Regulation 19 Review

Regulation 19 (Discipline), is a regulation that applies to all clubs, at every level of the game, had been updated in a piecemeal fashion over a long period of time. The regulation had become cumbersome, over legalistic and complicated in places. It therefore needed to be streamlined so that it can be easily understood and set out in a more user-friendly way. To that end, the Regulation 19 Review Group[1] was tasked with refreshing the regulation ahead of the 2024/25 season.

Review Principles

The principles of the review were to ensure Accuracy, Brevity and clarity (ABC) of the regulation. It is key that the regulation is simple and understandable by all; can consistently be applied; avoids repetition; and incorporates any necessary improvements from lessons identified. There are some elements that must be included as they originate from World Rugby's core principles.

Key Changes

The vast majority of the content of Regulation 19 was retained but rewritten and restructured to make it more easily understood.

Where changes were made, they were as follows,

a) The re-ordering of the regulations and removal of duplications to improve its flow and to make it more volunteer friendly;

b) The introduction of a definition section specifically related to discipline. This has included several new definitions to help clarify the discipline process, for example the widening of what constitutes a 'Judicial Officer' or a 'Match Official';

c) The introduction of explanatory notes alongside the regulations to provide further assistance to persons not overly familiar with the discipline process;

d) Introduction of an alternative resolution process for dealing with cases;

e) Strengthening of compliance measures available for dealing with non-fulfilment of education and alternative sanctions;

f) Introduction of protection for whistle-blowers reporting incidents in good faith to discipline, Speakup or Safeguarding;

g) The ability for an expedited discipline process to be used in certain cases, when agreement has been given to that CB. (With the agreed process being set out in a new appendix which is to be written in the first half of the 25/26 season);

[1] The review group comprised Kirsty Marlor (Chair & Council Member Royal Navy), John Crate (Council Member Surrey, Discipline Secretary Surrey), John Constable (Council Member Dorset & Wilts, Member of ACMSC), John Downham (Hon Sec Cheshire CB & CBAGDS Cheshire), Kingsley Hyland (Northumberland CB Discipline Sec, Newcastle Falcons Discipline Officer), Clive Leek (Representative from Laws Sub-Committee and Member of East Midlands Referee Society), David Barnes (RFU Head of Discipline), Rebecca Morgan-Scott (RFU Disciplinary Hearings Manager) and Angus Hetherington (RFU Legal Counsel (Discipline)).

h) The ability for the Head of Discipline to review appeals to determine if there are valid grounds for appeal and then to dismiss prior to a hearing if there are no grounds.

Consultation process

Whilst the review group benefited from the input of knowledge experts in the drafting of the new regulation, there has been extensive consultation with various stakeholders within the game who have been encouraged to provide feedback to the group.

As part of the consultation the draft regulation was sent directly to;

a) All club discipline officers, at every level of the game
b) All discipline contacts in the Premiership, Championship and PWR
c) All CB Discipline secretaries
d) All RFU Judicial Officers and Panel members
e) The Referee's Union (RFRU)
f) All RFU Council members

All individuals were encouraged to circulate the draft further, as they felt appropriate.

Just under 40 separate responses were received by the working group and all the groups listed above were represented in that feedback.

The feedback received was very positive with individuals commenting that rationalisation of the regulation made it much easier to navigate and more user friendly, aside from a number of minor amendments to wording or references there has been little negative feedback. The full feedback can be seen here as well as the responses (in green) to the feedback from the review group.

We will shortly be beginning the review of Appendices 1-7 which we are aiming to complete by January 2025. We will be coming out to you again for feedback on these documents in November and we will keep you updated on that progress as we go.

David Barnes.