The Development of 
Elite Rugby Union Officiating in Wales: 
A Critical Analysis

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Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Abstract

Rugby refereeing requires its practitioners to possess certain qualities. MacIntyre (1981) emphasises the importance of moral goods defined with respect to a community of virtuous persons engaged in a social practice. Whereas a virtue ethics account of playing and coaching has evolved (Brown, 1990; McNamee, 1995), little philosophical work exists on the role and status of elite match officials. The significance attached to the outcome of elite sport contests provide principled and instrumental reasons as to why this particular sporting aspect requires attention. Existing sports officiating research deals primarily with psychological (Bar-Eli et al., 1995; Boyko et al., 2007; Nevill et al., 2002; Weinberg et al., 1990) and physiological issues (Castagna et al., 2007; Inácio da Silva et al., 2008; Reilly et al., 2006). This work does little to explain the role and function of elite officiating. This interpretive study aims to enhance role understanding within a MacIntyrean framework, using elite Rugby Union officiating in Wales as its particular context. It examines the extent to which elite Rugby officiating can be considered part of a social practice by investigating the elite referee’s role as an arbitrator of justice and fairness and other responsibilities that may constitute the internal goods and virtues that safeguard the game. This analysis provides principled foundations for identifying those aspects of the referee development structure that represent ‘good practice’ and those that require reform. Key findings suggest (i) that Rugby refereeing is unique within sports officiating, (ii) that officiating is an integral yet imprecisely understood part of the practice; what Morgan (2007) refers to as a social collaboration and (iii) that greater interactivity between playing, coaching and officiating would enhance the growing understanding of Welsh Rugby as a commodified product. Subsequent recommendations include implementing a holistic approach to developing the game through the creation of a Rugby triumvirate and maximising the limited resources in the referee development process through early talent identification.

Keywords: Elite match officials, sports officiating, social practice, game reasoning, virtue ethics, justice, phronesis
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Diolch yn fawr iawn i’r Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol am hwyluso’r posibilrwydd rhyfeddol hwn yn y lle cyntaf.
“You and I do not see things as they are. We see things as we are.”

Herb Cohen
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Introduction

This introductory chapter provides the reader with an outline of the thesis. First, some background information with regard to the demands and expectations of elite Rugby is provided. Specifically, the nature of the game, its complexity and how its emerging professional ethos impact officiating are discussed. Then, the research aims and objectives for the overall study are stated. Synopses of chapter contents conclude the introduction.

Background

The Game of Rugby Union embraced professionalism following the conclusion of the 1995 Rugby World Cup. Professionalism has increased the competitive nature of this sport. Elite Rugby Union (hereafter “Rugby”) demands a high level of performance from players, coaches and match officials. Such high standards are to be expected, given that success at any major Rugby tournament brings prestige, money and status to the winning team’s playing and non-playing personnel. There is much to incentivise the professional Rugby practitioner, both domestically and internationally. There are various financial motivations. From win bonuses to endorsements, improved contracts to testimonial seasons, elite players have considerable earning potential. The same can be said for elite coaches whose continued future employment is so often determined by the success or otherwise of their respective teams.

Winning teams acknowledge the contribution made by their supporters. Fans, or what Giulianotti (2002) might call the traditional fans, help to sustain the
practice. They contribute to the contest by verbalising their appreciation of players’ actions. Yet, supporters are quick to express their disapproval whenever they deem that their team has been penalised incorrectly. Spectators will have a different visual experience relative to those watching at home. Those in attendance do not usually have the benefit of action replays and will therefore base their reaction to refereeing decisions on limited information (Collins, 2010). The TV viewer, in contrast, is provided with multiple angles in real time and slow motion. The latter has more time to consider his verdict of officiating calls.

Professionalism has led to increased media coverage of Rugby’s major tournaments (Rugby World Cup [RWC], Six Nations’ Championship and European Cup). It is customary for a studio presenter to lead a panel of experts (“pundits”) in a discussion about key moments in a match. Such a panel often comprises former players and/or coaches who have experience within the elite environment. Major decisions made by the match official(s) are critically analysed. Poor decisions and/or missed infringements have possible implications for players and coaches including loss of earnings and non-renewal of contracts.

Scrutiny of elite match officials has become the norm. This is particularly so following a close match where one or two incidents may have seemingly affected the outcome for either team (Cleary, 2013; Mole, 2007). The various media seek opinions from players and coaches alike. Television has gone a step further by inviting viewers to “tweet” their comments. Social network sites are not regulated and anyone can offer an opinion.

The above sources seem to shape opinion regarding referees. This study seeks to provide sufficient evidence to support the notion that the dominant
perception of officials is one that sees them as obstructions rather than facilitators. It is easy to see how referees are portrayed as interlopers. Yet, given the game’s complexity frequent referee intervention should not be that surprising. Match officials are encouraged to use preventative measures or ‘prompts’ to facilitate compliance. Personal lived experiences support the notion that player conduct, or more specifically player misconduct, is largely responsible for such ‘interference’.

Post-match analysis of referee interventions is commonplace. Current practice consists of the coaches reviewing the game and then raising any issues with the National Referee Manager. The use of performance analysis facilitates detailed scrutiny of all referee actions. Post-game analysis often focuses on the decision-making capabilities of match officials. The example below highlights the typical scrutiny and pressure experienced by elite referees.

The following incident took place at RWC 2011. Wales was playing France in the semi-final. The enormity of the game was apparent. In the 18th minute, the French initiated a pre-planned attacking movement from a lineout that involved the French winger Vincent Clerc (1.78 m, 90 kg) running infield and receiving a pass from his scrum half. Immediately on receipt of the pass, Wales’ flanker and captain, Sam Warburton (1.88 m, 106 kg) executed an offensive tackle. This technique involves driving the player backwards, as opposed to ‘soaking up’ the ball carrier’s momentum and falling backwards. Warburton executed the tackle so well that Clerc was lifted off the ground, turned and subsequently dropped. This type of illegal action is commonly referred to as a tip tackle. The IRB (2012) gives a full description of its mechanics under Law 10: Foul Play.
Lifting a player from the ground and dropping or driving that player into the ground whilst that player’s feet are still off the ground such that the player’s head and/or upper body come into contact with the ground is dangerous play. (p. 65)

This incident can be discussed in terms of Simon’s “vulnerability principle” (1991, p. 66). Simon sets out the necessary circumstances for meeting its criteria.

According to VP, for the use of force against an opponent in an athletic contest to be ethically defensible, the opponent must be in a position and condition such that a strategic response is possible and it is unlikely injury will ensue. (1991, pp. 66-67)

Such actions in Rugby call for paternalistic intervention. The tackle is an area of the game that is inherently harmful and the IRB ought to rectify it. Such action would comply with existing safeguards. For example, players are not allowed to tackle the jumper in the air (at either a lineout or in open play).

With such a dynamic technique coupled with physical superiority, one could argue that it was inevitable that Warburton should dominate this particular contact situation. In accordance with the Laws of the Game and subsequent Law ruling (IRB, 2009a), referee Alain Rolland sent off the Welsh captain. Much debate followed this incident – coaches, players, sportswriters and TV pundits all expressing their views. Such reaction prompted the IRB Referee Manager, Paddy O’Brien to publically defend the decision (Rees, 2011). Despite an acknowledgement by Sam Warburton himself that the red card was correct, the Rugby community still questions the referee’s action.

The above example illustrates the disconnect that may exist between public perceptions and officiating practice. Alain Rolland was free to make whatever
decision he deemed appropriate. The issue is that the discretion and freedom he exercised led to a decision that did not resonate with that of the public. Hence, the debate that followed regarding the possible lack of empathy shown Sam Warburton. Nevertheless, Rolland was largely duty bound to apply the existing Law and its supplementary ruling, which makes clear the sanction for such an action.

While an onlooker may see a dynamic tackle, the referee observes the same action through a different lens. First, he sees a player being lifted. Then, he notes that his feet have gone beyond the horizontal plane. Finally, he observes that the player has been dropped. The well-executed tackle is appreciated and evaluated differently. Referees and non-specialists have conflicting sets of evaluative criteria. While referees apply the vulnerability principle (Simon, 1991), spectators evaluate from a perspective of functional aggression. The ‘good tackle’ becomes a ‘dangerous tackle’ that warrants the highest sanction. The difficulty of the task is magnified as the referee has but one view of the incident and cannot rule on intent.

Focus on the key aspects of refereeing performance has led to a widespread call for an improvement in the standards of elite officiating (Hennessy, 2007; Yeman, 2009). Here, the Warburton incident helps to contextualise the broader problem of refereeing. The nature of the game is problematic. Rugby is an interactive sport. It is both an invasion and an evasion game with liberal parameters (Beashel and Taylor, 1996). It has many variable transitions. For example, from tackle situations a ruck or maul may develop, an infringement may occur or play may continue. A combination of physical contact, complex situational and structural play within a highly dynamic framework underpins the holistic
problem. Scrutiny of elite referees is inevitable and the spotlight on their performances has magnified significantly. Of concern is the subsequent failure to fully appreciate the problem of the officiating task.

Rationale

The rationale for the study emanates from a desire to produce research that explores the nature of sports officiating. Specifically, there is a desire to enhance understanding of elite Rugby Union refereeing. I present a theoretical and empirically informed review that uses both conceptual and empirical data to evaluate current practices before making proposals for improving both the practice and supporting institutional structure of elite Rugby officiating in Wales.

The background and current climate of the game provide the basis for this research. This study seeks to gain a better understanding of the nature of Rugby officiating and the role of the elite match official. It is reasoned that by exploring the problematic practice of officiating, those areas of current referee development that require improving will be highlighted. How best to prepare match officials for the modern game is a significant challenge and undertaking a critical analysis of the refereeing provision will serve to better inform how to develop elite Rugby officials.

Sports officiating, specifically, elite Rugby refereeing is a domain of sports science that has not been subjected to significant and comprehensive research. Existing sports officiating research deals primarily with psychological (Bar-Eli et al., 1995; Boyko et al., 2007; Nevill et al., 2002; Weinberg et al., 1990) and physiological issues (Castagna et al., 2007; Inácio da Silva et al., 2008; Reilly et al., 2006). This collective body of work does little to explain the role and function of
elite sports officiating. Moreover, it has neither questioned nor explored the nature of officiating and thus, has developed a research agenda based on an orthodox view of the prevailing practice. This has the merit of being functionally and procedurally convenient, but also in so doing potentially sets in motion a research agenda that is reactive and uncritical; one that does not, and discourages, asking questions in terms of its ontological status and significance.

It is felt that a philosophical approach holds greater relevance. It is seen as a way of developing a more foundational critical understanding of the nature of officiating, which is both valuable in itself as it leads to better (self-) understanding of the practice. Such work can also provide a clear framework within which other research approaches can operate with a more comprehensive interpretive vocabulary. This study does not set out to answer a specific research question. Rather, it is an empirical exploration of a unique activity whose direction is guided by an appreciation for and an understanding of the role’s complexities. How this investigation is to be undertaken is articulated below.

Aim and objectives

Player development and coach education programmes are constantly evolving. It is imperative that Rugby refereeing experiences a similar evolution. The aim of this critical analysis is to gain a better understanding of both the nature and complexity of the practice of officiating, and assess how such an understanding is relevant to an environment that is subject to ever-changing greater performance demands. Such analysis requires both an examination of the nature of officiating
practice itself and the context, namely the Referees Department, which is the institutional structure in which the practice of officiating is situated.

It is necessary to assess whether the existing development pathway is fit for purpose. The principal intention is to analyse the current approach and make any subsequent recommendations based on a combination of conceptual, structural and analytical findings from this study. Prior to assessing the referee development provision, it is necessary to understand the actual nature of officiating. This can only be achieved by clarifying the nature of the game of Rugby itself. Key philosophical ideas (see next section) will guide this process.

The study aims are to be achieved by problematising Rugby officiating. In so doing, certain objectives must be met. There is a need to understand (i) the essential ‘dialectic’ of refereeing (observers or makers of the game), (ii) the social context in which referees operate and (iii) the need to provide a good product. These are the more substantial objectives within the study, but at the same time are not ones of specific detail that would pre-empt data driven interpretation.

These objectives help to structure the exploration. Existing literature does not inform the project, so there is a need to look at officiating through a conceptual lens. Rugby refereeing is an under-researched domain. It is hoped that meeting these objectives and subsequently achieving the overall aim of the thesis makes a significant contribution to this little understood phenomenon. It is hoped that the critical analysis will generate recommendations for ensuring that Welsh Rugby enjoys the highest level of officiating possible by making match officials and refereeing better for the demands of the elite game.
Outline of thesis

Chapter 1: Conceptualisation

In this chapter I examine the game of Rugby and how it impacts on the nature of match officiating. I stress the importance of developing an understanding of the game itself before attempting to problematise the practice of refereeing.

Here I extend my analysis of the problematic nature of the game and officiating therein. I make the case that Rugby comprises 'ludic chaos'. Based on this understanding, I argue for a core conceptual framework for understanding the nature of officiating based on MacIntyre's notion of a "social practice" (1981). Officiating is recognised as more than just a mechanistic, administrative task.

I draw on several key ideas from mainstream philosophy: game reasoning (Shields and Bredemeier, 1995), virtue ethics (MacIntyre, 1981), justice (Rawls, 1999) and phronesis (Aristotle, 1941). This philosophically informed conceptualisation underpins the argument that the game of Rugby is particularly prone to ludic chaos and therefore, the nature of officiating is problematic. I argue that the game’s complexity impacts on the role of the match official. Moreover, the desirable characteristics of an elite match official are discussed in terms of a MacIntyrean framework of virtue ethics. Furthermore, I suggest that elite referees need to display the intellectual virtue of phronesis or practical wisdom to fulfil their roles effectively.

Chapter 2: The Welsh Rugby Union Group

In this chapter I present a detailed account of the organisational structure of the Welsh Rugby Union Group. Such an undertaking complements the descriptive
accounts of Rugby and officiating in the previous chapter. Highlighting the refereeing provision within the Union increases the understanding of the practice of officiating and its associated problematic issues.

I highlight the key personnel employed by this institution and the various operations carried out by its many departments. Linear and cross structural analyses help to situate the Referees Department within the wider governing body. Then, I present an overview of the existing referee development provision. I raise potential operational issues of functioning as a “tall hierarchy” (Lim, Griffiths, and Sambrook, 2010). I go on to articulate more fundamental issues related to understanding the nature and role of officiating. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main foci of the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

I present this chapter in two parts. Part 1 deals with methodological matters relating to the concepts discussed in Chapter 1 and the structural references of Chapter 2. Part 2 addresses the practical issues of undertaking the research.

I begin Part 1 by addressing the fundamental methodological issues of researcher as participant, researcher’s voice and the study’s ontological and epistemological positions. Then, I discuss the move from the conceptual to the methodological. This relates in part to formulating research questions based on the conceptual framework that sets out to understand the nature of officiating and the desirable characteristics of elite match officials.

The originality of this study does not lend itself to a traditional methodology. I submit that the approach is appropriately loose because it aims to allow for a
critical interpretive approach that is not tethered to any pre-determined procedural requirement or evaluative framework. So, while it is exploratory in terms of how it examines the empirical landscape of officiating practice, this examination is informed by significant initial conceptual work, which aims to better understand the nature of the practice so as to allow for interpretation other than social description. Hence, there is a need to make strong the link between the conceptual work and the subsequent empirical work, even though the empirical work is not wholly or purely tied to a particular formal qualitative approach. So while the empirical work is exploratory – with regards to assessing the relationship between the concept and practice of officiating – in order to examine the empirical actuality of the practice in a systematic way, some formal qualitative methodological processes are used, consisting principally of qualitative evaluation inquiry (Patton, 1990) and voice (Chase, 2005). Furthermore, I provide a rationale for undertaking a pilot study, as advocated by Oppenheim (2000), to test reliability and validity of the overall research design.

Part 2 focuses on the procedural issues of undertaking this non-traditional method. To facilitate a meaningful analysis of the nature and practice of elite Rugby officiating I note the operational considerations of conducting research within the existing referee structure. Then, the issue of sampling is addressed before commencement of the pilot.

Having reflected on the above process, I move on to discuss the selection of suitable participants (n=20) and choosing an appropriate method of data capture. Here, I present a rationale for employing the qualitative techniques of conducting semi-structured interviews (Chase, 2005) and collecting supporting evidence
(documentation). Then, I adopt what can be described as an interpretivist approach. I do not simply ask and describe; rather, this process involves asking, describing, evaluating and recommending. This approach is neither fixed to any specific methodological pathway nor does it conform to any particular checklist of theoretical parameters. A combination of researcher voice and participant voice (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009) is used to analyse key findings.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

In this chapter I present thematic overviews of the interviews along with relevant supporting documentary evidence. Participants share their views on various game-specific issues including cynical play, cheating, rule breaking and gamesmanship. Their responses also reinforce ongoing concerns with regard to player/coach-referee relationships.

From such rich narrative themes emerge that are relevant to the practice of officiating. The data analysis process produces the following six themes: game reasoning, virtue ethics, justice, phronesis, development structure and interactivity. Interpretation of matters relating to elite refereeing follows. This analysis retains the philosophical thread of the thesis.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

In this final chapter I bring together the conceptual, structural and analytical data to make conclusions regarding the nature of Rugby officiating and the role of the elite match official. Furthermore, I interpret the study findings with regard to
what needs to be done to improve this practice. Lastly, I highlight the potential strengths and areas for improvement for current referee development.

Having analysed the study’s main findings, I intend to confirm good practice and where necessary, to make suggestions for improving the referee development process. In this chapter I present recommendations for future best practice. In keeping with the philosophically informed approach, my recommendations focus on the key ideas presented. Future research proposals conclude the chapter.

A background to professional Rugby has been presented above, outlining various pressures of the modern game. Some complexities associated with officiating have also been presented. This helps both to articulate and to emphasise the nature and purpose of this research. Chapter summaries help to prepare the reader for the critical analysis that permeates the thesis. What follows is a review of literature. The critique acts as guide for the entire research process.
Chapter One: Conceptualisation

1.1 Introduction

In the introduction to this thesis I sketched an account of the game’s complexity and the problematic nature of officiating. Furthermore, I proposed that Rugby could be considered a social practice in the MacIntyrean sense. In this chapter I draw on an eclectic mix of literature to offer an account of the nature of Rugby and its subsequent impact on the nature and role of officiating. Moreover, I identify the problem in terms of both the practice of officiating itself and the institutional structures that support that practice.

In so doing, the account presents the problem as fundamentally a moral one in advance of subsequent technical, bureaucratic and procedural ones. The nature and problems of officiating Rugby therefore are embedded in the prevailing moral values and attitudes of contemporary sport as a whole. Then, I move on to the specific moral themes that strongly emerge as necessary for understanding officiating as a moral practice more fully.

Analysing key philosophical ideas highlights some of the crucial problematic issues associated with officiating Rugby in general, and the professional game in particular. The following concepts inform a critical analysis of elite Rugby Union officiating. The list is not exhaustive but represents a number of *prima facie* useful ideas: game reasoning, virtue ethics, justice and *phronesis*.

As stated, my concern is not so much the mechanics associated with the role of the match official, namely, the technical, tactical, physiological and
psychological; rather, the study engages with a more critical question about the fundamental aims and goals of officiating in general and of the official in particular. It is contended that the purpose of officiating and the role of officials are often perceived respectively in terms of a narrow function and as peripheral bit-part actors in the heart of Rugby drama. For many practitioners, officials may be seen as necessary but unwelcome interlopers who, for the most part, frustrate rather than facilitate what is good and worthy about the game.

This conceptual chapter guides the empirical critique of elite Rugby officiating. This particular study is a philosophically informed analysis. Consequently, key concepts from mainstream philosophy facilitate a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. The following conceptual review will help to frame the empirical nature of the thesis. The subsequent findings inform recommendations for future elite referee development. This study expands on earlier research (Hennessy, 2007) that called for an enhanced status for elite match officials.

1.2 Nature of Rugby and other constitutive games

This section provides a knowledge base for interpreting the nature and role of officiating. Focusing on Rugby, I present a brief account of constitutive games. Here, I argue that Rugby can be understood as a “social practice” (MacIntyre, 1981). Furthermore, I evaluate the institutional framework that supports this type of social practice.
It is not necessary within the scope of this study to distinguish between play, sports and games. Here, the terms “sports” and “games” are interchangeable. Suits proposed that games are “goal-directed activities which involve choice,” adding that such “means-end oriented activities” are rule-governed (2007, p. 9). Constitutive games require participants to adhere to the constitutive rules of the game. Rugby is an example of a constitutive game in which “gratuitous difficulties” abound (Lasch, 1977, p. 181). The formalisation of gratuitous difficulties has manifested a broad spectrum of games that appeal to adherents. In Rugby, the rules (or for historical accuracy, the “Laws”) require players to pass the ball backwards in attempting to advance the ball to their opponent’s in-goal where it can be grounded for a try.

Loland offers the view that, “the optimal blend of merit, chance and luck in the good game expresses a particular ludic rationality aiming at maximising values in games themselves” (1999, p. 182). Particular gratuitous difficulties and the specific constitutive rules have led to the shaping of Rugby in this way rather than a number of possible others. The point being that there is no absolute right form of the game. The form that we have is the one that we have crafted thus far.

In defining constitutive games, and Rugby in particular, Bernard Suits’ work is relevant. He argues that games have four constitutive elements: pre-lusory goal, means, rules and a lusory attitude. The pre-lusory goal is a “specifiable achievable state of affairs” (Suits, 1978, p. 36). The pre-lusory goal gives a game its principal and simplest objective. Rugby's pre-lusory goal is clear to a point.
The object of the Game is that two teams of fifteen players each, observing fair play according to the Laws and sporting spirit, should by carrying, passing, kicking and grounding the ball, score as many points as possible, the team scoring the greater number of points being the winner of the match. (IRB, 2012, p. 3)

This statement raises one particular concern. There is a need for further clarification with regard to “observing fair play according to the Laws and sporting spirit”. This makes the objective somewhat unclear. The IRB needs to make explicit what it means to observe fair play according to such criteria.

The simple example of a discus thrower illustrates Suits’ four notions of a game. The pre-lusory goal of a discus thrower is to propel the discus further than his fellow competitors. The means signifies the permissible way(s) in which the pre-lusory goal might be achieved. Here, the athlete must start in a circle that has a diameter of 2.5 m, which is recessed in a concrete pad by 20 mm. Moreover, the discus must land within a 39.92° sector. The rules “circumscribe those means, which proscribe certain means and prescribe others” (McFee, 2004, p. 17). In this instance, the athlete is allowed to move freely across the throwing circle and execute the “constitutive skill” (Torres, 2000, p. 85) of throwing, but his attempt will be recorded as a foul should he step outside the circle while in the act of throwing the discus. The fact that the athlete abides by the rules and only employs those means as prescribed indicates a lusory attitude, interpreted by Suits as “the knowing acceptance of constitutive rules just so the activity made possible by such rules can occur” (1978, p. 40). On this account rule adherence implies the playing of the game.

Proscribed and prescribed rules frame a game and McFee refers to these, respectively, as “regulative” and “constitutive” rules (2004, p. 35). It is accepted
that “playing games is a voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles” (Suits, 1978, p. 41) when game rules determine how the pre-lusory goal is to be achieved, albeit through “less efficient means” (ibid.).

Rugby is played in accordance with both regulative and constitutive rules, known collectively as the Laws of the Game of Rugby Union (IRB, 2012). Rugby’s goal is framed within particular skills that constitute the game. Players use an array of carrying, passing, kicking and running skills to overcome their opponents. These technical skills are complemented by tactical, physical and psychological skills, which maximise the playing of the game. Rugby’s constitutive rules also allow for contact where certain skills are required to execute actions such as tackles, binds and lifts. While it is acceptable for players to overcome their opponents through superior physicality, it is not acceptable “wilfully or maliciously to inflict injury” (IRB, 2012, p. 13).

The Laws state both the regulative and constitutive rules. Yet, a lack of clarity and consistency causes confusion. Such uncertainty might lead to the better side not actually winning the match. McFee speaks out against this discrepancy, stating, “rules cannot in principle deal with all situations (and cannot be modified to do so)” (2004, p. 3) and hence, “the application of rules could never be as unproblematic as has been assumed – partly because what is being considered is ‘human action’” (ibid.). It could be argued that the Laws fail to accommodate the game’s complexity.

One cannot anticipate all the possible skills to be constituted by the game’s rules. However, one can anticipate that following the principles of the game should prompt their conception, initiation and evaluation. The constitutive skills of a game
emerge from its constitutive principles. Rugby is a simple game in terms of purpose, but a complex one in terms of its means.

The IRB sends a clear message to practitioners to play “in accordance with the Laws of the Game and be mindful of the safety of themselves and others” (2012, p. 3). In order to ‘go forward’, the ball must be passed backwards. The ball can be kicked forwards but the kicker’s teammates must be behind the ball at the moment the ball is kicked. This apparent contradiction creates a need for teamwork and self-discipline. Here, being in a position to ‘support’ the ball carrier is crucial for maintaining ‘continuity’ of play. When not in possession, a team must apply ‘pressure’ and ‘contest possession’ before once again moving the ball forwards towards their opponents’ in-goal. Arguably, teams that successfully apply these key principles have a better chance of winning the game.

Rugby has many unique aspects and can be categorised as both an invasion and evasion game. Like many other constitutive games it is essentially about the creation and use of space. The likely winners of a match will be the team of players who can get themselves and the ball into space and use that space wisely, while denying the opposing team both possession of the ball and access to space in which to use it. Rugby’s constitutive nature affects how this team of players functions at any given time. A team breaks down into smaller components circumstantially. Consequently, there is variability in terms of roles, positions and skills required.

In this dynamic and highly complex game, players have to operate as both individuals and members of a team. As an individual, for example, a player may occupy the role of goal-kicker. As part of the team, the same player forms part of a
collective defensive line, which attempts to prevent the opposing team from going forward. Moreover, players find themselves forming part of sub-units and units; such groupings are operationalised from time to time in certain constitutive elements of the game, namely, lineouts and scrums (set pieces). A sub-unit of two lifters and one jumper will attempt to contest possession of the ball in a lineout, while a unit of eight forwards will bind together in a 3-4-1 formation to maintain continuity or contest possession in a scrum.

Rugby’s dynamic complexities combine to produce ‘messiness’ or what this researcher terms ‘ludic chaos’. It abounds in the practice in part due to the rules that constitute continuity after the tackle, ruck or maul and the contestation of set pieces. Such ludic chaos impacts on the practice of officiating. It amplifies the challenge faced by officials even when the game is played with best intentions. While players may enter the contest with the best of intentions, the reality of the situation may necessitate a change in the normative attitude to bring about success. Such divergence does little to simplify the officiating process. Players who are struggling to overcome their opponents often take alternative measures to enhance their chances of winning.

Players are encouraged to play “both to the letter and within the Spirit of the Laws” (IRB, 2012, p. 13). Coaches, captains, players and match officials share a collective responsibility for ensuring compliance. According to the IRB, the game’s spirit is said to flourish when there is “discipline, control and mutual respect” (2012, p. 15). Rugby’s physical nature helps to “forge the fellowship and sense of fair play so essential to the Game’s ongoing success and survival” (ibid.).
In addition to its Laws, Rugby is further underpinned by its ethos. An ethos is understood as the fundamental and distinctive character of a group, social context or period of time, typically expressed in attitudes, habits and beliefs. Morgan offers the following view.

Those attitudes, commitments, values, goods and virtues that are necessary to sustain the ways of life embodied in sporting practices. In its most basic sense, the ethos furnishes a compelling reason to make the gratuitous difficulties of such practices the central point of engaging in them. More specifically, it supplies a reason to take seriously and pursue diligently the standards of excellence that infuse the aim of the game, a reason to try and win in whatever way the game demands. (1994, p. 224-5)

Moreover, D’Agostino argues that, “the ethos of a game…distinguishes between those official judgments that are acceptable, and those which are unacceptable” (1995, p. 47). He explains an ethos as “that set of unofficial, implicit conventions which determine how the rules of that game are to be applied in concrete circumstances” (D’Agostino, 1995, pp. 48-9). The following examples will help to illustrate the point.

It is within the accepted ethos of Rugby that two opposing players standing face-to-face may exchange punches and perhaps only receive as their punishment an admonishment from the referee. However, it is completely unacceptable for a player to strike an opponent from behind. Nothing less than expulsion is satisfactory. In contrast, a player in a game of association football is likely to be shown the red card and sent off if he raises his hand and makes even the slightest contact with an opponent’s face. The contrast in sanctions and expectations can be explained by ethos. To fully understand the actions applied in either example, one
would have to explore lived experiences of both practices to appreciate the respective core values.

The crucial issue to consider is how we are to judge whether an ethos is positive or negative, and what kind of normative relative position that takes inside and outside the practice. While a certain kind of conventionalism might be derived from ethos (Morgan, 2007), we cannot be certain that its direction of travel is towards progress in a commendable way. MacIntyre (1981) believes that ethos is strongly rooted in the practice tradition.

Rugby is a physically challenging and sometimes brutal activity. Yet, it is a game that demands a high level of appropriate conduct. As the Laws do not account for every eventuality, abiding by an ethos is an alternative way of accommodating potential anomalies. As in any community agreement, it is incumbent on all practitioners to embrace the ethos. From this ethos, a “social practice” emerges (MacIntyre, 1981). It is not only simple activities that count as social practices; complex and dynamic sports can also be counted as such. Rugby as a social practice is discussed further in section 1.2.1.

Rugby has its own history and traditions. McNamee (1995) suggests that sporting practices like Rugby are constitutive of broader cultural traditions. Rugby has a logical constitutive framework contextualised by its social group. It is a game that has emerged from socio-economic complexities (Johnes, 2000). Current practitioners can appreciate the nature of Rugby based on an understanding of its evolution and of its customs. Moreover, they can embrace its ethos and become part of a group that shares responsibility for maintaining the practice. McFee suggests that the notion of a social practice is inherent in Rugby’s traditions or

1.2.1 Rugby as a social practice

Rugby has been defined above as a constitutive game. Here, I suggest that it can also be conceived of as a social practice (MacIntyre, 1981). In so doing, I note what can and cannot be considered as practices. Then, I consider what MacIntyre refers to as the “internal” and “external” goods of practices. I examine how the pursuit of these goods impacts on an understanding of the game of Rugby as both a social practice and as a social institution. There is further discussion as to how the role of the match official is to be understood in relation to Rugby as a social practice.

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre examines the historical and conceptual roots of the idea of virtue. He discusses its lack of presence in personal and public life. Furthermore, MacIntyre (2007) presents his account of the human good in social terms, making reference to practices, traditions and the narrative unity of human lives. It is his belief that human flourishing can be achieved by displaying the virtues in pursuit of those goods linked to practices and their traditions. Many sports philosophers have used MacIntyrean thinking when researching sporting phenomena (Loland, 2002; McNamee, 2008; Morgan, 2007). It is this very notion that helps shape the overriding research aim.

MacIntyre emphasises the attainment of the virtues of courage, justice and honesty. Pill, Wainwright, McNamee and Pattison infer that without these virtues
one “cannot achieve the internal, intrinsic goods inherent of practice” (2004, p. 23).

MacIntyre offers a comprehensive definition of what constitutes a social practice.

Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. (1981, p. 187)

Further discussion on those “goods internal” is presented below. Here, it is necessary to clarify what counts and what does not count as a practice.

Tic-tac-toe is not an example of a practice in this sense, nor is throwing football with skill; but the game of football is, and so is chess. Bricklaying is not a practice; architecture is. Planting turnips is not a practice; farming is. (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 187)

Arts, games and sciences are further examples of practices. The difference between practices and “isolated competencies” (Kretchmar and Schneider, 2007, p. 186) is clear. Practices are social collaborations. Like Rugby, they can be understood as dynamic and complex activities. Kretchmar and Schneider suggest that, “practices require community and participant cooperation, the recognition of authority and achievement, respect for standards, and occasional risk taking” (2007, p. 186). Such a notion underpins MacIntyre’s view that all of the above are necessary “to provide opportunities for humankind to excel and otherwise flourish” (1981, p. 194). It is suggested that engaging in this manner can lead to the attainment of practice goods.
Goods are central to the notion of practices. MacIntyre’s account focuses on two types of goods: internal and external.

A practice involves standards of excellence and obedience to rules as well as the achievement of goods. To enter into a practice is to accept the authority of those standards and the inadequacy of my own performance as judged by them. (1981, p. 190)

Internal goods are viewed as the achievement of a certain level of skill or excellence. MacIntyre (1981) argues that the internal goods of a practice are the desired end or outcome. In fact, he stresses the fundamental importance of pursuing these goods. Moreover, it is understood that those internal goods “can only be identified and recognised by the experience of participating in the practice in question” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 189). In relation to a practice’s internal goods, McNamee offers a useful summary.

First, such goods can only be specified in the language of such practices and through examples of them. Second, these goods can only be gained by first-hand experience of them in the relevant practice, and those who lack this experience are not competent to judge those practices. (1995, p. 62)

MacIntyre speaks of the need to compare oneself against those that have previously excelled in a given practice. To do so, one would need to participate in the practice appropriately; to do so would secure for that individual the internal goods. He also suggests that someone’s achieving them “is a good for the whole community who participate in the practice” (MacIntyre, 1981, pp. 190-1). In the context of Rugby, it can be said that players like Jonah Lomu, Jonny Wilkinson and Brian O’Driscoll have contributed to raising the standards of excellence. In the
words of McNamee, sportspersons who “have broken new ground are thereby rewarded and esteemed” (1995, p. 64). In so doing, their achievements have “enriched the whole relevant community” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 191). Celebrating these people is celebrating the practice. Their performances cannot but inspire the practice community as a whole.

As there are internal goods, so too are there external goods. MacIntyre offers “prestige, status and money” (1981, p. 188) as examples. It is understood that such goods are “not inextricably bound up with engagement in a particular practice” (Steenbergen and Tamboer, 1998, p. 45). MacIntyre discourages pursuit of external goods for the sole purpose of promoting the “self” (1981, p. 61). Participation for this reason makes them objects of competition.

Rugby has an inherent set of values and goals. Its internal values call on the individual to contribute to the team’s effort. However, those players who favour externality over internality (McNamee, 1995) are more concerned with attaining fame and fortune. Those practitioners with internal goals will be just those persons who strive for excellence. It is important for such individuals to achieve in the game by becoming the best practitioner that they can be. To do so, practitioners need the support of their institution.

1.2.2 Rugby as a social institution

The above section facilitated an understanding of Rugby as a social practice. MacIntyre (1981) notes that institutions sustain practices. It follows then that one ought to have a clear notion of the social institution that upholds the Rugby practice traditions. The discussion presented in the preceding section
provides a rationale for now thinking about the setting in which practices are lived. Within the context of this study, the International Rugby Board (IRB, 2009b) provides global support; nationally, the practice is maintained by the WRU.

MacIntyre (1981) reports that practices rely on the continued support of their respective institutions. McNamee comments that, “institutions are corruptive of their practices, yet they are also essential to them” (1995, p. 62). Of concern here is the idea that an inherent conflict of interest exists between the practice and its institution. This notion is underpinned by MacIntyre’s proposal that practices and institutions have different agendas in respect of goods.

It is accepted that practices are primarily concerned with the attainment of internal goods. Yet, MacIntyre observes that institutions are “involved in acquiring money and other material goods” (1981, p. 194). These are further examples of external goods. He states that institutions are “structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money and power and status as rewards” (ibid.). On the surface MacIntyre’s observations would appear to reflect the existing relationship between Rugby and the Union.

Those within the practice strive for excellence in performance. The institution relies on such aesthetics to sell the game so as to maximise the external goods associated with the sport. As an organisation, the WRU operates as a business. It needs to make money and attract outside investment to sustain the practice community. The Union employs various means to finance the game in Wales. For example, the Millennium Stadium plays host to non-Rugby events including music concerts, the GB rally and international football matches (WRU,
Arguably, the main issue here is striking a balance between the respective needs of the practice and those of the institution.

One way in which the Union has sought to maximise Rugby revenue has been to introduce an annual Autumn Series. Four international Test matches are now played during November. These fixtures are in addition to the two/three Six Nations matches and the summer tour. The Autumn Series often features the southern hemisphere nations of New Zealand, South Africa and Australia. These matches attract big crowds. The Union relies on this additional income to help repay, among other things, the bank loan that helped pay for the construction of the Millennium Stadium (WRU, 2010a). However, according to Holley (2010), these “extra fixtures” affect the Welsh regions that supply players to the national squad. Issues arise when players amass more ‘game-time’ with the national team than they do with their primary employer. One of these games is always outside the agreed window for playing international matches. The Union has continually ignored this in favour of generating further revenue.

The Union’s agenda does not affect the clubs and regions alone. This conflict of interest impacts on how Rugby referees experience their role. An institution that prioritises external goods makes certain demands on referees. It is argued that such demands can be regarded as aesthetic, moral and economic expectations. Elite match officials are likely to be under pressure to produce an entertaining game. This is an issue that recurs throughout this critical analysis. Such spectacles have the potential to attract big crowds and significant investment from external sponsors. With the institution emphasising the need to provide
entertainment, a referee may feel that he has to adopt a less rigid approach. Consequently, striking a balance is problematic.

It appears that the issue of the dominant ethos arises from the tension between the practice and its institution. In proposing that externality takes priority over internality, a number of issues are raised particularly in relation to player conduct. The competitive nature of the sport leads to what can be described as “game reasoning” (Shields and Bredemeier, 1995). This concept is now discussed in the context of professional Rugby.

1.3 Game reasoning

Part of the above discussions focused on the pursuit of practice goods. More specifically, the issues associated with the pursuit of external goods were raised. It would seem that such an undertaking is not only prevalent at the institutional level. The following account presents a description of a particular ethos within the Rugby practice community. These practitioners belong to a wider community or society. Here, the notion of game reasoning (Shields and Bredemeier, 1995) is reviewed within the context of Rugby at the practice level. Highlighting any tendency towards externality by elite players would help underpin the notion that elite Rugby officiating is both problematic and complex.

Sport is a goal-orientated activity. While persons engaging as amateurs may do so for greater social, mental and physical health benefits (Bailey, 2007), elite performers are under constant pressure to achieve set goals. The means for achieving these goals are restricted by the *Laws of the Game* (IRB, 2012). Now,
the ideal is that all who engage in the practice do so with a lusory attitude (Suits, 1978). As mentioned earlier, this relates to players knowingly accepting the rules so that the game can take place. However, the competitive nature of the modern game rather nullifies this notion and the reality is that there is a need for a ‘Laws enforcer’, the referee. Research shows that when participating in sport, players tend to revert/regress to an instrumental moral outlook. Here, Shields and Bredemeier refer to the “moral atmosphere of sport” (1995, p. 113). There is transference of moral responsibility to a third party, namely, match officials. This wilful act has implications for the referee because he has to deal with players who do not seem to have any obligation to play fair or at least their obligations are first directed towards winning and the issue of fair play is ditched when inconvenient. This is problematic in the sense that players disconnect from real life by unloading all sense of personal responsibility.

