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Irish Rugby Football Union
P. R. Browne
Chief Executive

Ref: LR/DG/GB/JL/ domgames/domesticgameltrs0809/91/abuse

29th January 2009

To: Club Presidents

Re: Abuse of Match Officials

Dear President,

In over 100 Years of rugby being played in Ireland, respect for Match Officials has been at the forefront of all our Branches and Clubs, a feature acknowledged and indeed admired by other sporting bodies and organisations.

During this season it has become evident that verbal abuse of Match Officials, by both players, coaches and club supporters appears to be on the increase again. This is happening at all levels of the game, from Youths up to and including AIB League matches with consequent negative effect on retention and recruitment of referees.

Under IRFU Regulation 5.15 "Club's participating in matches are responsible and accountable for the conduct of their players, officials and members". With immediate effect I will be requesting all Branch Disciplinary Committees and the I.R.F.U. Disciplinary Committee to be particularly severe in sanctioning any verbal or physical abuse of Match Officials, including Clubs being fined when allegations are proven. I will also be proposing that disciplinary sanctions should be published on Club, Branch and Union websites, as appropriate.

Please acknowledge safe receipt of this letter and confirm that your club has this issue high on its Agenda; and I would also ask that this letter is brought to the attention of all your club members by displaying it prominently in your clubhouse.

Yours in Rugby

JOHN P. LYONS
President