



Otago Rugby Referees Association Newsletter



Issue #3

Date: 16th May 2026

Chairman's Update

The season is well and truly underway and with all grades up and running we have felt the pinch at times as we simply do not have enough referees to go around some weekends. A reminder to get your mates involved, and make the most of the REFerral initiative that ORFU have running when you sign a friend up to referee (see Brandon for more details).

Great to see a few closer to home interchanges on the horizon, an opportunity to try a different flavour of rugby for some of our referees. We have also welcomed Benoit Lemmonier, all the way from France, who is with us for the best part of a month. Benoit shook off some jetlag with a 2nd XV fixture last weekend, and this weekend is up in Cromwell to referee Cromwell vs Arrowton. Thanks to those who are hosting Benoit, we know you will make him welcome.

A reminder about the Taieri 7's on May 31st - a great day out so make sure to get in touch with Brandon if you can make it.

Finally, please reach out to one of the executive with any on or off field issues you are having - we can't help if we don't know, and it is important we report any gripes, to stay on top of things.

Enjoy another weekend out in the middle!

- **Rodger Hewitt**

Coaching Update

All rugby is now up and running which means endless opportunities to get a run in the middle. We are receiving interest in the rugby community coming forward and responding to our SOS earlier in the month regarding lack of available referees. This is a positive for us and the game so hopefully this momentum continues further into the season. Thank you to those that have been sending in match reviews, either through Clarky's app or other templates. This is hard evidence that you are wanting to develop your skills and is taken into account further down the track. Keep these coming through.

A massive thank you to James Doleman who gave us time last week to share his experiences from the start to now and how he built himself into a professional referee whilst studying. There was a good turn out and we hope to have another online call very soon with another top athlete.

It was great to see good attendance to the bronco testing earlier this month in Metro. Metro's next Broncos will be 7th June @1pm Logan Park (Turf) and 8th June @6pm Logan Park (Turf). Attendance at one of these will be compulsory for those that wish to referee playoff fixtures in any grade in town, as this will be the last opportunity for the season, this is why there are two options. You also have until then to complete or have another attempt at the law test. South and Central dates are yet to be determined.

We welcome Alan Eason onboard to our selectors panel in Metro. He will assist Mark Milburn and be a big part in reviewing referees.

Southland Exchange

We are set to go with the southland exchange on 23rd May with Jackson Brierly, Cullen Fagan and Angus Macgregor travelling down to Invercargill this Saturday, and we welcome Sam Nicholson, Kayel Cousins and Callum Stuart to Dunedin. Each referee will receive a review from selectors in the opposite region. A great learning opportunity with different styles of play. Plans are underway to have a similar exchange for our country referees in the coming weeks.

We have also had Logan Whitty and Jackson Brierly selected to travel up to Canterbury to referee in the SIBS 1st XV crossover competition during the magic round on King's Birthday weekend, another great opportunity for these two men.

Keep working hard, and putting your best foot forward as we enter the mid season.

- **Caleb Neilson**

Appointments Update

For transparency, we want to give everyone a clear understanding of how appointments are done. At the start of the year, clear expectations were set that referees wishing to officiate at a higher level must complete a law test and a bronco to the relevant standard. If you are struggling to meet these standards, please reach out to your coach in the first instance, and/or the Coaching and Development lead, for support.

Appointment decisions are driven by these results alongside observed refereeing ability — the best available referees will be appointed to grades appropriate to their level, to best serve the game. We also use selected fixtures as development opportunities for referees who have shown potential and been identified by their coach, the Coaching and Development lead or the Head Selector.

Going forward, we are confident we have the right systems in place to serve the game to a high standard. However if you have any questions/concerns, they can be directed to the Coaching and Development lead or the Chairperson.

Recognition

Well done to our Top 10 available referees so far this season. Thank you for consistently putting your hands up for midweek fixtures and giving up your time. If you are keen to do any mid-week games, please get in touch with your regional appointments officer.