If the sporting environment is one that promotes the win-at-all-cost notion, then players are similarly motivated. Focusing on the external goods of the practice like power, prestige, glory and money serve only to make matters worse. Elite players want only to win. They have a disregard for fair play. Theirs is an instrumental regard. Professionals will do everything that they can – within a context where everyone is doing the same – to win the game. Yet, as McFee suggests, “players who fail to abide by a rule, or even cheat, may still be playing the game” (2004, p. 35). Reddiford recalls cricketer C.B. Fry’s view that, “if both sides agreed to cheat, then cheating is fair” (1998, p. 225). Nevertheless, he warns against adopting such a proposition.
For if this is the case then playing fairly, without cheating, could come to have but a tenuous hold upon the sentiments and motivation of participants, especially when cash is at stake, which is the case in most elite sport (Reddiford, 1998, p. 225)

Reddiford also informs us that acts of cheating that go undetected are often “admired and approved of” (1998, p. 225) by spectators, especially when their occurrence brings success to the team that they support. Moreover, he notes that while coaches will publically disapprove of such acts, the players know, “that it is to be preferred to failure” (Reddiford, 1998, p. 225). Morgan’s (1994) notion of radical instrumentalism within sports underpins the notion that game reasoning is prevalent in elite Rugby. He reasons that players will look for ways of exploiting aspects of a practice in order to gain an advantage.

One could argue that game reasoning does not really work at the professional level. The fundamental demands of the sport necessitate a balance between complying with and violating the rules (Loland, 2002). The game comprises several highly technical elements. It is argued that it is not always in a player’s best interests to engage in unfair practice. For example, the mechanics of the scrum would suggest that it is more effective to scrummage in accordance with Law, that is, straight, than it is to adopt a less stable and illegal profile. Personal experience as a former prop forward justifies this claim. Poor technique and/or execution can cause serious injury to both the player and his opponent. A player detaches himself from the practice whenever he adopts a game reasoning mindset. Prolonged engagement in this way might be less beneficial than part-engagement. Earning a reputation as a cheat would bring unwanted attention from opponents and match officials alike.
Elite Rugby is part of the entertainment business. Spectators cannot be expected to pay good money solely to witness their team engaging in game reasoning for the entire match. Rather, the faithful supporter wants to see exciting passages of play and, among other things, feats of physical and technical skill. It is perhaps for the reasons mentioned above that the Northern Union realised scrums, rucks and mauls detracted from the spectacle. The elimination of these constitutive parts led to an increased and more desirable tempo. The same cannot be said of the gamesmanship affecting scrums at this present time. Brian Moore, former England and British and Irish Lions hooker has publically voiced his growing frustration.

“Paying customers are rightly registering their disapproval and asking where the value for money is in watching the game.” (Moore, 2013)

There is a normative sense as to why game reasoning is unacceptable within the existing practice. As MacIntyre (2007) suggests, the “internality” of the practice is what is important here. That is, the internal qualities are to be promoted above any notion of instrumentalism. One should not be satisfied on hearing that no harm comes when both sides engage in game reasoning.

It must be noted that some aspects of game reasoning have had a positive effect on Rugby. Law changes have been made that reduce opportunities for unfair practice. One such change has been made with regard to pre-gripping and lifting in the lineout. The legitimisation of this act now reduces the likelihood of lineout players interfering with the opposition. Pre-gripping affords opponents little or no
time to interfere with the lifting process. Even such a simple change as this increases the game aesthetic, as a well-executed lineout lift looks good.

Where game reasoning does flourish, it presents problems for match officials. Referees have to make judgments based on a sense of fairness and justice. It is argued here that they must do so through means of practical wisdom or “phronesis” (Aristotle, 1941). It is suggested that elite players’ behaviour or more specifically, their moral character is affected whenever they participate. Pressure affects the way in which players think and act. While it cannot always be left to the lawmakers to solve the problems that emerge because of game reasoning, the existing conduct exhibited by the modern player implies that the practice of officiating is therefore problematic.

1.4 Nature of officiating

The preceding sections act as a useful precursor to what follows. Their collective inclusion helps to lay the necessary foundation for better understanding the nature of officiating. Here, it is proposed that game reasoning (Shields and Bredemeier, 1995), which manifests itself in the pursuit of those goods external to the practice (MacIntyre, 1981), is largely responsible for making the task of officiating such a difficult one. Below, I offer an account of Rugby refereeing, specifically at the elite level.

The role of judges, umpires and referees as match officials is of much interest. McFee proposes that the task is often understood in the following way.
The ideal here might seem to be rules whose application was so transparent that umpires need do nothing more than apply the rule to this situation – conceived primarily as a species of ‘reading the rule aloud’. (2004, p. 3)

He is quick to suggest that adopting such a mindset is problematic. With regard to judgments in officiating, there are two notable imperfections. First, rules cannot account for all eventualities and endless modifications would never address this limitation. McFee’s description of the other problem is presented below.

The application of rules could never be as unproblematic as has been assumed – partly because what is being considered is human action. So the question of what action was performed by such-and-such a sportsperson can rebound on a judge or referee… That is, as a question where the rules have a bearing on the matter, or where the referee must decide if such-and-such did or did not occur. (2004, p. 3)

The fact that Rugby differs greatly from “parallel” games¹ (Hardman, Fox, McLaughlin and Zimmerman, 1996, p. 61) in that it is an interactive contact team invasion game makes it all the more complex and difficult for referees to decide if such-and-such did or did not occur. Rugby’s constitutive distinctiveness and interactive nature combine to produce the ludic chaos that subsequently impacts on the task of officiating.

Fully understanding the nature of officiating requires an appreciation of the playing experience. The game is challenging whatever the level of participation. It tests a variety of skills and is known for its robust nature, physicality and mental toughness (Jones and Moorhouse, 2007). Players must make decisions while battling against the onset of fatigue (Fourie and Potgieter, 2001). Rugby requires an element of physicality and controlled aggression (Brown, Guthrie and Growden, 1996).

¹ Snooker and swimming are examples of parallel games wherein there is no direct physical contact. Contenders test their skills against one or more others.
2007). Players have to deal with regular collisions: tackles, rucks and mauls. Their endurance is further challenged by the demands of the set piece, which place tremendous stress on the human body (Luger and Pook, 2004).

Furthermore, players must overcome their opponents by employing superior physical, tactical and psychological skills. A coordinated team effort is required. Yet, the game’s distinctive features compel teammates to function as units (backs and forwards), as sub-units (two lifters and the jumper at a lineout) or even as individuals (place kicker) from time to time. The ludic chaos that ensues makes the task of officiating such a challenging one.

The referee tries his best to deal with the ludic chaos. He cannot slow the tempo of the game to suit. Rather, he must instantaneously deal with matters as they arise. Given the nature of the game, minor and some major offences happen both quickly and frequently; they are very often not singular events. In such cases, the referee must accurately determine the first offence and rule accordingly.

Owing to its chaotic nature, Rugby does not produce relative stable action as seen in other sports. Infringements are likely in multiple-phase sequences of play and the referee has to process any chaotic deviance and decide which player, if any, is to be penalised. Such action reflects Aristotle’s notion of the need to do right thing, at the right time, for the right reason and with the right feeling.

As Fitts and Posner (1967) suggest, the actual mechanics of officiating become ingrained over time. Yet, as Yeman (2009) affirms, the very nature of officiating is both challenging and problematic. Similarities exist between the challenges faced by players and match officials. The referee is expected to be in a position to rule on play that is frequently multifaceted. For example, at a ruck the
referee has to observe that all players remain on their feet, that no player uses a hand to play the ball, that all arriving players join from behind the ball and that all non-participants remain onside.

Moreover, at the scrum, the referee has to call the engagement process before observing for a multitude of possible offences. There are twenty-one potential infringements involving the front row alone (IRB, 2012). These include early pushing, collapsing the scrum and incorrect binding. The fact that there are so many penalisable acts in a game of Rugby adds to the enormity and complexity of the referee’s task.

Popper (1963) suggests that our observations are theory-laden. He argues that we do not just see figures, grass and balls; we see tackles, rucks and mauls and so on. In this sense, match officials’ interpretations are different to that of any other interested observer. To some extent, this provides some explanation as to why some refereeing decisions incense players, coaches and spectators alike and/or why they fail to accept the rational explanation that follows.

Referees are limited by their human capacities and when confronted with the dynamic complexity of the game it is evident that the ability to determine officiating judgment based on a comprehensive account as to what ‘really’ happened is a significant challenge. It is also important here to consider the idea as to what constitutes a ‘comprehensive account as to what really happened’. One perspective, let us call it an ‘absolutist’ or ‘realist’ view, might argue that the role of the official in sport is to attempt as best as possible to provide officiating judgments based on the most accurate account as to what really happened and that the problem here is one of correspondence where what officials strive for is the ability
to observe, describe and judge sporting reality. The capacity of referees to do a good job, on this account, is one of matching up an external reality – the game being played – with an accurate description of that reality. Here, the game’s existence is as an event independently occurring in the world in advance of any judgments that are to be made of it by persons officiating (observing and judging) that event. Officiating on this view is to be nothing more than an accurate description of events that are then subsequently matched to \textit{a priori} evaluation articulated by the rules of the game and their interpretive directives. On this view, the role of the official is one of an independent and objective mediator of empirical reality (the game being played) and already at hand formal rules and their interpretations. It is a view of the officiating role that is entirely procedural and one in which the skill of the official is entirely conceived as one’s capacity to observe action, report it accurately and apply rulings accordingly and nothing more.

A more radical approach sees officiating as central to the game-making process. While it may be the case that there are independent events occurring – a rugby game being played – the only sense in which events are ‘real’ is determined by the interpretive role of the officials. In other words, what is of importance here is that one must acknowledge that the ultimate determinant of what is to count as Rugby reality is the decision of the referee whose judgments are subject to a significant range of influences that go beyond sensory-motor capacities to observe, report and apply rules. Officials are also subject to individual preferences and ideas that are infused into their officiating such that it is often the case that two different officials observing the same Rugby event will arrive at two radically different rulings and officiating decisions. From this perspective, the idea that somehow the referee
can claim neutrality and independence has to better account for the inherent subjectivity that arises in their decisions. Furthermore, as it is evident that the game of Rugby has a social dimension to it, a dimension that at the elite level is highly nuanced, pressured and emotive, it is to be expected that the subjectivity of officials can be made more malleable. The belief that officials therefore undertake their task as a conduit for reporting reality and implementing decisions that comport with universalisable ideals of fairness and justice that transcend the particulars of the action at hand is an unhelpful delusion. It is better to acknowledge that Rugby officials are as much, if not the most important part of the game-making process.

To overcome these ontological and empirical tensions, Collins offers a third perspective which argues that the nature of officiating should not be seen as either one of ‘telling the truth’ or of ‘making the truth’, but involves aspects of both. Collins (2010) argues that officials will observe and interpret the sporting contest differently to everyone else. Collins’ notion supposes that referees have “epistemological privilege” (2010, p. 136). Such a privilege consists of having a superior view and specialist skills. He maintains that because the match official occupies a position on the field of play he therefore has “a better view than most others” (2010, p. 136). Moreover, he makes decisions based on his having “specialist skills that are enhanced by the build up of scrutinised umpiring experience” (ibid.). Furthermore, the “ontological authority” (Collins, 2010, p. 136) associated with the role is acknowledged by the game’s stakeholders who recognise the referee as “the sole judge of fact and Law” (IRB, 2012, p. 46). Though sometimes reliant on support from his two assistants, the referee assumes primary responsibility for managing the many complex features of the Rugby match.
Two distinct conclusions can be drawn, particularly if ‘prompting’ is deemed necessary. Either the game is deficient in nature, which is manifest in the attitudes of players or prompting is an effective way of managing ludic chaos, which is an inherent positive quality of the game.

Consideration must be given to the temporal pressure endured throughout an elite contest. In the ruck example above, the referee has to constantly make split-second decisions. He has but one opportunity to do so without the luxury of slow motion replay that offers several viewing angles. A referee must rule on what he sees, not on what he assumes has occurred. To some extent this negates the very idea of the superior view and acts as a source of authority erosion. The pundit and the viewer enjoy the privilege of multiple screenings from which to form an opinion as to the accuracy of refereeing decisions.

The elite referee has to deal with two particular external pressures: institutional and social. Match officials have to play their part in producing a spectacle. They are expected to contribute to the entertainment value of a match.

The prestige and rewards of professional Rugby have affected elite officiating. For example, as a direct consequence of the evolution of the modern game, the elite match official requires a high level of conditioning. Rugby consists of many twists and turns. The referee is expected to make an immediate call from a single, real time observation. This requires a certain level of physical fitness. Elite practitioners commit to fitness programmes that increase the likelihood of arriving at the next phase of play in good time to make a considered judgment. This aspect of their role is vital, as missing the first offence and subsequently penalising the second or even third infringement is a source of great frustration.
The modern game analyses and criticises those who would occupy a role that is seemingly the hardest to fill in terms of recruitment. Hoye and Cuskelly (2004) note the difficulty of recruiting officials across all sports. Not surprisingly, Davies (2011) states that recruitment of Rugby match officials is a major concern. Community Rugby, which is the starting point for all aspiring referees, does not attract large numbers to the practice of officiating. Davies (2011) reports that many of those who attend the Level 1 course do so only to comply with Union regulations for officiating small-sided games and festivals. He remarks that many attendees are parents of children who participate at junior level. Davies’ (2011) statistics indicate that only 12% of attendees progress to Level 2 status.

A narrative highlighting the problematic nature of officiating and of being a match official has been presented above. The account highlights some of the key responsibilities of this specialist individual. In section 1.2.1 it was suggested that Rugby could be considered a social practice in the MacIntyrean sense. Given the nature of the task, it is plausible to make a case for labelling sports officiating a social practice too.

Officiating like playing requires a set of particular skills. Some of which have been highlighted above. It is acknowledged that refereeing can only occur as part of a sporting contest. However, it is proposed that officiating is sufficiently distinct to playing to at least be considered a practice in its own right. Arguably, there is a probable overlap in the context of Rugby. So, it is perhaps more accurate to view officiating as a practice-within-a-practice. This study considers this notion and concludes the matter in section 5.2.2.
1.5 Virtue ethics

Above, I proposed that the concept of game reasoning (Shields and Bredemeier, 1995) abounds within the elite game. In this section, I present an applied account of the role of virtue in sport. Thinking of virtue as a mid-point between two extremes of excess and deficiency can help to explain game reasoning. The challenge is then how to ensure that virtue ethics is both descriptive and normative, and that it somehow captures the reality and is thus capable of critiquing it. While acknowledging that game reasoning and the cultivation of virtue are not entirely commensurable, the notion that they can be compatible and the conditions under which they are will be discussed.

Sports offer good things. The internal goods of a practice can be achieved by exercising those qualities we call virtues. MacIntyre (1981) argues that those who engage in activities must concede that virtues such as courage, justice and honesty are essential elements of any practice with internal goods and standards of excellence. Furthermore, that if we do not accept these virtues, then the achievement of internal goods will be impossible and we would not be judged as having excelled in a particular way. Cheating is seen as a tool and such an understanding primarily focuses on attaining external goods, should these be available as an end to rule breaking and displays of mediocrity.

It is how we are judged that is deemed of great importance when referring to the attainment of standards of excellence and the achievement of internal goods in any given practice (MacIntyre, 1981). It is suggested that players are more
interested in attaining the external goods than they appear to be interested in the acquisition of internal goods.

It is accepted that a degree of sportspersonship is required within any sporting practice. According to McNamee, this should be seen “in the context of certain standards of athletic excellence in persons striving mutually for exclusive goals by admirable standards of conduct and character” (2008, p. 37). Rugby's various practitioners have conflicting views on the modern game. Players frequently engage in rule violations, putting the onus on referees to catch them. It is the same players who use persuasive, emotive measures to contrive favourable rulings. This appears to place an unfair burden on match officials.

Morgan states that virtue ethics theories “claim that ethics should devote itself foremost to the development of the moral character” (2007, p. xxv). He argues that two factors contribute to moral development, namely, the acquirement of virtues and the quest for excellence in all undertakings. This underpins Slote's reference to “aretaic motives” (2000, p. 325). Such motives compel human beings to strive for excellence in all activities. It can be argued that the social practice of Rugby ought to align itself with this view. Yet, it is perhaps unrealistic to think that all players could be convinced that this is a good way to go.

This is why virtue theory places a heavy premium on courage, justice, honesty, and integrity in our dealings with one another, and on excellence as the preferred end of human striving. (Morgan, 2007, p. xxv)

Virtue ethics support the development of morally desirable virtues for their own sake. In any given scenario it is through the actor’s response that we make the judgment as to whether such virtues have been developed. There is no process of
preparation before the test; it is all in the action. Of interest here is how the virtues might be applicable to sport.

Many virtues have been put forward. Historically, Plato (1984) championed the virtues of wisdom, courage, moderation and justice. Aquinas (1996) later interpreted these as prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude. While the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle are still highly regarded in modern thinking, it is the contemporary ideas of Alasdair MacIntyre that are of particular interest here.

Specifically, it is his notion of virtue ethics that underpins this research. MacIntyre advocates that, “every individual has a given role and status within a well-defined and highly determinate system of roles and statuses” (2007, p. 122). Every man’s status carries with it an array of “duties and privileges”. Hence, a person is judged in society by his actions. This can be said to apply to all Rugby practitioners. MacIntyre offers a clear set of guidelines so that a person knows when he is or is not performing as expected.

By performing actions of a particular kind in a particular situation a man (sic) gives warrant for judgement upon his virtues and vices; for the virtues are just those qualities which sustain a free man in his role and which manifest themselves in those actions which his role requires. (2007, p. 122)

The virtuous man is conscious of his actions and the subsequent effect that they might have on others in society.

MacIntyre deals with the virtue of courage as understood in heroic societies. It is an important quality, one that helps to preserve whole communities. For acts of courage one might expect to receive kudos (status, high regard) from one’s community. This may result from an act of military bravery or athletic excellence in
a contest. The bestowing of kudos signifies a community’s approval of one’s actions.

To be courageous is to be someone on whom reliance can be placed. Hence courage is an important ingredient in friendship. (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 123)

McNamee (2008) suggests that courage, in a sporting contest, cannot be labelled as such. Courage here can be interpreted as something that one displays on a battlefield where one’s life is at risk. It is inferred from McNamee that sportspersons who appear courageous can be said to be displaying daring.

Like all virtues and using courage as an example, Aristotle (1980) prescribes a sense of balance. A man needs just the right amount of courage, too much and he may be labelled rash, too little and he is called timid. That a virtue lies between two vices perhaps makes it all the more difficult to live a virtuous life. It is understood that the virtues will help man to cope with adversity and other such evils in his quest for achieving the good.

In the heroic age there is a strong sense of kinship. Every hero knows exactly what he owes another and if they appear to be faltering MacIntyre (2007) informs us that they would feel aidos. Aidos as a quality is the feeling of reverence or shame that restrains men from wrongdoing. To have honour appears to be the main reason for being in a heroic society. MacIntyre suggests that despite the many changes in moral theory and practice over the years many of the qualities of heroic societies still hold true.
There is no way to possess the virtues except as part of a tradition in which we inherit them and our understanding of them from a series of predecessors in which series heroic societies hold first place. (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 123)

Humans, as sportspersons, need to make choices – choices concerning which means will best achieve the desired end. MacIntyre argues that such choices compel us to make judgments, “to do the right thing in the right place at the right time in the right way” (2007, p. 150). Is such a judgment possible? In the heat of the moment, an adrenalin-charged player is unlikely to be thinking as rationally as a player in a more relaxed state. This is particularly difficult given the nature of Rugby’s ludic chaos.

MacIntyre refers to the concept of phronesis as an intellectual virtue (see section 1.7). A man who possesses phronesis is said to be able to make sound judgments, which MacIntyre suggests are “acquired through teaching” (2007, p. 154). Such judgments are deemed virtues of character from habitual exercise.

Humans must obey rules if we are to coexist in a way that all can prosper respectively. In Ethics, Aristotle (1980) does not speak directly of rules. He philosophises that a virtuous man would follow the laws of the city-state and live his life in such a way that he would have no cause to break the rules. Here, Aristotle claims that the prospect of failing to be a good enough person acts as a sufficient deterrent.

Interactions are essential components of a practice community. MacIntyre advocates “every practice requires a certain kind of relationship between those who participate in it” (2007, p. 191). Practitioners should display virtuous behaviour. Of interest here is how MacIntyre’s vision might prosper in today’s
game. Two challenges present themselves. First, the task of promoting a relationship between players of opposing sides; second, establishing a working relationship between players, coaches and match officials.

Here it is proposed that Rugby practitioners should operate within an ethical framework. To this end, Butcher and Schneider advocate a host of “virtues, praiseworthy attributes, or behaviours” (2007, p. 121) that are applicable to sports. Such actions, it is suggested, can promote social values of cooperation, friendship and justice.

On the virtue of compassion, McNamee suggests that it “facilitates interpretation of the situation in order to decide upon a course of moral action” (2008, p. 77). He also proposes that, “fairness facilitates the right judgment and third, sportspersonship facilitates choosing values” (2008, p. 78). Furthermore, he argues that the virtue of integrity is deployed to “facilitate the implementation of action” (ibid.). McNamee addresses this concept by stating that sportspersonship is not a single virtue but an “internally complex amalgam of values, attitudes and beliefs” (2008, p. 78). An earlier definition by Shields and Bredemeier is presented below.

Sportspersonship involves an intense striving to win combined with a commitment to the “play spirit” of sport, such that ethical standards will take precedence over strategic gain when the two conflict. (1995, p. 188)

Butcher and Schneider (2007) point out the problematic nature of such lists. While justice (fairness) and integrity (honesty and responsibility) are present in either list, there are differences between the other moral values, despite their perceived compatibility. As the world is diverse in terms of religious beliefs and
cultures, it is not surprising that different accounts exist of what values or principles should be developed when practising sports. They provide clarification.

Different views of ethics as such translate into different characteristics as the foundations of fair play, and just as we have no good method of arbitrating between the competing claims of different moral systems, we have no corresponding way of adjudicating between rival claims concerning fair play. (Butcher and Schneider, 2007, p. 121)

In sport, there is less room for the cultural and the religious because its very nature “requires that the participants be engaged in the same activity” (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 121). Coexistence is impracticable. However, the more general point being made is that there will always be ongoing debates about where to draw the line on what ought or ought not to be done in any given situation.

One observation and one suggestion have been made. First, players employ game reasoning while attempting to persuade the referee to rule in their favour. Second, players ought to act in a virtuous manner to maximise the opportunity for attaining excellence, as understood in broad human terms, within the social practice of Rugby. One might conclude that there is a fundamental tension between game reasoning and the pursuit of human excellence.

It is not enough to say that players should refrain from cheating to enhance, among other things, the product of Rugby. Any perceived improvement in conduct may be no more than a trained response. This means that the chosen response may not necessarily involve any moral reflection or attention to virtue. Expectations of player conduct need to be realistic.

By participating within a moral framework it is reasonable to assume that game reasoning would be restricted. Any restriction or reduction would be reliant
on a greater trust among players. While trust is an important virtue, Hobbes (2010) suggests that it is also a very controversial one in moral philosophy. In the context of Rugby, players want someone to apply the Laws correctly and consistently. In conjunction with this, match officials need players and coaches to trust in their ability to act as arbiters of justice. Players displaying the virtues of honesty and courage, among others, would simplify the officials’ task. The reality of ludic chaos suggests that elite referees ought to be capable of at least regulating player behaviour; eradicating all game reasoning is unrealistic. How these officials might acquire the necessary skills is discussed in Chapter 5.

1.6 Justice

Honesty and trust were among the virtues discussed above. The concept of justice is also seen as a key virtue. Konow (2003) proposes that justice is the concept of moral rightness. In the context of Rugby officiating, Konow’s notion would suggest that the referee’s role, if nothing else, is to ensure that both the way the game is played and the result is considered fair.

Reviewing the concept of justice gives us a basic understanding and expectation of the nature and role of officiating. Moreover, it hones in on the idea that this fundamental issue is not in doubt with regard to officiating, but that the more problematic issues relate to how the official’s role as a guardian of justice is to be instantiated. Consequently, this means addressing more fundamentally how we are to understand the concept of justice within the context of elite Rugby.
Here it is reasoned that focusing on the pursuit of justice leads to greater trust and honesty between Rugby practitioners (DeConick, 2010). This implies that those who perceive a greater sense of justice are more likely to comply with the Laws. Consequently, the difficulty of task might prove to be less problematic for the elite official. To this end, the following account discusses those types of justice associated with the social practice of Rugby. Further discussion centres on the idea commonly referred to as ‘materiality’. When considering the materiality of a player’s action the referee must decide whether or not the offence prevented a fair contest or made a real difference to the game.

McNamee states that philosophers tend to categorise justice into one of two classifications: “the distributional (who gets what, where, when and why) and the rectificatory (following injustice how is the matter rectified properly)” (2008, p. 188). John Rawls’ theory of justice (1999) acts as a primary source for the discussion that follows. The focus is on the role of justice within society and its perceived importance in Rugby.

Justice is derived from the mutual agreement of all concerned. Rawls (1999) presents his notion of “the original position” in which each person, under a “veil of ignorance,” would agree to some general principles of justice. In the context of Rugby the notion of materiality may conflict with Rawls’ thinking here. For example, when one forward pack is particularly dominant, it is questionable that a referee will completely disregard this knowledge when making decisions at scrum time. Justice has an important role to play in society. This conceptualisation partly draws on Rawls’ insight to underpin the argument for an improved ‘state of play’.
Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. (Rawls, 1999, p. 3)

MacIntyre is of the opinion that justice demands that every person should have the opportunity to “develop his or her talents and his or her other potentialities” (1981, p. 7). It is concerned with the proper ordering of persons and things in society and comes in many forms. It is not the intention here to review its various forms; rather, the discussion confines itself to those forms that are most relevant to this study: distributive, restorative and retributive (retaliation) justice. Rawls’ view is clear on matters of justice.

Many different kinds of things are said to be just and unjust: laws, institutions, and social systems, but also particular actions of many kinds, including decisions, judgements, and imputations. We also call the attitudes and dispositions of persons, and persons themselves, just and unjust. (1999, p. 6)

Rawls’ viewpoint underpins the perception that persons are able to conduct themselves in either a just or unjust manner. The types of behaviour displayed depend on the circumstances in which persons find themselves. For example, an otherwise just individual may act in an unjust manner when placed in an elite sporting environment that places far too much pressure on that individual to achieve a certain outcome. Often, this level of pressure is not something with which a sportsperson is able to cope well. Alternatively, it may be the case that an ethos of game reasoning prevails or that there may not be any pressure at all and conformity is easy.

Distributive justice pertains to the distribution of things such as wealth, power, reward and respect in a just manner (Rawls, 1999). The allocation of such
goods are not questioned when it is perceived that they have been acquired by means that are both fair and just. Conversely, injustice occurs when the goods have been obtained through unreasonable means, what MacIntyre labels “interferences” (2007, p. 245). Such action consequently deprives others of their fair share.

The ludic chaos of the game dictates that player misconduct impacts on the task of officiating. As an active practitioner, my understanding of the role is that a referee undertakes to facilitate a Rugby match in such a way as to maximise opportunities for all involved to attain performance excellence through just means. Yet, he has to contend with any number of players that willingly employ unfair practices (cheating, rule breaking, gamesmanship) and then proceed to defend their actions as mere game reasoning. Showing respect for fellow practitioners is key and any negative approach ought to be discouraged. To this end, in part, the IRB (2013a) recently reviewed its protocol for television match officials. The extended remit now allows the referee to refer questionable incidents such as knock-ons, forward passes and dangerous tackles to the TMO. When called on, this enhanced process ensures a more accurate and fairer distribution of goods.

Restorative justice requires that we address the victims’ harms and needs. We must hold those who transgress accountable to put right those harms. Zehr (2002) stresses the need to involve victims, transgressors and whole communities in the restorative process. In this way, all those who have been affected by the injustice can be restored to as near their original state as possible. Whether this is possible within the context of elite sport is debatable.
Retributive justice is a form of justice that relates to ‘settling the score’. McAleer (2009) explains that in such a system, punishment is only handed out as a direct response to the provision of lawful evidence that proves beyond reasonable doubt that a crime has been committed. The punishment imposed is deemed just and considered as moral and deserved.

Neither restorative nor retributive justice can be directly administered. Minor infringements are commonplace in Rugby. A referee awards either a penalty or free kick for such indiscretions, depending on the Law infringed. When dealing with players who are guilty of intentionally offending, the referee uses even greater sanctions. Cynical acts lead to a temporary suspension. Moreover, a referee will further punish the transgressor by awarding a penalty try should he feel that a try would probably otherwise have been scored. In this way, restorative justice has prevailed, with the non-offending team also benefiting from a conversion kick in front of the posts.

In attempting to ensure that justice prevails, match officials must decide on the materiality of any given occurrence of unfair practice. The elite referee is aware of the environment in which he operates. He has a duty to maintain flow and draws on his practical wisdom (phronesis) to decide whether a player’s action has directly affected proceedings.

Deliberate rule breaking frequently occurs in sport. Aristotle (1980) refers to occurrences of fighting, cheating and deliberate rule violation as akrasia. He believes this vice manifests itself whenever a person displays a weakness of the will. It is debatable whether this should be considered as the reason for the actions of Rugby players. Deliberate rule breaking or “intentionally offending” (IRB, 2012,
p. 63) is currently a cautionable offence (where a player is temporarily suspended for a period of ten minutes). The debate centres on the sufficiency of such a deterrent. The professional foul is a source of constant frustration. While IRB statistics show that the non-offending team often scores between 7-12 points during the temporary suspension (Thomas, 2011), cost benefit analysis suggests that committing a cynical act is worthwhile (Boardman, Greenberg, Vining and Weimer, 2010). One could argue that this is inevitably part of the game and therefore should be accepted. The enforced absence of the transgressor provides the opposition with a kind of restorative justice, albeit an imperfect one.

There is a distinct comparison between soccer and Rugby in relation to cynical play inasmuch as the latter does give referees the power to award a penalty try, if in all probability a try would otherwise have been scored. When an attacking player in soccer is felled from behind by a desperate lunge from a defending player, the result may well be a sending off but no penalty goal can be awarded. The non-offending team has to be satisfied with a numerical advantage and a penalty kick (if the foul occurred within the penalty area). Should the penalty be missed or saved, and the defending team go on to win the game as a result of the intervention by the defender, then arguably justice has not prevailed (Carlson and Gleaves, 2011).

Nevertheless, Loland suggests that we could declare a fair result “even if rule violations occurred” (2002, p. 6). Formalists might be disgruntled by this outcome (D'Agostino, 1995; Morgan, 1995), as they argue that all contests should be played under the rules of that sport without deviation. Yet, it is hypothesised that formalists would be accepting of such a situation, as would, say, consequentialists.
The real issue here is who considers the ruling to be deficient or not in relation to expectations of justice. The rule itself can say nothing about this. It can only be correctly or incorrectly applied.

It could be taken that Loland’s suggestion goes against the very nature of distributive justice. Here, the internal goods would be distributed to those agents acting immorally by taking advantage of their fellow practitioners. Any player who intentionally offends has interfered with the fair distribution of goods.

The *Laws of the Game* are very clear on acts of retaliation – “A player must not retaliate” (IRB, 2012, p. 62). Such acts, however provoked, are never condoned. A reaction in the heat of the moment will still necessitate an appropriate sanction. It has been proposed that game reasoning frequently occurs throughout the contest. Even with the best of intentions, a referee will not detect all cases. Yet, whenever a sanctionable act is detected the referee will use punitive measures in dealing with that player. This ensures some form of retributive justice. Without such measures the game might deteriorate as a consequence of players taking matters into their own hands. However effective this might be, self-resolution should never become the norm. Preferably, a referee would employ a degree of practical wisdom to circumvent any potential episodes.

1.7 *Phronesis*

Various virtues have been discussed hitherto. Their respective merits have been considered in relation to the practice of officiating. In this section, it is proposed that Aristotle’s (1941) notion of “*phronesis*” is one such virtue that all elite
match officials ought to possess. It is important to understand that the notion of \textit{phronesis} is that of an intellectual virtue that captures the idea of persons exercising good decision-making in relation to practical activity. Moreover, it is necessary to see that it differs from particular moral virtues such as justice. So, the two together are what is really important for officiating, that evidence for rational officiating knowledge emerges through the way one’s \textit{phronesis} mediates a range of competing virtues, including that of honesty, truth and justice. Reviewing appropriate literature regarding this notion will underpin the likely argument that \textit{phronesis} forms a key component of the elite match official’s make-up. Of particular importance here is how context and experience affect a referee’s ability to display such a virtue.

Virtue theorists maintain that ethical considerations ought to deal primarily with the development of moral character (Shields and Bredemeier, 1995). Hence, Morgan (2007) advocates that humans should adopt an \textit{aretaic} approach to seeking and consequently achieving excellence in all that they do. He argues that virtue theory promotes the use of “courage, justice, honesty, and integrity in our dealings with one another, and on excellence as the preferred end of human striving” (Morgan, 2007, p. xxxii). Different types of virtue are discussed below.

Aristotle proposes two kinds of virtue: “intellectual and practical” (1941, 1103a 14). The former owes much to teaching, which requires expertise and time; the latter is derived from habit. With regard to intellectual virtue, he presents us with two concepts: \textit{sophia} and \textit{phronesis} (Aristotle, 1941). Persons who possess \textit{sophia} are able to think well about scientific matters; they display theoretical
wisdom. Persons who possess *phronesis* are able to think well about practical matters; they display practical wisdom. Sigmund Loland shares this view.

Practical wisdom refers to the ability to act in accordance with virtues such as justice and fairness, temperance and enthusiasm, empathy and understanding. (2011, p. 19)

Aristotle argues that “virtue makes us aim at the right mark, and practical wisdom makes us take the right means” (1941, 1144a 8-10). For a virtuous person or one striving to be so, it is not only essential that the end sought be a morally worthy one, for example, sporting excellence, but also that it is accomplished in a morally upstanding way. It is hoped that the professional Rugby player would set out to compete always in accordance with the *Laws of the Game* and out of moral respect for his opponents. A virtuous competitor would do well to act in a manner that is deemed “other-regarding” (Morgan, 2007, xxiii). For without opposition, no individual can excel in his chosen sport. Respect for one’s opponent in the form of appropriate conduct is crucial to achieving Aristotle’s notion of *eudaimonia*.

Every art and every enquiry, and similarly every action and choice, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. (1941, 1094a 1-3)

Aristotle does not define *phronesis* as merely a skill to be learned. It is distinct from other practical skills such as arts and crafts. In such pursuits, the point is to produce something distinct from their exercise. For example, in the practice of medicine, the point is to produce healthy patients. The point of *phronesis* is not to produce *eudaimonia*; rather, *phronesis* consists in acting just because one sees
what one does as noble and worthwhile. These actions are intrinsically good. One who possesses *phronesis*, then, has the capacity to perform actions of this kind.

*Phronesis* is the ability to decide how to achieve a certain end and to reflect on and determine that end. Learning a new skill takes time and repeated practice and as such, Aristotle proposes that achieving *phronesis* requires a certain level of maturation.

Whereas young people become accomplished in geometry and mathematics, and wise within these limits, prudent young people do not seem to be found. The reason is that prudence is concerned with particulars as well as universals, and particulars become known from experience, but a young person lacks experience, since some length of time is needed to produce it. (1941, 1142a)

*Phronesis* is concerned with particulars, specifically how to act in particular situations. One can learn the principles of action, but applying them in the real world in situations one could not have foreseen requires experience of the world. For example, if one knows that one should be kind, one might act in certain situations in ways that cause pain and offence. Knowing how to apply kindness in balance with other considerations and in specific contexts requires experience. Aristotle (1941) argues that having *phronesis* is key to becoming a virtuous agent. As *phronesis* is practical, is it possible to have both *phronesis* and *akrasia*? It may not be possible in a holistic sense, but *phronesis* or *akrasia* is particular to each situation. This implies that there will always be the need for balancing. According to McNamee (2008), intentionally offending and gamesmanship are not acceptable reasons for rule violations. However, many elite players will engage in akratic
practices to gain the upper hand. Motivated by self-interest, they choose their moments for acting in either a phronetic or akratic manner.

The virtue of *phronesis* is seen as relevant to the practice of sports officiating. It is interpreted here as that which promotes wellbeing or human flourishing or contextually, Rugby flourishing. It is argued that a referee needs to display practical wisdom in his role as arbiter of justice. He must draw on his knowledge and experience in performing his duties.

Rugby coaches and players alike are always calling on referees to show empathy for the game. Those officials with greater practical wisdom are able to show such empathy at the highest level. Empathy is having an understanding for what is trying to be achieved, applicable to both playing and officiating. Contextually, it is the ability to take a common sense approach to officiating the ludic chaos that is a Rugby match. The referee has to decide whether or not an act has had a material effect on the play. If play has been unaffected, then the game is allowed to continue.

Given the nature of this elite sport, one must question the fairness of placing such a burden on one individual. Here, the referee is being encouraged to make value judgments on possible futures. With unlimited possibilities, this is somewhat problematic from an officiating perspective. The institution already makes great demands on its practitioners. Elite match officials are under pressure to meet aesthetic, moral and economic expectations. Such expectations are imposed by the game’s institution, which prioritises the external goods. This implies that referee selection, management and development are significant and complex tasks.
Philosophy addresses a wide range of issues. Key areas of exploration include knowledge, values, reason, mind, existence and language. While it can be argued that any number of philosophical notions would be suitable for articulating the nature and practice of officiating, the concepts presented above were considered highly relevant for this analysis. From here the focus is now directed onto those individuals who would occupy the challenging role of elite match official.

1.8 Characteristics of an elite match official

The chapter thus far has given descriptive accounts of both the nature of the game and the complexities of officiating it. Discussing key philosophical concepts such as game reasoning, virtue ethics, justice and phronesis has helped to gain a better understanding of the role of the elite match official. In light of these discussions I now move on to consider the characteristics that an elite match official ought to possess. Here, I am mindful of the possible tensions that such a discussion exposes. Clearly, asking whether good referees are born or made does not elicit a straightforward ‘yes/no’ answer.

This brief discussion is helpful for informing the research method. What constitutes “elite” is of particular importance and is considered a key aspect of any subsequent qualitative data collection. Can such essential/desirable characteristics be learned? MacIntyre’s (1981) views on the internal goods of a practice guide this discussion. Quality of character and physiological state are also of concern here.

If we consider the full complexity of the role of elite match officials a number of key issues become apparent. The professional game is a highly charged
emotional event for all concerned. A referee requires a sound knowledge of the Laws to facilitate a fair contest. Moreover, he should possess important personal characteristics such as integrity and courage. His judgment should be good, both of the facts and of what the Laws require in light of certain facts. This underpins the argument that the virtue of *phronesis* is a vital component of any elite official. The relevance of the virtue of *phronesis* is clear. The ability to make good decisions that allow the game to flourish is crucial. It is reasoned that possessing sound practical wisdom will raise a referee’s overall officiating capabilities.

The professional game needs referees who can cope with the pressure of the occasion as well as manage appropriately the players and coaches. An elite referee does not allow himself to be swayed by the actions of others seeking to gain the upper hand however insignificant they may seem. He portrays authority and empathy. An elite referee executes his duties without bias. Here, “elite” defines referees who consistently produce first-class performances and thus distinguish themselves from others who would occupy similar roles. A selection panel determines a referee’s status based on, among other things, key performance indicators. The significance of a referee’s “eliteness” should not be overstated.

