



Warwickshire Society of Referees

YOUNG WHISTLERS ACADEMY

An Introduction

The Warwickshire Society of Referees, recognising the need to recruit new officials to service the game in the County, set up its Young Whistlers' Academy several years ago.

This Academy is aimed at recruiting young referees, aged 14 to 17, from Warwickshire schools, giving them their initial training, and then further developing their officiating skills until they are deemed competent to handle the adult game.

This is done by appointing them to handle matches at local schools and at the junior sections of Warwickshire clubs, and providing mentors and experienced coaches to give them advice.

The youngsters are recruited from a special annual half-term RFU course, giving them an RFU entry level qualification, which recognises their ability to start refereeing the 15-a-side game with safety, and a basic knowledge of the laws.

The course, the entry fees generally subsidised by the Warwickshire Rugby Football Union (WRFU), is held over three sessions on different days during the October half-term break by a qualified RFU Educator, and includes both theoretical and practical training with each candidate assessed for competence.

In return for having the opportunity to do the special course the recruits have to commit to refereeing at least 10 games appointed by the Society and take an active part in the activities of the Young Whistlers.

These include attending the occasional YW group training sessions, which may be addressed by an RFU National Panel Referee, and also presents them with the opportunity to officiate at the Rosslyn Park School Sevens (the largest schools Rugby tournament in the World), the prestigious Sainsbury's School Games and week-end tournaments such as the South Devon Rugby tournament in Paignton and a festival in Barnstaple.

What Happens after the Course?

After the course is successfully completed the new Young Whistler will be invited formally to join the Warwickshire Society of Referees. A joining fee (currently £5) is payable. His/her application form will be sent to the WSOR secretary, who will enter the details in the Society records.

The YWs details will also be entered on the Society's on-line referee scheduling system, Who's the Ref, which is used to manage the appointment of referees, both senior members and Young Whistlers, to matches.

In order to familiarise the YWs with the appointment and availability system he will also forward by e-mail to YWs two User Guides. One explains how to log-in to Who's the Ref and the other how to enter availability for appointments.

When appointments are made the Young Whistler will receive an e-mail from the appointments secretary, via Who's the Ref, asking him to accept or decline the appointment. The YW clicks on "accept" or "decline" and he is immediately linked to Who's the Ref, which gives full details of the appointment. If availability is up-to-date then it will only be in exceptional circumstances that appointments are declined.

The club or school referee contact will then be in touch by e-mail or telephone to confirm the game, giving details of venue, club/school colours, kick-off time etc. Mentors/Coaches will receive their appointments in a similar way.

After that the YW should be taken to the game by a parent or guardian and meet up with the appointed mentor/coach or appropriate school teacher. When a coach is appointed he will de-brief the YW at the end of the game and submit a brief report to assist the YW in improving his refereeing skills.

EXPENSES:

YWs are entitled to claim expenses for their travel to the game at the rate of 40p per mile, up to a maximum of £10. Schools/clubs are not charged for YW appointments because of their support for the YW scheme. Expenses are claimed monthly through the Who's the Ref system and bank account details have to be provided to enable expenses to be processed electronically by the Society treasurer.

KIT: The Young Whistler is expected to provide his own kit for the initial period of his refereeing. When he has demonstrated his commitment to the scheme, in line with the conditions of his subsidised ELRA course, he will qualify for a Young Whistlers shirt, which is normally distributed at a training evening by a well-known RFU Premiership referee. All

YWs must arrive at schools/clubs smartly dressed as they are representing the Warwickshire Society. No jeans or tee shirts are allowed. Referees can arrive changed ready for the game if they wish. All kit, including boots, must be clean and suitable for a match official.

REPORTS:

Where coaches/mentors are appointed they will send a report to the Young Whistlers' committee. These reports are assessed on an ongoing basis and YWs will be appointed to higher level of age grade games on the basis of improving competence and ability. At the age of 17 the YW will be considered for adult membership of the Society and be appointed to adult games.

YOUNG WHISTLERS – POLICY DOCUMENT

OBJECTIVE: The objective is to have in place a policy whereby the members of the Young Whistlers can enjoy their refereeing and develop their skills to their full potential in a safe environment.

