

FOURTH OFFICIAL PROTOCOL

1 GENERAL

Each home club must provide a nominated 4th official whose responsibilities are as follows.

- Meeting with the appointed match officials before the game to be made aware of any particular requirements which they may have
- Ensuring that both teams have adequate supplies of substitution and half time protocol cards and establishing who from each club will be notifying him of replacements
- Being readily available at the pitch side to the match officials and both clubs' officials
- Managing all substitutions. In particular, ensuring that a team does not replace more than two players at a time and does not exceed 10 interchanges
- Logging full details of all match events including scores and scorers, substitutions, red and yellow cards issued and kicking records
- Ensuring in conjunction with the Referee and an official of the visiting team that the match result sheet is completed and signed off correctly. This should be done within one hour of the end of the game
- Monitoring the time penalty for any player temporarily suspended, ensuring that the suspended player remains in the technical area until the time penalty is complete and notifying the Referee via the near side assistant referee when the player can rejoin the game
- Collecting any half time protocol cards and passing these to a match official at half time
- Ensuring that replacements warm up at the correct ends of the pitch
- Maintaining good order in the technical area. Any issues should be reported to the referee.
- Assisting the match officials as requested and appropriate

In certain matches the RFU will appoint a 4th official who will act as the replacement match official if required. This does not remove the obligation of the home club to appoint a 4th Official. The referee will allocate duties but, notwithstanding, the home 4th Official is responsible for completing and submitting the match report sheet.

2 REPLACEMENTS AND SUBSTITUTES

In National League 1 and 2 North and 2 South matches, each team is allowed up to 5 replacements. These must be listed on the match report sheet at least 15 minutes before the kick off. Changes to replacements after this can only be made with the permission of the Match Referee.

In addition, each team must have and nominated in advance at least five suitably trained and experienced front row players in their match squad, all at least eighteen years old (unless otherwise permitted pursuant to RFU Regulation 15).

Rolling substitutions will be utilised in all National League 1 and 2 North and 2 South matches and each club is permitted to use a maximum of 10 interchanges. The following regulations apply to their use

- After all the permitted 10 player interchanges have been made, no other replacements, substitutions or player interchanges will be permitted for any reason (including temporary or permanent injuries, sending offs and suspensions) and in the event that a player is injured, sent off or suspended from the field the team will play with one less player and with uncontested scrums in the event that this involves a front row player and the game cannot continue safely with contested scrums.
- For the avoidance of doubt, player interchanges replace the “blood bin” which means that, if a player has an open wound and has to leave the field, this will be classified as a player interchange if that player is replaced by another player. If a team has used all of its player Interchanges, that player may not be replaced and the team shall continue with one less player than was on the pitch prior to the “blood bin”. The player is permitted to return once the wound has been treated and the bleeding stopped.
- Not more than two player Interchanges per team may occur at any one time and may only occur during a stoppage in play and with the knowledge of the Referee who is entitled in his sole opinion to refuse to allow or postpone a player Interchange if he believes either that
 - the player Interchange would prevent the opposition from restarting the game quickly
 - the replacement player is not fit to continue playing in the match
- A player must enter the field of play on the halfway line.
- A player who is a replacement shall not be entitled to take a kick at goal until a passage of play has taken place since that player took to the field of play.
- A player who suffers two injuries in a match which has necessitated that player being replaced on each occasion is not permitted to act as a replacement following the second injury.
- Under dispensation provided to Unions by World Rugby, where these rolling substitutions regulations conflict with the Laws of the Game, these regulations shall take precedence.
- Substitution cards will be used for the management of substitutions on and off the pitch. These can be downloaded from the NCA web site.

The following procedure will be used during a match.

- Each team’s nominated person will have at his disposal as many replacement cards as he/she requires.
- When it is decided that a player is to be replaced, the appropriate nominated person completes the details on the card and hands it to the 4th Official
- The 4th Official liaises with the near side Assistant Referee to get the Referee’s permission to make the change
- The home club should retain the substitution cards until the end of the season in case they need to be referred to in the case of a dispute

The specific Regulations relating to replacements and substitutions are set out in Appendix 2 of RFU Regulation 13.