Name	All Referee Appointments	Referee Appointments	AR1 appointments	AR2 appointments	No4 appointments
Carter Dermody	16	8	1	7	0
Cullen Fagan	15	8	7	0	0
Brandon Hale	14	9	5	0	0
Angus Macgregor	14	6	0	6	2
Amelia O'Connell	13	8	0	5	0
Logan Boyd	13	6	1	5	1
Jacob Davies	12	10	2	0	0
Phill Carroll	12	5	1	0	6
Murphy Lister	12	5	4	2	1
Logan Whitty	10	7	3	0	0

Our Referee's Experience



Jackson Brierly: From Player to Ref - Eight Years of Growth

At 22, Jackson Brierly has been refereeing for 8 years, driven by a desire to stay connected to rugby from a different angle. "Being apart of the game from a different perspective, while being able to remain on the field," is what drew him to the whistle.

And what a journey it's been. Jackson's highlight reel includes refereeing the 2024 Premier Colts Final with two of his mates as assistant referees, and running the line for a Ranfurly Shield match. But beyond the big games, it's the camaraderie that keeps him coming back: "Being apart of a great tight-knit crew." Of course, not every day is perfect. Ask Jackson about his least favourite moment and he'll tell you about "the freezing wind, rain and mud on a Dunedin winter day" - something every Otago referee knows all too well!

His biggest challenge? Learning to face mistakes as growth opportunities rather than setbacks. "There is no ability for growth without using mistakes as learning experiences," Jackson reflects - a mindset that's shaped not just his refereeing, but his approach to life.

When he's not on the field, Jackson is studying for his BCom and working at Otago Sports Depot, but rugby refereeing remains a core part of who he is.

His advice to anyone considering it? "Get off the fence and have a go. You don't know how you'll enjoy it until you experience the game from this perspective. Have conversations with other referees and learn from their experiences to help your development."

Ready to see rugby from a whole new angle? Join Jackson and our referee family!

Debuts and Milestones



Carter Dermody (pictured here in a previous fixture) made his Premier Women's Debut last month when Alhambra Union and Dunedin clashed under lights! Well done Carter - many more on the horizon.



Logan Whitty brought up 50 Premier matches last month in the Southern v Zingari-Richmond fixture - an impressive feat at only 23 years of age! Zingari made the day extra special, presenting Logan with a plaque in recognition of his milestone - Logan also refereed Zingari back in his debut game in 2021!



And to cap it all off, Caleb Neilson clocked 100 games when he oversaw University vs Alhambra-Union on the 9th of May - amazing achievement Caleb!

Registrations and Subs

A reminder to ensure you have registered through RX for the upcoming season (if you need help with this reach out to Brandon Hale - Brandon.Hale@orfu.co.nz). **For any RX issues, Brandon is your point of contact. A Reminder, fuel claims can not be submitted until you have paid your subs for the 2026 season.** Subs have again been set for the 2026 season as below:

Full Member: \$70

Student Member: \$50

First Year: \$35

Referee Coach: \$35

Associate Member: \$0

The account for payment is 06-0901-0881984-00

Reminder - if you have any issues with paying subs, reach out to one of the executive.

Executive Contacts

A reminder of the new email addresses that each Executive member can be contacted on; they are as follows:

Executive Member	Email
Chairperson	chair@orra.co.nz
Secretary	secretary@orra.co.nz
Treasurer	treasurer@orra.co.nz
Coaching & Development	coaching@orra.co.nz
Socials	socials@orra.co.nz
South Representative	south@orra.co.nz
Central Representative	central@orra.co.nz

Support Resources

We know times are tough, and sometimes being out in the middle can be a lonely place! Please reach out for support if you need it.

[Otago | Rural Support Trust NZ](#)



Otago Mental Health
Support Trust

Self-referrals are welcome.

Email: info@omhst.org.nz

Phone: [03 477 2598](tel:034772598) | [0800 364 462](tel:0800364462)



[Sports Chaplaincy Otago & Southland - Otago & Southland](#)



Our Referees in Action

Check out these shots of our referees in action throughout the last few weeks!





Photo credit:

- Rach's Sports Photos
- Susan J Church Photography
- Annie Mac Grace Photography
- Stevemcarthur.nz
- Kayla Ann Photography
- Si Leeds Sports Photography

Submit Something to the Newsletter

If you would like to submit anything to be added to the next newsletter, especially any great action shots of our referees from around the grounds, please email it to the Secretary at secretary@orra.co.nz by the first Thursday of the month that the newsletter is to be published on.