The human factor in Rugby is unavoidable. Despite good intentions, a referee sometimes finds himself in an unfavourable position at a critical moment. For example, during an attacking movement, the referee while following play may have his view obstructed by players running across his path (“traffic”) at the same time as a throw forward occurs. Unfortunately for the referee, at the exact moment of the questionable pass he has been blinded and cannot rule accordingly. Often,
these missed events result in scores and unless the referee has help from his assistants in this matter, he will expect to be held accountable.

Two points relating to referee error conclude this section. First, when a referee has made a clear mistake, he must not attempt to balance this out by going with the opposition on a later call that is unjust. He has to accept that he has made an error and continue to be an arbiter of fairness and justice. Clearly, two wrongs do not make a right. An elite referee must put the incident to the back of his mind and concentrate on the rest of the game. Second and perhaps more of a concern, are those situations wherein a referee thinks he has not made an error but clearly has. How this should be dealt with is of interest to the whole practice community. Referee accountability and credibility is discussed further in section 4.3.

1.9 Summary

To conclude this chapter I summarise the key issues emanating from this review of literature. This summary helps to explain the necessary inclusion of the next chapter. Chapter 2 focuses on the institution that runs Welsh Rugby, the WRU, specifically its organisational structure and functionality. The building of trust between players, coaches and officials is deemed important for the continued growth of the modern game. In cultivating this trust it is suggested that there is a need to establish justice for the greater good. McFee (2004) proposes that officiating is complex and problematic when striving for justice as fairness. In citing Davis (1998), he suggests that popular myths such as “all referees are blind” (McFee, 2004, p. 88) can be traced back to at least the sporting contests of ancient
Rome. It is evident that fairness is fundamental to any satisfactory sporting contest. Yet, the problems that can arise are commonly thought to result from human error.

The WRU is looking to attract persons who are confident and accurate decision-makers. The role of the elite referee requires sound moral judgment, honesty and consistency. While these can be learned, it is crucial that aspiring officials show sufficient potential for developing these essential characteristics.

McFee reminds us that it is pointless to change the rule each time a complex situation arises that results in an unfair outcome for one or both of the teams. He advises, “rules cannot, in principle, be devised to cover all cases” (2004, p. 47). All eventualities cannot be accounted for in any rulebook. It is possible that, even despite the inclusion of Law rulings (statements that clarify the meaning of any given Law), “a situation could always be envisaged where either those rules were silent or where they produced an answer intuitively contrary to the spirit of the game” (McFee, 2004, p. 47). This suggests that as one loophole is exposed and subsequently filled, another emerges and so the problem persists. As the Laws of the Game are written imperfectly, it is fair to assume that judgments made by match officials will also be imperfect from time to time. This simple statement is a hard fact that all stakeholders must accept and while it also computes that players are equally imperfect, it is not unreasonable to expect them to act morally in their actions against and judgments of others. Albeit an imperfect one, the elite match official plays a significant role within the modern game.

Self-interest and over-emphasis on the external goods have a negative influence on professional sports like Rugby (Kretchmar and Elcombe, 2007). This research draws on the work of notable authors from mainstream philosophy
(Aristotle, 1980; MacIntyre, 1981; Rawls, 1999; Shields and Bredemeier, 1985) to evaluate the game’s current status from an officiating perspective. This study builds on earlier research that upholds that greater cooperation between Rugby practitioners can lead to a significant improvement (Hennessy, 2007). The eclectic mix of philosophical literature helps to problematise and then to critically analyse elite Rugby Union officiating.

The review of literature has facilitated a greater understanding of the nature of Rugby and its subsequent effect on the nature and role of officiating. I have drawn on mainstream philosophy to understand better the moral values and attitudes of such a contemporary sport. Specifically, the philosophical concepts of game reasoning, virtue ethics, justice and phronesis have been considered. Their inclusion was deemed appropriate for undertaking a critical analysis of the officiating phenomenon. Consequently, I have identified some key issues for both the practice of officiating and for the institutional structures that support it. I dedicate the next chapter to presenting a detailed account of the institutional structure that is the Welsh Rugby Union. This allows the reader to fully appreciate the contribution made by the game’s governing body in Wales.
Chapter Two: The Welsh Rugby Union Group

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the organisational structure of the Welsh Rugby Union Group. The need for such an institution is outlined. I present a two-part contextualisation of the WRU’s refereeing provision. The first part provides a descriptive account of the WRU Group’s organisational structure, outlining the roles of key personnel within the Referees Department. The second part considers the Union’s functionality and the potential issues that are related to operating as a “tall hierarchy” (Lim, Griffiths and Sambrook, 2010). The chapter concludes with a summary of the main research foci. In line with the overall aim of the study, this chapter problematises issues within the practice of officiating and its development.

Preceding the main text, it was felt necessary to highlight the contribution of volunteers and then to discuss the notion of sporting roles as professions. This informs the reader as to the need for and purpose of such an institution as the WRU Group. Then, I consider the ideology of enhancement, a particularly relevant concept given the nature of the study. As this study goes on to suggest, attaining sporting excellence motivates officials as much as it does athletes. Performance enhancement therefore is a key factor in development of elite match officials, which is overseen by the Referees Department.
2.2 Volunteering

Sport relies on the paid and unpaid efforts of individuals. As Rowe, Adams and Beasley (2004) note, organisations like the Football Association (FA), the International Rugby Board (IRB) and the International Cricket Council (ICC) were all founded to steer the growing popularisation of their respective sports. These organisations can be considered social institutions as defined by MacIntyre (1981). A national governing body networks the many clubs, coaches and volunteers that make sport happen (Sport England, 2011). NGB’s are responsible for all administration while providing support and guidance to members on matters like player safety and Laws.

Individuals can engage in sports in their own way and at their own level. Many scholars have noted the various benefits of participation (Farelli, 2011; Lieberman, 2010; Rowe, Moore and Mori, 1999; Wankel, 1991). Playing sports can impact positively on an individual’s physical, social and mental health (Biddle, Fox and Boutcher, 2000). Moreover, a person’s involvement does not have to end once active participation has ceased.

Volunteers make an important contribution to participation level sports. Nichols, Taylor, James, King, Holmes and Garrett (2005) argue that the duties that they carry out help sustain this social practice (MacIntyre, 1981). Among other things, volunteers provide match day assistance (cleaning changing rooms, selling tickets and serving meals), while for others the desire to remain within the team environment is such that they become volunteer coaches. Burgham and Downward
(2005) note the significance of nurturing the next generation of practitioners. It is the volunteer who ensures the longevity of a social practice such as sports.

In the context of Rugby, parents (often former players themselves) volunteer to help in the mini/junior sections of their local clubs. The Union reports that many attend the UKCC accredited coaching course to gain the necessary Level 1 qualification (WRU, 2005). These volunteers support the player pathway by coaching and managing children aged between 5-14 years old (Nichols et al., 2005). This situation reflects MacIntyre’s (2007) ideas about initiation and the requisite expertise and knowledge of the best custodians of the practice. However, while volunteer contributions do help with sustainability, the richness and depth of their game understanding will vary greatly.

In light of this mixed picture of coaching quality at junior participatory level, it can be argued that a coach is only truly a coach once Level 3 accreditation has been attained. A coach volunteer with a limited capacity for developing practitioners cannot fully prepare athletes for the professional game. Yet, as Lusted and O’Gorman (2010) observe, these individuals who receive no financial rewards for their undertakings volunteer because they want to give something back to the practice community. Their contribution has merit and should be appreciated.

It is more common for a sportsperson to make the transition from player to coach than from player to match official. Titlebaum, Haberlin and Titlebaum (2009) report the difficulties that all sports face with recruiting and retaining referees. Current research suggests numerous reasons, which include: harassment, limited career opportunities, time away from family and obligations of primary job (Cuskelly and Hoye, 2004; Kellett and Shilbury, 2007; Rainey and Hardy, 1999). In Wales,
the WRU (2012) has recently indicated that a lack of respect, and verbal/physical abuse are specific factors in Rugby. The nature and degree to which these are problematic needs to be investigated. The historical pathway may well be from player to coach but exploring how professional career orientated referees could be supported in their development is of interest.

This study will discuss the motivations for and implications of entering the practice of officiating. Among other things, factors such as age, playing ability and experience will be considered. Referee profiling will aid this process by highlighting the differences among aspiring match officials. Of particular interest are the biographies of junior academy referees and their respective Rugby experience.

2.3 Playing, coaching and refereeing as professions

Rugby as a professional sport is approaching its twentieth year, but to say that it provides practitioners with a *bona fide* profession is debatable. As Barrow suggests, “professions are based on scientific and philosophical facts acquired through scholarly endeavour” (1977, p. 353). Those who enter a profession do so for reasons that distinguish them from other work or vocations. Boone (2001) states that a profession can be defined in part as performing a public service.

This symbol of the ideal profession consists of a set of ideas about the kind of work done by a real profession, its relations with other members of other professions, the internal relations of its own members, its relations with clients and the general public, the character of its own members’ motivation, and the kind of recruitment and training necessary for its perpetuation. (Becker, 1977, p. 93)
In the MacIntyrean sense, this social practice is a suitable “site of professions and professionalism” (Pill, Wainwright, McNamee and Pattison, 2004, p. 22).

The chronological status of professionalism in Rugby is as follows. The sport went “open” following the conclusion of Rugby World Cup 1995. Players began to be remunerated openly for their participation. The practice of appointing professional coaches began shortly afterwards. Full-time match officials did not materialise until some years later. Williams (2009) recalls that the WRU only appointed its first three professional referees in 2002.

Arguably, the hierarchical status of professionalism in Rugby does not replicate its chronological status. In terms of fulfilling the criteria of professionalism, it can be argued that coaching has made greater progress than both playing and officiating. Roberts (2011) refers to the well-established coach education programmes and relevant degree programmes that augment the profession. However, it is difficult to judge referees in terms of being professionalised. The practice of officiating needs more time to evolve.

Coaching as a profession is still in its embryonic stage. Jones (2006) suggests that coaching has some way to go before establishing itself as a credible profession. Bullock and Trombley argue that a profession arises when any trade or occupation transforms itself through “the development of formal qualifications based upon education, apprenticeship, and examinations, the emergence of regulatory bodies with powers to admit and discipline members, and some degree of monopoly rights” (1999, p. 689). Hence, the appropriateness of labelling coaching as a profession is problematic. The WRU recognises the importance of the coaching role in the modern era. The Union has introduced a coach education
and development programme to ensure a sufficient number of qualified coaches operate within the elite game.

The Union’s formal coach education programme offers globally recognised qualifications and continuing professional development opportunities (WRU, 2005). High performance athletes require elite support structures to achieve their aims. To this end, these coach education programmes provide advanced learning and development opportunities. Unsurprisingly, the Union has invested heavily in its coach education programme (John, 2011). Once recognised as professional coaches, they provide optimal support for enhancing athlete performance.

Rugby refereeing as a profession is even less established. Presently, there is no guarantee of full-time employment as an elite match official. Two distinct pathways emerge in considering when, if ever, an individual might enter the practice of officiating. An individual could opt for early specialisation, for example, by entering the practice post secondary education. Alternatively, an individual might wish to continue his Rugby involvement post performance.

Current sports literature offers no guidance on which pathway is best. There is merit in choosing either route. For example, an individual who opts for early specialisation has the opportunity to become an expert through years of training, development and honing of the necessary skills required. Likewise, the player-cum-referee can draw on vast playing experience and game knowledge in mastering the practice.
2.4 Enhancing performance

Performance enhancement has focused on developing players and coaches. Such development is necessary to ensure growth at all participatory levels. Elite players have access to expert coaching, conditioning programmes, sports nutritionists, sports psychologists, and even lifestyle managers. Coaches benefit from CPD and coach education programmes. It can be argued that referee performances should replicate the playing and coaching standards of the modern game. Refereeing needs to keep pace and a clear understanding of how this might be achieved is essential. Matters of consistency and proportionality between the performance development of players and referees will be discussed in relation to future best practice.

Continuous improvement in the standards of playing, coaching and officiating is both desirable and necessary. Recognising the need to provide an appropriate development structure that would serve the elite game in Wales, the WRU launched its National Academy in 2009. The Academy is housed at the National Centre of Excellence, which is based at the Vale Resort in the Vale of Glamorgan. The National Academy was established to facilitate the development of aspiring players, coaches and match officials. The Group Chief Executive said of the National Academy:

We are creating a finishing school for our most talented young sportsmen and women, which will help deliver a winning Wales for generations to come. (Lewis, 2009)
Part 1: Organisational Structure

2.5 Five basic parts of an organisation

The organisational structure of any institution, company or organisation depends on its primary objectives. Such a structure affects organisational action by providing the foundation on which operating procedures and routines rest. Moreover, certain structures will determine the specific roles of individuals, for example, by determining who has responsibility for decision-making processes (Lim, Griffiths and Sambrook, 2010). Organisational structure of a business allows the expressed allocation of responsibilities for different functions and processes to different entities such as the branch, department, workgroup and individual.

There are many levels within this type of structure. Mintzberg (1979) proposes that every organisation has five parts (Figure 2.1). These parts vary in size and importance depending on the business environment and its technology.

![Figure 2.1: Five Basic Parts of an Organisation](image)

Top Management

Technical Support staff  Middle Management  Administrative Support Staff

Technical Core
The technical core carries out the fundamental work of any organisation. It represents the production department, for example, in a manufacturing firm, the teachers and classes in a school or the medical activities on a hospital ward (Daft, Murphy and Willmott, 2010). Researchers and engineers form part of the technical support staff. They are responsible for examining the work environment for potential problems and opportunities. Mintzberg (1979) stipulates that they have to be prepared to adapt in order to remain competitive. Dealing with all technological developments, this part acts as an important facilitator of change. The daily running of the organisation is the responsibility of the administrative support staff. All physical and human components come under this part. Administrative support functions include the human resource department and maintenance staff.

Two managerial components complete the model. Baird, Post and Mahon (1989) view the direction and coordination of other parts of the organisation as the functions of management. Direction, strategy, goals and company policy are the responsibilities of top management, which is held accountable for the entire organisation. Below this tier, middle management ensures that the above responsibilities are carried out successfully. It has responsibility for implementation and coordination at departmental level.

2.6 The Welsh Rugby Union Group

The Welsh Rugby Union Group is the corporate name of this organisation. The Group comprises two Boards. First, the Welsh Rugby Union Ltd is responsible for all Rugby operations. It leads on all matters relating to finance, regulation and
game policy. Various departments share responsibility for carrying out the WRU’s daily functions. Second, the Millennium Stadium PLC is responsible for the stadium. It markets all events held at the Millennium Stadium from international and domestic Rugby matches to rock concerts and the GB rally. Millennium Stadium PLC is also responsible for the maintenance of the stadium.

The administrative work of the Group is done at two locations. All community Rugby operations are undertaken at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff’s city centre. The elite game is administered at the WRU National Centre of Excellence. The WRU Group is a multi-tiered organisation (Figure 2.2), which replicates Mintzberg’s (1979) basic five-part model.
Figure 2.2: Organisational Structure of the Welsh Rugby Union Group
2.6.1 Boards of the WRU Ltd and Millennium Stadium PLC

The WRU Group comprises two Boards of Directors. Firstly, the Board of the WRU Ltd represents the very top tier of the organisation. It comprises three National Representatives, namely, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of WRU Ltd, the National Representative without Profile (NRP) and the National Representative with Special Responsibility for Financial Affairs (NRF). Also sitting on the Board are the Group Chief Executive (GCE), two District ‘A’ representatives (including the Vice-chairman of the Board of Directors of WRU Ltd), two District ‘B’ representatives, two District ‘C’ representatives, two District ‘D’ representatives and one representative from Districts E, F, G, H and J. Secondly, the Board of Millennium Stadium PLC oversees the management of the stadium. Presently, the Chairman of the WRU Ltd is the chairman of Millennium Stadium PLC; the Vice-chairman of Millennium Stadium PLC, the GCE, joins him on the Board alongside four WRU appointed Board directors and four Cardiff county council appointed Board directors. Remits for both Boards can be found in the Union’s annual audit (WRU, 2010a).

2.6.2 Subcommittees

The three subcommittees come under the direction of the WRU Ltd. Their roles are briefly outlined below.

2.6.2.1 Finance Committee

This comprises the NRF as chair and six committee members. These include the WRU Chairman and the Group Chief Executive. Part of its remit is to manage the Union’s budget, which includes paying grants to its Member Clubs.
2.6.2.2 Regulatory Committee

This committee comprises the District ‘A’ representative as chair and five committee members. They handle all matters relating to playing and administrative disputes. For example, it is common practice for the regulatory committee to deal with complaints of player ineligibility and to liaise between clubs when they cannot agree on a date for the playing of a postponed match.

2.6.2.3 Game Policy Committee

The District ‘D’ representative leads the nine members on this committee. The Head of Rugby Performance and Development and the National Representative without Portfolio sit on this committee. Part of its brief is to monitor the WRU player pathway and to set the playing schedule. In so doing, they allocate weekend slots for both schools and clubs. Moreover, this committee ensures that playing audits are kept for all age grade levels (U16, U18 and U20).

2.6.3 Executive Board

The executive board of the WRU Ltd comprises the Group Chief Executive, the HRPD, Head of Group Compliance, the Group Finance Director, the Millennium Stadium general manager and Head of Communications. This top management group is responsible for the implementation and coordination of the Union’s overall strategy, goals and game policy (Mintzberg, 1979). The GCE chairs the executive board, which has been given devolved responsibilities to manage all Group affairs.
2.6.3.1 Group Chief Executive

Following his appointment in 2006, the Group Chief Executive (GCE) appointed a new executive board “and together they created a rolling five-year financial and strategic plan which is based upon creating long-term sustainability for the Group” (WRU, 2011a). Furthermore, the GCE has responsibility for the Millennium Stadium which “promotes a wide range of sporting events including world class soccer, boxing, speedway and show jumping, and is a major music venue” (WRU, 2011a). The revenue from such events provides additional financial support for the WRU’s Rugby operations.

2.6.3.2 Head of Rugby Performance and Development

The Head of Rugby Performance and Development (HRPD) is charged with “the task of ensuring the game thrives as the national sport of Wales” (WRU, 2011b). The HRPD manages “a new WRU development structure which oversees the elite game through to its roots in the community clubs and schools” (WRU, 2011b). His remit also includes working closely with the national head coach and the national squad “to ensure that all the systems and structures throughout professional Rugby in Wales are aligned to the requirements of the national team” (WRU, 2011b). The HRPD has created a clear and consistent player pathway geared towards achieving high performance standards.
2.6.3.3 Head of Group Compliance

The Compliance Department was established in 2005. Its remit is to “implement an internal/external audit function for the business” (WRU, 2011c). The Head of Group Compliance (HGComp) is responsible for “monitoring the progress of parties over terms of agreements made and measuring against contractual commitments” (WRU, 2011c). Furthermore, the HGComp is accountable for all ticketing operations at the Millennium Stadium.

2.6.3.4 Group Finance Director

The Group Finance Director (GFD) manages the Group’s finances. The executive board sets the annual budget. The GFD ensures that the Group’s spending is kept in line with the projected annual budget. He works closely with the Group Chief Executive.

2.6.3.5 Millennium Stadium General Manager

The General Manager has responsibility for all matters relating to stadium operations. He is ultimately responsible for public health and safety issues when sporting and musical events are held at the Millennium Stadium.

2.6.3.6 Head of Group Communications

The Head of Group Communications (HGComm) has an extensive background in television news and journalism. He uses his wealth of media experience to manage operations within the Communications Department.
2.7 Rugby Performance and Development Department

The Head of Rugby Performance and Development leads this department. He is a member of the top management group who sits on the executive board. The HRPD is based at the National Centre of Excellence and is responsible for directing and coordinating all playing, coaching and officiating operations.

While the HRPD reports directly to the GCE, he delegates responsibilities for the various Rugby operations to three middle managers. The Head of Rugby Development (HRD) focuses on the implementation of the player pathway. The Divisional Coach Development Managers (DCDM) oversee the delivery of the coach education programme. The National Referee Manager (NRM) has responsibility for all officiating matters. The departmental structure is presented below (Figure 2.3).
Figure 2.3: Organisational Structure of the Rugby Performance and Development Department
2.7.1 Playing

The five Regional Performance Managers implement the player pathway across Wales. They coordinate the daily operations within their respective regional academies. Position-specific skills coaches, strength and conditioning coaches, sports nutritionists and lifestyle managers support the elite structure. This pathway includes the operationalisation of the various age grade competitions.

2.7.2 Coaching

Divisional Coach Development Managers manage the coach education programmes in the east and west and a coach development officer directs operations in the north. The Regional Coaching Managers are responsible for administering the UKCC courses. The Coach Education Development Officers deliver the programmes within their respective regions throughout the year.

2.7.3 Officiating

The National Referee Manager has responsibility for all matters relating to refereeing and match officials. He heads a department that looks after officiating at both the elite and community levels of the game in Wales. There now follows a detailed account of the Referees Department and its personnel.
2.8 Referees Department

When the current NRM was appointed in 2003 a single administrator supported him. Now, the NRM is an integral part of middle management with special responsibility for developing elite match officials. Hence, he has the support of a small team of specialists (Figure 2.4).

This team includes the Match Officials’ Performance and Development Officer, the National Academy Referee Coach and the National Academy Conditioning Coach. The Performance Analyst and the Head of Nutrition and Lifestyle Management provide further support. Moreover, the Community Referee Development Manager focuses on the recruitment, retention and development of Level 1 and 2 match officials. He was appointed in 2006. Two full-time administrators support the departmental staff.

The Union employs two full-time match officials. Both professional referees also act as Referee Development Officers. Their remit is twofold. They are primarily employed to officiate elite Rugby matches whenever and wherever required. In their respective roles as RDO’s, they each attend society meetings to deliver the training topics that form part of the department’s annual referee development programme. These topics are refereeing-specific and designed “to improve the standards of officiating” (Owens, 2011). Recent topics include positioning, communication, control and management.
Figure 2.4: Organisational Structure of the Referees Department
While the following descriptive narrative identifies the personnel within the Referees Department, the primary focus is on referees themselves. In order to fully understand the structure of this department, it is necessary to appreciate the process that referees experience.

2.8.1 National Referee Manager

The NRM directs operations across the Referees Department. He oversees officiating at all levels. More recently, he has taken a leading role in the development of all Academy referees.

2.8.2 High Performance

This subsection of the Referees Department focuses on elite level officiating. The Referee Academy is housed within the NCE. This facility has been described as “a high performance finishing school” (WRU, 2010b). The National Academy selects “high-calibre players, coaches and match officials from the men’s and women’s game for specialist and personal training at the highest level” (WRU, 2010b). The refereeing section of the Academy is split into three subgroups: elite, junior and development. While the numbers in each of these groups can fluctuate, it is noted here that there are currently six referees ranked at elite grade and a further 18 junior members within the academy structure. The development group comprises 20 less experienced referees who are likely to be invited onto the WRU List of Referees within the next 6-12 months. The List is a register of all Level 3 match officials who officiate in the WRU national leagues.
The Match Officials’ Performance and Development Officer (MOPDO), who reviews all age grade, Principality Premiership and RaboDirect PRO12 games, monitors referee performances. He analyses performances before reviewing with the respective referees.

The performance analyst prepares all the video footage and statistical data for the MOPDO. Furthermore, the PA records all practical and theoretical training sessions for distribution to all societies. These valuable learning resources include presentations by the National Academy Referee Coach, the Head of Nutrition and Lifestyle Management and the National Academy Conditioning Coach.

The role of National Academy Referee Coach was created in 2010. The NARC is responsible for developing skills and techniques associated with elite officiating. He conducts regular workshops on officiating and draws on his own vast experience as an IRB match official to further the group’s knowledge and understanding. To date, the NARC has delivered presentations on control, management, decision-making and game awareness.

The NACC prepares bespoke training programmes to ensure optimal conditioning. His work is supplemented by the contribution of the HNLM who has made presentations to the group regarding fat loss and dietary requirements. In addition to speed and work capability (endurance) testing, all Academy referees have their body composition measured quarterly to ensure adherence to their fitness plans. This system complies with the IRB’s fitness standards for elite match officials (Proctor, 2011). Any referee wishing to advance in the practice must attain the relevant levels. For example, the current IRB acceptable standard in the work capability or ‘Yo-Yo test’ (Bangsbo, Iaia and Krustrup, 2008) is set at Level 18.
2.8.3 Community Rugby

The Community Referee Development Manager is responsible for all Level 1 and 2 match officials. He organises day courses across Wales as part of the ongoing recruitment programme. The CRDM shares delivery with the MOPDO.

Once an individual has attended the course, arrangements are made for him to observe another referee. A referee advisor accompanies him. During the game, the advisor will offer advice and answer any questions relating to officiating. Thereafter, the Level 1 match official will act as touch judge for a fellow referee to gain experience of the match environment. The attending advisor will offer support and provide feedback. The referee will then officiate his first fixture. The advisor will be an active referee who is able to replace him should the need arise. If the referee is doing well, then the advisor will limit his role to that of offering support.

Referees are encouraged to officiate in as many junior games\(^2\) as possible to maximise self-development. Once an advisor is satisfied that a referee is safe and sufficiently competent promotion to Level 2 follows. These referees can officiate senior District matches unaccompanied. An integral part of the CRDM’s remit is to watch as many Level 2 referees as possible. He works in conjunction with referee advisors to identify referees for promotion. The Referees Department’s team of specialists support those referees who continue to Level 2 and Level 3 through operationalisation of a training programme. For example, three training topics are planned and delivered to every society each season. The CRDM, the MOPDO and the two RDO’s lead on all training matters.

\(^2\) Junior level is any game played at U16 or below.
Many attendees gain the refereeing qualification to simply comply with minimum operating standards for officiating their child’s/children’s Rugby festivals (Davies, 2010). Hence, the Referees Department has a problem retaining sufficient numbers for progression to Levels 2 and 3.

2.8.4 Departmental operations

The Referees Department carries out numerous functions. These include appointing match officials to all senior matches in Wales, conducting performance reviews of all its elite referees and organising assessments of promising referees. Furthermore, the department provides referee coaching for new and inexperienced officials and it holds an annual meeting with advisors to re-grade referees at the end of each season.

2.8.4.1 Match appointments

A selection committee meets to appoint referees to all professional matches. The National Referee Manager heads this four-man committee, which includes the MOPDO and two senior performance reviewers. They appoint based on current levels of performance and fitness (Whitehouse, 2011). Its remit includes appointing match officials to all Principality Premiership fixtures and to matches involving other Unions. The NRM and the CRDM appoint referees to the community game. Community Rugby currently comprises national divisions 1-5.
2.8.4.2 Performance reviews

Every referee is reviewed at least once in a season. This assessment satisfies the legal requirements regarding insurance. As such, many of the senior referees are seen only once a year to satisfy health and safety policies (Bowden, 2010). As there are many more referees than advisors, the NRM has to prioritise accordingly. Consequently, aspiring referees are seen more often than those referees with many years’ experience who are no longer being considered for promotion. Similarly, as Davies (2010) remarks, those referees who have regressed and/or are struggling at a new grade receive greater attention.

Priority is given to those aspiring to attain elite status. Three roles have been created to offer relevant support. Firstly, there is the performance reviewer (PR) who offers a critical analysis of the referee’s performance. Secondly, there is the referee coach (RC) who offers general advice and support. Thirdly, there is the referee advisor (RA) who offers all the above support; he tends to operate within the community game. Being seen by all three types of assessor affords those aspiring referees every opportunity of enhancement.

Assessors no longer score a referee’s performance against set criteria (Appendix A). As a direct result of the survey findings, the procedure of writing a formal report has been replaced. Now, the PR presents a narrative of the game while focusing on key aspects of officiating: tackle/ruck/maul, communication, scrum, lineout, offside, management and fitness (Appendix B). Dialogue is encouraged between PR’s and officials to maximise development (Whitehouse, 2011). The effectiveness of this qualitative approach needs to be measured.
Feedback from the RC is more informal (Banfield, 2010). He shares his experience and ideas with the referee. Written feedback comprises two to four key coaching points (Appendix C). In contrast to this, the RA operates at Level 2 and provides formal feedback to the referee. This report includes two to three coaching points for consideration by the referee. Assessors are volunteers who are available to all referees for advice and support. It is the referee’s decision whether or not to accept their recommendations.

2.8.4.3 Promotion and demotion

At the end of each season, the NRM leads a meeting of all assessors. Every referee is discussed and re-graded. Referees receive notification of their new grade in early June. This grade is based on performances throughout the season and future potential. Other factors such as age, fitness and ability are considered. Every referee is expected to engage in self-development. Those referees who make little or no effort to improve or sustain their performances risk demotion. No one is immune from this process.

Match officials who have given many years’ service naturally make way for the next generation (Yeman, 2009). Depending on the individual, a referee may be demoted or invited to become a specialist assistant referee. An SAR can offer support and advice to a less experienced but aspirational official. This newly created role allows senior match officials to prolong their refereeing careers.
2.8.4.4 Grading system

Level 2 referees are graded according to their ability. Grades A-C are used to differentiate this group of match officials (Bowden, 2010). Grade ‘A’ referees officiate in District premiership matches. Grade ‘B’ officials referee in division 1 and ‘C’ grades officiate in division 2 matches.

Level 3 match officials are graded according to their ability and potential. On joining the WRU List of Referees, a referee is given a grading of 5P (probationer). Following initial assessments, he is usually promoted to at least grade 4 within a season. The grading system at Level 3 runs from 5P, 4, 3, 2, 1 to Championship, Premier, and finally, to Elite grade. The referee’s grade corresponds to the level (division) up to which he is deemed capable of officiating. Referees showing potential are appointed to fixtures at the next level. For example, a Grade 3 referee who is showing promise will be appointed to division 2 matches and his suitability assessed. Those referees who perform well at the next level may receive further appointments at the higher level for the remainder of the season. Promotions are officially recognised after re-grading and apply from August 1\textsuperscript{st} of each year.
Part 2: Operational Issues

This section considers the potential operational issues within the Welsh Rugby Union. A systematic analysis of the organisation highlights problematic issues that may need addressing. This holds particular significance for an organisation that deals with people, as sound human resources management maximises functionality. Application of Mintzberg’s five-part model (1979) facilitates linear and cross structural analyses. Within the Referees Department, the foci are departmental resources, recruitment, reporting lines, ongoing activities and evaluation processes.

2.9 Functionality

Having situated the Referees Department within the overall Group structure, this section now assesses the functionality of this subdivision.

2.9.1 Hierarchical organisation

The multitiered structure of the WRU Group can be defined as a hierarchical organisation. It consists of a group of power at the top (the Board) and various subordinate levels of power beneath it (Pugh, 1990). This is the principal structure of many organisations, including governments and large corporations. Members of hierarchical structures predominantly communicate with their immediate superior and with their immediate subordinates. However, levels of management, power and authority will depend on the type of organisation.
Like other hierarchies, the Union’s structure can be visualised as a pyramid. The height of the ranking or person depicts a certain power status. In commerce, the business owner commonly occupies the apex of the organisation. As there is no single stakeholder in the WRU Group, the collective power is delegated to the Board of Directors. It delegates responsibility to a managing director (the Group Chief Executive) who oversees daily operations.

The potential issues associated with the above arrangement fall outside the scope of this study. As is the case with all corporate organisations issues of power and authority are significant and prevail except where the structural mix creates a power dynamic. If standards of officiating were impacting on the image of the Union, then the GCE would ask the HPRD to address the issues. Nevertheless, the focus here is on those personnel who have the greatest impact on refereeing matters in Welsh Rugby.

2.9.1.1 Personnel

As the Union deals with people, it is critical that appropriate leaders and subordinates are in place to carry out the organisation’s main objectives. These people are required to make good judgments and should therefore be appointed based on meritocracy (Young, 1958). A patriarchal process should be avoided (Meagher, 2011). A meritocratic system is far more just and appealing than one that appoints on the basis of time served.
2.9.1.2 Appointments

A rigorous and fair process must be employed. Such a process applies to referee selection. In paraphrasing the work of Hamlin, Keep and Ash (2000), the governing principles of any appointment process are defined thus.

**Meritocracy:** appointments are governed by the overriding principle of selection based on merit – an objective assessment of the fit between the skills and qualifications of the perspective candidate and the needs of the organisation.

**Transparency:** the appointment process guidelines are clear and understandable.

**Consistency:** the appointment system is applied consistently in respect of all appointments.

**Probity:** appointees must be committed to the principles and values of public service and perform their duties with integrity.

**Proportionality:** the appointment process will be subject to the principle of proportionality, that is, the process will be appropriate for the nature of the position and its responsibilities.

Adherence to these principles creates an effective appointment process while ensuring that the organisation employs suitable personnel.

In-depth analysis of the appointments process is beyond the scope of this study. The information known indicates that there is an appropriate match between job description and remit. Remembering that this is an embryonic process, no clear profile exists to determine what an NARC, for example, looks like. Consequently, all posts within the Referees Department are works in progress. Those reliant on such personnel ought to have some confidence in any given person’s experiences and abilities to execute their respective role.

There are four key appointments within the Referees Department. The roles of the National Referee Manager, Match Officials’ Performance and Development Officer, National Academy Referee Coach and Community Referee Development
Manager are now briefly discussed. It is apparent that these roles are necessary for facilitating the referee development process.

As a former international referee and IRB advisor, the current National Referee Manager possesses many desirable qualities. His lived experiences enable him to make informed decisions. Similarly, the Match Officials’ Performance and Development Officer offers an experienced voice. He is a former international referee who can draw on 30 years’ middle management experience as a police inspector. Furthermore, the appointment of the National Academy Referee Coach was made through meritocratic means. An IRB referee since 2005, he shares current best practice with the next generation of match officials. This is a valuable resource within the referee development process. Finally, the current CRDM was appointed based on his managerial experience gained in his former position at the Post Office. His refereeing background, which includes officiating in two Test matches, means that he is well suited to the work of developing Level 1 and 2 match officials.

2.9.2 Systems of power, authority and control

Having situated the Referees Department, there is a need to look at the organisational structure of refereeing operations. Of particular importance here is the need to understand the existing systems of power, authority and control that exist. Each concept is analysed with regard to its respective impact on the existing linear and cross structural systems.

This is a Rugby study but sometimes the need arises to look into other areas. While a full-blown examination is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is
helpful in understanding the Rugby context to give a brief summary of these concepts. What follows is an extremely brief conceptual undertaking that will have an applied setting in mind.

2.9.2.1 Power

Power is evident across any organisation. Dahl (1957) views power as the potential ability of a person (or department) to influence other people (or departments) to carry out orders or to do something they would otherwise not have done. Those who have the ability to influence other people to bring about desired outcomes are said to have the power (McAuley, Duberley and Johnson, 2007). It only exists in a relationship between two or more people.

Power is often described as a personal characteristic. Managers are said to have five sources of power (French and Raven, 1960). These powers are briefly described below.

**Legitimate**: the authority granted by the organisation to the formal management position a manager holds.
**Reward**: stems from the ability to bestow rewards to others.
**Coercive**: the authority to punish or recommend punishment.
**Expert**: derives from a person’s greater skill or knowledge about the tasks being performed.
**Referent**: derived from personal characteristics: people admire the manager and want to be like or identify with the manager out of respect and admiration.

Anyone can exercise power. Daft et al. suggest that power can be exercised “upward, downward or horizontally” (2010, p. 544). While every employee has access to some sources of power, the majority of power is allocated to those in top and/or middle management (Mintzberg, 1979). This is a proven method for
achieving desired outcomes. Certain rights and responsibilities accrue to top positions. Consequently, employees accept the legitimate right of top managers to set goals, make decisions and direct activities.

The allocation of power to middle management and its subordinates is crucial as power enables employees to be productive (Knights and Willmott, 2006). For example, encouraging employees to be independent thinkers ensures greater productivity. Allowing employees to make non-critical decisions without the need to consult a “higher-up” saves time (Boyle, 2005). Empowering subordinates to work within the departmental remit can avoid unnecessarily engaging a superior in mundane tasks. Assigning responsibility for this and other menial tasks will allow departmental heads to deal with more pressing matters.

2.9.2.2 Authority

Authority is viewed as a force for achieving desired outcomes. It is determined by the formal hierarchy and reporting relationships. Daft et al. (2010, p. 543) identify three properties of authority.

1. **Authority is vested in organisational positions.** People have authority because of the positions they hold, not because of personal characteristics or resources.
2. **Authority is accepted by subordinates.** Subordinates comply because they believe position holders have a legitimate right to exercise authority.
3. **Authority flows down the vertical hierarchy.** Authority exists along the formal chain of command and positions at the top of the hierarchy are vested with more formal authority than are positions at the bottom.
Within this hierarchy, the Board has overall authority in matters pertaining to the organisation. Once top management has set the long-term objectives, middle management ensures the relevant strategies are employed at departmental level (Mintzberg, 1979). Middle managers make all critical decisions and ensure that subordinates carry out the remit (Daft et al., 2010). Departmental heads submit progress reports to top management who authorises any strategy changes.

2.9.2.3 Control

Top and middle management determine the organisation’s strategy of control. Ouchi (1979) puts forward three such strategies, but only two are of concern here: bureaucratic and clan.

The main function of bureaucratic control is to standardise and control employee behaviour. Daft et al. confirm that it is the “the use of rules, policies, hierarchy of authority, written documentation, standardisation and other bureaucratic mechanisms to standardise behaviour and assess performance” (2010, p. 370). For this strategy to succeed, managers must be authorised to maintain control over the organisation.

Clan control relies on shared values and trust among employees. Daft et al. define it as “the use of social characteristics, such as corporate culture, shared values, commitment, traditions and beliefs, to control behaviour” (2010, p. 371). Certain individuals may be employed because they are committed to the organisation’s purpose.
2.10 Linear structural analysis

The Referees Department is a subdivision of a large organisation. Operating within such a structure can be problematic. When analysing the Referees Department’s functionality, the foci include the perceived balance of power and authority. Moreover, the effect of “slippage” needs to be considered (Martin and Chapman, 1982; Miller and Chapman, 1983). Slippage relates not only to the accuracy of the information being communicated but also to the competency in performing the task. It occurs most often when people have to forward information to different levels.

The NRM has overall power, authority and control for departmental operations. However, he relies on the knowledge, skills and judgment of his staff to function successfully. Being a small cohort suggests that the probability of any consequential slippage is low. Regular interaction between staff ensures a positive working relationship. All subordinates report to the NRM. The CRDM and MOPDO are copied into e-mails so that they are kept abreast of all officiating matters. The NRM’s ability to allocate effectively determines the department’s functionality.

The Referees Department appoints over 240 match officials to games on a weekly basis. This undertaking is not always fulfilled, owing to the lack of referees and advisors (Bowden, 2011; Yeman, 2009). Consequently, the NRM has to carefully manage the group of advisors to maximise the impact on referee development. Ideally, advisors would be appointed to every league fixture. Deciding on which referees are observed and which are not is a dilemma that continues to cause friction (Whitehouse, 2011). Of interest here is how potential
issues like subjectivity, bias and favouritism could be resolved. There is a need to ensure appropriate treatment of each referee when there is unevened difference. This approach might be based on a flexible needs analysis that does not become an excuse for inappropriate treatment of the individual.