POLICY:

1. The Young Whistlers programme shall be co-ordinated by a sub committee of volunteers from the Society, which is approved by the Society Executive
2. The sub-committee will interact with the Executive through the Society's Training & Development Officer, and will provide copies of updated reports in advance to the Training & Development Officer for each Executive Meeting.
3. Applicants to join the Society's Young Whistlers' Academy, must have successfully completed Parts 1 & 2 of the RFU's Entry Level Referee Award
4. and be between 14 and 17 years of age.
5. Young Whistlers taking the ELRA course will pay the relevant fee for that course.
6. After 6 games as a member of the Warwickshire Young Whistlers, the referee will receive a Society Young Whistlers shirt.
7. The applicant's parent(s)/guardian(s) MUST sign a medical consent form and countersign the Society's Application for Membership form. This must be done in the presence of a WSOR YW's committee member
8. Those volunteers involved in the scheme as mentors/coaches shall be required to apply for an enhanced CRB/DBS check in accordance with the RFU guidelines detailed in the rules below.
9. Young Whistlers must only officiate within the RFU's regular season as per regulation 15 in the RFU handbook. Any tournament outside the regular season must obtain permission from the RFU
10. All elements of the RFU's Safeguarding and Health and Safety Policy MUST be adhered to when Young Whistlers are appointed to properly organised and recognised out-of-county festivals. Permission for such tours must be obtained from the WSOR Executive Committee.

RULES:

1. Young Whistlers must be smartly turned out when representing the Society, both on and off the pitch.
2. The minimum suitable attire off the pitch includes a smart pair of trousers, shirt and tie. No jeans or tee shirts are allowed when on Society appointments.

3. When officiating, Young Whistlers will turn out in smart, clean kit, including polished boots, and wear a Society shirt. This shirt must only be worn to games where the Young Whistler has been officially appointed by the Society.
4. Young Whistlers can claim a maximum of £10 in travelling costs per game within Warwickshire
5. Initially, Young Whistlers will only referee games no less than two years below their own age group.
6. When the Young Whistler shows potential, and the sub committee deems him/her suitable, they can be appointed to referee up to their level of competence, based on their advisor reports.
7. On reaching 17, they will be considered for senior appointments. Recommendations will be made by the Young Whistlers committee depending on ability and potential to the Grading committee. Senior games would be appointed, where appropriate and once approved, by the Senior appointments team and further progress would be monitored by the Grading Committee.
8. Every Young Whistler must be accompanied by a mentor/appropriate adult whilst refereeing. This can be split with 1 mentor per maximum 2 referees if the pitches are close enough together.
9. A School Master may be appointed as a mentor for the day if no member or WSoR is available or if resources do not allow.
10. Parents are to be responsible for ensuring that the Young Whistler is driven to the game and not left alone until the mentor or appropriate adult is present
11. Guidelines for school and junior club rugby coaches will be sent out to all clubs and schools accepting Young Whistlers appointments (see attached).
12. An assessment form devised specifically for the Society's Young Whistlers, will be used by mentors/coaches after each game. These forms will be used by the YW Committee to assess performance. Future grading/promotion decisions will be based on these reports. A copy of the report will be sent to the WSOR Chair of Grading.
13. Young Whistlers, along with Committee members will meet on a regular basis to discuss their progress and training needs.
14. Young Whistlers will only be appointed through the Who's the Ref system and must ensure their availability is updated regularly and that they confirm/decline appointments promptly. Failure to do so will result in loss of appointments.
15. All mentors/coaches must have an Enhanced DBS check if their role is classed as a Regulated Activity. Within a rugby setting, the position must meet the following criteria in order to be deemed Regulated Activity – *“Any activity which involves contact with children or vulnerable adults and is of a specified nature (e.g. teaching, training, care, supervision, advice, treatment or transport) frequently, intensively and/or overnight.”* To meet the threshold for “frequent” or “intensive” the individual must carry out the role at least once a week or more, or four times in a month or more.

Young Whistlers - Use of Social Media

Introduction:

Social Media is recognised as an excellent way in which to communicate or to offer support and advice but it should also be recognised that it can have a detrimental effect on either individuals or a group of people if not used with consideration and care. The Young Whistlers should be very careful in the way that they use Social Media, either to communicate with each other or make comment on other individuals either within the group or others outside the group.

Guidelines

Creation

1. New profiles or groups should only be created following agreement by the Young Whistlers Sub-Committee.
2. New profiles and groups will only be agreed if a clear need can be proven.
3. The Society will set up all new profiles and groups.
4. Any profile or group must be closed and only visible to approved members of the Young Whistlers Group
5. Approved contributors should be made aware of this protocol.