3 FRONT ROW REPLACEMENTS

Specific regulations apply to replacement of front row forwards as follows

- With the exception of those players who fall within RFU Regulations 15.3.6 or 15.3.8 no player may play in the front row of the scrum during contested or uncontested scrummages in adult rugby until he has reached his eighteenth birthday. Any breach of this Regulation shall be considered to be a serious breach and may give rise to a severe penalty.
- As set out in World Rugby Law 3, the replacement of a front row player must come from the suitably trained and experienced players who started the match or from nominated replacements. A player other than a nominated front row player is permitted to play in the front row only when uncontested scrums are being played and there are no available front row replacements.
- In their match squads, sides must have at least two players capable of playing hooker and three players capable of playing prop such that on the first occasion a replacement hooker is required and on the first occasion a replacement prop is required, the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums.

4 HALF TIME PROTOCOL

- The RFU regulations stipulate that “No person shall approach the match officials at any time during the half time interval to discuss any issue arising from the first half of the match nor shall they enter the Referee’s changing room during the half time interval unless invited to do so by the Referee”.
- To allow coaches to ask the officials to look at specific aspects, the 4th Official will provide each team with a card on which they can request the Referee to look at up to two specific points. These cards should be returned to the 4th Official before half time and he will pass them to the Match Officials at half time.

5 WATER CARRIERS

- In National League games no more than 4 water carriers per team (including medical staff) are permitted inside the technical area (see plan in the Appendix)
- Water carriers can only enter the playing area to supply water to players at stoppages (e.g. injuries and conversions). They are not permitted to do this at penalty kicks
- Players can move to pitch side to receive water
- Where practicable, water carriers should not be replacements/substitutes. If they are, then tracksuit tops or a different coloured top to the playing colours of the team should be worn so that team shirts are not visible
- Coaches/Directors of Rugby are not permitted to be water carriers.

6 REPLACEMENTS/SUBSTITUTES

- Replacements/substitutes should remain in the designated area outside the playing area (see pitch plan in the Appendix) or in the dedicated dugout, unless warming up.
- Warming up should only take place in the opponent's dead ball area.

7 TEMPORARY SUSPENSIONS

- Players given temporary suspensions (yellow cards) are to remain off the field for a minimum of 10 minutes **playing time**. This time starts when the referee blows his whistle to restart the game after having given the yellow card
- The 4th Official is responsible for timing temporary suspensions
- Stoppages for injuries, half time and other incidents indicated by the referee do not count towards the 10 minutes. The referee will signal to indicate such stoppages and will also signal to indicate when they are over
- Players temporarily suspended must remain easily visible and available to the 4th Official
- Club officials should not repeatedly ask the 4th Official how much time remains on a suspension
- When the 10 minutes has elapsed, the 4th Official should take the player to the nearside Assistant Referee who will arrange with the Referee for the player to return to the field of play. This will generally be at the next stoppage provided that this is not for a penalty
- Where a front row player is temporarily suspended, at or before the first scrum after the award of the yellow card, the team concerned must provide a suitably trained and experienced front row player so that the game can continue with contested scrums. This player can come from the players already on the pitch or by replacing a player
- If the team which has had the front row player sin binned cannot provide another trained front row player, the 4th Official should inform the Referee who will apply administrative instruction 6.13
- The replacing of a player to bring on a replacement from players is considered to be one interchange. If this process is reversed at the completion of the sin bin period, this is also considered to be one interchange

8 FOOTNOTE

- Club Officials, Directors of Rugby, coaching staff and players should recognise the difficult job the 4th Official has and should not bring any undue pressure on that match official.

Visitor
Replacements

Home
Replacements

Pitch side barriers

Sin Bin

Visitors
Technical
Area

4th Official

Home
Technical
Area

Sin Bin

In
Goal
Area

Playing Area

In
Goal
Area

TECHNICAL AREAS ARE FOR THE SOLE USE OF THE FOLLOWING

1. TEAM DOCTOR or PHYSIO
2. 2 X WATER CARRIER'S

All of whom should stay in the technical area unless allowed onto the pitch

The maximum allowed in the Technical Area is 4

Personnel must always return to the technical areas

The maximum number of personnel at any time carrying water is 4

ALL REPLACEMENTS AND OTHER NON PLAYING STAFF
(INCLUDING COACHES)
MUST STAY BEHIND THE PITCH SIDE BARRIER DURING THE MATCH

REPLACEMENTS MAY ONLY WARM UP BEHIND THE
OPPONENTS' IN-GOAL AREA

To be
used as
the
warm
up
area

To be
used as
the
warm
up
area

Pitch side barriers

Do not walk across Pitch
Walk around the outside of the pitch surround barrier