The player pathway sees only the best players moving into the professional game. The referee structure takes a similar approach. The NRM has to supply capable match officials to officiate in the various elite competitions: RaboDirect PRO12, Heineken Cup and Amlin Challenge Cup. His remit also includes ensuring high standards of officiating within the Principality Premiership. Therefore, potential elite match officials are given priority over others.

Issues of recruitment and retention of referees are ongoing. Those referees who retire prematurely escalate matters (Bowden, 2011). The referee development process must keep pace with the modern game but it may take 3-5 years before the benefits of an academy structure are realised (Yeman, 2011). Analyses of the effectiveness and the appropriateness of these refereeing initiatives are required.

2.11 Cross structural analysis

The Referees Department supports the work of the other two Rugby subdivisions. The NRM makes the referee development officers available to the playing department for regional training sessions and to the coaching department for UKCC courses. These officers clarify points of Law and officiate conditioned games across the regions. Moreover, when attending coaching courses, they will conduct Q&A sessions as part of the Laws module.
Regular interaction between players, coaches and officials is to be encouraged. A professional working relationship can have a positive effect on Rugby development (Hennessy, 2007). Referee input increases player knowledge and therefore overall quality and skill. It is suggested that these interactions could encourage greater respect of opponents, match officials and perhaps the game itself (Hennessy, 2007). Moreover, regional coaches can assess the impact of their coaching through referee feedback. Referees can comment on the effectiveness and legitimacy of a team’s approach and challenge players’ knowledge and understanding of the Laws. Any assistance the referee can offer from an officiating perspective serves to enhance team performance.

Two concerns emerge from this arrangement. As the Referees Department employs only two RDO’s, over-familiarisation and complacency are potential issues with regard to the above practice. Regular attendance by the full-timers at regional sessions might have repercussions in competition. It might be perceived that these referees are treating these players more favourably than their opponents. Similarly, the players might expect to influence officiating decisions.

2.12 Proportionality

Playing and coaching receive greater financial support than officiating. The budgetary section of the annual report confirms this (WRU, 2010a). The number of employees working in these subdivisions provides further evidence of difference. There has been significant investment in developing playing and coaching support systems over the last 15 years (WRU, 2010c). The Union has introduced the
UKCC award and the Performance Lifestyle initiative for the betterment of players and coaches. The launch of the National Academy has been the only significant initiative in the development of match officials.

With the Rugby Performance and Development Department split into three subdivisions, understanding the role and functionality of the Referees Department requires an investigation into the proportionality or otherwise of departmental resources. The revelation of any disproportionality in the findings would underpin any recommendations. Here, resources mean the allocation of people, roles and workload. Moreover, the primary monetary issue concerns the percentage of funding that the Referees Department receives compared with the playing and coaching subdivisions. Per capita comparisons with other Unions will help contextualise the Union’s current situation. This examination will be worthwhile as initial assessment points to an imbalance of proportionality.

2.13 Summary

One of the benefits of structuring an organisation hierarchically is that this pyramid system helps to define the power structure. Furthermore, it establishes channels of communication (Daft et al., 2010). However, it is suggested that operating in this way can lead to poor cross-departmental communication or “slippage” (Martin and Chapman, 1982; Miller and Chapman, 1983). The implementation of a cross-departmental, non-hierarchical communication system might lead to increased efficiency through greater flexibility.
As a hierarchy, the Group might be putting itself into a situation where certain people only talk to certain others. These individuals might never have an opportunity to speak to personnel from other departments (at any level). Furthermore, each department has limited functions and the capacity to expand can be restricted. Rahim (1985) warns that such limitation can lead to a build up of tension and internal conflict. Overreliance on the approval of others can be stifling and lead to further discontent through the materialisation of a power struggle.

A controlled budget requires the departmental head to prioritise spending. Budget constraints impact on the operationalisation of any subdivision of a hierarchical organisation (Pfeffer, 1992). Financial limitations can lead to major frustration, particularly when equipment and/or personnel essential to the functionality of a department cannot be sourced. This study will investigate whether or not the Referees Department is affected by such restrictions. Furthermore, the rigidness of this type of management structure will be assessed. Having to follow too many strategies, policies and protocol can cause an organisation to lose perhaps one of the most important tools for success, flexibility (Adkins, 2010; Gratton, 2003). A limited budget reflects how the organisation views the overall contribution and subsequent importance of any given subdivision. When a subdivision is not seen as a priority, then it is likely that that organisation will channel its financial and human resources elsewhere.

In this hierarchy, the Union’s workforce is banded at different levels to give the organisation its pyramid shape. There are several layers within the Union’s organisational structure, thus making it a tall hierarchy (Lim et al., 2010). Such a structure produces narrow spans of control. Within the Referees Department, the
NRM manages relatively few people and so the team can be closely supervised. However, this can restrict responsibility and make decision-making slow, as approval has to be sought higher up the layers of management. For example, the NRM has to pre-approve all costs relating to referee logistics. Delays in this process can lead to less efficient expense payments. Lim et al. (2010) suggest that this type of structure has the potential to create unnecessarily high management costs, owing to a lack of subordinates.

The advantages of this hierarchy are evident in its clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Employees can see a clear path for career advancement while developing loyalty to their team. However, hierarchies can be overly bureaucratic and thus slow to respond (Lim et al., 2010). Hence, communication horizontally between departments can be poor and decision-making can be flawed with departments making decisions based on self-benefit.

The Group operates as a multi-tiered organisation. Although the existing structure reflects Mintzberg’s (1979) five-part model, potential problems associated with this typology have been highlighted. Among the principal issues raised above is the allocation of resources. It is suggested that there is a need for greater proportionality. Greater integration of the three Rugby subdivisions might help to develop match officials who are capable of operating even more effectively at the elite level. Integration requires continued support and development from the Union’s major stakeholders, but this cannot be provided unless appropriate resources are made available.

An overview of the organisational structure of the WRU Group prepares the way for the main analysis. Having a clear understanding of how elite Rugby
officiating is perceived and subsequently developed underpins the argument that officiating in Wales suffers as a direct result of marginalisation. Further problematisation of the practice of officiating has provided the study foci, which are highlighted below.

2.14 From review to research

This section brings in to focus both the pragmatic issue related to the structure and where the broader conceptual issues identified in Chapter 1 merge together. This is a philosophically informed analysis. As such, the research process undergoes a transition from a philosophical conceptualisation to that of an empirical research study. Rugby officiating is a lived experience. Therefore, any critical analysis of this sporting phenomenon requires a real world approach. The research process must account for the complexity of this under-researched area of the sporting domain.

The conceptual objectives outlined in Chapter 1 make clear the desire to present officiating as a social practice or more specifically, as a practice-within-a-practice. Officiating takes place within the confines of the sporting contest. Within the professional Rugby environment, the various stakeholders do not interpret the notion of a contest similarly, or at least not in terms of immediacy. Winning may be the be all and end all for a particular playing stakeholder, but for the WRU at large, it does not really care about who wins as much as it does about promoting mixed goods that have a social, cultural and economic impact. A winning Wales team is important in that respect, but that is a matter that overrides the particular interests
of any one WRU stakeholder group. The subsequent narrative highlighted the importance of attaining the internal goods of the practice rather than focusing on its external goods. It has been suggested that the greater desire to secure superficial rewards such as fame and fortune affects the task of officiating.

A review of philosophical literature has been useful with regard to determining how these and other matters might be understood and subsequently addressed. Understanding the notion of game reasoning (Shields and Bredemeier, 1995) and other challenging practices that abound in elite Rugby will help to determine a more applicable approach to referee development. Providing accounts of both the nature and role of officiating further augmented the rationale for undertaking a review of this type, which aids overall understanding. This exploration naturally progressed to discussing the desirable characteristics of an elite match official. Consideration of such would usefully inform any future plans to enhance referee development.

The structural overview above provides a clear and detailed narrative of the institution. Understanding the workings of the national governing body helps to problematise the issues associated with the practice of elite Rugby officiating in Wales. In this chapter I have provided a detailed account of where the Referees Department sits within this hierarchical organisation. This was felt necessary so that any interested outsiders could appreciate the Group’s contribution to the practice community. Moreover, the account complements the previous chapter. It was initially proposed that ludic chaos abounds within the modern game, which subsequently impacts on the task of officiating. In light of this, subsequent refereeing issues were then raised and discussed.
Some of the major concerns include recruitment and retention of match officials at all levels of the game. The practice traditions cannot be upheld without such specialist practitioners. Thus, it is deemed important that part of this exploratory study should research the possible reasons for the referee shortfall. How potential elite officials are identified and developed is also of great interest. Moreover, it is felt that an analysis of the objectivity of referee performance reviews and their ongoing development would prove useful in addressing such matters. It is suggested that the proposed critical analysis should consider the provision of an elite referee pathway. It is reasoned that any such pathway should replicate the existing playing and coaching structures.

The above concerns are clearly linked to the overall aim of the study. Their inclusion does not generate research questions *per se*; rather, they act as signposts in relation to the key areas of the overall research focus. As the title and nature of this study suggest, it is evident that such concerns are pertinent to the referee developmental issues that have been highlighted thus far. What follows in the next chapter are details of the methodological approach employed to facilitate a meaningful critical analysis of this sporting phenomenon.
Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The conceptual and structural reviews identify a range of issues associated with officiating in Wales. I have argued that a philosophically informed understanding of the nature and complexity of elite Rugby refereeing will provide a solid foundation for future research into sports officiating. The challenge now is to convert the conceptualisation as presented into an appropriate methodology. Below, I provide an account of how the relevant aspects of the philosophical literature were transformed into an appropriate research process. Chapter 3 synthesises the contents of the opening chapters in the construction of a valid critical analysis. It discusses both the methodological and operational issues associated with this very particular real world study.

Presented in two parts, this chapter discusses both methodological and procedural issues, and their solutions associated with this type of research. Part 1 deals with matters of methodological principle in accordance with the concepts discussed in Chapter 1 and the structural references as outlined in Chapter 2. Part 2 addresses the practical issues specific to this study and in particular outlines the chosen research design. This includes sampling, data collection techniques and interview protocol. The chapter concludes with a summary of the overall methodological process. First, a brief précis of the scholarly attention that officiating has received hitherto.
Sport scientists have dabbled with the practice of sports officiating, focusing on its psychological (Mellick, 2005; Nevill, Balmer and Williams, 2002) and physiological demands (Inácio da Silva, Fernandes and Fernandez, 2008; Mallo, Navarro, Aranda and Helsen, 2009). The above studies all employed tried and tested research methodologies. The actual nature of sports officiating however has not received the same degree of academic attention. Sports philosophy has engaged somewhat with this subject by considering the respect players have towards umpires (Bingham and Fleming, 2003; Bingham, Fleming and Hardman, 2004), the need for fair play within sports (McFee, 2004) and the philosophy of officiating (Collins, 2010).

This study is an attempt to recognise the complexity of the phenomenon. Undertaking a relatively novel research study need not be as problematic as first thought (Brown, 1992; Collins, Joseph and Bielaczuc, 2004). Still, it can be argued that as the nature of the research is complex, a nuanced approach is required. This chapter raises all related methodological issues before providing a justification for the chosen method. It is important to clarify the links between the conceptualisation and structural analysis and the methodological approach that underpins the development of an empirically informed normative theoretical account of elite Rugby officiating.
Part 1: Methodological Issues

Part 1 draws on the principal theories discussed in Chapter 1 and the structural representation as outlined in Chapter 2. Further considerations with regard to the conceptualisation are presented in support of the methodological rationale by way of dealing with the key issues that arise as a direct result of attempting to undertake a study that attempts to critically evaluate both conceptual aspects of the nature of Rugby officiating as well as provide empirical evidence to support the study.

I begin by discussing the relative position of researcher as participant (Silverman, 2006). Then, I address the transition from the conceptual to the methodological. Here, I explain how the philosophical framework established at the outset helps to direct the empirical aspects of the study. Having determined the data collection tools, the chosen methodology is presented together with a rationale for undertaking a pilot study. Finally, a detailed account of the research process that underpins the rationale for the research design and subsequent data analysis is provided.

3.2 Researcher as participant

The uniqueness of this empirical study cannot be overstated. While this study is non-ethnographic in nature, there exists a participant’s perspective on the research environment. Researcher subjectivity is not a perceived weakness of the study. It is fair to say that no outsider would be granted such accessibility.
Bishop’s (2005) work supports the notion that an insider, and not an outsider, is perhaps best placed to undertake this particular type of critical analysis. Arguably, an outsider would not possess the base knowledge to fully engage with such a project. Insider insight is a perceived benefit of the study. It follows then that insiders are more likely to possess a greater ability to ask more meaningful questions and perhaps more significantly, to project a more truthful, authentic understanding of the practice being evaluated (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane and Muhamad, 2001). Still, insider-conducted research raises two potential concerns: that insiders are inherently biased and that they are too close to the practice to ask critical questions. There is a need to determine the relationship between the researcher and the study in addressing such matters.

The fact that the researcher is on the inside is viewed as positive circumstance. Given the context of the study, the researcher’s position is seen as helpful rather than obstructive. As Scott-Jones and Watt (2010) argue, a more thorough critical analysis is possible when there is superior knowledge of the subject matter. This research strategy relies on up-close, personal experience. However, it must be stressed that researcher input is secondary and justifiable only if positioned effectively in relation to the primary source of empirical evidence. It is the participants’ views that are fundamental to this critical analysis.

In providing a rationale for the chosen method, it is important to reflect on the methodological nuts and bolts of overcoming the problems such a critique generates. Although the study contextualises the practice of officiating, it does not set out to describe the nature of any specific individual, group or community. Elements of ethnography are present, however, the actual nature of officiating acts as the primary research focus. In relation to the research process, the fact that the
researcher is not an outsider – he is very much a part of the practice and its institution – is the first issue to be addressed. In addressing the issue of researcher as participant, it is essential to make clear his principled intentions.

3.2.1 Researcher’s background

I am a former professional Rugby player who became a match official on returning to full-time academia in 2005. The sport continues to enthuse me. So that I might improve as a player, I sat the Laws examination at 18 years of age and had even gained my WRU Level 1 Junior Coach qualification before I had turned 20.

Between 2000 and 2004 I read for an MPhil (Sports Psychology), investigating novel training and assessment methods for enhancing motivation levels of intermediate schoolboy Rugby players (Hennessy, 2004). I conducted a series of empirical interventions, which included providing a test group with clinics to improve their knowledge of the Laws and then analysing the impact their advanced understanding had on their individual performances. It was at this time that I also held the post of assistant coach to the Welsh Women’s Rugby Union U19 national team. I would be appointed team manager, Wales U16 on my return to Wales, following a two-year stint in England, for the 2008-2009 season.

I am now employed periodically as a tutor coach to deliver and assess on the Union-run UKCC courses. As part of ongoing CPD, I read for the MSc in Coaching Science. I investigated the interactions of Wales’ regional coaches and elite match officials (Hennessy, 2007). Of particular interest was the lack of a professional relationship between coaches and referees. My findings suggested that referees are seen as obstacles to coaches’ objectives.
This doctoral study has come about as a direct result of many personal, lived experiences – as player, coach and now match official. Being intrinsically motivated to accomplish something provides additional fuel for the journey. Playing and refereeing issues within the game continue to bother me.

The key principles here are interpretation, consistency and game integrity. Each one is a source of frustration for all Rugby practitioners. How players and coaches interpret the *Laws of the Game* does not always correlate with match officials’ understanding and subsequent application. This is problematic in the sense that from game to game players and coaches are unsure how best to play the referee. They are unclear on how individual referees interpret the game.

Issues of consistency amplify this frustration. Specifically here, there is a lack of consistency in decision-making. Such inconsistency exists both within game and from game to game. Neither of the above principles is helped by insufficient game integrity. The apparent lack of a lusory attitude (Suits, 1978) by the modern player adds to the growing frustration within the practice.

These and other issues have compelled me to undertake an extensive critical analysis of this phenomenon to inform the practice community. I argue against the current *status quo* and advocate change. Moreover, I wish to affect positively the mindset of any practitioners who view referees as obstacles. In so doing, another principle emerges, namely, player-official cooperation. I am convinced that this study can offer great comfort and support to those coming behind me, while simultaneously acting as a self-teaching tool.

Researching the little understood practice of officiating, specifically its nature and the required characteristics of an elite match official, is of great significance to me. I wish to achieve the standards of excellence of the practice by attaining IRB
status. Now that I have been promoted to elite grade within the Union, this is the primary goal. The whole research process including its findings and recommendations augment the support that I receive within the National Academy. By undertaking a critical analysis of a real world phenomenon, I am seeking to add to the rather limited sports officiating literature. As an active practitioner, I feel strongly that my own voice should be heard alongside those selected participants.

3.2.2 Researcher’s voice

Participants’ voice is fundamental to any empirical research. Yet, Mazzei and Jackson (2009) argue that the significance of the researcher’s voice should not be ignored. There is a need to establish a “voice” among those of others, particularly when the analysis is partly based on a detached critical perspective. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest, giving voice to qualitative research improves clarity and analytical interpretation.

However awkward and complex the researcher’s position may appear, his voice should be heard to ensure as thorough an analysis as possible. Mazzei and Jackson encourage the practice of “more is better” (2009, p. 1). This implies that more than one qualified and relevant voice can enhance the narrative. Such an undertaking avoids the potential danger of attempting “to represent a single truth” (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009, p. 1) by way of a single voice.

This researcher has considered the ethical issues associated with representing the voice of others and having the freedom to interpret narrative accounts. Several scholars (Barone, 2001; Gannon, 2005; Stewart, 2005) have sought to “minimize the corruption and simplification of participant voices” (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009, p. 2). To this end, it is recommended that qualitative
researchers avoid seeking “that voice we can easily name, categorize, and respond to” (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009, p. 4). In the context of this study, this means not only recording those voices that are familiar to us; rather, the more effective approach is to seek the voice that cannot be easily classified – one that requires greater interpretation.

The problem of speaking for others raises three fundamental concerns. First, there is an issue with the speaker’s location, which Alcoff refers to as “social location or social identity” (2009, p. 118). She asserts that the speaker’s location “has an epistemically significant impact on that speaker’s claims and can serve to authorize or dis-authorize” his speech (Alcoff, 2009, p. 118). This implies that both the meaning and truth of what is said is open to affect, depending on the status and power enjoyed by the speaker. Second, the issue of objectivity affects what questions the researcher decides to ask in the first place. Third, there is a danger of engaging in the practice of privileged persons speaking for or on behalf of less privileged others. Alcoff warns against this, as this can lead to “increasing or re-enforcing the oppression of the group spoken for” (2009, p. 18). This problem can be somewhat diluted when the speaker speaks for groups of which he is a member, but this is not unproblematic.

Within the context of the study, this was not an issue. For while some participants were more or less empowered owing to the nature of their position within the refereeing structure, inherently, they were not a disadvantaged group. Yet, their capacity to articulate their position accurately may present an area for distortion regardless of their “power”. Here, the researcher has the power of interpretive control in representing participant views.
It is appropriate here to distinguish between the issues of speaking for others and speaking about others. Alcoff talks of a “crisis of representation” (2009, p. 120) in which she stresses that whoever engages in the practice of speaking for/about others is representing the other’s “needs, goals [and] situation” (ibid.) based on his own situated interpretation. Alcoff implies that this leads to the “construction of their subject-positions rather than simply discovering their true selves” (2009, p. 120). She sends a clear message.

Although we cannot claim a neutral voice...we may at least all claim the right and legitimacy to speak. (Alcoff, 2009, p. 123)

The above comments suggest that there is a case for the researcher acting as a messenger should the need arise. Within the context of this research, it is also important to address the matter of researcher acting as interpreter. This is crucial in determining whether this empirical study portrays an accurate account of elite Rugby officiating. Below addresses the issue of researcher as interpreter by setting out the study’s ontological and epistemological positions.

### 3.2.3 Ontology and epistemology of the study

This subsection pulls together the discourse concerning the researcher’s justification for presenting an interpretive account of elite officiating. First, the study provides a rich descriptive account of elite Rugby refereeing that has been crafted by a researcher fully active within the practice community. Doing so aims to provide the reader with no doubt as to the researcher’s in-depth knowledge and understanding of the practice.
This grounding provides as firm a foundation, if not better, than any other to justify the basis on which valid interpretations can be made – it grants the researcher effective authority to act as both descriptor and creator through the interpretive process of refereeing reality. This general presentation of the relationships between the object of research (Rugby officiating), the subject conducting the research and the basis for evaluative judgments of object-subject relationship requires an articulation of the ontological and epistemological positions that are inherent in the study.

Jones (2010) suggests that the sport ethics literature often uses interpretive methodologies to address moral issues in sport and that they generally “come in two metaethical guises, namely realists and antirealists” (p. 90). They have differing opinions on what Jones (2010) refers to as the “epistemic ends of moral discourse” (p. 90). Realism, as suggested by Russell (2004), reflects the view that there are facts, including moral facts, “about the world that are independent of the beliefs and evidence we have about them and we can have some at least approximate knowledge of these facts” (p. 142).

Anti-realism rejects any notion of establishing truth. Morgan (2004) argues that any attempt to seek truth outside of our traditions and ourselves is pointless. Jones (2010) concludes that, methodologically, researchers should more closely investigate their social practices and “seek the consensus of its members about what is best for the practice itself” (p. 91). Jones adds, “the rules of sport along with the judgment of officials…are themselves matters of convention and received wisdom and to be discussed and reflected upon in debate and dialogue” (p. 99).
In emphasising the need for greater criticality of sports coaching research, Garratt (2013) supports the notion of combining philosophy, qualitative methodology and sports coaching. Garratt (2013, p. 1) “encourages a more radical departure and critique from a philosophical-hermeneutic perspective”.

The argument here is that qualitative data analysis should not be overly concerned with pre-determined and conceived analytical methods. As Garratt (2013) suggests, data analysis is undertaken best whenever the researcher employs practical reasoning and thus, avoids any “benign and formulaic process” (p. 1). This view underpins my choosing to employ qualitative evaluation inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). According to Andrews (2008), such an approach favours interpretive over predictive ways of knowing.

The above is relevant given the practical (not mechanical) nature of the research process. As Jones (2012) might advocate, this qualitative study seeks to “push the boundaries of understanding” (p. 3) through critical analysis of an under-researched area of sports. Garratt (2013) suggests that presenting a philosophically informed conceptualisation privileges “the ontological nature of analysis as a hermeneutical process infused with elements of culture, identity and tradition” (p. 2).

It is accepted that no analytical method can resist the influence of its own nature and subsequent “ontological disposition” (Garratt, 2013, p. 3). While being an insider is seen as helpful in this case, it is worth remembering that we can never see (exactly) things in Rugby refereeing for what they really are. We can only interpret them from within the confines of our own self-understanding.

Epistemology deals with the nature and scope of knowledge. It is fundamental to how we think. It makes us question what knowledge is and how it
can be acquired. Of particular relevance here is the philosophically informed critical analysis of the knowledge acquired within the study and how it relates to the notions of truths and facts. An understanding of how we acquire knowledge through sensory means and how we mentally develop concepts are key. Kirk and Miller (1986), and later Seale (1999) argue that conveying a strong epistemological position may lead to greater trustworthiness.

It is not my place to claim that the findings convey any notion of absolute truth. This study is more concerned about establishing a broad inter-subjective consensus. It offers a critical view, one that is not grounded in any particular meta-ethical standpoint. It can be argued that the study’s ontology is dependent on its epistemological position and vice-versa. What comes from the refereeing discourse can be best understood as an ontology that attempts to take the practice as it exists in terms of how its practitioners best understand it.

Flint and Peim (2012) suggest that qualitative data analysis cannot now be regarded as “procedurally neutral” (p. 37). It is not possible to remove the partition between what we know and what exists. It can also be argued that theory does not just show itself. Rather, theory is made partly through our own self-understanding. We cannot detach ourselves from the known physical world. Similarly, theory cannot be grounded in data alone. This requires some interactivity between the researcher and the data. Arguably, this can only be achieved through interpretation. This implies that theory is generated rather than discovered. This makes sense, as data cannot speak for themselves. They need to engage with the researcher. We might ask whether in following a preordained formula instead of portraying referees experiences contextually, the analysis and representation of
such experiences can become unduly narrow and reductive as opposed to being more open and positively generative.

The research process cannot detach itself completely from “the conceptual frame within which the analysis is conceived and undertaken, nor decoupled from the ontological disposition and identity of the researcher” (Garratt, 2013, p. 5). This would suggest that there exists no epistemological base from which to develop a particular theory of sports officiating. Thus, we find ourselves functioning in an interpretive state. Garratt makes the following argument:

The corollary for qualitative data analysis is that the ‘conceptual’ cannot be separated from the ‘practical,’ which also means that ‘thinking’ cannot be divorced from ‘doing.’ So, it follows that there can be no blueprint, formula or universal set of procedures to guide the process of analysis. (2013, p. 6)

Knowledge as self-interpretation seems somehow incomplete. Interpretation itself can never be labelled a methodology. Hence, Garratt (2013) suggests that we should view it as some kind of practical philosophy. In the Aristotelian tradition, this would involve practically engaging in qualitative data analysis. Such engagement would require the researcher to demonstrate phronesis (Aristotle, 1941). Practical reasoning of this kind cannot be pre-determined; rather, it evolves as we proceed. As Garratt suggests:

It is a practical manifestation of the application of knowledge and deliberation, judgement and reflection to a given situation, which is already always there and implicit in what we do. (2013, p. 6)

Qualitative data analysis is a moral and intellectual enterprise. It is an inexact science. Qualitative research challenges the researcher to draw on existing
knowledge to address a particular research context. While the research is confined to what Garratt (2013) refers to as “framings and dispositions” (p. 6), these nevertheless “effectively combine the contextual, cultural and identity-related background assumptions and beliefs that inform and further usefully ‘frame’ the process of analysis.

Of the five conceptual framings proposed by Taylor and Garratt (2010), three – positionality, policy context and key literature – are worth mentioning here. Positionality relates to acknowledging one’s own subjectivity in undertaking any data analysis. The second framing of policy context suggests that all data interpretation is influenced by the social and political context in which it is conceived. The third framing of importance in the process of qualitative data analysis is that of key literature. It is essential that the researcher review a range of relevant literature to assist in the construction of his interpretations. Here, a selection of philosophical literature helps to contextualise the data and inform the subsequent interpretative critique. These framings facilitate an understanding of the dialectic between the intellectual and practical in qualitative data analysis.

Garratt neatly summarises my intentions:

Here, the aim is not to approximate ‘truth’ more faithfully, but instead to produce compelling and arguably more persuasive narratives, resonating and connecting more readily with those for whom they are written and expressly intended. (2013, p. 8)

The process of analysis is never a solitary act. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2004) inform us that the researcher engages in continuous conversation with the data, producing a sort of “second-level hermeneutics” (p. 261). This hermeneutical strategy is later subjected to further deconstruction (Taylor and Garratt, 2010). The
The purpose of critical analysis is to offer a version of events that accurately conveys the empirical world. Garratt’s (2013) notion of serendipity facilitates the construction of a plausible story emanating from the person making the judgment. Moreover, as Fine and Deegan (1996, p. 442) suggest, it can help “to conceptualize and present the problem in a novel light”.

Garratt (2013) suggests that practical researchers should “worry less about following what the research text books say, in their commitment to ‘method,’ and more about the explicit ontological nature of research, recognizing that all inquiry is inescapably located within a social, cultural and historical framework” (p. 10).

3.3 From the conceptual to the methodological

This section addresses the issues associated with taking the philosophical literature and making it serve the methodology. The decision-making process of how these philosophies were metamorphosed is outlined below. Specifically, how the normative concepts of game reasoning, justice, virtue ethics and phronesis were converted into relevant questions for use in the interview process is conveyed. This required interpreting the reviewed literature to construct questions relating to the nature of the practice.

The challenge was to convert conceptual principles in such a way as would facilitate purposive data collection. For example, it was necessary to consider how to translate certain normative positions on justice into an analysis of the referee’s perspective of justice. It was necessary to present these four concepts in a way that would demonstrate their purposefulness within Rugby, specifically with regard
to the development and promotion of good refereeing. The next issue to address is to what extent these concepts act as criteria for analysing elite Rugby officiating.

3.3.1 Conceptual framework

Chapter 1 conceptualises the four principle ideas of game reasoning, justice, virtue ethics and *phronesis* within the social practice of Rugby. An argument for their inclusion is presented. Their very existence within the game is regarded as fundamental to issues relating to elite officiating. The link between the conceptual and the empirical forms the focus and tone of the following discussion. Specifically, how these proposed theoretical principles can and do impact on officiating is articulated. The issue centres on the potential implications for undertaking such a research project and the methodological issues that arise. Here, the focus shifts from the moral discussion to the methodological process, as the underlying problem is not a philosophical one.

The conceptualisation suggested that these specific philosophical ideas have been observed in practice. An initial inductive account of the practice has been undertaken, with anecdotal, personal and later, participant responses providing sufficient support. Consequently, a philosophical conceptual framework has been developed which then endeavours to capture the ideas. Thus far, the reader has been presented with an overview of the key theoretical research interests. To critically analyse their presence within the game there was a need to formulate questions that facilitate responses that largely synthesise with the overall conceptual framework. The nature of the critical analysis suggests that those who operate within the domain of Rugby should be studied. Consequently, a qualitative
approach that explores and subsequently analyses and interprets the mindsets of suitable practitioners would be needed.

3.3.1.1 Formulating the questions

The process of formulating questions involved interpreting each concept in light of its relevance to the practice. Drawing on previous research (Hennessy, 2004, 2007), personal experiences, anecdotes and media sources facilitated this process, a snapshot of which is provided below.

Game reasoning in Rugby can be understood in terms of cheating and/or bending the Laws. Players often adopt a win-at-all-costs attitude that has to be managed by the match officials. Players use game reasoning in their attempts to manipulate the referee. This is seen as a part of the game, as the external goods of the practice motivate the elite player. Taking the concept of game reasoning, its philosophical meaning thus understood directs the questioning relating to those actions undertaken by players throughout the course of any given contest (Appendix D). To investigate the nature and impact of game reasoning within and on the game the literature was interpreted accordingly, which resulted in the construction of the following questions.

There appears to be a high level of cynical play by players in the modern game. Would you agree with this statement?

How might we deal with this? Specifically, how might a referee deal with playing issues such as cheating more effectively?
Interviewees were given an opportunity to confirm or otherwise the presence of game reasoning. Moreover, they were invited to provide suggestions as to how this issue might be addressed.

When interpreting the concept of justice, it was important to seek opinion on the perceived fairness within the modern game. The question asked very much ties in with the first concept, as it seeks to establish participant views with regard to fair play and just outcomes. It attempts to make sense of right and wrong, to address the issue of the ethos of fair play.

It is suggested that players will frequently and wilfully bend the laws or engage in gamesmanship, yet when on the receiving end of an unfair act, then they are quick to turn on the referee; this is especially true when the referee has not seen the incident. Your thoughts on this. (Appendix D)

If we are to understand the nature of this practice and officiating, it is useful to seek informed opinions as to the type of individual who might function as an elite match official. Interviewees were encouraged to make sense of those virtues that such an individual might display in order to be successful. Among other things, they were asked to comment on the qualities of character, behaviour and personality that an elite match official should possess.

What kind of person makes an elite match official?

What skills/characteristics should they possess?

When considering the presence of *phronesis* within the practice, it was necessary to look at the role and responsibilities of the match official. There is a case for allowing the referee greater freedom to interpret the Laws and to referee
“what is in front of him”. Many incidences occur that, at first glance, appear clear cut but this is not always the case. There is an argument to suggest that referees should deploy practical wisdom in their rulings to account for, among other things, intent, context and outcome. Case in point, the tackle executed by Wales’ Sam Warburton on France’s Vincent Clerc at RWC 2012 would support an argument for allowing referee discretion.

Materiality is often discussed at Society meetings. Do you think that allowing the referee more freedom in his decision-making would lead to a higher standard of officiating in Wales?

The above exemplars convey the thought process for transforming philosophical concepts into pertinent questions. The narrative moves on to describe the chosen methodology with its various constituent elements.

3.4 Chosen methodology

Of key importance is the consistency between the research aim and objectives and the chosen method employed – their fitness for purpose (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003). Silverman (2001) and later, Denzin and Lincoln (2005), among others, have written about the various tried and tested methodological approaches associated with qualitative research analysis. Given the aim of this study, selecting an appropriate methodology for this real world study would be of critical importance.

The conceptual chapter draws on a number of contrasting philosophical theories in beginning to unravel the key research interest. Similarly here, the
methodological chapter details the various theoretical paradigms that inform the study. It is readily accepted that this is a problematic area of investigation, owing to its very nature and the many uncontrollable variables that exist. This is a piece of interpretive research that ventures outside the familiar confines of a laboratory to address the complexities of one of sports under-researched practices. An interpretive approach helps to make sense of a real world phenomenon.

This study does not employ a mixed-method approach, as understood traditionally. The chosen methodology of qualitative evaluation inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) incorporates small elements of other such methodologies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have argued that some methods are more appropriate than others for conducting research on human construction of social realities. Yet, there is no single method – or collection of methods – that leads to ultimate knowledge. The methodology of this particular study is sensitive in nature. Still, it offers a competent analysis of a practice that has received limited academic attention.

Qualitative evaluation inquiry (QEI) explores the socially constructed nature of reality. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) encourage the use of QEI, as it allows the researcher to focus on the relative bond between the researcher and subject matter, and the situational restrictions that shape inquiry. This method generated intricate details about sensitive phenomena. These phenomena include the participants’ thought processes, feelings and emotions. Such intricate details are near impossible to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods. For this very reason, QEI was considered the most appropriate method.

As Patton (1990) remarks, “qualitative evaluation inquiry draws on both critical and creative thinking – both the science and the art of analysis” (p. 434). His viewpoint underpins the justification for affording this researcher certain allowances
in terms of creativity and flexibility. This process was informed throughout by the existing literature and subsequent findings. A degree of latitude however, was necessary when analysing the emerging data.

Using QEI was logical considering the messiness of the research topic. Brown (1992) and then later, Collins et al. (2004) refer to this rather aptly as a messy situation. While every effort was made to ensure the research process was consistent in terms of the aim, objectives and overall design, it was impossible to account for every possibility. Nevertheless, Patton’s work justifies the action taken. Given the unique researcher position, making sense of the data by any appropriate means – QEI in this instance – to advance knowledge of an under-researched field should be commended.

Investigation of such a complex phenomenon required scientific flexibility. A sense of freedom was necessary to conduct an educated analysis through informed judgments. These judgments were primarily informed by the supporting conceptual literature. Specifically, interview responses and supporting data were interpreted without prejudice to convey the thoughts and feelings of those who share a common interest in advancing the practical nature of officiating.

With regard to participant responses, an element of contemporary narrative inquiry (Chase, 2005) is evident. Its partial inclusion allowed the interviewees to become narrators. This was particularly helpful whenever interviewees did not necessarily have ready answers to questions posed (Chase, 2005). Participants were able to share personal histories. This gave them a clear voice.

The research objectives were readily achieved through eliciting individual responses that more accurately reflect the matter at hand without the need to question all manner of issues such as intellectual honesty and personal bias
(Jennings and Callahan, 1983). Deploying QEI allowed participants to provide an extended and integrated account of their officiating experiences through which the specific thematic issues arose and subsequently analysed. The interviews were designed so that the questions did not seek out discrete, specific chunks of data but a comprehensive narrative of their officiating experience. As Chase notes, semi-structured interviews provide sufficient opportunities for interviewees to impart their true thoughts.

The stories people tell *constitute* the empirical material that interviewers need if they are to understand how people create meanings out of events in their lives. (2005, p. 660)

In 3.2.2, the importance of the researcher’s voice was discussed. The chosen method incorporated an element of this approach. Overall, three types of researcher voice were used to interpret and represent the narrator’s voice (Chase, 2005). An authoritative voice was used to both connect and separate the researcher’s voice and narrator’s voice. This was achieved by presenting long excerpts of the interview followed by some interpretations of the text for greater clarity. In so doing, an authoritative interpretive voice was asserted that spoke differently from, but not disrespectfully of, the narrator’s voice. A further supportive voice pushed the narrator to the fore. This strategy ensured that the narrator did the talking.

Transcripts were prepared in such a way as to optimise understanding. According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), this allows “readers to hear the exact words (and, occasionally, the paralinguistic cues, the lapses, pauses, stops, starts, reformulations) of the informants” (p. 209). I adopted this approach based on
Chase’s view that an interactive voice “displays the complex interaction – the intersubjectivity – between researchers’ and narrators’ voices” (2005, p. 666).

Appropriate care was taken to avoid researcher vulnerability within the text. I heeded the advice of Tierney and Lincoln (1997) in relation to sharing personal thoughts and feelings. It was important to understand oneself before one could begin to understand the interviewees and thus engage in subsequent interpretation. Likewise, it was necessary for the readership to understand the researcher’s history before they can truly understand the narrators’ stories. The importance of highlighting the researcher’s background becomes obvious.

3.5 Piloting

A pilot study was considered necessary to determine the appropriateness of the methodology. Conducting a pilot study meant I was able to test both the accuracy and reliability of the research design. As Oppenheim (2000) warns, no researcher can ever assume how participants are going to respond and/or react. Consequently, the pilot study involved a consenting, actively engaged member of the practice community.

Initial thinking had conceived of interviewing referees and advisors, so it made sense to conduct a pilot interview with someone of that ilk. It became apparent that seeking the views of an advisor who had once been active as an elite match official would be most appropriate. A former senior referee agreed to participate and the necessary arrangements were made. The fact that this former
international referee is a well-educated man and used to conducting interviews boded well for the pilot.

The interview was prepared in relation to the key concepts presented in the conceptualisation of elite Rugby and the perceived role of match officials. The pilot also covered matters relating to the developmental pathway that the participant had taken in reaching elite status.

A conscience effort was made not to put words into the interviewee’s mouth by refraining from directly naming any of the key concepts. Personally attending to the production of the transcript allowed for initial familiarisation of the text. The interview was transcribed *verbatim* prior to commencement of data analysis. Necessary revisions were made before finalising the research process.

### 3.6 Research process

The social practice of Rugby naturally provides for data capture in an empirical context with the present research design incorporating the respective views of match officials, advisors and coaches. A review of literature intimated that certain key philosophical concepts were evident within the practice. This subsequently generated a unique opportunity for furthering knowledge in an under-researched area of sport. The main factors affecting the research process are discussed below.
3.6.1 Timeline

This study was conducted within the realms of a professional sport. So, the participants largely dictated the research timeline. Contact time was maximised in an ordered manner that allowed the capture of relevant data. Yet, the process was still flexible enough to allow participants the freedom to elaborate.

3.6.2 Interpretive data analysis

Selection of a data analysis method was informed by the conceptualisation. It was argued that four particular philosophical concepts were present within professional Rugby. This philosophically informed account helped to determine how these concepts could be analysed. The account laid the foundations for a research design process that would seek to analyse and then interpret their relative significance within this social practice.