Operation

1. Know and follow WSOR Code of Conduct and IT Policy.
2. When using third-party websites (such as Facebook), know and follow their terms of use.
3. No content should be published unless it is within the terms of use of the group.
4. Be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent.
5. Be mindful that what you publish may be seen by the group for a long time
6. Respect copyright laws.
7. Do not publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal to the WSOR without permission.
8. Respect your audience. Do not publish anything that would not be acceptable face to face. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory..
9. Write in the first person ("I" or "we").
10. Remember that you are an ambassador for the Society and be cordial at all times

11. Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation.
12. Do not correct contributors' spelling or grammar.
13. Edit other people's contributions only when necessary. Instead of editing or removing significant factual errors, you should either make a public response or directly contact the person who made the original comment, or both.
14. If a contributor makes a comment that is defamatory or likely to cause extreme offense, edit or remove it where possible. If this is not possible, contact the user to explain why you took this action, and if appropriate ask them to post the comment again without the offensive content.

Review

1. The YW Sub-Committee will carry out periodic reviews of the YW Social Networking sites. This will include reviewing content and feedback.

Closure

1. Profiles and groups must not be deactivated without prior approval from the Society.

Personal use of social media

1. Know and follow WSOR Code of Conduct and IT Policy.
2. Ensure that your online activities do not interfere with your studies. Posts on social media should not be made when you are at school or college.
3. Be aware of your association with WSOR in online social networks. If you identify yourself as a Society member, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself with colleagues and other users.
4. If you publish content to any website not owned by the Society, and it has something to do with the Society use a disclaimer such as this: "The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Society."

Child protection

1. If a profile or group is set up in the name of the Young Whistlers, it is essential that a member of the Sub-Committee becomes a member of it and oversees the content and activity.

2. The committee member should monitor conversations, images and other activity of members of the group and challenge, educate or intervene as necessary.
3. The committee member should educate members of the group about online safety, including how to customise privacy settings. (For information and resources see <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>)
4. Events or parties at private addresses should be reserved for the group's private area.
5. Members must not publish images of people who are not members of the group.
6. Group members should maintain boundaries between their personal and refereeing lives by customising their privacy settings and avoiding inappropriate personal information becoming visible to members of the group.

Acceptable Content

1. Information giving on social events to be held formally by the YW group.
2. Advice on refereeing and law. Discussion around these areas is an acceptable use but any definitive answer to a question posed must be given by the YW Training Officer.
3. Feedback and discussion about recent match appointments.

Unacceptable Content

1. Adverse comments on other referees' performance
2. Adverse comments about the Society or other members of the Society
3. Photos of people who are not members of the group, unless with written permission
4. Any content that does not meet points 1-3 of Acceptable Content.
5. Any defamatory comment or comments.

Non-Compliance

If members of the Young Whistlers Group do not follow these guidelines then they may be subject to disciplinary action under the rules of the Society's constitution.



MESSAGE FOR ALL COACHES

This School / Club is supporting a challenging initiative run by the Warwickshire Society of Referees in recruiting, training and developing 14-17 year old students as 'Young Whistlers' . After completing the RFU's Entry Level Referee Award (ERRA) these Young Whistlers, who come from Schools and Colleges across Warwickshire are being coached and mentored during inter-school or Club matches, here and elsewhere, to enable them to maximise their refereeing skills.

It is inevitable that they will make mistakes during this learning process – just as the players in the teams will – but the Coaches at this School or Club have accepted their professional responsibilities as teachers towards these youngsters to give them positive support during all our games, by refraining from criticising their decisions and by condemning any negative comments from their teams players, from the touchline or by any other spectators.

As Coaches of a visiting School or Club team, we are confident that you will also support this exciting initiative to recruit and develop young Referees for our game by behaving, at all times, in accordance with the RFU's Code of Conduct as it relates to coaches and spectators alike.

The Warwickshire Society of Referees, through its appointed mentors who attend all games, will be happy for coaches, after matches, to offer any constructive comments which will assist the Young Whistler in his or her ongoing development.

Thank you in anticipation of your co-operation



***Welcome to the Warwickshire
Society of Referees
Young Whistlers Academy***



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