3	Hibberson, Gary	40	Nutt, Doug	3
Caldwell, Keith	3	Hodda, Darryl	2	O'Connell, Barry	2
Cardiff, Simon	33	Hogan, Matthew*	63	Paloni, Robert	43
Casey, Allan	10	Hogarth, Bob	33	Patterson, Don	3
Cassidy, Fred	100	Howse, Gavin	3	Paul, Chris	1



ACT Rugby Referees Association

Cheetham, Carl	21	Hughes, Shane	8	Payne, Eddie	6
Christophersen, Sam	9	Humphrey, Elton	17	Pettit, Geoff	27
Cleary, Michael	133	Hurley, Brian	17	Piazza, Glen	10
Collins, Tony	2	Ingram, Brodie*	42	Portway, Bruce	1
Conway, Peter	12	Izod, Scott*	34	Pritchard, Julian	15
Cook, Brian	114	Janssens, Peter	101	Quinn, Joe	1
Coonan, John	20	Johnson, John	2	Rahilly, Ben	8
Corin, Greg*	4	Jones, Doug	10	Richards, Peter	60
Corrigan, Sarah	57	Jordan, Bill	1	Scholes, Gary	1
Cowie, Rob	25	Kearns, Nathan	62	Scholtens, James	5
Cremer, Ron	61	Reuben Keane*	7	Scholtens, Paul*	56
Crowley, Joe	12	Keogh, Michael	144	Sheville, Bernie	117
Crozier, Andrew	31	King, Liam	3	Shorney, Brian	24
Curtis, Leigh	38	Larsen, Paul	50	Siggee, Norm	3
Dale, Brad	15	Lawler, Brian	63	Smith, James	132
Davis, Neal	13	Lawler, Peter	254	Snow, Mark	9
Davis, Patrick	1	Lees, Kim	205	Stevens, Ian	2
Dodds, Cliff	50	Fenton, Harry*	2	Tanzer, Michael	14
Taylor, Blair	29	Lehmann, Peter	12	Middleton, John	1
Thomas, Greg	6	Long, Nicholas	33	Toirkens, Michael	45
Tierney, Arthur	7	Gwynn-Jones, Brian	14	Toohey, Brian	3
Edelman, Andrew	14	Maher, Owen	10	Turner, Bob	18
Edwards, Graham	3	Margules, Ray	1	Vest, Bert	67
Evatt, Frank	6	Martin, John	15	Vest, Wally	2
Foster, Bob	25	Matthew, Graeme	12	Wallace, Bob	26
Fry, Eric	21	McCarthy, Dominic	7	Williams, Don	24
Gibson, Alan	1	McCarthy, John	43	Wills, Timothy	2
Gilmore, Ian	6	McFarlane, Jim	22	Woodfield, John	38
Girdlestone, John	116	McLennan, Bill	30	Wright, Graham	8
		McPhillips, Peter	166		