The review highlighted areas of the game that might require attention. Hence, I had to consider how these four philosophical concepts might be transformed in such a way as to be researched empirically. Moving from the conceptual to the methodological satisfactorily would be crucial in the facilitation of a fitting critical analysis. It has been hypothesised that the research findings would add significantly to the relatively limited understanding of sports officiating, specifically elite Rugby Union officiating. To this end, it was necessary to incorporate into the actual data collection process (Appendices D, H, J-L) both the philosophical concepts evident in the professional game and any relevant referee development issues.

Interview questions were formulated to induce participant responses that directly or indirectly related to the study’s key philosophical themes (see 3.3.1.1).
The theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 dictated the interpretive design method used. I was aware that such a framework would not capture everything. While this lived phenomenon has the capacity to constantly raise new themes, all data were to be interpreted in light of the conceptualisation provided.

3.6.3 Codification

Participant responses were primarily codified in relation to the four philosophical concepts presented in Chapter 2. It followed that these should be the main foci of the analytical process, as their respective influences on the modern game were considered significant. When analysing transcripts, every part of each interview interpreted as making reference to a particular philosophical concept or aspect of referee development and interactivity was noted using a simple code. For example, every reference to game reasoning was marked with ‘GR’; every reference to virtue ethics was marked with a ‘VE’. Every relevant passage within the text was annotated accordingly. Then, I transferred the collated data to a Word document (Appendix O) where I used colour coding to highlight the anticipated themes as they emerged during each interview.

Moving on to further research considerations, it is necessary to address reliability and validity. The reliability of this empirical research is its inherent ability to be replicated at a future date. Consequently, a coherent approach to the matter in hand was needed. To ensure its validity I had to adopt an approach that would actually reflect the intended critical analysis.
3.7 Reliability and validity

It can be argued that the credibility of qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher. Patton (2002) argues that reliability is a consequence of the validity in the study. He underpins Lincoln and Guba who propose that “since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter” (1985, p. 316). Patton (2002) suggests that reliability and validity are two factors that all qualitative researchers should consider when designing a study, analysing data and assessing the research’s quality. Patton’s comments are a suitable response to the question, “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 290).

It is argued that reliability and validity can be measured by the willingness of the respective stakeholders to act on the research findings. Denzin and Lincoln suggest that validity centres on the issue of the study’s “workability” (2005, p. 54), that is, that any new knowledge solves, at least in part, the existing practice issues.

As this study does not replicate any theoretical model in a pure form, it has been necessary to articulate the ways in which various elements of qualitative methodologies have supplemented a primarily QEI approach. In terms of reliability, this is a necessary undertaking should a similar study be required in the future. Empirical reality gives this study its messiness (Ferguson and Thomas-MacLean, 2009; Sapsford and Jupp, 2006), as there is neither an existing quantitative technique nor a qualitative methodology that neatly applies to the proposed
research design. This unique study embraces the apparent messiness by employing QEI with an eclectic mix of research methodologies.

3.7.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions. (Hammersley, 1992, p. 67)

While absolute reliability cannot ever be guaranteed, every effort was made to ensure a high degree of consistency. In a qualitative research study such as this, the question of replicability in the results (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992) is not as important as accuracy and credibility (Creswell and Miller, 2000). Replicability holds far more significance within quantitative researches.

In striving to present accurate and credible research, operationalisation of the entire research process was the sole responsibility of the author who collated all documentation and conducted all interviews. The same hand prepared all transcripts. Such an approach reduced the likelihood of inconsistencies.

To ensure the reliability of this qualitative research, there is a need to prove its trustworthiness. Seale stresses that, “trustworthiness of a research project lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability” (1999, p. 266). Kirk and Miller emphasise the importance of establishing trustworthiness.

While the forte of field research will always lie in its capability to sort out the validity of propositions, its results will (reasonably) go ignored minus attention to reliability. For reliability to be calculated, it is incumbent on the scientific investigator to document his or her procedure. (1986, p. 72)
This qualitative study embraces the above notion and can be seen to enhance reliability through the use of low-inference descriptors. This process involves “recording observations in terms that are as concrete as possible, including verbatim accounts of what people say, for example, rather than researchers’ reconstructions of the general sense of what a person said, which would allow researchers’ personal perspectives to influence the reporting” (Seale, 1999, p. 148). Moreover, in accordance with Spradley (1979), interviews were transcribed verbatim and supporting notes were made during the data collection process. This greatly assisted the analysis process and subsequent interpretation. Transcripts and data codification were undertaken following each interview so as to maintain the freshness of the discourse.

Further supporting documentation such as pro forma performance reviews (Appendices A and B) and survey responses (Appendix E) proved useful in underpinning the analytical process. As Silverman (2001) points out, textual data are known to be reliable sources of supporting evidence. They offer instant data, which need only be categorised accordingly.

It was important to ensure that participants understood the questions and that their responses could be coded without the possibility of ambiguity. In so doing, greater interview reliability was realised (Silverman, 2001). The inclusion of a pilot study, as recommended by both Bell (1993) and Oppenheim (2000), meant that the questions had been suitably vetted (Silverman, 2001). Piloting familiarised the interviewer with the process prior to commencement of the main study.
3.7.2 Validity

By validity, I mean the truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers. (Hammersley, 1990, p. 57)

The concept of validity is not a fixed one. Taken as a contingent construct, grounded in research methodologies and studies, Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest that validity is affected by the researcher's perception of validity in the study and his choice of paradigm. Guba and Lincoln concur, “one of the main issues around validity is the conflation between method and interpretation” (2005, p. 205). With reference to a study's trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that this can be sustained by establishing confidence in the findings.

Testing the validity or trustworthiness of the findings ensures that the study is acceptable as a meaningful piece of research. Consequently, the first check for research validity was undertaken following the completion of the pilot study (Stenbacka, 2001). Data were analysed for appropriateness, and based on Hammersley's (1990) advice, all relevant findings were duly incorporated into the main data analysis. Thereafter, data triangulation (section 3.15.2) proved effective in confirming the validity and reliability of the findings. This is a strategy endorsed by Mathison.

Triangulation has raised an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation [in order to] control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology. (1988, p. 13)

Patton (2002) acknowledges the usefulness of this strategy, suggesting that greater validity can be achieved when methods are combined, for example, when
drawing on several kinds of method or data in presenting the findings. Here, the qualitative research techniques of gathering documents and conducting interviews were employed to facilitate a meaningful analysis of the nature of officiating. However, as with any empirical research, it is not possible to observe each and every participant within the practice. There exists neither a method for measuring the accuracy of interviewee responses nor a way of confirming whether or not a participant indeed practises what he preaches. The sampling process (section 3.9) thus becomes an important part of the research process, with every effort made to engage participants who shared a keenness for developing the practice.

The process of interpretation is another area of critical importance. While positivism calls for rigour in the application of the chosen methodology, Guba and Lincoln argue that there is a need for “community consent” and “defensible reasoning” (2005, p. 205). The former needs no explanation while the latter can be understood in the sense that the interpretive analysis is “plausible alongside some other reality that is known to author and reader – in ascribing salience to one interpretation over another and for framing and bounding an interpretive study itself” (Lincoln and Guba, 2005, p. 205).

The soundness of this study should be judged against criteria as put forward by the qualitative research literature, for example, against what Guba and Lincoln refer to as “authenticity” (1989, p. 245). Fairness is seen as an important factor in determining validity. Achieving a quality of balance facilitates a sense of fairness and therefore, this study ensures that all participants’ views were represented. A conscious effort is made to share participants’ concerns by making certain that no stakeholder opinion is omitted, which could be interpreted as a form of bias.
It is anticipated that the findings and subsequent recommendations will be further validated by the practice community and thus make the research socially robust (Nowotny, 2003). This pragmatic research generates new knowledge that can be used to improve the current practice.
Part 2: Procedural Issues

Real world empirical research is potentially problematic. Part 2 deals with matters arising from employing the chosen methodology. In Chapter 1, I argued that the nature of the professional game is such that those who operate as match officials face mounting pressure to get it right, despite the frequent attempts of players and coaches to engage in acts to ‘win’ favourable decisions. It was also suggested that personality impacts on future refereeing success and thus, these concepts were further scrutinised with regard to the essential characteristics of an elite official. Subsequent findings then inform recommendations as to future best practice in the development of referees.

Part 2 details the procedural issues of this pragmatic research. The following narrative underpins the rationale for undertaking a pilot study and conducting interviews.

3.8 Operational considerations

Before data capture, it was necessary to determine which structural components should be evaluated (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004). Key personnel were identified from having gained an understanding of the hierarchical structure of the organisation. The narratives are based on position across the various aspects of Rugby: playing, coaching and officiating (Silverman, 2000). This section addresses these requirements in turn and explains why the chosen methods were appropriate.
The proceeding narrative details the qualitative nature of the research study, which includes the rationale for the chosen data collection method. Furthermore, an account of the interview process is presented with reference to its usefulness in this particular research environment. Then, the narrative details the participant selection process and ethical considerations associated with real world studies.

3.9 Referee structure

The previous chapter provided information on the Referees Department's place within the Union's structure. Details of its remit were also presented. This structural analysis identified the major personnel from which the key individuals could be selected. Recognising that this group had the potential to provide the necessary rich data, identification of a sample population from which to select and conduct the pilot study was undertaken.

3.10 Sampling

The sampling process was dictated by the nature of the study. It makes sense to engage those individuals who operate within elite Rugby, including those who have the potential to do so. Consequently, the search for potential participants was confined to those individuals who had been exposed to the professional game. Those persons operating within the community game lack the relevant experience and thus, were not considered suitable contributors.
Elite Rugby officiating is the primary focus and it was appropriate to seek the views of qualified individuals; namely, elite match officials, including those aspiring to be so, and their advisors (“performance reviewers”). Moreover, it was felt that regional coaches would offer a suitable alternative viewpoint of both practices (Rugby and officiating). Research into normative profiles by Hughes, Evans and Wells (2001) proved useful in determining the final number of participants (n=20).

The elite referee academy comprises six match officials while the junior referee academy comprises 18 individuals (JAR’s). To ensure quality of balance (Guba and Lincoln, 1989), it was decided to engage four elite match officials, four performance reviewers and four elite coaches. The numbers were based on there being only four regional teams in Wales. Profiling determined which of the 18 JAR’s would be invited to participate (section 3.13.1; n=5).

For making organisational and developmental comparisons with other Unions who appoint match officials to the competition in which the Welsh regions play, elite referees from the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU; n=1) and the Scottish Rugby Union (SRU; n=1) were engaged. Data collected from these elite practitioners can be interpreted as the “primary contributions” (Ollis, MacPherson and Collins, 2006, p. 312). The NRM and the pilot interviewee complete the sampling process.

As both a WRU tutor coach and an elite match official (an insider), access to the majority of the proposed participants was unproblematic. However, there were two occasions where matters of participant accessibility arose (Creswell, 2003), both potential participants were coaches. One was in the middle of player
appraisals and therefore unavailable for comment, while the other was not forthcoming. The respective Regional Coaching Manager, on my behalf, forwarded two e-mails requesting an interview but I received no response.

While it is disappointing to report the unavailability of two targeted individuals, the nature and subsequent time constraints of elite Rugby is acknowledged wholeheartedly. It is not uncommon for those who occupy the role of Head Coach or Director of Rugby to give precedence to more pressing in-season matters however helpful any contributions might have been.

3.11 Pilot interview

The above considerations led to the conclusion that the pilot study should seek the views of a senior practitioner. While the selected participant (PI) was not an active practitioner, this former international referee was still engaged as a television match official (TMO). Moreover, his role as mentor to a small group of Academy referees made him an ideal participant. PI had previous experience of research interviews, so was suitably acquainted with the process. Following reflection-on-action (Schön, 2007) and qualitative data analysis (Silverman, 2001), it was decided that PI’s narrative merited inclusion in the main study.

Pilot interview questions were formulated as set out above (section 3.3.1.1) and due attention was given to reliability and validity (section 3.7). There followed a review of the interview format and an analysis of the preliminary data, a strategy endorsed by Oppenheim (2000). This process was carried out under the guidance of the Director of Studies.
PI provided data that were relevant to the study aims. Responses pertaining to the conceptualisation had been elicited. He shared his experiences of coming through the system to reach IRB status and was able to make comparisons with current practice (Appendix F). Sufficient data were gathered to commence the codification of some key themes from which to critically analyse this phenomenon.

This informal setting facilitated extraction of highly relevant views by an experienced member of the Rugby fraternity. The pilot produced some encouraging findings, specifically, that the use of semi-structured interviews involving specific sets of participants might be of use. Conclusions drawn from the subsequent data analysis had clearly shown that the material was valid, with the dialogue providing suitable contents. Furthermore, this process confirmed that there was no need for audio-visual data recording, which can lead to participant discomfort (Harper, 2000). Thereafter, initial contact was made with participants.

3.12 Initial contact

The research proposal was presented to Mr. Robert Yeman (NRM). He approved the study but stressed the need to present accurate findings. While full cooperation was given, I was reminded that complete accessibility could not be guaranteed. Further endorsement came from Mr. Joe Lydon (HRPD).

Initial contact with participants was made either by telephone or in person. Securing the services of those participants who were not directly known was made through contact with mutually known third parties. The use of third-party communication proved successful, as it establishes greater trust, confidence and
purpose (Frank, McDaniel, Bray and Heldring, 2003). These middlemen were able to communicate relevant information to the respective persons prior to any direct contact. Thereafter, telephone calls were made wherein further information was imparted and arrangements for interview made.

When giving voluntary informed consent (Appendix G) all participants were made aware that all or part of the information received might be used for subsequent analysis and inclusion in a doctoral thesis. All participants were satisfied as to the nature of the research. All agreed to their contributions being included in both an academic publication and a presentation of recommendations that would be submitted to the WRU for the good of the game. In conjunction with ethical guidelines (McNamee, 1999), the participants were given coded identities for easy reading of the text. Participants were made aware that anonymity could not be guaranteed as per the norm (Homan, 1992). This was owing to the very nature of the investigation and the importance of informing the reader of each participant’s biography, which was deemed highly relevant for this study. The participants agreed by written consent (Appendix G) that their anonymity did not require safeguarding.

3.13 Participants

The sampling process highlighted the need to engage suitably experienced Rugby practitioners. The first set of participants (Set 1) included elite match officials (REF) and referee advisors (PER), and both the PI (Appendix F) and the
NRM (Appendix H). Personal approaches were made to all individuals and their respective willingness to participate confirmed.

The four elite match officials were selected so that they might share their lived experiences from novice referee to IRB match official. Very much active in the modern era, they offer valid opinions on the current state of the game and how it affects their role. Their selection was straightforward. With a limited budget the Referees Department is not able to employ any number of full-time match officials. Moreover, it does not have many ‘elite’ referees. Thus, the pool of suitable participants was rather small. Some of the participants had contributed to previous research (Hennessy, 2007) and it was felt that they could make a significant contribution to this analysis. This study was able to seek the views of two current full-time match officials and two former full-time match officials. As all four had attained elite status, it was felt that their contributions would help to achieve the aim of the study, which concerns the development of elite Rugby officiating.

The four advisors selected were equally well informed on current Rugby matters. Their opinions on what makes an elite referee would be useful. Partly for logistical and partly for availability reasons, I sought the contributions of two senior advisors from my local Society and two others with vast IRB experience. All four have a clear understanding of what it takes to operate at the highest level of officiating. Accumulatively, they have over 80 years of reviewing experience. Consequently, their input would prove invaluable.

While all these participants were able to share their expert opinion regarding officiating issues, it must be said that their position within the overall referee structure does suggest drawbacks. The positions occupied by the NRM and the PI
epitomise the main limitation, namely, the obligation to be diplomatic. Indeed, every participant who occupies a role within the Union has to ensure that offence is neither given nor implied. Set 1 participants are presented below.

**Table 1: Set 1 – Match Officials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PI</th>
<th>Former WRU/IRB match official; WRU referee coach and mentor.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NRM</td>
<td>Former WRU/IRB match official; IRB performance reviewer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER2</td>
<td>Former WRU match official; IRB performance reviewer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER3</td>
<td>Former WRU coaching coordinator; WRU referee coach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER4</td>
<td>Former WRU match official; WRU referee advisor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF1</td>
<td>Full-time WRU/IRB match official; Junior World Championships (JWC) U19 &amp; U21; IRB Assistant Referee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF2</td>
<td>Full-time WRU/IRB match official (RWC 2007, 2011); 3 Heineken Cup finals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF3</td>
<td>Former full-time WRU referee; IRB match official (RWC 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF4</td>
<td>Former full-time WRU/IRB match official (RWC 1995).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Set 2 comprised regional coaches. Failing to secure the services of the four Directors of Rugby brought about a change to the make-up of the set. Having been granted access to three respective members of the regional coaching staff (RCS), the interview process was completed without further hindrance. Participants were contacted by telephone to confirm their readiness to contribute.

The three Rugby coaches played at the highest level of domestic Rugby in their respective eras. Even more significantly, each has attained all levels of the
Union’s various coaching awards. All were familiar with the player pathway and coach education programmes currently in operation. Set 2 participants are presented below.

Table 2: Set 2 – Regional Coaching Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RCS1</th>
<th>Former professional Rugby player; Wales 7’s and U20 national coach.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RCS2</td>
<td>Former Welsh international; previous experience in English Premiership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCS3</td>
<td>Former first-class player; Wales’ Students and Wales 7’s national coach.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.13.1 Academy referee profiling

A concise Academy referee profile (Appendix I) was word-processed and presented in a simplified table format (Veal, 1997). This negated the possibility of illegibility (Creswell, 2003). Referees had only to circle the appropriate responses. This enterprise allowed for appropriate grouping of potential participants for Set 3 interviews according to grade (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003). Available grades were that of Premier, 1, 3 and Probationer (5P). To establish a normative profile of Academy referees, it was felt that five groupings should be established (Hughes et al., 2001; Hughes and Franks, 2004). The largest grouping that of the probationers (n=10) was split according to age. This facilitated the realisation of the five groupings from which one JAR per grouping was selected randomly. Given the research title, it was felt that collating accounts of those with elite aspirations would contribute significantly to the final analysis and subsequent recommendations. Set 3 participants are presented below.
Table 3: Set 3 – Junior Academy Referees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JAR1</th>
<th>Grade 1; 27 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JAR2</td>
<td>Grade 5P; 25 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAR3</td>
<td>Grade 5P; 19 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAR4</td>
<td>Grade Premier; 23 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAR5</td>
<td>Grade 3; 23 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Set 4 comprised two non-Welsh full-time professional match officials. Section 3.10 gave reasons for their inclusion. Chiefly, it was thought that some comparison with other Unions who also supply elite match officials to the Magners League (now RaboDirect PRO12) would help in formulating possible recommendations for future best practice. Circumstances dictated that these two should be chosen. Both were appointed to matches in Cardiff at times that coincided with my workload. Thus, it made sense to request their participation. Set 4 participants are presented below.

Table 4: Set 4 – Professional League Referees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLR1</th>
<th>IRFU/IRB match official (RWC 2003, 2007); two Heineken Cup finals.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLR2</td>
<td>SRU match official; U20 JWC U20; European experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.13.2 Equipment

Olympus digital voice recorders (model numbers VN-5500PC and WS-450S) were used in the interview process. Spare batteries were kept with the main audio equipment. Writing implements and a printed copy of the questions were provided to assist participants in the completion of the interview pro formas.

3.14 Interviews

Having confirmed relevant study participants, the interview process began. Kahn and Cannell regard such a process as “a purposeful discussion between two or more people” (1957, p. 9). To complement this, Lincoln and Guba refer to an interview as “a conversation with a purpose” (1985, p. 100). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) report that interview techniques can range from an informal chat to that of a structured interview. Here, conducting semi-structured interviews afforded the interviewer some latitude.

The research design called for the “why” more so than the “what” and thus, the decision to engage in qualitative research in the form of interviews was reached quickly. When employing interviews as a means of empirical inquiry, it is noted that, “the interviewer should be knowledgeable about the topic of concern and master the technical language” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 147). Furthermore, he should be familiar with interviewees’ biographies, so as to ensure parity during discourse. These points were addressed in Part 1.

For the selection of interviewing as an appropriate primary research method, specific criteria were proposed and subsequently followed. These included Veal’s
(1997) suggestion that interviews should usually be undertaken when the population is so low that quantitative inquiry would be deemed unsuitable. As a consequence of interview responses often being varied and complex, Veal (1997) further asserts that it would be difficult to interpret the data using other methods, for example, via quantitative techniques. Another important factor is the feasibility of the interview process, as Denscombe (2003) reminds the potential interviewer about the viability in terms of temporal and logistical costs.

In response to these potential obstacles, an appropriate sample was considered (section 3.10) following an analysis of the Union’s organisational structure (Chapter 2). This facilitated the process of determining the number of participants. The specific nature of the critique dictated that only a select group of Rugby practitioners could be approached. As elite Rugby in Wales enjoys a favourable demographic, temporal and logistical issues were of minimal concern. Each region was easily accessible and there were no issues relating to logistical costs. These were borne personally to maximise convenience to the interviewees.

The interviews were structured in accordance with the key concepts so that critical analysis of their general effect on elite Rugby could be undertaken. The questions facilitated discussion of each theoretical framework without forcing the concepts onto the interviewee. Here, an interest exists “in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them” (Chase, 2005, p. 651). In part, a personal narrative (Chase, 2005) was sought in each interview. With regard to an appropriate interview procedure, interviewee accessibility was given due consideration (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Creswell (2003) offers telephone,
focus group and one-to-one interviews as possible solutions. Each approach is supported by the literature.

Briefly, Denscombe (2003) supports the use of telephone interviews, as it is a convenient tool for those occasions when direct access to the participant is not achievable. Silverman (2001) appreciates the usefulness of operationalising a focus group consisting of a small number of individuals who are usually homogenous in character. Whatever the type of interview selected, Patton (2002) reminds us that open-ended questions and probes yield in-depth responses about a population’s knowledge, histories, thoughts, understanding, perceptions and feelings. Thus the content of the interview should include verbatim quotations with adequate context to be interpretable.

Unsurprisingly, the literature suggests respective drawbacks of conducting interviews under any of the three ways mentioned above. It is sufficient to acknowledge an awareness of those issues associated with telephone and focus groups. As it had been decided to conduct one-to-one interviews, only related matters are of concern. I noted and accepted Creswell’s (2003) concern that this type of interview technique can result in the collection of poor data as a direct consequence of interfacing with an introvert and/or less articulate participant.

Issues surrounding data capture from interviews are acknowledged, specifically, their length. Conscious of the fact that participants’ time was precious (Veal, 1987), especially that of Set 2, interviews were sequenced efficiently to encourage flow of narrative (Appendix J). Previous experience ensured that participant responses were digested accordingly. Thus, repetitive probing and prolonged discussion were avoided.
3.14.1 Format

Data capture took place in-season. Times and dates were scheduled at the participants’ convenience. Interviews were conducted at their respective workplaces. A pre-determined semi-structured format was followed to avoid any bias (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). This ensured consistency in the questioning. Prior to recording an interview, each participant was reminded of the study’s aim.

Set 1 was asked questions relating to personal experiences as a referee – the journey from novice to elite status (Appendix D). Set 2 participants, all of whom have attained the UKCC/WRU Level 4 Certificate in Coaching Rugby Union, were primarily asked for their thoughts on the role and responsibilities of elite match officials (Appendix J). Among other things, Set 3 interviewees were asked to talk about their own refereeing goals as members of the Academy structure (Appendix K). Set 4 was called on to offer alternative, non-Welsh perspectives (Appendix L). Making comparisons with other Unions may well underpin proposals for future best practice. The concept of tradition hopping (Morgan, 1994) is considered in the presentation of recommendations.

3.15 Supporting evidence

Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that documents and records can be categorised on the basis whether or not the text is prepared as evidence of some formal transaction. They define records as marriage certificates, driving licenses and bank statements. Documents are depicted as items, which are “prepared for personal rather than official reasons” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 277). Texts and,
more importantly here, documents are analysed in qualitative research for gaining insights into the mindset of a particular group of practitioners and/or institutions (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). The motive here is no different. Documents or “mute evidence” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 703) offer a potentially vast and ranging spectrum of support material from which to collect rich data. Official publications, reports, letters, pro forma assessments and surveys are examples of mute evidence (Patton, 2002).

Inherent in any form of research of this type is the difficulty that might arise in obtaining the required documentation. Potential issues include, “locating materials, obtaining permission to use materials and questioning the value of materials” (Creswell, 1998, p. 132). Being an active match official and member of the Academy meant that soliciting the appropriate documentation was straightforward. Similarly, with access to the worldwide web and Internet facilities, obtaining documentation from other Unions was equally unproblematic.

A critical analysis of elite Rugby officiating in Wales required that documentation specific to the Referees Department be gathered. PR’s, RC’s and RA’s conduct referee performance reviews. Each group uses a designated pro forma for the submission of written feedback to both the referee and the NRM. The review process, having recently experienced a substantial overhaul based on feedback from the nine Referees’ Societies, includes a review pro forma that does not require the scribe to give a score (out of 120) as was customary. These are given due attention within the thesis (Appendices A and B). Further documentation was obtained from both the IRFU and the SRU (Appendices M and N) for comparison.
3.16 Data analysis

Data analysis adhered to a four-stage procedure (Miller, Hengst and Wang, 2003). This correlates with Marshall and Rossman’s (1999) six-phase analytic procedure. The process involves organising data, generating categories, themes and patterns, data codification, testing the emergent understandings, searching for alternative explanations and writing the report. Completion of each phase led to positive and manageable data reduction. This subsequently facilitated the task of bringing meaning and insight to participants’ views.

In line with the interview process, the data analysis was designed to capture the four key concepts. Every effort was made to link the conceptualisation to the methodological approach and then, in turn, to link this to the data analysis and subsequent critique. Hence, these concepts became the foci of the analytical process, which was carried out as follows.

Having transcribed an interview, annotation of the dialogue that contained elements of one or more of the key theories was undertaken. Section 3.6.3 described this simple process. A table was then created that included all relevant elements of the interview. The colour coding of each theme provided a simple visual aid for future reference (Appendix O). Transcribing and codification were undertaken directly following each interview to preserve freshness (Oliver, Serovich and Mason, 2005). All transcripts were checked for accuracy by listening to the interviews while reading through the hardcopies.

The hardcopies provided useful data references when undertaking the critical analysis process. Each hardcopy was reviewed in relation to the
conceptualisation and potential themes and patterns were manually annotated. This produced a bank of re-occurring thoughts and issues, which in turn allowed for further researcher interpretation. Through the accumulation of similar responses, the emergence of useful data was evident, underpinning final conclusions and recommendations for future research and best practice.

As stated above, all data were subjected to four stages of analysis that included the construction of codes, concepts, categories and theories (Martin and Turner, 1986). Following the advice of Rapley and Flick (2008), I used a combination of documentation and interview response analyses. Such a method is supported by Silverman (2001) who promotes the use of qualitative data analysis of interview responses for determining any patterns, differences and possible like-minded opinions of participants.

3.16.1 Managing and reporting data

Conducting 20 interviews produced a substantial amount of data. Therefore, it was essential to establish quickly a well-organised data management system. Hughes and Franks (2004) stress the importance of this for greater accuracy and efficiency in the reporting of data. Wolcott provides further guidance concerning mass data collection.

The critical task in qualitative research is not to accumulate all the data you can, but to ‘can’ (get rid of) most of the data you accumulate. This requires constant winnowing. (1990, p. 35)

This sizeable task was accounted for in pre-study planning and preparation. I acknowledged the need to sort data using broad descriptive categories “relating to
particular people, places, activities and topics of concern” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. 16). As Tesch (1990) suggests, the information was arranged into meaningful units. All data were subjected to re-analysis and wherever necessary, re-interpretation, as recommended by Miller and colleagues (2003). This process ensured accurate data codification. Regular interaction between researcher and participant facilitated peer clarification whenever new data emerged or further interpretations were sought. Data triangulation (Silverman, 2001) ensured that reporting the study findings was carried out as accurately and as truthfully as possible.

3.16.2 Data triangulation

A study of this magnitude required detailed planning and a degree of flexibility. There was strict adherence to universal research procedure, which by its very nature demands a high level of both reliability and validity (Silverman, 2001). Aware of the issues associated with researcher as participant, attempts were made to alleviate any deficiencies and biases that might have derived from engaging with such a novel research study. The advice of Maseide (1990) was followed and thus, data triangulation and respondent validation (Bloor, 1978) were employed.

Much of the data were confirmed by supporting documents supplied by the Union. For example, the referee-scoring sheet (Appendix A) and performance review pro forma (Appendix B) augmented participants’ responses with regard to the existing advisory system. Completed transcripts were e-mailed to participants for confirmation prior to publication (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers, 2002). Participant verification (Mays and Pope, 2000; Morse et al., 2002) allowed
the interviewee to review interpretative analysis that might be problematic and/or sensitive. This procedure further enhanced respondent validation (Mays and Pope, 2000). However, as with any participant-based experimentation, the Hawthorne effect (Hammersley, 1990; Landsberger, 1958) may have been present. According to Silverman (2001), its presence would provide sufficient justification for contesting the truth status of respondents’ accounts.

Methodological triangulation was attained through a review of the research methods literature and, to some degree, by drawing on previous qualitative research experiences at postgraduate level. Acutely aware of the problems associated with triangulation of this kind, Silverman’s warning was heeded.

The major problem with triangulation as a test of validity is that, by counterposing different contexts, it ignores the context-bound and skilful character of social interaction and assumes that members are ‘cultural dopes’, who need a social scientist to dispel their illusions. (2001, p. 235)

Employing this method meant that any attempts, conscious or otherwise, to offer overly subjective interpretation were reduced. As a consequence of the above measures and in keeping with Weber’s (1949) proposals, it could be argued that researcher bias was minimised.

3.17 Research ethics

Matters pertaining to ethical issues are addressed here. Guided by the work of Jennings and Callahan, every effort was made in this empirical study to ensure the “careful collection and accurate reporting of data, and candid admission of the
limits of the scientific reliability” (1983, p. 6). Olivier (2002) supports this notion by stressing that adherence to sound ethical practices are paramount when undertaking qualitative empirical research.

The study adhered to the ethical guidelines of both the WRU and Cardiff Metropolitan University. All members of the National Academy are expected to have an understanding of the responsibilities and duties of operating within such an organisation. Furthermore, the IRB (2009b), through its Union Members, does not tolerate actions, verbal or otherwise, by any person who wilfully brings the game into disrepute. Further obligations were met through attainment of ethical approval from Cardiff Metropolitan University’s Research Ethics Committee (REC). The REC is the official body charged with ensuring that ethical guidelines for undertaking research with human participants have been followed and all appropriate actions taken where necessary. Consequently, the research proposal was granted ethical approval by both organisations.

All participants were consenting adults. No vulnerable populations were used (Olivier, 2002). Moreover, Miller’s and Bell’s recommendation was noted, which emphasises that, “consent should be ongoing and renegotiated between researcher and researched throughout the research process” (2002, p. 53). Following the advice of Olivier and Olivier (2001), participants were made aware that they were at liberty to withdraw at any time without fear of sanction.

The nature of the information contained in the study is not particularly sensitive. However, this is a community of practice (Culver and Trudel, 2006) where, for example, coach-referee interactions are vital to its success. As such, there is an element of participant anonymity where appropriate.
3.18 Summary

A rationale has been presented in support of the methodology employed in this critical analysis. This partially ethnographic work satisfied particular requirements associated with the study of human activities, namely, “the need for an empirical approach; the need to remain open to elements that cannot be codified at the time of the study; a concern for grounding the phenomena observed in the field” (Silverman, 1997, p. 8). These criteria were met by adopting a reflexive, interpretive approach. Informed interpretation of data was made and later clarified through discussion with key personnel (participant-collaborators). Such a procedure is seen as critical (Mehan, 1979), as the strong point of ethnographic study – its ability to provide deep insights into new or known social settings – can also be its Achilles’ heel. Care has been taken neither to indulge in anecdotalism nor selectiveness.

Researchers seldom provide the criteria or grounds for including certain instances and not others. As a result, it is difficult to determine the typicality or representativeness of instances and findings generated from them. (Mehan, 1979, p. 15)

The implementation of an ethnographic approach within an interpretive design method was appropriate (Silverman, 2000; Patton, 2002). It allowed for a systematic and intensive data analysis with theory emerging inductively from constant comparison, collection and coding of evidence (Creswell, 2003). As Strauss and Corbin (1998) have argued, incorporating multiple methodologies
allows for previously undisclosed thoughts, interactions and other social processes to emerge from a lived phenomenon.

What follows is a presentation of the principal findings of the research process. Conveying the nature of this social practice and the role of the elite match official within highlights those areas of elite Rugby officiating that require attention. Chapter 4 informs the study by presenting the key issues with which elite match officials have to contend regularly. It is reasoned that interpretive analysis will lead to suggestions as to how elite referees might deal with the array of notions presented in the conceptualisation.
Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present findings of the data collection process. These results are informed by both interviewee responses and supplementary documentation. The chapter focuses primarily on four philosophical themes, presented as separate areas for discussion: game reasoning, virtue ethics, justice and *phronesis*. Two officiating-related themes are discussed thereafter; namely, the referee development structure and interactivity.

Each of the above sections has a particular thematic focus. All relevant emergent themes are incorporated to support the discussion. Relevant participant views precede the interpretive analysis. It was anticipated that the various groups would provide different responses. While this is clearly evident, similarities between groups are also presented to enrich the discussion.

Before summarising this chapter, I present the study’s principal findings. I emphasise the unique nature of Rugby officiating and the distinctiveness of task. In so doing, I highlight the current state of the game and how elite match officials might best serve the game moving forward. Based on the data analysis, I then propose that officiating is in fact an integral part of the practice and needs to be recognised formally as so. The final part of this section suggests that a holistic approach to Rugby development is needed. More specifically, a playing-coaching-officiating triumvirate might be helpful in making Rugby a better product. This in part is based on the influence of the four key philosophical concepts, which are discussed first.
The ultimate aim here is to evaluate current practice by analysing participant opinions regarding elite Rugby officiating. The primary objectives are to further understand how best to develop and prepare match officials for the professional game. This chapter informs the reader about problematic issues associated with refereeing and how such matters might be addressed.

4.2 Game reasoning

Match officials are encouraged to show empathy towards players’ endeavours. Still, they must manage negative game features like cheating, foul play and gamesmanship (McFee, 2004). PI notes that players “affected by…gamesmanship…quickly turn on the referee for some sort of… fair call” (p. 12). Some perspective is needed here. Players must accept the fact that they too will be affected by the unjust actions of their opponents.

The concept of game reasoning is contextually understood here in terms of how professional Rugby players display behavioural norms that otherwise might not necessarily be tolerated in other social practices. It appears that they adopt a temporary ludic attitude. Such an attitude is considered acceptable within this sporting environment (Jones and McNamee, 2000). The apparent competitive approach – the ‘win-at-all-costs’ mindset – affects the task of officiating. The general consensus is summarised by PLR2 who concedes thus, “It’s part of the game that we’re never going to get rid of” (p. 4). Participant responses confirm the notion that game reasoning abounds.

PI is clear in his view on this, “Players will always do what they can get away with to win” (p. 7). JAR2 thinks that players engage in this way because they believe that the opposition are doing it – “I think everybody knows if the
other guy’s doing it, I’ll do it then” (p. 4). This suggests that the principle of maintaining parity or equality emerges alongside the pursuit of advantage. His view reflects current thinking. Personal communications with elite players suggest that they only cheat in response to opposition behaviour. As Loland (2002) notes, adopting such a mindset is perhaps their way of justifying deliberate rule violations.

Elite coaches are not averse to employing game reasoning as a mean to achieving their respective ends. RCS1 openly discusses the notion of cheating, but makes it clear that he does not “go down the line of teaching cynical elements…obviously there’s gamesmanship that comes in and that’s always existed” (pp. 3-4). While the coaches have not provided definitive examples of cynical practices, they do acknowledge coaching certain strategies. For example, RCS2 admits that players are coached in ways that will slow opposition ball at the breakdown, “That’s pretty much across the board with everyone” (p. 4). It seems that coaches go even further in attempting to influence the outcome of matches.

4.2.1 Pre-match game reasoning

Players and coaches make frequent attempts to manipulate officials. Referee participants share the view that such behaviour “is nothing personal against the referee: (PI, p. 12). However, PER1 and PER4 warn against being taken in by such antics:

“They are trying to con you.” (PER1, p. 8)

“It’s a naïve referee who thinks that anything at the professional level happens by accident.” (PER4, pp. 5-6)
A significant tactic is the off the field working of referees. An official must assess coach intentions during the pre-match meeting. Here, the coach is given an opportunity to seek clarification and/or interpretation of the Laws. Yet, it is common practice for the coach to monopolise the discourse by focusing on the opposition’s traits and spoiling tactics. It is debatable whether this arrangement still fulfils its initial objective. While completely eradicating this interaction would be the ultimate outcome, perhaps the IRB should consider the merits of continuing with this provision in its current format.

The interpretive role of the match official is always contingent on what unfolds. Arguably, there is too much looseness within the game and the referee needs to get a firmer grip on proceedings. It is understandable that a coach would want a pre-match engagement to ascertain that particular referee’s expectations. What frustrates coaches is a general lack of refereeing consistency. However, given the nature of this complex game, it is debateable whether they have a right to feel this way. While it is important that what the referee says is consistent with what others say, it is inevitable that individuality should dictate otherwise. Hence, the good coach is keen to relay any message to his players, having clarified how the appointed referee is likely to interpret key aspects of the game.

The continuation of such an arrangement should be interrogated. Who actually benefits from this meeting? It can be argued that subjecting the referee to this process undermines his ontological authority (Collins, 2010). The concept of ontological authority dictates that the referee has legitimate power (Raven, 1992), having been officially appointed to his role by the institution. Elite referees have indicated that this pre-match interaction is a waste of time (Barnes, 2010) wherein coaches deploy pre-match game reasoning.
Prior to international Test matches, elite match officials are often shown video footage and statistics that highlight poor play by the opposition. Coaches attempt to influence the referee (MacMahon, Starkes and Deakin, 2007). Barnes (2010) affirms that manipulative behaviour is commonplace. Experience has taught him to manage this interaction by reminding those involved that the purpose of the meeting is to clarify Law interpretations.

No matter how clearly the referee clarifies a coach’s query or fully articulates his interpretation of a certain Law, problems will arise. Even a well explained interpretation could not anticipate in-game application. While a referee will endeavour to clarify any grey areas for the inquisitive coach, it is impossible to account for all scenarios. Thus, a coach should be satisfied by a referee’s explanation of how he manages certain areas given the relevant circumstances. The referee can stipulate areas of the game that are not grey areas. He can make it clear to the coach what his position is on a particular matter, for example, where he stands on players questioning his decisions.

According to PI, a coach requesting a dialogue often means, “You listen to me” (p. 10). It is during such interactions that he ‘convinces’ the referee that his players are going to play positive Rugby and that the opposition will use various ploys to counter this. This resonates with a typical party political broadcast. Rather than focusing on his own team’s actions, the coach spends more time pointing out the opposition’s negative behaviours. As an experienced IRB match official, PLR1’s comments confirm the tendency for coaches to focus on the transgressions of the opposition and he advises that referees should take all coaches’ words “with a pinch of salt” (p. 16). Current protocol does not permit the referee to decline coach meetings.
Officials must enter into any interactive process with an open mind. Prejudging a coach’s input is unwarranted. Each interaction must be treated on its own merits. Referees are encouraged not to say too much in these situations. Offering limited responses is a way of controlling the interaction. The existing coach-referee relationship often determines its usefulness. If mutual respect has been previously established, then it is likely that a two-way meaningful conversation will ensue.

Nevertheless, the experienced match official filters all trivia arising from the coach-referee interaction. Understandably, coaches and their players have a unified agenda going into a match. It is important that the referee is also clear about his own objectives. He must be focused on facilitating a fair contest and be ready to sanction unfair practice.

4.2.2 In-game game reasoning

Game reasoning also abounds within the captain-referee relationship. This liaison has evolved during the professional era. REF4 suggests that captains are groomed for this purpose. He names Ireland’s Paul O’Connell and Wales’ Ryan Jones as prime examples of captains who regularly attempt to manipulate match officials. Paul O’Connell, he adds, “will try and bully the referee” (REF4, p. 6). With coaches viewing this approach as worthwhile, it is no surprise that “Ryan Jones has been taught to do it” (REF4, p. 6).

Barnes (2010) has also referred to interactions with team captains. He warns that while the likes of Victor Matfield (South Africa) and Richie McCaw (New Zealand) may appear to cooperate, their true motive is self-interest. Nonetheless, these exchanges seemingly augment the existing Rugby drama.
Engaging with the referee, even on a relatively small matter, can be seen as a way of seeking to influence decisions. While a senior referee will use his vast experience to deal with these exchanges, a less experienced official is advised against getting embroiled in a debate or worse, saying something that might leave him open to post-match repercussions.

4.2.3 Implications

PI distinguishes between gamesmanship and blatant cheating. “Neil Back, the hand of God” (PI, p. 8) is the example given of blatant cheating. REF1 echoes this view, advising that referees must “look for the clear and obvious” (p. 4) and then rule accordingly. This modus operandi is well known to players and coaches alike. REF1 praises those who “can get away with things that are marginal” (p. 4), as “…the world’s best players live on the edge” (p. 4). While the Laws frame the game, REF2 suggests that match officials, “have to appreciate that players will try and push that framework and try and go outside that framework” (p. 8).

Welsh match officials adhere to the Referees Department’s directive of ruling on the clear and obvious. Marginal calls are to be avoided, but being asked to ignore, say, a slightly forward pass is potentially problematic. It can be argued that a series of marginal, yet cumulatively and ultimately significant episodes could be more or less problematic than an act of blatant but largely unproductive cheating. For example, a referee who continuously allows players to place their hands on the floor beyond the tackle (“sealing off”) prior to the formation of a ruck is denying a fair contest for possession. This institutional dictate is putting added pressure on the elite referee to conform. By allowing
such borderline acts to occur, a referee is in danger of finding himself in the potentially awkward situation wherein he may well and truly be ‘worked over’.

Regional coaches are calling for referees to show empathy. However, we must consider when and how many of these marginal calls are to be accepted. This requires further insight. A temporal analysis of when players actually engage in such conduct would highlight the problems associated with game reasoning. If we were to reduce the number of grey areas within the practice, then referee consistency might improve. Moreover, players, coaches and spectators would know exactly what is and is not acceptable as a marginal call.

From the coaches’ perspective, there has been a call for harsher sanctions against those who act cynically. RCS2 fully appreciates the challenges faced by elite officials in detecting cynical play. From his personal experiences, he notes that, “sides can still come here and try and stop you playing, but I think those sides need to be punished then with a card or two” (RCS2, p. 2). That said, RCS2 freely admits to coaching his players in ways that allow them “to slow the ball down” (p. 4). He argues that it is a part of normal coaching practice.

There is a collective mindset that good coaching involves the ability to “find routes round something” (RCS2, pp. 3-4). From time to time, directives or rulings are made for the good of the game. Yet, the good coach looks for an “out” (RCS1, p. 3). RCS1 is not an advocate of cheating, but he does encourage his players to push “the Law as much as they possibly can” (p. 4). There are varying degrees of cynical play. RCS1 calls for “consistency across [the] board” (p. 4). He encourages match officials to collectively highlight inappropriate conduct and then to manage it. Putting the onus on referees to
regulate all unfair practice seems unreasonable. Perhaps a shared responsibility would be more fitting.

RCS1 acknowledges the presence of game reasoning and is clear in his mind that, “we would be fools not to employ that ourselves” (p. 4). RCS1 explains, “players around you will push every boundary they can possibly push because ultimately they’re measured on 80 minutes and they’ve got to make it count every single time” (p. 6). He is keen to interact with match officials and hear their opinions on cheating and gamesmanship. This view reflects PLR2’s response. He offers the view that players are adopting a game reasoning approach because, “it’s their livelihood…to win leagues and trophies etc. is their main priority and these guys will do the cynical things to try…and help their cause a little bit more” (p. 4).

In the context of the modern game, RCS3’s views mirror those of his contemporary – “there is an element of living on the edge” (p. 4). He points out that teams like Leicester and Munster are better at doing this and consequently, “those are the guys who are winning the major tournaments” (RCS3, p. 4). RCS3 also adds that they are successful, in part, because they are “pushing the referees to the edge as well” (p. 4). He does get frustrated with match officials who do not referee unfair practice. A lack of consistency leads him to the conclusion that “you tend to become more cynical in your own approach because you’re unsure of what’s going on” (RCS3, p. 5). While he accepts that referees cannot detect all negative play, RCS3 appeals thus, “if it’s persistent offence [sic] going on, then it has to be picked up” (p. 5). The cunning of players and coaches in getting away with one-off incidents is admired.

“You’ve got to put your hands up and say, ‘Hey, fair play. We were outdone; we were outcoached, outplayed.’” (RCS3, p. 6)
An example of the above occurs regularly when attacking players execute pre-determined running lines that obstruct potential tacklers. The angling of the run is often so subtle as to go undetected. RCS3’s comments are reiterated by JAR3 who views cynical acts that go undetected by the referee as “clever play” (p. 3). He believes that all players are trying “to get one over on the referee and if you do so, you’ve got an upper hand in the game” (JAR3, p. 3). JAR3 belongs to the next generation of aspiring match officials who have already encountered much game reasoning despite their limited experiences.

Like his peers, JAR1 is adamant that, “we’re in a situation where cynical play is actually coached into players” (p. 3). He believes “that they’re actually encouraged to commit an offence, to save points, for example” (JAR1, p. 3). He maintains that the main issue from a refereeing perspective is “actually proving that cynical play” (JAR1, p. 3) has transpired. Of interest here is the degree to which coaches and players would describe such play as cynical. Is there some other less pejorative terminology? It seems that the existing boundaries are quite blurred.

Making assumptions is not best practice. JAR1 does not condone deliberate player misconduct, yet “we all have to accept that it does occur” (p. 4). Referees are naïve to think that players want to play constructively always. Nonetheless, there is a danger of referees assuming a similar cynical perspective with regard to issues of trust. Prejudice towards player behaviour is neither desirable nor productive. While wary of the potential opportunities for underhandedness, the elite referee must officiate without agenda.

Match officials agree that players “try and push the referee as much as they can to get an advantage” (JAR4, p. 3). Two kinds of cynical play are noted.
“There are players like Richie McCaw who rarely get picked up by the referee and other players whose cynical acts include deliberate knock-ons and sort of deliberately not rolling away, just trying to prevent tries and so forth.” (JAR4, p. 3)

JAR2 is also tolerant of the status quo, “I think it’s just part of any game. Whatever sport you play, you’re going to bend the rules because it’s all about winning, isn’t it?” (p. 4). Likewise, JAR5 says that, “it’s always been part of the game that people will try to find the loopholes in the Law or push the boundaries of the Law to their limits” (p. 3). The general feeling among this group is thus: “If we see it, if we catch it and we deal with it, then I think that’s a bonus for us” (JAR1, p. 4). Such a comment does not convey a great sense of mutuality.

PLR1 refers to the Laws in countering game reasoning. He emphasises that they “are there to defend you” (PLR1, p. 13). Players who transgress are fully aware of the consequences and PLR1 advises referees to be mentally strong when someone “cynically infringes” (p. 13). While he accepts that he will not detect all cases of cheating, PLR1 will “make every effort the next time…to do something about it” (p. 14). The general advice is not to allow oneself to be affected by undetected misconduct.

PLR2 surmises that the best players probably make the best cheats. He also admits that cynical play is “very difficult to detect sometimes” (p. 4). This suggests that elite players are highly skilled performers who time their actions appropriately as to avoid regular detection. Any assertion that some players are too good and do not need to cheat is a false one.

An elite referee puts to the back of his mind any such incidences and concentrates on the present. Of utmost importance here is refraining from trying to make amends. Any referee seeking to remedy the situation by redressing the balance is himself guilty of unfair practice. PER1 recalls an elite referee who
made a genuine mistake and then made three deliberate mistakes trying to rectify the situation. Clearly make-up calls are not something that referees want to happen. Nonetheless, it is possible for such reparation to occur and perhaps common that they do. This predicament is indicative of the duel role occupied by the match official. He is the rule enforcer, but equally someone that desires ‘natural’ justice.

Whether this is a good or a bad thing is worthy of further consideration. Any such action of this kind raises the question of whether these two ideals can sit comfortably with each other. It seems elsewhere, where practical wisdom and materiality are emphasised, that it is exactly what is being asked of referees. This study does not offer any resolution to this debate. The success or failure of this potential conflict will be borne out in particular cases. What we need to see is greater subtlety and nuance.

The above comments suggest a compromise or balance is needed. If we were to accept “sportspersonship” (McNamee, 2008) as an integral part of contemporary sports, then it would seem fair to better regulate the apparent cynicism. If this were the case, then players who intentionally offended could expect graver sanctions. Such an approach might reduce the perceived cost-benefit (Boardman et al., 2010) analysis that currently operates within the game. Stronger deterrents might encourage greater player compliance.

The current climate indicates that players and coaches are not adhering sufficiently to either the spirit or the Laws of the Game. The institution must drive any change for the betterment of the practice. Any positive institutional intervention would facilitate the task of elite officiating. Moving away from instrumentalism to internalism (MacIntyre, 2007) would be most welcome.
4.3 Virtue ethics

The role of elite referee befits a certain type of person. As RCS3 suggests, officials are “special people” (p. 10). Participants were asked for what they believed to be the essential characteristics of an elite match official. In the words of the NRM, elite officiating is, “all about being open and transparent and honest” (p. 4). While the responses were varied, the reader will clearly pick up on the commonality of views.

4.3.1 Participants’ views

Both PLR’s were clear in their assessments of what comprises an elite match official. PLR1 insists that they must have enthusiasm, a “willingness to do the job” (p. 12). He also advocates having an “appetite” for the game (p. 12) regardless of status. PLR2 is a little more direct – “thick skin” (p. 7). It is important for a referee to be “big enough and strong enough to take criticism, but also to sometimes admit your mistakes as well” (PLR2, p. 7). He accepts the inevitability that we all make errors occasionally. PLR2’s viewpoint is shared by JAR2 who believes that an elite referee should display “toughness” (p. 8).

PLR2 further explains the benefit of having a “hard edge” (p. 8). Players, he asserts, “don’t give a stuff about whom you are, what you’re doing or where you want to go” (p. 8). PLR2 believes that such an approach is necessary to “stamp your authority” (p. 8). He summaries his feelings by advocating that good refereeing is fundamentally about “growing a pair of balls and just going with your decisions more than anything else” (PLR2, p. 8). REF4 also suggests that someone with the ability to remain “cool and calm under pressure” (p. 8) has a good chance of making it as an elite practitioner. He cautions that not
being mentally strong enough “can play on you” (p. 8). RCS3 welcomes “somebody who is strong of character…somebody who has the courage of his convictions, somebody who is not afraid to make a tough call, somebody who can manage his team” (RCS3, pp. 9-10). These comments correlate with PI’s thinking; “There’s a definite stamp about a referee I’ve always found…usually a good guy to have a pint with, not going to fly off the handle for the slightest reason…handles pressure well” (p. 17).

PER1 sets out his priorities for assessing a referee’s potential. He is “only interested in guys who are keen…ambitious” (p. 17). PER1 warns that being, “over ambitious and blind on ambition can be dangerous” (p. 17). PER1 insists that the Laws are applied “sensibly, honestly and consistently” (p. 18). PI argues that even when criticism is self-inflicted referees “should be entirely accountable and suffer for it” (p. 18). REF2 believes that the best referees are “able to take the criticism because that is when you’re going to learn” (p. 13). PER1 says, “there’s nothing wrong with an honest mistake because there’s not a person in the world who hasn’t made one and we’re all going to make many in our lifetime” (p. 19).

Moreover, PER1 advocates being “selfish” (p. 18). In looking after yourself, “Apply the Law as you see it. Show no favouritism. Be consistent. Be honest. If you make a mistake, it’s an honest mistake” (PER1, p.18). As PER3 notes, “it boils down at the end of the day to honesty” (p. 13). In championing the virtue of honesty, PER1 speaks of the need for impartiality.

“I’m calling you ‘Green 7’ and I’m calling him, ‘Dai bach,’ you know?” (PER1, p. 25)
REF4 makes a similar claim by emphasising that players will “respond if you treat them fairly” (p. 4). PER4 reiterates the essential characteristics of an elite match official: “to be open, transparent, and honest” (p. 4).

PER2 suggests that a “very determined person” (p. 5) makes a good referee. He stresses the importance of having control. Asserting one’s authority can facilitate a good contest. This approach requires common sense, one thing that PER2 believes “you can never compensate for” (p. 7). His view is shared by PER4.

“Determination. But is also willing to put the hard work in and by that I mean the training. And not merely mean physical fitness, it’s the flipping mental fitness.” (PER4, p. 13)

JAR4 too supposes that the role requires “somebody who is dedicated, dedicated and committed to the demands of elite refereeing” (p. 7). According to JAR5, aspiring referees have “got to be very driven to get to the top” (p. 5). JAR1 talks of having “self-control” and “a lot of self-discipline” (p. 6).

REF1 shares the generic view of performance reviewers; namely, that an elite referee must be “an ambitious person…somebody who can manage expectation…you have to be patient…you have to be quite extrovert and confident in yourself” (p. 8). REF1 explains, “It’s no good being an introvert character. If you’re confident and you can make decisions, if they’re wrong they’re wrong, but you make them confidently” (p. 9). On making mistakes REF1 advises that, “it gives me more credibility in the long term by being honest and saying, ‘well, I’ve dropped a clanger there’ and again, trial by DVD, you know, there’s nowhere to hide anymore” (p. 10). He also speaks of “integrity” (REF1, p. 9), suggesting that an elite referee must look for “black and white, as opposed to perceptions” (p. 9).
REF2 offers a unique outlook. He thinks that, “90% of your ability to be a top referee is natural ability” (p. 2). Furthermore, REF2 believes that, “the most important thing is probably honesty” (p. 3). He emphasises the need to be brutally honest when self-reviewing performances, so as not to be found out. Taking such an approach allows you “to learn from it” (REF2, p. 3); this facilitates progress. REF2 also speaks of “consistency, control and the way you communicate” (p. 9); a view shared by REF3.

When assessing referees with the potential to achieve elite status, the NRM looks for individuals who display a positive attitude and a good temperament. He uses the analogy of a pie chart to convey his thinking.

“In terms of being the complete referee, it’s a pie chart. It’s knowledge of the game, it’s fitness, it’s attitude, approach, mental skills and a variety of others – fitness being a key element because if you’re not there to make the decision, then the respect of the players is gone and from that point of view, half your battle is lost.” (NRM, pp. 3-4)

From a coaching perspective, RCS1 stresses the importance of “man management skills” (p. 6). While RCS1 advocates having a really good knowledge of Law, “you’ve got to be very much your own person as well and you’ve got to be very confident in what you’re delivering” (p. 6). RCS3 reinforces RCS1’s call for non-robotic referees. While having a personality is important, he frowns on egotistical referees. “The game now is about entertainment,” but equally, “it’s about getting things right” (RCS3, p. 10).

“[The official] needs to be there to ensure that the game goes along, it’s entertaining, it’s fair and it goes along as smoothly as possible. That requires special people, mind, which is why there are so few special people around.” (RCS3, p. 10)
JAR2 suggests that, “some personalities are kind of suited for the game. Some are not” (p. 8). He has a similar view to RCS3.

“You can’t have a personality who wants to be seen on the field. The game is not about the referee. It’s about the players, about the team who is trying to win a Rugby game.” (JAR2, p. 8)

Nevertheless, JAR2 does emphasise the need to enjoy what you are doing and have “a passion for it” (p. 8). JAR3 has a different take on what makes an elite official. Like RCS3, he understands the uniqueness of the role.

“I think someone who is slightly different. I don’t think the textbook referee should necessarily be the guy who gets there. It’s that guy who’s got a bit of personality about them.” (JAR3, p. 4)

He does see the merit of conveying personality. It helps the individual “to adapt and not be pretty rigid on how they’re refereeing” (JAR3, p. 5). To this end, PLR1 underlines the value of having a sense of humour. In a highly charged game, a quip or other appropriate comment can often lighten the mood. Having a feel for what to say but more importantly, knowing when to say it can be an effective tool. This tallies with PI’s submission that having a humorous side can help, “to take some of the rubbish that’s heaped upon you sometime…from the side” (p. 17).

4.3.2 Interpretations

Participants were asked for their opinions regarding essential characteristics of an elite match official. The general consensus conveyed here is that the best practitioners will possess the following virtues: honesty, courage, temperament, impartiality and consistency.
PI summarises, the top referees are “fairly level-headed” (p. 16) and display similar dispositions. “What it boils down to most of the time is how much confidence the players have in the referee” (PER2, p. 9). Hence, PER2 wants referees to portray themselves as strong, positive characters.

Honesty is a key characteristic. Participant views infer that stakeholders have far greater respect for officials who account for their mistakes. Arguably, admittance of one’s errors might serve as some sort of calming agent. Any attempt to cover up inaccuracies would be frowned on by players and coaches alike. Participant responses emphasise the importance of always conveying equality, fairness and impartiality.

Being perceived as fair is crucial in establishing oneself as an elite match official. This is achieved in part by maintaining an impersonal working relationship. Referees must avoid giving coaches further cause to complain by getting too close to players. The status quo reiterates the need for honesty, especially when things are not going well, as this will stand a referee in good stead for future adversities. REF1’s remarks clearly underpin the argument that officials must make impartial decisions no matter what.

Drive, determination and commitment are commonly thought of as essential characteristics of the elite referee. The NRM makes clear his expectations. The importance of physical fitness is a given. Yet, he also states that he targets those referees who are not easily flustered. The game’s ludic nature requires a referee to show good temperament. For the NRM, the elite referee must adopt a similar mindset to that of the professional player.

Those at the elite level exude self-confidence. A decision is made with conviction, even when this affects a potentially game-changing outcome. Elite practitioners are not easily fazed. A leading official manages the inherent
adversity of his specialised role. He is well prepared and can anticipate and manage potential issues before they explode. As JAR1 acknowledges, the elite referee has excellent communication skills. Such skills are required for effective player management.

REF1 considers assertiveness a virtue. He implies that an assertive person who has extrovert characteristics is likely to do well. Yet, an extrovert disposition should not be overtaken by cockiness or arrogance. RCS1 also thinks that confidence and assertiveness are key elite characteristics. The importance of individuality should not be underestimated. Referees who display humanness are more likely to enjoy player cooperation. RCS1 recognises that the game has an aesthetic value to which the elite referee must contribute. He would welcome a personality who makes accurate and sometimes tough calls.

RCS3 too endorses personality. Yet, he is adamant that referees should refrain from seeking celebrity. The paradox of a ‘celebrity referee’ is to be discouraged. Enjoying a reputation as a good, consistent referee should suffice. Players must remain the focal point of any contest. While personality is useful, it is essential that the referee adopt an appropriate mindset whereby he never thinks that he matters more than the game. A sense of humility or lack of ego is seen as a desirable virtue within the context of officiating.

REF2 speaks of natural ability. He believes that possessing such an innate characteristic is advantageous. While he engages in continual development, self-analysis and the like, he feels that he possess an inner quality that allows him to excel within the practice community. Officiating at the highest level necessitates sound judgment. REF2 and REF3 stress the importance of accuracy when making judgments; this is key to how a referee’s performance is ultimately measured. To this end, REF3 states that to be an elite
referee, an individual has “to be dedicated” (p. 11). This requires the kind of personality that can absorb constant scrutiny. It is advised that all referees should treat praise and criticism equally. Both will aid long-term development. The Union is less likely to invest in those individuals who do not engage in self-development. Practitioners who listen and seek to improve will achieve greater success. A practitioner who can stand alone and resist self-interested others will succeed as an elite match official.

Every performance is analysed. Rather than dwelling on the negatives, elite referees build on the positives and make any necessary modifications. Their vast experience sees them largely unaffected by external criticism. As PER2 suggests, dedicated individuals actively engage in self-improvement to maximise gains. Such persons should be given full support in pursuit of their goals. His views are echoed by PER4 who believes that striving for excellence within the practice is key. Even an elite referee with many years of officiating experience can learn from each and every performance.

Acquiring some or all of the presupposed essential characteristics necessitates holistic development. As REF1 stresses, the ambitious official requires patience. Time and effort are needed for craft development; thinking you are ready does not mean that you are ready. Expectations need to be managed. Being told that you have the attributes to become an elite referee still requires you to earn that status. In managing such expectation, the individual will display his ability to operate accordingly.
4.4 Justice

The concept of justice is fundamental to any sporting contest. Arguably, Rugby’s appeal is enhanced whenever justice is seen to prevail. Still, the modern game endures much unfair practice.

4.4.1 Participants’ views

PI notes the continuing trend of players bending the Laws in their favour. With regard to cheating, he issues the following statement.

“It’s up to the referee to catch it…they can’t have the penny and the bun. They can’t shout off about it if somebody else gets away with it, whereas they expect themselves to get away with it. If they get done by the same little trick, keep quiet about it, isn’t it?” (PI, p. 12)

REF1 calls for positive management in ensuring that justice prevails. He would like all parties to agree on some “acceptable standards” (p. 4). REF1 read for a law degree at university, which “kind of tied in with the whole ethos of perhaps match officials and decision-making and things like that and trying to be impartial” (p. 9).

REF2 talks of “a framework for players to play within” (p. 8). He sees the official’s role as one of ensuring that players operate within that framework. REF2 points out that, “you have to appreciate that players will try and push that framework and try and go outside that framework” (p. 8).

When exercising good judgment REF4 advocates not dwelling on past decisions. He advises all referees “to believe what you did was right and just get on with the game and almost dismiss it instantly” (p. 8). REF4 recalls an occasion when he went outside the TMO protocol to bring about a just outcome.
following serious foul play. This particular instance highlights the difference between procedural and natural justice. Having been given the number of the transgressor by the TMO, REF4 sent off the guilty player. In his view, this was the right thing to do; natural justice had prevailed. As Rawls (1999) suggests, “a conscious effort must be made to determine whether an infraction has taken place and to impose the correct penalty” (p. 210).

However, since the match officials did not conform to the agreed IRB protocol, their action was later adjudged a procedural injustice (Rawls, 1999). The successful appeal was based on what Rawls (1999, p. 75) refers to as “pure procedural justice”. Consequently, no further punishment was forthcoming. The player’s counsel did acknowledge the principle of justice here insomuch as it was agreed that the correct decision had been made in ordering off the guilty party.

The regional coaches all share in the belief that referees need to be assisted in their role to ensure greater justice. For RCS1, greater justice is achieved when match officials employ consistency. He feels that being consistent or at least striving to be leads to more just outcomes. RCS1 suggests that players and coaches will feel less hard done by when a referee has been consistent both in his approach and application. JAR3 supports the call for consistency, particularly in the “basic areas of the game” (p. 4). However, JAR4 notes the difficulty of consistently ensuring just outcomes.

“It’s hard…if you see it, you’re going to try and obviously ping it.” (p. 4)
He adds,

“If you see something and you don't deal with it adequately, I think that's when it becomes inexcusable.” (JAR4, p. 5)

To facilitate greater consistency, RCS2 promotes an extended remit for the TMO.

“Referees need help as well and that could be with a fourth official who is watching a monitor.” (p. 3)

PLR2 also speaks of the TMO's limited capacity. While an extended TMO protocol may ensure greater justice, this specialist role has not necessarily been created to address issues of justice. RCS2 ponders, “How far back do you go?” (p. 10). He suggests that, “it's unanswerable at the moment” (PLR2, p. 10). JAR2 talks about the importance of dealing with unfair practice.

“If you do see someone bending the Laws and taking the mick, then you've got to act on it. Otherwise...the other guy's going to do it and then it's going to become a mess.” (p. 4).

Players rely on referee integrity and expect elite officials to show courage in making such calls. On this point, PLR1 is not concerned how referees officiate because we all “have different ways” (p. 16) of operating. What matters to him is a referee’s ability to achieve “outcomes” (p. 16). This he believes is key to having a successful career at the elite level.
Interpretations

Elite Rugby officiating requires morally strong characters. It is desirable that all practitioners are of a just nature. Such a disposition can facilitate the way in which referees cope with the modern game. They are expected to make impartial decisions, which are always unpopular from at least one team’s perspective. While players may display emotivist behaviour (Ayer, 1936) from time to time, match officials have to uphold fair play at all times.

It has been suggested that players, coaches and spectators take issue with a referee who misses an incident of foul play or a knock-on that results in a significant advantage for the opposition. Yet, they remain silent when any illegal action by their team goes undetected. More importantly perhaps and as REF4 has advocated, referees must accept that they cannot change what they did/did not do. Justice is not served when a referee tries to balance things up unjustly.

REF1 is in favour of rewarding positive play, but this still requires refereeing. The Laws cannot be ignored simply because a team is perceived as being constructive. For example, a referee can only reward scrum dominance when the team is dominating legally. As Collins (2010) suggests, officials have specialist skills that enable them to judge what is and what is not acceptable.

The Laws may not be without their critics but the referee has a duty to uphold fairness and justice, facilitated by a degree of common sense. REF1’s exposure to the study of law makes him appreciate the need for both knowing what the Laws of the Game are and how best to apply them.

The TMO protocol is currently under review. REF4’s experience highlights the need for change. The current system is inadequate. While one incident cannot decide the outcome of an entire 80-minute game, a critical decision may impact on it. To this end, additional input from the TMO should be
considered. The discussion following trials in England and South Africa will consider the optimal level of TMO input. Any subsequent change to the TMO protocol will have to consider the temporal parameters of live broadcasting.

It is generally accepted that match officials do not detect all occurrences of cynical play. Yet, players, coaches and spectators alike must accept that when officials do detect unfair practice, then appropriate action will be taken. On this point, JAR1 is wary of how much responsibility is given to others in the decision-making process. He suggests that while the TMO remit could be extended, the referee must be allowed to remain as the ‘chief executive’.

Shared thinking among the practice community intimates that players and coaches interpret the Laws to suit their needs. Conversely, whenever game reasoning is detected, a referee is duty bound to act accordingly. A referee who failed to act, owing to some weakness of character, would be doing the game an injustice. While such occurrences cannot be unequivocally proven, much anecdotal evidence suggests that some officials are reluctant to penalise teams during the closing minutes of a close-scoring game. This seems most apparent during a series of reset scrums within kicking distance of the posts.

Match officials can only rule on what they see. They must officiate in such a way as to maximise just outcomes. Effective officiating strategies include positional optimisation and the use of preventative measures. Failing to implement such strategies creates unnecessary tension and frustration. Leniency in the form of empathy or materiality is acceptable to a point. As JAR3 implies, consistency is key to minimising injustices.

Justice and more specifically just outcomes are an important part of any social practice. Here, participants have articulated the importance of fairness as justice within the context of professional Rugby. How best to achieve this
requires further investigation and is not for this analysis. The above comments suggest that greater cooperation might lead to fewer injustices.

4.5 *Phronesis*

*The Laws of the Game* outline how Rugby is to be played. They are a collective set of rules that act as a guiding framework (IRB, 2012). As such, they are open to interpretation. Refereeing decisions are made during a match based on Law knowledge, game understanding and practical wisdom.

4.5.1 Participants’ views

PI sees “decision-making” (p. 6) as a key factor in the success or otherwise of an elite official. Referees have to make decisions by interpreting player action in accordance with the Laws. PI explains, “You have to balance your judgment of a guy playing the game on the edge…to a guy who’s playing so much on the edge that he’s stopping the opposition playing by foul means” (p. 7). PI believes that, “it’s about the decisions you don’t make. It’s about the times you don't blow your whistle” (PI, p. 22).

PER2 suggests that the game consists of a “bit of kidology” (p. 19). PER2 calls for “good judgment and accuracy” (p. 20), which stem from “good old-fashioned common sense” (p. 7). He would consider the intent of the player and advises referees to ask, “Was he being destructive or constructive?” (p. 19). Since a referee has only a split second to decide, REF4 advocates painting a picture of what it is you would hope to see unfold.

PER4 focuses on “how a referee manages the players” (p. 16). He believes that making accurate judgments is key to a referee’s performance.
REF1 talks about Rolland, Owens and Kaplan as elite referees who “can express themselves, let the game run. They’re not overly black and white. They are accurate in their decision-making” (p. 14). REF1 says the ability to judge materiality is essential.

REF2 suggests that the ability to rule on materiality is not something that young referees possess. He believes that “they look at something as black and white” (p. 3).

“You need that ability to sort of understand what is going on and how to deal best with it…to know really when not to blow that whistle because the easy job is to learn the Law book and go and blow the whistle.” (REF2, p. 3)

REF2 implies that no more need be explained or said – the evidence of refereeing ability arrives in the presence of *phronesis*. REF3 also believes that having “a great understanding of the game” (p. 10) enhances a referee’s practical wisdom.

PER2 believes that an elite referee should have sound game understanding. Only knowing the Laws is insufficient. He suggests that a “lack of knowledge of certain areas of the game…holds you back” (PER2, p. 4). This view resonates with PER3; insufficient understanding leads to making decisions “which are based on not absolute knowledge…you’re guessing” (PER3, p. 4). PI does defend officials when he says, “It’s not the referee’s fault; it’s the Laws’ fault that’s leading to the current problems in the game” (p. 7). Here, he is referring to the contact area, also known as the breakdown or ‘pile up’.

PER4 thinks that having a playing background can be advantageous. He believes that having such experience is “a great advantage” (p. 16). While some referees with little or no playing background will have excellent Laws
knowledge, interpreting them is “a different thing” (PER4, p. 16). He sees this deficiency manifest itself when players get frustrated with a referee who they perceive to be lacking phronesis as empathy.

REF4 asserts that the match official’s role is about making “the best of what’s unfolding in front of you” (p. 3). He supports making decisions based on materiality but does not condone “opting out of Law” (Whitehouse, 2011). REF4 stresses the importance of making moral judgments at all times, irrespective of the match status. Moreover, REF4 favours “the communicative approach rather than the beating them with a stick approach” (p. 4).

NRM refers to the hurried nature of the game when considering phronesis. The game’s high tempo compels referees “to make an instantaneous decision” (p. 4). NRM acknowledges that while we are not going to get every decision right, the “best referees make the fewest mistakes” (p. 4).

From a coach’s perspective, RCS1 views consistency as a major component of good officiating. Consistency derives from practical wisdom: to know what is likely to happen next and thus, to be in a position to rule accordingly. RCS1 accepts that “there’s going to be human errors” (p. 9).

PLR1 does not think that, “within human nature you’re ever going to solve that wonderful problem” (p. 16) of consistency. As individuals, referees will naturally operate in different ways but getting the right “outcome” (PLR1, p. 16) has to be the priority. RCS3 also acknowledges the human factor – “as a coach you recognise that human error does creep in” (p. 3). Like NRM, he appreciates that the speed of the game impacts on the referee’s decision-making capabilities. RCS3 understands that, “there’s a lot of potential decisions” but he does expect “a certain level of consistency” (p. 3).
It is not only the coaching fraternity that views being consistent as an essential attribute. JAR1 is in favour of ruling on materiality but has a clear message to all practitioners – “It’s very difficult to educate both players, coaches and obviously spectators on the materiality and the way in which the referee applies it in any one situation” (p. 6). Herein lies a potential problem, there is a sense of false expectation that one group requires of another. His colleague, JAR2 continues the point.

“Things do happen by accident, you know, rucks – people going over and stuff. You’ve gotta have a feel sometimes for what they’re trying to do.” (p. 4)

Showing empathy and allowing players to flourish are characteristics of high standard officiating. JAR4, a less experienced official, suggests having “a quiet word” (p. 6) with those who commit minor infringements.

To facilitate greater player compliance and thus contribute to a better spectacle PLR2 would “rather bang them and go to the bin than just penalise them for the rest of the afternoon” (p. 4). He sees managing players as a major part of his remit. It seems that a particular form of refereeing is expected so that a particular type of game can emerge. That is, one where the cost benefit (Boardman et al., 2010) of infringements becomes too high a price for the offending team. It could be argued that the officials ought to have power to determine this ideal – both from a normative and an aesthetic ideal.

JAR5 is yet another advocate of consistency. By being consistent, “they know where your limits are and if they cross you, then they know what the consequences could be” (p. 3). JAR5 also believes that referees “should have some flexibility whether or not offences are material to the game” (p. 4).
4.5.2 Interpretations

The concept of *phronesis* as understood in the context of Rugby relates to materiality. The referee judges what really matters. He evaluates the action as it unfolds to maximise game aesthetics. To do so successfully requires practical wisdom or *phronesis* (Aristotle, 1941). While it is clearly advantageous for an elite official to possess such wisdom, practitioners must accept that the humanness of the role can never be fully eradicated. The concept of materiality and how one acquires it is hard to rationalise. Elite match officials have tacit knowledge and understanding derived from epistemological privilege (Collins, 2010). They have great insight.

Current practice implies that the Laws are written in such a way that they should be interpreted using common sense and with consideration for materiality. Arguably, an appreciation of the apparent ludic chaos derived from a playing background better prepares an official for making judgments. Moreover, as PER4 suggests, player management is key. To facilitate a high level of performance an elite referee should acquire fundamental player knowledge. In addition to the phenomenological qualities of the game, he ought to familiarise himself with the character of the players, that is, knowledge of player history, style of play and general attitude. A player-centred approach to officiating is desirable. To this end, as REF3 advises, officials should look for the positive and only penalise the clear and obvious. A referee who has empathy for what players are trying to achieve is always well regarded.

The notion of empathy is central to most refereeing discussions (Whitehouse, 2011). It is not surprising that all participants talk of its importance. The IRB (2012) encourages practitioners to act within the spirit of the game. Showing empathy is one way that referees adhere to this principle.
Such practical wisdom allows a referee to assess whether or not a player’s action has had a material effect on play. However, the game cannot rely solely on this approach. It is still incumbent on players to contribute to a fair contest; one in which all are given the opportunity to strive for excellence within this social practice (MacIntyre, 2007).

Materiality plays a significant part in the modern game. Referees are being asked to consider whether or not a particular act has affected the game in such a way as to warrant sanction. They are expected to draw on their practical wisdom, which may result in play continuing. The game is rife with infringements. Arguably, they do not all demand referee intervention. Each incident requires an honest and fair judgment call.

The concept of materiality is not unique to Rugby Union. For example, association football referees also have to judge intent and apply advantage accordingly. Yet, there is a significant difference in terms of both the complexities of the elements to consider and of all the possible outcomes. In Rugby, the match official has relative latitude when judging the material effect of players’ actions. Uniquely, he has legitimate power (Raven, 1992) to award a penalty try to compensate an inevitable score. Elite referees are very experienced practitioners who make a significant amount of accurate decisions. Such consistency earns them the trust and respect of those they manage.

Practically-wise officials are always in control. Sound player management reduces the frequency of sanctions. A stop-start affair produces an unattractive spectacle. Utilisation of phronesis increases game aesthetics. How so? The elite referee’s heightened sense of what matters facilitates one of the game’s main principles, continuity. Of key importance in relation to officiating is promoting fairness through a particular style of play. Materiality and
empathy are “tools” that a referee can use to manage a game effectively. They are nothing more.

Rugby Union forces the utilisation of *phronesis*. It is arguably one of the hardest games to officiate. No other sport relies on such proactivity by its officials. Here, REF4 referred to “gut instinct” (p. 11), suggesting that such judgments are available to anyone, but these cannot be any ordinary guts at the elite level. He implies that rationality drops out where the form of rationality ordinarily expected is in the form of articulable propositional knowledge.

The referee has to decide whether a player has done something “destructive or constructive” (PER2, p. 19). This is interesting, as it suggests there is a normative account of how (in terms of style) the game should be played. A clear example of this is the relative advantage given to the attacking team, but why? It is thought that there is much more to this; that is, it has to do more with ensuring a balance between continuity and flow to the game and opportunity to compete for possession. It is essential that refereeing directives are designed to make such preferences manifest. Two questions arise: How are the directives determined? Who gets to enter into these conversations? Informed responses are offered in the concluding chapter.

The Rugby referee occupies a rather unique role in the sense that he is expected to use preventative measures (prompts) to facilitate game management. Collins suggests that when a referee uses prompting he is defining what happens “in any particular instance in so far as it affects the subsequent unfolding of the game” (2010, p. 136). Prompting can be an effective officiating tool. The ability to maintain control is key to a successful performance. Failing to establish control leads to players taking advantage of the situation. They will seek to further test the referee’s capabilities.
The problematic nature of officiating is evident in the referee’s application of *phronesis*. Making judgments based on materiality requires skilful practitioners. Moreover, a balance is needed. The official has to create a balance in terms of strict interpretation of the Laws and a phronetic approach, which is influenced by a particular set of aesthetic and ludic ideals. Excellent situation management is often key to achieving the appropriate aesthetics. Failure to perform effectively may result in future non-selection. This is compounded by external scrutiny by the media and other social networks. TV pundits, journalists and “tweeters” alike will openly criticise any substandard performance. Of crucial importance is whether officials can appropriately balance this tension. It may be the case that sometimes both a litigious and a personal aesthetic skew judgment in a problematic way.

4.6 Development structure

Theoretically, elite match officials can attain professional status. At the very least, these leading officials can expect to be well remunerated and travel extensively. Performing at a consistently high level is necessary to experience both. Achieving elite status requires substantial development. This section discusses the evolution of referee development. The shortage of match officials and the ongoing budgetary constraints are just two of the issues highlighted. Signposted micro-themes facilitate the narrative.
4.6.1 Participants’ views

Early experiences

Match officials were asked to comment on their early referee experiences. PI recalls, “It was a case of turning up” (p. 2) and getting on with it. He remembers being left to his own devices as a novice and does not recall being seen by an assessor during his first season. The only feedback he inferred was in the appointments he received. Better games, he surmised, meant that he “was starting to do all right” (p. 3). No definitive structure or support system existed during the 1970’s. PER2 highlights the fact, recalling that he was not assessed for four seasons during his early years.

Word of mouth was the fundamental mechanism for building one’s reputation as a good referee. Whether this was a good approach is debateable. The obvious issue here is one of consistency and personal agenda. Not surprisingly, PI recollects that too many good referees never progressed beyond Level 2. PI is pleased that the current system is far more proactive – “Nowadays, if you’ve got any talent at all, I think most people get on the Union in some shape or form” (p. 4). Other match officials share the view that the existing structure is far more progressive.

Referees’ Societies

PER3 was integral to the establishing of Referees’ Societies. While employed as a WRU coaching coordinator PER3 was asked, “to take on board the refereeing side of things because the only structure that we had was the appointments system” (p. 1). PER3’s comment underpins the notion that playing and coaching are the Union’s key priorities.

Like many of the older generation of match officials, PI learnt his trade “only really through meetings” (p. 3). He would informally engage senior
referees in discussion on major incidents that had occurred in his recent matches. PI still attends meetings and believes “they deliver a fair mix of stuff for referees” (p. 14).

As a relative newcomer, JAR2 has “consciously made efforts to go to Society meetings” (p. 2). He found these particularly helpful in his early days. Whenever he had an issue, he too would seek the advice of veteran officials. Having been in similar positions, he was able to draw on their experiences in providing solutions – “It’s always nice to have somebody there to give you a bit of support...if you do have a bad one, you know, they don’t slate too much” (JAR2, p. 3).

PER4 values the opportunities presented by Society gatherings. They are “a marvellous area for open discussion and it worries me that many referees do not attend Societies and equally, perhaps even more importantly, the advisors and assessors because it’s easy to pick a weakness, but give a solution” (PER4, p. 9). PER2 also speaks of his frustration regarding the poor attendance at Society meetings. PER2 insists that these meetings are an integral part of referee and advisor development. All match officials must take responsibility for improving standards of officiating.

Advisory system

The initial advisory system was based on a mark out of ten – “It really was as simple as that” (PI, p. 5). The current system requires a far more comprehensive narrative of the game. Advisors now feedback on all major aspects: scrum, lineout, fitness, control, tackle/ruck/maul and communication. REF2 believes that, “it's the same now as it was when I started refereeing, is that you rely on people’s good nature...people’s ability to...have people who
want to help you on the way” (p. 4). PI believes that advisors must always consider the referee’s situation when reviewing the performance.

“You’re only giving what you see at high speed on a one-off in the middle, whereas a guy with slow replay and all the time in the world can always pick holes in your performance.” (p. 15)

For PI, this method is problematic. The problem seems to be how best to evaluate in hindsight decision-making that is in the moment. Video feedback is seen as largely irrelevant as it does not capture the angle from which the referee has observed play. His viewpoint concurs with Collins’ (2010) notion of epistemological privilege whereby the referee has the superior view. The spectator, coach and advisor never have the luxury of seeing play from the referee’s viewpoint. Arguably then, advisors should refrain from watching multiple slow motion replays before submitting written feedback. The referee sees events unfolding in real time and makes an immediate call. The advisor should not dwell on insignificant matters.

As a referee coach, PI sometimes has difficulty in “finding something to say to a guy, especially a guy who is refereeing at a good level” (p. 16). This resonates with Thomas, Edwards and Kibble (2011), all members of Cardiff Referees’ Society, who have bemoaned the fact that some feel obliged to generate coaching points unnecessarily. The trend of giving feedback for feedback’s sake is unhelpful.

Too many referees might see advisors as threats and become too defensive. PER1 suggests that the advisory system has “got to be a two-way thing” (p. 16). The relationship between referee and advisor must allow for a two-way dialogue. Referees should understand that advisors are there to assist
in their development. Likewise, advisors should always take a positive approach. Excessive negativity by either party is not helpful.

Like other participants, PLR2 is in favour of the new review system. However, he believes that there are a few “ambitious performance reviewers” (p. 5). PLR2 thinks that they have a tendency to “give you a more harsher mark to say, ‘Look what sort of report I can write because I’ve got my own little agenda and I want to go certain places’” (p. 5).

PER2 also notes the perceived ill feeling towards advisors by referees. He points out that attacking a referee has never been his policy. He knows exactly what it is like to be on the receiving end of an advisor’s report and emphasises that he only gets concerned when “persistent infringements” (p. 6) are not sanctioned. PER2 advocates a positive approach to assessing.

PER3 also takes umbrage with match officials – “They don’t go out of their way to learn other parts of the game” (p. 4). He wants today’s referee to note the importance of understanding current playing/coaching issues, strategies, game plans and the like. This is further evidence of the expectation that referees actually become fully conversant practitioners of the game rather than particular officiating experts. It is not apparent that any other sport places such an important and explicit expectation on its officials.

According to PER3, an elite match official “has to know a hell of a lot about the game itself” (p. 11). Yet, he insists that aspiring referees have “to be big enough to ask for advice, seek advice, look for the people who will give them that kind of advice and look for people they respect” (p. 12). According to PER3, a holistic appreciation enhances officiating capabilities. He feels strongly that advisors need to have a similar level of game understanding. They must be in a position to assist referee development. To this end, PER3 insists that they
must be able to offer solutions. Offering only a performance evaluation has obvious limitations for referee development. Academy referees JAR2 and JAR4 welcome performance reviews that focus on providing solutions. This appears more favourable than receiving excessively negative evaluations. As Lewis (2011) stresses, constructive criticism is important but worthless if advisors fail to suggest ways to improve.

PER4 (p. 5) believes that “there’s a great deal of investment and training required on the development of advisors” too. He also advocates that “assessors should be armed with video cameras or most games should be videoed…especially at the higher level because that’s an important tool for the referee” (pp. 8-9). PER4 acknowledges that access to game footage greatly improves the accuracy of the reviewer’s report.

REF 1 benefitted from a mentoring approach. His experiences underpin the call for providing new referees with coaching assessments rather than any formal performance reviews. REF1 says that he “spoke a lot with Derek Bevan at the time” (p. 1). This mentorship had a positive effect on his development.

REF1 notes that early feedback was, “more positives and things…areas to work on for encouragement, development…as opposed to weaknesses and such…so it was put in a very positive way and it gave me a lot of encouragement to move on, as opposed to focusing on too much of the negatives” (p. 2). His comments underpin the appropriateness of providing the referee with two to three key coaching points.

As an elite match official, REF1’s performance reviews now follow a different format. He reports that, “it’s quite detailed analysis…it’s a synopsis of your overall refereeing performance…and then it goes into specifics then about control, communication, tackle, ruck, maul…it breaks everything down” (p. 7).
Subjectivity is largely avoided, as no overall mark is awarded. From an Irish perspective, PLR1 had been frustrated by the old scoring system.

“A score of 78 in a high intensity [game] could be much more valuable than a 91 in a fluffy game” (PLR1, p. 5).

Nowadays, PLR1 is much “more interested in the words” (p. 5). Like the WRU, the IRFU has replaced its “tick-box assessment” (PLR1, p. 5) with that of a written report (Appendices B and M). Initial assessments came in the form of coaching reports, similar to the WRU pro forma (Appendix C). PLR2 recalls that the referee coaches “would look at the game wholly, but they would pick out, usually at most, three comments” (p. 3).

PER3, as the then WRU coaching coordinator, introduced both the “observer system” and the “card system” (p. 1). He explains, “we were trying to encourage a wider sort of feedback on the referee’s performance” (PER3, p. 2). These systems have not altered greatly since the 1970’s. The forms may have changed but the principle process remains: observe, analyse, feedback. These principles still allow for significant flexibility in the referee development process.

PER3 does recall one particular issue with the card system. “You couldn’t rely on the same guy in the clubs giving feedback…it became inconsistent” (PER3, p. 2). The clubs were asking for input, yet they were not prepared to ‘buy into’ the system. This lack of engagement continues, as RCS1 testifies below.

Regional coaches’ contributions towards elite referee development are varied. RCS1 has limited knowledge of the referee development structure.
"If I’m honest, I probably haven’t had as much exposure to that as probably would want. I think that it’s probably been one of the things that has been left a little bit to the side.” (p. 1)

He speaks of his frustration regarding some poor refereeing decisions, yet his region has not made use of the coach feedback provision. This initiative was set up to improve officiating standards.

RCS2, who produces pre-match dossiers on referees (Appendix P), has provided feedback on match officials’ performances. He had his doubts whether or not, “it was being taken much notice of” (p. 1). RCS2 continues to use the card system but questions its worth and effectiveness. He wants assurances that what he feeds back to the Referees Department is being discussed with referees. The clubs engaging in this process need to know that their contributions are taken seriously (same comment RCS1).

RCS3 is in favour of coach-referee interactions. His method of inviting referees into the regional training environment offers them “an insight into how we’re coaching it and you know, we’re both helping each other…that has to be the way” (RCS3, p. 6).

RCS3 promotes “a coach-player-referee triad or…a triumvirate” (p. 6). He understands the need for advisors but wonders, “How well up to speed are these performance reviewers on modern methods of coaching and playing the game?” (p. 6). It is a fair question. Not all advisors share a similar background with PER3. As a former player, teacher and coaching advisor, he is able to “put the coaching and playing side together with the refereeing side” (PER3, p. 3). RCS3’s remark further highlights that the contrast with regard to the expectations of Rugby officials and other sports is massive.

RCS3 articulates another concern regarding elite match appointments.
“I do think there’s a balance because referees have to develop, but I think that needs to happen before they enter the professional era. You can’t be having a look at referees when people’s jobs are on the line in Magners [RaboDirect PRO12] and ERC games.” (p. 10)

PLR1 argues that we need to “take a gamble on some” (p. 13). He is troubled by the lack of referees across the UK and Ireland – “We’ve got to find them and we’ve got to find a pathway to get them in” (p. 13). This echoes PER1’s concern with regard to the present deficit – “I don’t think we’ve had the people coming through” (p. 10).

Self-development

According to REF4, all referees should engage in self-development. He recalls that he would observe the top referees and incorporate various aspects of their officiating into his own practice.

“I tried to copy who I considered to be the best referees in the world. I watched them on telly…I’d try and watch and I’d look at the referee and think, yeah, that’s good. Could I incorporate that into my personality and my style because some people are idiosyncratic and you now, just can’t emulate them?” (p. 3)

REF4 encourages referees to follow suit. He “cherry-picked” (p. 3) what he thought were strengths and adapted them accordingly. PLR1 would also watch other referees and “take the best bits of them” (p. 6). In a similar vein, PLR2 watched a lot of Rugby matches to help improve his officiating skills.

“Obviously, it’s a completely different level of Rugby that you watch on the television than it is to your refereeing, but if you just watch that sort of Rugby then you start to decide in your head what you should and shouldn’t be doing.” (p. 3)
PLR2 started refereeing locally. He officiated 3rd team games within his district before moving on to 2nd XV fixtures. Over this period of initial progression PLR2 was able to turn to local senior officials who acted as mentors.

Self-development has also been a key element of JAR1’s progress. He has met with former regional prop, Andrew Millward to discuss scrum issues and Phil John, Ospreys Rugby Academy Manager. He valued picking “their brains from a coaching point of view” (p. 3). JAR1 also undertakes video analysis with the NARC. He has welcomed regional coaches’ perspectives regarding player management. JAR1 believes that “open communication” (p. 3) is key to performance enhancement. He thinks that referees should be actively seeking feedback from the Referees Department. Feedback is always available form the NRM, the MOPDO and the NARC.

JAR3 says that he had little formal input in his first year. He would “look for support within friends rather than official capacities” (pp. 1-2). However, after joining the WRU List, he gained access to a wealth of experience. PLR1’s recollection of his introduction to officiating is similar – “There wasn’t really a course…it was a kind of ‘have whistle, will travel’” (p. 2). He was observed for safety reasons then given a Law book and invited to the local Society meeting. PLR1 neither sat a written Law exam, nor did he attend a course. He did most of his learning by talking to others. Initial development was based on “self-help” (p. 3). Today, he welcomes the use of video analysis and referee cameras.

PLR1 warns against “fast-tracking” (p. 6). Referees need time to develop, so that they may draw on experience or “flashbacks” (p. 6) to enhance performance. He believes referees should undertake “a lot of self-analysis” and “a lot of practice” (PLR1, p. 6). These strategies helped him to achieve elite match official status.
Moreover, PLR1 stresses the benefit of drawing on the expertise of former referees like Derek Bevan and Ham Lambert; of the latter, even at the age of 90, PLR1 says that “he still had an appreciation of the real things that made referees tick – anticipation, ability to persuade a player to do something different with body language, whistle tone, how he looked at a player” (p. 5).

**Talent identification**

Level 2 referees officiate within their respective regions. On average, the Blues’ Regional Referee Appointments Officer appoints to 80 local league fixtures every week (Bowden, 2010). Presently, it is impossible to monitor each individual performer’s progress and possible inclusion on the WRU List. Given the shortage of advisors, REF4 has clear views regarding early talent identification of Level 3 match officials.

“We should be personality profiling referees who we believe have the potential to go to the top…if their default is to go into their shell when the pressure comes on or somehow crumble, then I’m afraid they’re not going to make it at the top level.” (REF4, p. 7)

PI shares REF4’s thinking, namely, that looking at every referee is a waste of time. Such an approach might reduce the time wasted assessing unsuitable individuals. More crucially perhaps, it could facilitate optimal utilisation of the limited number of advisors.

PLR1 explains that the Irish structure is similar to the Welsh model. Schools’ Rugby provides young officials with opportunities to officiate in “front of crowds, refereeing in the heat of the battle” (p. 2). He believes that it is a “very good breeding ground for them” (PLR1, p. 2). Those identified as having the
potential to achieve elite status are promoted to national league games. PLR1 stresses the importance of doing “enough hard yards” (p. 3) before moving on.

Promotion is a measure of successful referee development. Whenever a referee moves up from Level 2 to 3, the Referees Department has to inevitably fill the void. Here, NRM emphasises the importance of “succession planning” (p. 2). The recent implementation of the National Academy provides for this. The Academy is a long-term initiative, “not an overnight success story” (NRM, p. 2). It serves to maximise talent identification.

The SRU employs four referee development officers to oversee match officials across Scotland’s four areas: Borders, West, Edinburgh and Caledonia. PLR2 has access to a conditioning coach, a nutritionist and a psychologist. The Scottish system includes “intense coaching in certain aspects with the aim of getting you from national rugby onto your national panel” (PLR2, p. 3). His comments correspond to Academy objectives.

**Post-officiating**

There are few, if any, options available to elite referees post-officiating. REF1 spoke of his future prospects – “…due to budgets and restraints, who knows where we’re going?” (p. 8). Presently, there is no distinct career pathway. Budget constraints again dictate Referee Department operations.

REF1 has recently been made redundant. The current selection policy is not dictated by the Union and thus, it could no longer guarantee his being appointed to games between March and September. The ERC and the IRB are responsible for appointments during this period. REF2 has been given the opportunity to extend his career by taking on an additional role, National Academy Referee Coach.
REF3 reflects on his time, stating that he “would have made a lot of changes…to the way that we were looked after” (pp. 1-2). He had been employed as a full-time referee for seven years and feels that he was harshly treated – “I would have wanted like a career path, you know, as a development officer to utilise my skills a little bit more in developing the younger referees” (p. 2). While REF3’s proposal was received positively, the NRM was unable to create such a role owing to financial limitations at the time.

Regarding post-refereeing opportunities, PLR2 talks of a potential career as a referee development manager. He reports that his Union do “have a career for you out with [sic] Rugby, if things don’t work out” (p. 7). The SRU funds PLR2’s college course. This is regarded as a necessary undertaking, “so I’ve got some qualifications and some skills once I finish Rugby” (PLR2, p. 7). To further assist those wishing to “walk away” (p. 7) post-officiating, PLR2 highlights the important role that the SRU career officer plays. In contrast, PLR1 informs me that there is no formalised career path for Irish referees. He is unconcerned, as he views “refereeing as a self-fulfilling process” (p. 4).

4.6.2 Interpretations

Early experiences

Negative experiences can affect refereeing’s appeal. Ongoing issues of recruitment at all levels suggest so (Davies, 2011). Match officials, particularly newcomers, who are not supported through their early days are more likely to abandon the practice (Mead, 2010). As PER4 implies, new referees should be accompanied and their early interactions managed by more senior officials. Referee coaches and advisors could perform this function.
Of crucial importance here are the initial advisor interventions. These should focus on the positive aspects of referee performance. The JAR’s expressed their preference for informal discourse, which can be less daunting than critical performance analysis. JAR5 was grateful for the generic feedback that he received in the beginning. His account reflects the existing approach of broadly assessing refereeing capability before focusing on the intricacies of the practice. Initial emphasis on encouraging novice practitioners is desirable. Overly critical feedback at this stage might have an adverse effect on any long-term refereeing aspirations.

**Advisory system**

A shortage of referee coaches, advisors and performance reviewers affects the effectiveness of the advisory system. Consequently, some referees may only be seen two or three times in a season. All personnel are volunteers. The Referees Department relies on the good nature of its former practitioners. Current budget constraints do not allow the NRM to offer remuneration. Also, there is no comprehensive training programme for advisors.

PER3 spoke of his ability to draw on his playing and coaching background when making assessments. The benefits of such experience in developing referees are apparent. The utilisation of the whole picture helps in forming a more accurate opinion. Unfortunately, not all advisors come with a similar Rugby pedigree.

Brackston (2009) recalls that referee progress was frustratingly slow under the old system. Subsequent feedback from the nine Referees’ Societies prompted the implementation of a fast-tracking system (Appendix E).
Academy structure facilitates quick progression. Referees who perform well are rewarded with accelerated promotion (Davies, Whitehouse and Yeman, 2012).

The previous assessment format has been criticised by all refereeing personnel. Yet, opinions varied regarding its modification, from scrapping the grading system for all referees below Premier grade to completely abolishing the scoring system (Appendix E). Previously, there had been much debate among advisors and the Referees Department regarding the grading/scoring of referees. Inconsistency in applying the performance criteria was the main issue.

PI offers two proposals for developing sub-elite referees. First, he reasons that, “anybody being assessed should be mic’d up in some way to the assessor” (p. 20). His rationale is clear – “I find that a huge gap in the armoury when you’re going to watch a guy, if you can’t hear what he’s saying until he comes within ten yards of you” (p. 20).

Communication systems or ‘comms’ are a vital development tool. Until the beginning of last season, only those advisors operating within the Premierships and above had access to such equipment. REF3 had argued that, “the Union have to invest in a little microphone that every assessor carries with him” (p. 13). The referee-advisor relationship is important. Being able to hear the referee facilitates a more informed judgment. Such provision is now made.

Survey responses highlighted the many benefits of having an audio link to the referee (Appendix E). Now, every WRU advisor carries broadcast-quality two-way communication sets. He is better informed regarding referee-player interactions. The ability to note the way in which the referee speaks to, instructs and manages the players offers a useful insight and has impacted positively on the review process.
Moreover, WRU performance analysts now capture all regional, Premiership and age grade games. Some Championship games are also filmed by the home clubs and sent to the Referees Department for review purposes. Software such as Team Performance Exchange (TPE) facilitates the availability of game footage.

The IRFU funds a development initiative called “ref cam” (p. 3). This equipment allows the Referee Development Officer to discuss with the match official all decisions and utterances made during the game.

“A guy is paid €225 for the day to mic and cam him and then that DVD comes back to Dave McHugh.” (PLR1, p. 3)

McHugh, a former international referee, is employed as a Referee Development and Coaching Manager. This provision complements the video analysis process. Referees who consistently perform well are invited onto the “Top 40” (PLR1, p. 4).

Second, PI suggests that, “rather than the system at the moment whereby one assessor watches a referee and then maybe sees him again at the end of the season, I think they ought to concentrate the available effort onto a certain guy” (pp. 20-21). PI’s thinking implies that looking at every single referee wastes much time. A narrower focus is needed. Having an assessor follow the same referee for, say, six successive games might be more productive. Currently, a referee is assessed on that day’s performance. Thus, no normative profile of his officiating capabilities is established.

The above approach was implemented successfully some years ago when Derek Bevan accompanied Nigel Owens to six consecutive matches – “They both said it was one of the most beneficial kinds of input they’d had (PI,
p. 21). REF2 reinforces the potential benefits of multiple observations – “I think you’ve gotta see a guy this week, you need to see him a couple of times over the next few weeks to see that he is taking on board what you’re saying” (p. 14). Continuous assessment over a short period of time could accelerate the development process. This method would allow the advisor to observe for marked improvements. REF2’s positive experience indicates the effectiveness of such a strategy and its use in future referee development is worthy of further consideration. Resource implications and the need for an effective talent identification process are addressed in the concluding chapter.

For the current advisory system to flourish all advisors need to be suitably trained, developed and regularly monitored. Referees might feel more assured if they felt that the assessment was being undertaken in a constructive and informed manner. There is an overriding sense of frustration among advisors (PER4) that they are not getting the support they require to fulfil their respective roles. Lack of investment means that these volunteers are providing limited advice to Welsh referees.

PER4 is suggesting that referee development still lags behind player development and coach education provision. Arguably, any imbalance ought to be addressed by the institution; any subsequent redress may yield a better product. The Referees Department cannot be expected to increase its production of elite match officials to service the professional game given its current budget limitations. More investment is needed to ensure that it has the necessary means to offer referees appropriate development opportunities (Yeman, 2011). Chapter 5 offers some recommendations regarding holistic Rugby development.
Self-development

REF2 speaks of a variety of people who helped him develop. This group included but was not limited to assessors. All contributed in their own way. New referees are encouraged to seek advice from a variety of sources given the current shortage of PR’s. As REF2 suggests, an alternative perspective from a non-Rugby specialist could prove useful. Besides, a good referee quickly learns to filter irrelevances.

RCS3 agrees that referees need to engage in self-development. All regional coaching personnel are available to discuss Rugby matters. No referee is that good that he can ignore the offer of some expert advice. While RCS3 is willing to support referee development, his earlier comment regarding referee appointments is unhelpful. It is customary for aspiring referees to officiate in lesser games (based on current league standings). However, there comes a time when they have to be challenged further. Aspiring regional players have the support of teammates. Unfortunately, officials have no one to turn to in-game. Therefore, Rugby practitioners need to display greater patience given the problematic nature of the refereeing role.

PER1 highlights another real concern within officiating circles. He believes that there is “too much petty jealousy amongst referees” (p. 5). In the old days, according to PER1, “there seemed to be a better camaraderie…swapping incidences, learning off other people’s mistakes and them learning off yours” (p. 5). PER1 believes that referee-referee interactions are limited. He suggests that referees are out to get one over on one another. Jealousy abounds. With the potential to earn a living from officiating, more referees appear to be in it for themselves. In light of such animosity, he feels that officials would better serve the practice by sticking together. Begrudging
another’s success is detrimental. Concentrating on self-development and positively supporting others’ progress would help address this issue.

Referees’ Societies

Society meetings are valuable opportunities to discuss current trends, rulings and Law amendments. Training topics facilitate debate and can provide solutions to both on and off the field officiating problems. Learning through experience by sharing good practice is advantageous regardless of a practitioner’s officiating status.

These gatherings cater to all grades. PI’s own society holds two meetings per month with the second meeting focusing on the particular needs of individuals as they arise. As JAR2 suggests, it is useful to have available senior referees who can offer mentorship to less experienced officials. These interactions can prove far more beneficial than advice from assessors who may not have officiated at the highest level.

REF3 would like to see former elite match officials giving back to the practice. Sharing their vast knowledge and experience with neophytes would be a valuable development tool. Yet, they are under no obligation to do so. A paradox exists here in that we are currently trying to service a professional sport with input from amateurs.

Officiating is not a chore. It is an undertaking to be enjoyed. The inherent challenges of Rugby refereeing however numerous should be embraced. Aspiring practitioners should consider the informed suggestions of “more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978. p. 86). It is vital that officiating keeps pace with the game’s evolution. Consequently, officiating methods should be reviewed and modified accordingly. Flexibility over rigidity is desirable. For example, while advisors will often suggest taking up a certain position at the contact area and
at set pieces, referees should feel free to officiate instinctively. As JAR3 advocates, this means taking up whatever position they feel is appropriate to make a good judgment.

**Talent identification**

The WRU launched its National Academy at the National Centre of Excellence to develop players and coaches. That it also incorporates refereeing is evidence that the Union acknowledges its significance in line with the needs of the modern game. The NRM and his staff monitor a select group of young referees who have shown the potential to achieve elite status. As with any high performance structure, an Academy referee who fails to meet the required officiating and fitness standards is released. The next hopeful to merit an opportunity then replaces him.

The above process replicates the elite environment. It is current policy for the best referees to be appointed to the best games irrespective of nationality. This highlights the fact that not enough elite match officials are being produced across the four Home Unions of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

**Post-officiating**

REF1’s recent redundancy, owing in part to the introduction of the above ‘best for best’ policy, highlights the lack of post-officiating employment. The Referees Department has to manage its affairs with prudence. Active referees are the priority. There are insufficient funds to even consider career options for retired officials.

The Referees Department relies on former practitioners to assist in the development of young referees. To offer any kind of post-officiating opportunities the Union would need to reconsider its financial contribution to
refereeing. Recommendations for how these specialists might best be employed and suitably remunerated are offered in the final chapter.

4.7 Interactivity

It has been suggested that match officials are somewhat marginalised from the main practice community. The role of referee has some sort of default stigma attached to it. It is suggested that a universal change in both stakeholder and practitioner perceptions is needed. A positive attitude towards officiating would strengthen its position as an integral part of the sport.

Below is an account of both generic and specific interactivity between members of the Rugby practice community. Here, interactivity also refers to in-game communications that can influence referee intervention.

4.7.1 Participants’ views

General anecdotes

Participants were asked about their interactive experiences. PI recalled a few interesting interactions – “I’d words with a few people over the years, but mostly in the heat of the moment and you know, mostly forgotten directly afterwards (p. 9). PER1 had some “highs and lows” (p. 2) with club personnel. He happily reports that, “the good times by far outweigh the bad” (p. 2).

REF2 reports having had good clubhouse experiences. He says it is only natural that, “you come across coaches and staff which [who] don’t like you or don’t like your style of refereeing for whatever reason” (p. 6). He dismisses this quickly, as “just one of those things” (p. 9) and does not take it personally.
REF3 recalls that early interactions were, “awkward, I would say. They didn’t tend to look after you” (p. 3). He remembers that, “you weren’t always treated the best. So, I think that part of refereeing can put a lot of the youngsters off when they’re left alone” (p. 3). Poor touchline conduct and general negativity towards officials are two reasons why people do not become referees. PER1 is frustrated by supporters’ ignorance of the game generally and of the Laws specifically. Their lack of knowledge results in many an incorrect rant from the terraces. Often, these expletives are completely unjustified, yet referees have no opportunity to respond to the heckling.

As a former professional referee, REF4 recalls that interactions with top clubs were not as productive as they could have been. He believes that “input from referees at training sessions in Wales has been reluctantly accepted” (REF4, p. 9). He feels that advice from referees is received begrudgingly.

PLR2 recalls his first outings in senior Rugby, “you’ve got guys who are old enough on that pitch to be [your] dad” (p. 2). It was a difficult step up but “once you got sort of recognised, you got your games under your belt, the guys are willing to listen to you” (p. 3). Now as an elite official most of PLR2’s matches are attended by a performance reviewer and preceded with “pleasantries” (p. 5). This is followed by an informal chat in the clubhouse afterwards. It is current practice that all RaboDirect PRO12 referees complete a self-review online. The Rugby Referee Information Management System (RRIMS; Appendix Q) is used globally for critiquing performances.

Players, coaches and spectators

PER4 encourages dialogue with both players and coaches. He advocates establishing a rapport with players but believes that referees should
play an “anonymous role” (p. 5). He feels that, “the importance for that particular referee is to establish with both captains prior to the game…and emphasise their responsibilities, a combined effort” (PER4, p. 5). For him, the captain’s role is essential. Putting aside referee manipulation, sound cooperation can facilitate game management. PER2 thinks that players are more likely than coaches to cooperate with match officials. Yet, PER2 warns that a referee who talks down to players would “lose that respect” (p. 9).

As a very young referee, REF1 recalls that, “it was difficult because I think that the more elderly/senior players then…did accept you fairly well” (p. 1). REF1’s problems were in dealing with the younger element that took the approach of “Well, I’m not going to have a kid telling me what to do” (p. 2). Like PER2, REF1 also believes that players accept a referee more so than coaches.

REF1 feels that, “there is this ‘them and us’” (p. 5) existence. He has noted the differences across the regions in terms of the quality of relationship experienced – “It depends on individual regions, individual coaches and I think that’s always going to be the case to an extent” (REF1, p. 5).

Incidentally, REF1 has no issue admitting his mistakes in order to preserve a positive working relationship overall – “I think coaches don’t really expect it, but I think it gives you more credibility and makes you more receptive…it helps build a better rapport” (p. 11). REF2 too has “no issue in sitting down afterwards and saying, you know, this is why I gave this decision, but I think there has to be a common sense approach” (p. 10). PLR2 agrees. “As long as it’s within a conversation that’s of the right tone and they’re being polite about it” (p. 8). He ignores rude coaches. PLR2 is also against making public apologies. He will “give you an answer, but a lot of this is damage limitation. If nobody asks you about it…then you don’t admit it” (PLR2, p. 8).
PER1 has a particularly strong view regarding coach-referee relationships – “They don’t give a fuck about your career. Not one bit” (PER1, p. 18). He contends that coaches use referees to meet their own ends. There is little regard for the latter’s aspirations. While PER1 is in favour of the full-timers going into the regions to assist player development, he has some concerns. He believes that, “it’s difficult then though when you get to referee them” (PER1, p. 22). Establishing some kind of personal rapport is unavoidable. Consequently, it makes refereeing them a different challenge to officiating players with whom you are not associated. PER1 goes on to criticise spectators.

“[PER1 gestures to blow whistle] ‘Penalty to Neath’ [PER1 claps] ‘Wow, fucking good ref, this one.’ ‘Penalty to Pontypool,’ ‘Well, where did they get this fucker from?’” (p. 26)

RCS2 suggests that there are limited opportunities to engage with referees. The NRM makes clear that coach feedback on any match official is welcome. However, his frustration is obvious – “coaches think the game is played in DVD slow motion mode” (NRM, p. 4). Coaches need to realise that a referee has to act instantaneously and without the benefit of multiple angles. While RCS2 thinks that immediate post-match dialogue can be problematic, he sees the value in “making time” (p. 6) for productive interactivity.

RCS3 is a little more proactive in his dealings with match officials. He favours the personal approach of contacting the referee himself. RCS3 is “keen to build a relationship with them” (p. 2). RCS3 is of the opinion that the “referee manager fuzzes the issues and maybe waters it down or intervenes too much” (p. 1). He has created a role for himself as referee liaison, which he considers a very important part of his overall remit. RCS3 believes that a good working
relationship is key. He acknowledges that referees do not intentionally err and accepts that mistakes do occur.

RCS3 would welcome the opportunity to “be totally open and honest with them but then, you know, what that affords you to do is be direct with them and tell them exactly how you feel and so, there’s no comebacks then” (p. 2). RCS3 wants to create an open relationship with all referees, as the ability to be direct saves time. He asks, “Why don’t we have a coach-player-referee conference together where we can throw issues out?” (RCS3, p. 8). He proposes holding such an event in the off-season when there are fewer emotions.

“We can be retrospective or we can be proactive for the following season, and we can get things out and understand what each other’s trying to achieve.” (RCS3, p. 8)

PI echoes RCS3’s view. He mentions that you can generally get a bit of sense out of a coach, but only after he has been taken away from the “immediate after-match situation” (p. 10).

JAR3 points to a lack of player education in the modern game. While coaches are briefed on all matters of Law, JAR3 believes that “there should be a system where they come and speak to players there so they can hear firsthand rather than their coaches telling them someone said this, someone said that” (p. 2). JAR3 echoes RCS3’s notion of establishing a triumvirate for the betterment of the game.

PI is disappointed that some professional clubs do not take advantage of full-time referees to assist with player and coach development, as is the case in England – “I know England are very, very proactive in that form. Most of their panel are associated with their top Premiership clubs” (p. 10). These regular interactions occur as a direct result of the full-time match officials being funded
by the English Premiership clubs. Panel referees are each assigned two clubs. This arrangement has created good referee-club relationships.

PLR1 is equally frustrated by the lack of opportunity for coach-referee interaction. In his early years, he would welcome the chance to discuss the game in the bar, “you talked to the prop, you talked to the coach…but that’s finished” (p. 15). The current situation is “very impersonal” (PLR1, p. 15). PLR1 always seeks an opportunity to “engage where I can with a coach or with a captain or with a player, but in the modern game, there isn’t that opportunity” (p. 15). He accepts that a professional coach who has just lost the game may not wish to interact. PLR1 thinks that “there isn’t enough what I call honest dialogue because it’s a game we all love” (p. 15). He would like to see changes made to the annual conference at Lensbury, with elite match officials being given the opportunity to interact with leading coaches.

PLR2 suggests that elite referees need both a “hard skin” and a “hard edge” (p. 8). He shares PER1’s view – “professional players…don’t give a stuff about who you are, what you’re doing or where you want to go…they couldn’t care less” (PLR2, p. 8). Consequently, PLR2 believes being a successful practitioner is about “having that ability to stamp your authority” (p. 8) on the field of play.

As a full-timer, PLR2 regularly works with Edinburgh Rugby, one of Scotland’s two professional clubs. He is often asked to “profile incoming referees…referee contact sessions…and sit back with the coach sometimes and give my thoughts” (pp. 5-6). For example, PLR2 will be asked his opinion on why the team was penalised at any given time. PLR2 states that, “there’s a good working relationship” (p. 6) within Scottish Rugby, dispelling any notion of a ‘them and us’ tag.
4.7.2 Interpretations

For Rugby to flourish there must be practitioner cohesion. There will always be those who take a disliking to the referee. If projecting such disdain is their way of dealing with some pressure situation, then so be it. The data highlighted differences between community and elite interactivity, both on and off the field of play. Age and experience are two of the factors that affect such interactions. This study was not concerned with gender issues. The data also indicate that communications between Level 2 match officials and coaches differ to those experienced at Level 3, largely due to associated pressures.

It is clear that referees at all levels should actively engage other practitioners. While they cannot expect to be well received by all personnel, a certain degree of mutual respect is essential. It can be argued that positive interactions ensue when all groups show an appreciation for each other’s role.

Match officials are tasked with controlling the ludic chaos of elite Rugby. The modern game demands that they are accurate in their application of Law and yet, they are expected to allow the game to flow. With players and coaches under pressure to succeed, it makes sense to establish a working rapport for the betterment of the practice. For example, while officials might educate players on how best to play the Laws, coaches could inform referees about what they are trying to achieve, say, in the contact area. The regions are not compelled to engage the services of match officials. Still, a framework that incorporates such a contribution from the Referees Department might help raise playing and coaching standards. There are very few, if any, logistical hurdles for creating such a framework.

Some clubs do not go out of their way to look after referees. It is often the case that a club will look after an official better when the game has
produced a favourable result. REF3 mentions his time working with the regions, which included refereeing contact sessions and doing some profiling of other match officials. He thought that these interactions helped his development.

Regional coaches have expressed an interest in referee-coach discourse. RCS2 thinks that a phone call during the week could be beneficial. By then, both coach and referee would have had time to review the game and be better informed entering into any dialogue. RCS3 would also appreciate an opportunity to discuss matters arising. He could then understand the referee’s thought process and feedback to his playing staff. The mutual benefits are obvious. Coaches do not have all the answers. Referees can offer valuable advice. Similarly, referees can learn much from elite coaches.

Above comments raise the debate of the feasibility and benefit of holding an annual conference. The Referees Department has organised several refereeing conferences over the years, but there is presently no annual event. The NRM attributes this to a lack of funds. RCS3 suggests holding an annual Rugby conference to discuss all aspects of the game. If a triumvirate were established, then the Rugby Department should finance such events.

Elite Rugby officials have a regulatory function. Yet, it is apparent from what they say about their practice that they also feel a responsibility to ensure the game is ‘aesthetically productive’. Developing a triumvirate to enhance game aesthetics should receive institutional consideration. This would generate a greater sense of how referees are expected to function. Participant responses are indicative as to how referees ought to go about negotiating this responsibility to aestheticise the game. This must take into account their more overt requirement to referee in a just and fair way in the face of the Laws. Arguably, a combination of phronetic and interactive skills would facilitate
expectations. The interactivities presented above indicate the extent to which this double role is acknowledged in practice.

4.8 Discussion of key findings

It is clear that drawing on the four philosophical concepts of game reasoning, virtue ethics, justice and *phronesis* has helped to gain a meaningful understanding of the nature of Rugby officiating. Furthermore, this exploratory undertaking has enabled further critical analysis of the existing development structure and the current level of interactivity within this social practice.

The three key findings are presented below. Each section includes further interpretation of participant responses. Consequently, additional insight into this social practice and its tradition-preserving institution is offered. The main conclusions inferred are as follows: (i) that Rugby refereeing is unique within sports officiating, (ii) that officiating is an integral part of the practice; what Morgan (2007) refers to as a social collaboration and (iii) that greater interactivity between playing, coaching and officiating would enhance the product that is Welsh Rugby.

4.8.1 Nature of Rugby officiating and the distinctiveness of task

Professional Rugby players are expected to achieve certain outcomes. Failure can result in non-renewal of contracts, which may limit further opportunities within the practice. Similarly, lack of attainment can lead to premature termination of coaching positions (Holley, 2010; RCS3, p. 10). For these reasons, among many others, there is a need to succeed in elite Rugby.
It has been suggested that players and coaches employ game reasoning (Shields and Bredemeier, 1995). Adopting such an approach facilitates goal achievement. While the practice community freely accepts sportspersonship (McNamee, 2008), it seems that the greater responsibility for ensuring a fair contest rests with match officials. Below, I consider two plausible options for addressing this issue in relation to in-game game reasoning. The first argues for a redress of balance, the second for a status quo.

With regard to playing Rugby in accordance with the Laws and within the Spirit of the Game, the IRB is clear. It states that, “responsibility for ensuring that this happens lies not with one individual – it involves coaches, captains, players and referees” (IRB, 2012, p. 11). Yet, as PI and JAR2 have indicated, and RCS1 has confessed, players and coaches continually do whatever is necessary to achieve their goals. RCS2 freely admitted to coaching certain illegal strategies to counter the opposing threat. Coaches are always looking for an “out” (RCS1, p. 3). It appears that they do so with the perception that the opposition have a similar mindset. This increases task difficulty and as such, referees alone cannot be expected to address this ongoing issue.

The main argument here is that any significant reduction in game reasoning might result in more just outcomes. In practice, this would primarily require players to adopt a more desirable approach or what Suits (1978) terms a lusory attitude. The subsequent result might be fewer incidences of cynical acts, as players would have greater regard for the opposition. Furthermore, Morgan’s (2007) notion of self-interest would be less evident.

To initiate a change in attitude, the Union would have to reinforce then enforce that part of the Playing Charter (IRB, 2012) that relates to conduct. It tells us that players and referees must operate with individual and collective
control and discipline, “upon which the code of conduct depends” (p. 11). Greater social collaboration (Kretchmar and Elcombe, 2007) and trust, I argue, would then result in a more positive match experience.

More importantly, the game’s governing body, the IRB, must become more proactive in its promotion of a moral game ethos (D’Agostino, 1995). It is suggested that the institution should base its approach on a virtue ethics framework (MacIntyre, 1981; Morgan, 2007). As MacIntyre (1981) suggests, this can be achieved, in part, by encouraging practitioners to focus on attaining the internal goods of the practice.

Any increment in institutional support ought to include giving referees the freedom to sanction more severely deliberate rule violations and other such offences that have the potential to bring about an unjust outcome. PLR2 is in agreement here; he would happily “bang [penalise] them” (p. 4) until they got the message. Such a strong deterrent – fully endorsed by the institution – might alter current trends. After all, sportspersonship is only acceptable to a point. Players ought to maintain certain “standards of conduct and character” (McNamee, 2008, p. 37). Any positive change would certainly make players and coaches think about adapting their approach.

The second option I want to put forward is that of a status quo. As a practice community, we could simply accept that game reasoning ploys occur and therefore consider them as mere game norms. Reddiford (1998) even makes the suggestion that there is a certain kudos attached to those whose transgressions go undetected. McFee (2004) holds a similar position in the sense that players who employ such methods are still engaged in the practice.

If we were to accept the above premise, then players and coaches would no longer have grounds for complaint whenever infractions go undetected.
RCS3 says as much in acknowledging those times when he and his team have been “outdone…outcoached…outplayed” (p. 6) by the opposition’s craftiness. While elite referees are acutely aware of the various types of indiscretion that exist, some sort of practitioner agreement might reduce the expectation on officials to detect all occurrences of unfair play. Any sort of game contract would have to consider the boundaries of acceptability.

The process of establishing the norms of what is or is not acceptable might create between-party tension. While differing agendas may exist, there would still be a need to balance externality with internality (McNamee, 1995). Here, players and coaches might call for referees to show greater leniency in the form of empathy. Such a request might conflict with a possible officiating ideology that the game should, as much as possible, be played in accordance with the guiding framework of both its Laws and Playing Charter (IRB, 2012).

In relation to pre-match game reasoning this study suggests that coach-referee interactions need to be evaluated. A re-balance of power is advocated. PI, in his interview, and Barnes (2010) in a personal communication, both express concern regarding the way coaches use these meetings to dictate refereeing matters. They attempt to influence referee behaviour. Consequently, coaches spend little or no time ascertaining how key areas (tackle, ruck, set piece) are to be refereed, which would provide useful information for their players. Coaches set out, as PLR1 notes, to convince the officials that their team will play positive Rugby and that the opposition will deploy illegal strategies to negate this.

Barnes (2010) questions the mutual necessity and subsequent benefit, if any, of the current arrangement. PLR1 is equally dismissive of the pre-match debrief; it is simply a way of allowing the coach an opportunity to prescribe how
a referee ought to officiate. Interpreting comments from key refereeing personnel (PI, PER1 and PER4), it is understood that such manipulation is not acceptable and should no longer be tolerated. Requirements for playing the game are well articulated and thus render these dialogues partly redundant. One wonders why such an arrangement is so necessary in Rugby when no other sport makes this provision.

The answer may lie in the game’s constitutive elements. Rugby is a multifaceted, dynamic activity. Consequently, it is arguable that it cannot be entirely defined by a non-exhaustive framework of prescribed and proscribed actions (McFee, 2004). Clarifications are required from time to time. Therefore, any future arrangement ought to be mutually beneficial and take the form of a balanced dialogue. The referee must also be allowed to express his concerns in relation to how either team functions. For example, an official who has regularly refereed the Ospreys’ prop Adam Jones will know that he has a tendency to bind (illegally) on the elbow of his opponent; consequently, he may wish to make the coach aware of this fact. In so doing, the good coach would be inclined to warn his players regarding such matters. Such a proactive, preventative approach may further increase the aesthetic by reducing the amount of interruptions caused by infringements.

Participant and personal reflections lead to the conclusion that introducing a tighter protocol would quash the potentiality of pre-match game reasoning. Coaches would have to limit their inquiries to seeking Law interpretations and ascertaining referee expectations, say, at the contact area. In turn, referees could situate the boundaries of acceptable player conduct.

Elite Rugby is a social practice that requires specially skilled individuals (Collins, 2010) to preside over proceedings. Part of their role is to facilitate
player compliance. How match officials referee the game of Rugby is determined in part by its constitution (Hardman et al., 1996). In Chapter 1 Rugby was described as an invasion game of great complexity, consisting of various “gratuitous difficulties” (Lasch, 1977, p. 181). It is an interactive contact sport, which includes both invasive and evasive elements. It is the constitutive parts of the game (Suits, 1978; Torres, 2000) that make distinctive the nature of Rugby officiating. Furthermore, as RCS3 and NRM remark, it is the speed of the game, its hurried nature, which makes the task of officiating so difficult.

This study suggests that the Rugby referee makes a significant contribution to the practice. He does so by helping to shape the game as it unfolds. One way the referee is able to frame the play is by using preventative measures (Collins, 2010). Prompting players optimises continuity. Such a strategy is not apparent in other invasion games like basketball, American football or netball.

That referees officiate in this way relates to the long-standing view of players, coaches and spectators that good referees show empathy for the game. They do so by displaying sound practical wisdom (Loland, 2011). The use of prompts is one such officiating tool that can facilitate a good spectacle. With heightened game understanding an elite referee anticipates the potential for non-compliance and can usually prevent it with a verbal (prompt) or non-verbal (hand/arm signal) communication. That said, even a seemingly positive strategy such as prompting needs to be balanced. A good referee will use a combination of preventative and punitive measures to influence player behaviour. Below, I offer two occasions wherein too much prompting can have an adverse effect.
First, I suggest that on those occasions when a quick ruck has been formed and the ball is emerging without delay there is no need for any verbalisation. It is clear to all what is happening. A referee who calls “ruck” on every single occasion is only generating “white noise” (Whitehouse, 2011). The MOPDO engages in weekly dialogues with regional coaches. In the feedback received, Whitehouse (2011) reports that players soon grow tired of an overly vociferous referee. Consequently, as personal experience would attest, they are more likely to ignore future and perhaps more important prompts, having simply switched off from the barrage of meaningless utterances.

Second, overuse of preventative measures can potentially deny one team an opportunity of winning, say, a penalty through continued application of pressure. For example, when a team is advancing towards the opposition’s goal line through a series of forward drives emanating from the tackle/ruck. It may be doing so in an attempt to catch the opposing players offside. Now, if the referee constantly reminds the defending team to move backwards to the hindmost foot (its respective offside line), then he is rather negating the pressure generated by the attacking team.

Another way the Rugby official shapes the contest is through recognition of advantages and disadvantages. PI stressed the importance of knowing when not to blow the whistle. Recognising that an infringement has occurred but providing the non-offending team with a suitable amount of time to gain an advantage is a key officiating skill (Brackston, 2009). This correlates with PER2’s comments; he believes that knowing the game is as important as knowing the Laws. Such an approach to officiating, as REF4 remarks, is a better method than “beating them with a stick” (p. 4).
It is important for an elite official to have a feel for ascendency. I argue that those who regularly officiate professional matches possess such ability. An awareness of dominance can relate to both team and individual contests, for example, the one-on-one competition between opposing prop forwards at scrum. The elite practitioner draws on superior game knowledge and understanding (Collins, 2010) to inform his deliberations.

The referee review process acts as a mechanism for enhancing officials’ game knowledge and understanding. This involves the referee and performance reviewer critiquing the game using RRIMS. This is a detailed process of self and peer evaluation (Appendix Q). Further scrutiny of performance is conducted by the MOPDO. It is through this ongoing, analytical process that the elite referee is able to familiarise himself with the predilections of certain key players and will officiate with these in mind. Yet, he will and must do so always without prejudice.

This study suggests that elite match officials possess some or all of the desirable characteristics and virtues to officiate professional rugby. Moreover, it is advocated that such qualities become apparent whenever they display practical wisdom or what Aristotle (1941) refers to as *phronesis*. The elite game is played at a high tempo. It is not uncommon for international and regional matches to generate ‘ball in play’ statistics of and above 40 minutes (Kinnaird, 2013). The elite referee’s contribution stems from good player management. Several participants including REF3, PER2, PER3 and PLR2 all note the importance of game understanding in determining what action, if any, to take. A referee has to anticipate the play and make an “instantaneous decision” (NRM, p. 4). As Collins (2010) suggests, the ability to make sound judgments is partly
based on epistemological privilege. The elite official is expected to assess the material effect of any given action in determining whether or not to penalise.

How a referee deploys this privilege rather depends on the level at which he officiates. The findings underpin the notion that match officials operate as coaches at mini/junior level, referees at the community level and as facilitators at the elite level. It is suggested that player competency often determines the approach taken by match officials. Lived experiences also suggest that age and experience are contributing factors. The following personal narratives highlight some differences in approach to match officiating.

When appointed to mini/junior matches I assume the role of coach. I tend to instruct players and talk them through the game. This method aids continuity by limiting the frequency of penalty sanctions. Coaches and their players of limited experience and game understanding appreciate this in-game guidance. Junior Rugby is concerned with mass participation and enjoyment. So, acting as instructor serves to maximise early ludic experiences of novice practitioners.

The above seems a positive approach to introductory game experiences. Yet, we need to consider the balance between instruction and officiating. Even young and inexperienced players need to familiarise themselves with the dynamic complexities of Rugby and to begin to cope with its demands and restrictions. Arguably, too much instruction has a detrimental effect on their game understanding (Cassidy, Jones and Potrac, 2009; Mosston and Ashworth, 2002) and their Laws appreciation. It seems that there is a real possibility of creating a culture wherein players are (overly) reliant on referee intervention through game facilitation.

Community players’ skill levels vary greatly. It is fair to say that some clubs are more ‘professional’ in their approach than others. It could be argued
that some teams are purely motivated by the inherent opportunities for physical confrontation. These teams need to be refereed. Players lacking the necessary skills and conditioning to cope with game demands will often use alternative means to achieve their goals. These include underhand tactics, cheating and intimidation. As the Union’s disciplinary records suggest (WRU, 2013), far more cases are brought against community teams than their elite equivalents.

Community Rugby is an amateur pursuit. Players are not expected to commit substantially to training and playing. Clubs strive for a balance between being competitive and offering an enjoyable experience. Nevertheless, senior players would be expected to possess a certain level of game knowledge and understanding, so that they might have whatever experience. In contrast, professional players are well versed with the nature and demands of the game. Arguably then, elite referees operate more as facilitators than actual match officials. Interestingly, REF 2 attributed his facilitatory skills to his own innate “natural ability” (p. 2).

There is mutual expectation at the elite end. Such reciprocity is not seen at community level. It is suggested that professional players do not play the game; rather, the field of play is their relative place of work. This is partly why referees encourage players to cooperate to make the best possible gains. Adopting a collaborative approach enables a fairer distribution of the burden of expectation. Boundaries of acceptability are made clear through maximisation of game management. As Kretchmar and Elcombe (2007) suggests, cooperation is key to enhancing practice and specifically here, game aesthetic.

Despite the relative collaboration, the elite referee will inevitably make decisions that are not always well received. Little compassion is shown him amid the ludic chaos of professional Rugby. As Barnes (2010) aptly points out,
“You’re not out there to be liked”. Nevertheless, this specialist individual must always convey virtue, acting honestly and with conviction. Refereeing in this way reflects well on his character. A referee who demonstrates virtuous behaviour (Morgan, 2007) rather than egotistical tendencies (RCS3) is well respected by players and coaches alike.

Amateur players expect fairness, justice, impartiality, consistency and good observational skills as much as their elite counterparts. The elite game also expects its officials to have an empathetic understanding of what players do. JAR4 underpins this notion; he favours “a quiet word” (p. 6) over incessantly penalising. Such an appreciation enhances the aesthetic. However, it can be argued that the demands of professional game are disproportionate.

Stakeholders want to see Rugby’s aesthetic qualities maximised. To this end, they demand greater consistency and accuracy from officials. Any sense of there being shared practice ownership among practitioners is blurred at best. Amateur expectation is far less substantial than elite-level expectancy. This is rightly so, partly because there are graver implications for poor officiating in professional contests. As PLR2 attests, “it is their livelihood” (p. 4). This underpins RCS3’s views that while he accepts that not all violations will be detected, persistent offences “have to be picked up” (p. 5). While these are valid points, I argue against making match officials solely responsible for enhancing the game’s appeal as a sporting product. As MacIntyre (2007) would suggest, co-liability would allow the practice to flourish.

4.8.2 Integral part of the practice

It was initially suggested that Rugby officiating is a practice-within-a-practice (see section 1.4). A casual observer might comment on the distinction
between playing and officiating. Arguably, it is only the players who actually play the game. The implication therefore is that they alone can attain internal goods (MacIntyre, 1981) inherent in the practice. If we were to accept this premise, then it would be logical to view officiating as a standalone practice. Yet, participant responses suggest that officiating is an integral part of Rugby.

MacIntyre (2007) informs us that engaging in a social practice can lead to the attainment of such virtues as courage, justice and honesty. With this in mind and based on Pill et al.’s (2004) premise regarding the realisation of intrinsic practice goods, match officials can and do display such virtues and therefore can be said to be as much a part of the practice as players. Consequently, it is now proposed that Rugby is a hybrid practice – a combination of playing and officiating.

This amalgamation can be interpreted as a social collaboration. As Kretchmar and Elcombe imply, playing and refereeing are not “isolated competencies” (2007, p. 186). Therefore, this collaboration can legitimately be considered a practice. Players, coaches and referees must take collective responsibility for upholding and improving on the practice traditions. According to Kretchmar and Elcombe (2007), without continued cooperation the longevity of any practice is risked.

The elite referee assumes a proactive role within the practice. It is evident that this complex game profits from such intervention. Yeman (2011) makes clear that professional players expect referees to use preventative measures whenever possible to maintain continuity. There is nothing in Law that compels a referee to act in this way. Yet, it is suggested that this practice is driven by the ethos of aesthetic management. Hence, the challenge for the elite official is to shape the game both fairly and qualitatively.
Prompting is more prevalent in the modern era. Non-verbal communication is also a useful officiating tool – a simple arm signal at the lineout illustrates this point. The referee will indicate to those “players not taking part” (IRB, 2012, p. 130) that the lineout is still in progress by raising his arm and only lowers it once it has ended. This type of non-verbal prompting facilitates continuity by preventing unnecessary and avoidable infringements from occurring. The point about maximising continuity is stressed again by Yeman (2011) when referring to the importance placed by major stakeholders on game aesthetics. With escalating ticket prices it is even more incumbent on professional practitioners to produce a quality product. It is not only spectators who demand value for money. Coaches, players and administrators rely on large audiences for their livelihoods. What kind of game unfolds is now more significant than ever. Recent television audience figures and match spectator statistics for the 2011 World Cup in New Zealand indicate a growing interest (RWC, 2011). With RWC 2015 fast approaching, the IRB will undoubtedly be doing all it can to further enhance Rugby’s global appeal.

Elite referees need good judgment to frame contests. This is stressed by REF2 and REF3 alike. Considering referees as a third party is no longer plausible. Those who would segregate match officials are being discriminatory. Current thinking suggests that they are an integral part of the practice. Their role as facilitators makes clear their intimate involvement.

Yet, the question arises whether game facilitation in the form of referee prompts should continue. If so, what format might it take? Overreliance on match officials to ensure aesthetical optimisation is problematic. There is too much at stake for the responsibility to rest with one individual. I would also argue that solely relying on referees to always have the right feel for the game
and make the right call based on that feeling is unrealistic. It is accepted that intervention is necessary, but I question whether officials necessarily welcome this requisition in its current format.

Various participants share this concern. While PER4, REF1 and REF4 have noted the significance of making accurate decisions based, in part, on materiality, others have questioned the burden of expectation. PI believes the fault lies within the Law book. He argues that the derived need for using preventative measures stems from its limitations as a guiding framework. PLR2 offered a more direct, less ambiguous approach to ensuring player compliance, but ultimately this goes against Rugby’s ethos. As JAR5 suggests, it would be logical to grant match officials “some flexibility” (p. 5) in determining materiality. Practitioners including myself should urge the IRB to take the lead in determining future best practice.

It is worth considering the unlikely scenario wherein referees reject the role of facilitator. A refusal to operate as per the current norm might significantly affect the game’s aesthetic quality, whatever that may be. Arguably, elite Rugby matches would become stop-start affairs. Any perceived burden of responsibility would be shifted from referees to players. The onus would very much be on the latter to display greater compliance, but it is questionable whether this would be effective. The fact is the game is far too complex for this approach to ever be successfully applied. No one would derive satisfaction.

It is perhaps for this reason that the IRB, for the most part, determines the remit for its elite match officials. The IRB makes clear to all practitioners what the referee’s role and purpose is. From time to time, the game’s governing body will disseminate directives to all its Member Unions. These e-
communications arise, for example, whenever there is a need to clarify a point of Law. This is one way the IRB is able to enhance its valuable commodity.

This study suggests that game aesthetic is given greater priority than Law application. Match officials are being asked to focus on managing the contest as opposed to refereeing it. If this arrangement is to continue, then it is reasonable to suggest that referees are afforded an opportunity to make a greater contribution to the game in collaboration with major stakeholders. The chance to play a significant role in Rugby’s development is overdue.

Those participants associated with officiating have expressed a sense of marginalisation. Elite match officials should no longer be portrayed as unwelcome interlopers; their role within the practice is too significant. Greater cooperation between players, coaches and officials would dramatically improve the existing relationship. Rugby is an interactive sport wherein judgment is needed. It is a hybrid practice that needs social collaboration (Kretchmar and Elcombe, 2007). This study calls for greater trust and cooperation among Rugby practitioners.

### 4.8.3 Developing the professional game

Rugby’s imprecision magnifies its appeal. Eighty minutes of ludic chaos is often rather captivating. Yet, there is an argument for a refinement of pinch points. Issues of consistency have been prominent in this analysis with all regional coaches demanding a coherent level of referee interpretation. Several areas of the game are difficult to officiate, specifically, the contact area (tackle/ruck). The scrum also causes much irritation. All are areas where assistance might be needed. For example, the referee cannot possibly see what is occurring on the far side of a ruck. Here, he would need the help of his
assistant referee to rule on any infringements, say, hands in the ruck or ball carrier not releasing.

How such pinch points might be best managed is of interest here. It is argued that the pinch points mentioned above are creating the most frustration for players and coaches alike. As PI commented, they are equally problematic from an officiating viewpoint. If it is commonly agreed that the contact area and the scrum are impacting negatively on the game, as the findings would suggest, then change is needed.

Developing the professional game ought to be a collective enterprise. While the guardians of the practice are undoubtedly the players, input from all practitioners would be useful in any major re-shaping of the game. RCS3 actually advocates establishing a “triumvirate” (p. 6) to operate within the practice community. Moreover, PLR1 encourages more purposeful coach-referee interactions for the betterment of the game.

To enhance the playing experience an ongoing dialogue between the major stakeholders and elite practitioners is necessary. The IRB and its Member Unions need to agree on an aesthetic ideal. The game has been open for nearly two decades now, but perhaps greater directionality is required to increase its profile.

Establishing an aesthetic ideal requires institutional leadership. The IRB Rugby Committee (IRB, 2013b) strives to produce a better product. This group monitors the Laws and their effectiveness. It welcomes feedback from Member Unions regarding their application and makes subsequent recommendations to the IRB Council in relation to updates and changes to the Laws (IRB, 2013b). This committee has implemented various trials that have led to permanent Law changes. These changes have been included to enhance game aesthetic. It is
essential that the IRB markets the game based on Rugby’s distinctiveness. Emphasising its particularities might increase interest and participation. Moreover, any message ought to convey the game’s qualities – its flow, enjoyability, energy and high tempo.

The IRB has been proactive in its attempts to enhance such qualities. It has a sense of how this ideal ought to look. For example, the Law relating to quick throw-ins and how a player is now entitled to throw in the ball along the line of touch or towards his own goal-line has helped speed up the game. It encourages players to attack. Another example of how the game has been improved is by the introduction of the restrictions on kicking to touch for a gain in ground inside the 22. Now, it is not possible for a team to pass the ball back inside the 22 and make a subsequent gain in ground from a kick. This limitation compels a team to attack. Again, this new Law enhances ‘ball in play’ time.

It is clear that all parties recognise that there is a broader responsibility to the game and its lasting appeal. Nonetheless, there are boundaries within which they must operate. Law interpretations and coaches’ directions must be managed. In this context, the annual conference at Lensbury (IRB, 2013c) provides an opportunity to collectively progress the game. Here, coaches and match officials decide on a modus operandi for the next 12-month period of matches. Such gatherings are crucial for safeguarding the practice. Two examples of recent changes are outlined below. One has been successful, the other yet to alter player behaviour.

The legalisation of the pre-grip at lineout has assisted the referee’s management of this set piece. There are now fewer across-line infringements (Thomas, 2011). However, the recent shortening of the scrum cadence has had little impact thus far. The time wasted by multiple resets has been emphasised
by the introduction of a scrum clock. Broadcasters highlight an issue for which referees are attracting the blame.

The purpose of the scrum is to restart play quickly, safely and fairly. (IRB, 2012, p. 134)

Despite the above stipulation, the scrum’s normative implication is being contradicted. Public perception implies that there is a problem. TV directors who highlight the time wasted are exaggerating the issue. Ultimately, this is a playing issue rather than an officiating one.

It seems the trend is to reach some sort of crisis point before any change occurs. By crisis point I do not mean at the magnitude of what Morgan (1994) might call an epistemic crisis. The problems I have highlighted are magnified at pinch points rather than throughout the game as a whole. This study evidences the need for greater proactivity through interactivity. RCS2 notes the value of “making time” (p. 6) for productive dialogue. Below are two example organisations (one sporting, one cultural-linguistic) wherein such an approach has proved successful.

The United States Golf Association (USGA) provides the sporting model. The USGA has served as the national governing body of golf since its formation in 1894 (USGA, 2013a). Its Executive Committee is a 15-member volunteer group that is responsible for all policy-making. Its duties include writing and interpreting the Rules of Golf, conducting national championships and competitions, and regulating and testing all golf equipment for conformance with the Rules of Golf. The USGA’s mission statement makes clear their objectives.
Based on a shared love and respect for golf, we preserve its past, foster its future, and champion its best interests for everyone who enjoys the game. (USGA, 2013b)

The Académie française provides the cultural-linguistic model. The Académie consists of 40 members, known as “les immortels” (Académie française, 2013). These elected members of intellectual repute decide on the acceptability or not of new words in the French language. Theirs is an advisory role, making rulings on all matters pertaining to French grammar, spelling and literature. While the Académie is a well-respected establishment, neither the public nor the government is bound by such rulings.

Given the standing of such an institution as the Académie française, the point above raises concerns as to the IRB’s continued ability to adequately regulate professional Rugby. It is questionable whether the IRB is detached from the reality of the modern game. Like the USGA, the IRB continues to stage tournaments (RWC, Six Nations’ Championship, The Rugby Championship), which act as the financial engine for all its operations. Yet, despite the success of such competitions, it is arguable that the IRB lacks the sufficient governance to be able to control or even modify competitive behaviour towards the desired ideal. Further discussion on how the game might progress through greater interactivity is presented in section 5.3.6 of the concluding chapter.

4.9 Summary

This chapter presents a discussion of results in narrative form. Interpretive analysis of participant responses supports this process. Interpretations are based in part on the researcher’s background and his insight.
into elite Rugby officiating. Documentation, where applicable, underpins interviewee responses.

The key findings in this exploratory study suggest that elite Rugby refereeing can be considered distinctive among sports officiating. Dealing with the many constitutive elements amid the ludic chaos that abounds highlights the difficulty of task. There is an expectation that the referee will play his part by contributing appropriately to the unfolding sporting contest. This implies that Rugby officiating involves an element of shaping. To be successful in this role favours a certain type of person. Participants have offered insight into those characteristics an elite official ought to possess.

The findings support the view that officiating can be understood as an integral part of the practice. The analysis, as interpreted, suggests that if this were the case, then officiating can play a significant role in the holistic development of the sport. It is argued that an approach that incorporates the triumvirate of playing, coaching and officiating might produce a better Rugby product in Wales.

This chapter has highlighted problematic issues. Chapter 5 brings the study to a conclusion by articulating how these key findings inform recommendations for future best practice with specific regard to elite referee development. Limitations and a brief discussion regarding future research opportunities conclude this critical analysis.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

I presented a discussion of results in Chapter 4. Qualitative evaluation inquiry (QEI; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) facilitated critical analysis of participants’ responses. This was helpful in determining the study’s key findings; namely, (i) that Rugby refereeing is unique within sports officiating, (ii) that officiating is an integral part of the practice and (iii) that greater interactivity between playing, coaching and officiating would enhance Rugby as both a practice and as a product in Wales.

In this final chapter I begin by considering implications of the key findings. It follows that any such implications would relate both to the world of policy and practice and to the world of research. I comment on both. Current literature and further interpretive data analysis underpin conclusions regarding elite Rugby Union officiating in Wales. There then follows a series of recommendations that relate to future domestic Rugby development. This study proposes that any future plans should include a significant contribution from the Referees Department. I close by acknowledging the study’s limitations and identifying possible future research into this sporting phenomenon.
5.2 Implications of key findings

This section addresses in turn implications of the three principal findings. Presented as three subsections for greater clarity, its purpose is to provide a link between the critical analysis offered in Chapter 4 and the recommendations that are presented later in this chapter.

5.2.1 Nature of Rugby officiating and the distinctiveness of task

In this study I have attempted to highlight the nature and complexities of elite Rugby Union officiating. I have suggested that Rugby refereeing is notably distinct to other forms of invasion game officiating. This is partly due to the particularity of ludic chaos that abounds in the professional game and the various distinctive elements – ruck, maul and set piece – that constitute the playing of the game.

The role of the Rugby referee is somewhat unique. This observation is based on the knowledge that he uses prompts and other such preventative measures to maximise game facilitation and subsequently, game aesthetics. Excellent decision-making skills are key. But, can these be taught or do they stem from one’s own “natural ability” (REF2, p. 2)? The findings suggest that knowing when to manage and when to sanction is an essential officiating tool. Hence, the case for possessing practical wisdom or *phronesis* (Aristotle, 1941) has been made. Within this study I have highlighted the pressure placed on match officials to make consistently good (by good, I mean accurate) decisions. It is hoped that the gravity of such individual responsibility should be fully understood and perhaps more importantly, never underestimated.
Data analysis suggests that the elite referee plays a central role within the ludic chaos. He is caught up in the tension of what is real and what is truthful. Specifically, he is positioned between the tension of what has happened and what is made. It would follow then that elite practitioners are necessarily appointed on the basis that they can demonstrate an aptitude for truth-making/telling. Undertaking such a philosophically informed study serves a useful purpose in the sense that it is asking both the practice and wider community to understand and subsequently to appreciate the way in which an elite match official operates.

It has been reasoned that a referee’s role differs according to the level at which he officiates. Arguably, the art and skill of officiating is largely dependent on the playing context. Yet, it is conceivable that a referee could be classed as “elite” in his application at any given level of the game. At the community level, management and, to a lesser but relatively important extent, coaching of players who possess a limited skills set is very much needed and expected. In contrast, elite players with superior capabilities need only to be refereed, notwithstanding the occasional flashpoint. The findings suggest that officiating is comparatively easier the higher the level of the game.

However, the decisions made at the elite level are often harder to make. Reasons for this include the tempo at which the game is played and the relative speed of thought and action by players. A decision or non-decision – from an officiating perspective – often carries a much greater consequence. As there are relatively few “big calls” to be made in professional Rugby, it is crucially important that the referee is able to make accurate judgments whenever the need arises. A player’s indiscretion may not ultimately cost his team victory or affect his being selected in future matches. Yet, a referee who incorrectly
sanctions or fails to do so becomes susceptible. Given the stakes associated with elite Rugby, suspension of elite match officials is no longer uncommon.

Of particular interest here is the aforementioned notion of natural ability. The performance review process currently includes no way of measuring the quality of a referee’s decision-making capabilities. Any process of assessment regarding the frequency of good decisions would require some sort of empirical/consequential judgment by the performance reviewer. He would have to determine whether or not the right call was made at the right time more often than not. It could be said that making a particularly high percentage of correct calls on a regular basis would imply a certain degree of phronetic capacity.

Referees who receive regular performance reviews are by no means guaranteed to progress. Selectors must consider at what point a referee’s ability is limited. Furthermore, it is not necessarily the case that any progression is in fact linear in nature. Referees will tend to move in proportion to the level of game played. A referee who has performed well at any given grade will be given opportunities to officiate at the next higher grade and his ability assessed.

Both the literature and the data suggest that assessing a referee’s phronetic capabilities should form part of the review process. Arguably, elite officiating involves making judgments centred on human error and human precision. As such, it is reasoned that phronesis is an important officiating tool and possessing it an essential characteristic of the elite match official.

Displaying a consistently high level of phronetic ability seems a necessary quality for those officiating professional matches. Moreover, this study proposes that there is a duality of role. The task of officiating is made that much more difficult and thus more distinct, as the referee is expected to act as both Laws enforcer and Laws interpreter. For this to be done successfully, it is
therefore clear that an elite referee must consistently display sound _phronesis_.

There are times during the contest when he enforces the Laws without exception. For example, when a player late charges the kicker the referee must sanction the transgressor accordingly. In contrast, the role of interpreter is activated when, for example, the referee considers whether a player who has gone off his feet at a ruck should be penalised. Here, the referee must decide whether or not there was a material effect. He uses his phronetic capacity to rule accordingly.

Success at the elite level has its rewards. All practitioners are ambitious. While each team has a collective goal, every player, arguably, has his own agenda. This is problematic in relation to how any particular game pans out. The elite match official is similarly keen to achieve success. While both players and referees are required to adhere to the Laws of the Game, the reality is somewhat different. It appears that a player often deploys game reasoning (Shields and Bredemeier, 1995) to maximise his chances of success. A referee however upholds the Laws without bias. Yet, given the participant responses and subsequent data analysis, it can be said that even the match official through _phronesis_ is afforded a degree of latitude. One could argue that both “approaches” contribute to game aesthetics. While one set of spectators, at any given time, will not applaud a particular act of gamesmanship (McFee, 2004; McNamee, 2008), most would find it difficult to criticise a referee who decides not to blow his whistle for a minor infringement that has absolutely no material effect on proceedings.

It is this notion of _phronesis_ or practical wisdom that I suggest is crucial to successfully undertaking the role of the elite match official. It is often said that a good referee has empathy for what the players are trying to do. Sound
phronetic ability facilitates a referee’s ability to make good judgments and/or non-decisions. This ability aids game facilitation and inevitably contributes to a better game aesthetic. Those wishing to act as match officials need to understand that excellent fitness levels and a comprehensive understanding of the Laws are not enough to guarantee progression to the elite grade. This study proposes that the elite practitioner is someone who possesses an innate sense of what is right, of what is acceptable and is thus able to convey that in a fair and consistent manner.

Accepting that *phronesis* is an essential officiating tool, the key issue then becomes how to recognise/develop it within referees. Currently, the advisory system neither accounts for nor assesses a referee’s phronetic capabilities. This research proposes that any future referee review process must establish phronesis as a key performance indicator or KPI.

### 5.2.2 Integral part of the practice

In Chapter 1 (section 1.4), I first proposed that Rugby officiating could be considered a practice-within-a-practice. Subsequent data analysis suggests otherwise. This empirical research highlights the relative importance of the elite match official. The main findings underpin the notion that officiating is very much an integral part of this social practice.

Participants had commented on the relationship between players and coaches and officials. While it was not necessarily conclusive that a ‘them and us’ tag exists (cf. REF1, p. 2 with PLR2, p. 5), the findings have augmented the need for acknowledging the significance of the official’s role. I advocate that greater recognition of the referee’s contribution, particularly in relation to game aesthetics, is warranted. There is a clear implication here. If it were widely
accepted that referees do make a significant impact, one that is appreciated by all, then it follows that becoming a referee would be viewed as a more attractive proposition. This may go someway to addressing issues of recruitment and retention that were raised in sections 1.4 and 2.8.3.

Rugby referees require specialist training if they are to be accepted as an integral part of the practice. Officiating needs a development structure that closely reflects the player pathway and coach education programmes. The former, which incorporates the age grade Rugby programme, facilitates talent identification of promising youngsters, while the coach education programme caters for all levels of the game. Both structures offer continuous training and development to their respective practitioners.

The data analysis underpins the argument for making similar provision within officiating. Given the nature and demands of the modern game, there is every reason to provide similar opportunities to aspiring match officials. The data have suggested that greater investment in Rugby refereeing development is required, both in terms of personnel and resources. This should include ongoing training and development of all match officials (referees, assistant referees and television match officials) and performance reviewers (referee coaches and advisors).

It is evident that any such provision must prepare practitioners for operating at the elite level. It has been suggested that the institution primarily focuses on performance enhancement of players and coaches. I have argued that there should be greater proportionality (section 2.12-2.13). Greater investment in enhancing refereeing standards is needed. Officiating cannot afford to remain as the poor relation. Refereeing standards must reflect playing standards. Any relevant intervention would naturally enhance the Rugby
product. Based on participant responses and the supporting documentation, there is room for improvement. Recommendations regarding future referee development are made in section 5.3.

5.2.3 Developing the professional game

Above highlighted the need for greater investment in the training and development of match officials. Participant responses and QEI have provided further comment on how the professional game could be developed. The two main implications here are that the use of technology and the establishment of a Rugby triumvirate are seen as essential for improving on the practice tradition. The former refers principally to the TMO provision and performance review process, while the latter is concerned with the notion of holistic Rugby development. Both are explored below before recommendations are made in sections 5.3.5 and 5.3.6 respectively.

In both the conceptualisation and subsequent empirical data I have tried to articulate the difficulties associated with elite Rugby refereeing. It has been argued that a combination of ludic chaos and game reasoning significantly impacts on this specialist role. Given the nature and complexity of the modern game, it was perhaps inevitable that the use of technology would be prevalent at some stage.

This study has highlighted the ongoing challenges facing referees within the game. The enormity of their task is clear. An elite referee has to rule on the clear and obvious (Whitehouse, 2011), while endeavouring to maximise game aesthetics. His task is made all the more challenging by players who display emotivist behaviour (Ayer, 1936). Given these circumstances and the high stakes of professional Rugby, the use of technology to assist with the referee’s
task should be encouraged. There is much to be gained from its proper use. Study participants have acknowledged the human aspect of officiating. So, to be able to call on another qualified authority for assistance alleviates some of the task burden. Yet, the argument holds that the game must not become over-reliant on its use. Clearly, a balance is needed. In keeping with practice tradition and game ethos, the referee should remain sole arbiter of fact, whatever that may be considered contextually to be.

Modern technology has its place off the field too. With the relative shortage of performance reviewers, technology that can facilitate the assessment process should be embraced. Given the capabilities of hand-held smart devices, using them could significantly improve feedback. Thus, the review process would become more meaningful. Accuracy in the review process is key to referee development. The use of technology in the form of game analysis and sports code software can only augment the process and facilitate performance enhancement. Such provision means that there is no excuse for a referee not to engage in self-development through self-review. Section 5.3.5 makes recommendations regarding the further implementation of technological support for the enhancement of refereeing performance.

This study has highlighted the need for greater interactivity among Rugby practitioners. The modern game has the potential to thrive on greater cooperation among its primary stakeholders. I have presented a case, supported by the literature and participant responses, for establishing a Rugby triumvirate. Such collaboration can only lead to producing a more attractive product moving forward.

I have suggested that all major stakeholders are quick to criticise match officials for their game management. I have tried to problematise officiating by
presenting a narrative account of the complex nature of the game. This is so that the interested reader/practitioner better understands the issues associated with having to determine, for example, whether to enforce or interpret the Laws at any given time without the support of say, slow motion replay. Highlighting the challenges facing elite referees has some of the following implications.

If the practice community accepts that officiating is a highly complex yet essential part of the Rugby practice, then improvements can and should be made. I argue that any such improvements must be made collectively. Each component of the game – playing, coaching and officiating – has much to contribute to the practice. This empirical research has highlighted the need for collective responsibility in upholding and developing the game.

From a playing and coaching perspective, expert coaches have acknowledged the associated difficulties and have articulated their willingness to help improve refereeing standards. Likewise, experienced match officials have conveyed their readiness to assist with helping players and coaches to better understand the game’s prescriptions and proscriptions. Greater social collaboration (Morgan, 2007) seems far more logical than any notion of functioning independently. Recommendations for how this might be achieved are made in section 5.3.6.

The aim of this section and its subsequent three subsections was to discuss the implications of the study’s principal findings. Articulation of the above implications acts as an appropriate link between the major outcomes and any possible future best practice. In the next section I consider, among other things, the potentiality of implementing a mentorship scheme and a holistic approach to Rugby development. The following recommendations also inform
the later discussion about future research that might enhance knowledge and understanding of elite Rugby Union officiating.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are informed by the interpretive data analysis and relevant academic literature. This study has highlighted certain aspects of officiating that require attention; principally, the development of advisors and match officials. To this end, greater interactivity among practitioners is needed to improve, among other things, Rugby’s appeal. The principal aim is to advance the standard of officiating, which in turn will help to increase the mean game experience. The following recommendations are submitted free of any financial restrictions.

5.3.1 Recruitment and retention

Improving the standard of Rugby officiating in Wales is desirable. A structured advisory system is required to achieve this objective. Before considering this, matters of recruitment and retention need to be addressed.

This study has highlighted the problems associated with recruitment of match officials. I recommend the implementation of a Union-funded nationwide recruitment drive. Such an initiative should stress the positive contribution referees make to the game. It should champion the benefits of occupying such a specialist position. Chiefly but not exclusively, these include giving back, upholding practice traditions, additional remuneration, extensive travel and lifelong friendships. Further prominence should be attached to this role.
More needs to be done to retain the services of match officials. Davies (2011) has bemoaned the lack of Level 1 referees advancing to Level 2. Enhancing the profile and significance of refereeing might encourage those who chose only to officiate at mini/junior level (usually parents) to embrace the challenges of senior Rugby. More targeted and meaningful monitoring and mentoring of Level 1 referees may increase their interest in officiating and see larger numbers progressing to senior fixtures.

The frustration of the above stagnation was noted by PER1 (p. 10). It is apparent that novice referees ought to be afforded greater support and attention. I recommend the implementation of a game strategy that makes a bigger ‘fuss’ of its officials. Promotion, success and performance excellence need to be recognised by the entire practice community. Currently, only those attending the annual referees’ dinner (referees and advisors) are privy to refereeing achievements. All officiating success must be given due coverage by the institution via its website and dedicated TV channel (WRU TV). The web pages should contain regular features and articles to promote refereeing.

The game in Wales incurs a weekly shortfall of referees. Bowden (2011) noted that community-level matches are often cancelled because referees are reappointed to fulfil the national league programme. Creating a positive image of the match official and his role will go some way to addressing both these issues. A more productive working relationship with fellow practitioners is needed to ensure its successful implementation (see section 5.3.6).

5.3.2 Advisory system

Optimal referee development has its roots in an effective advisory system. Such a system must reflect the modern game, but will only ever be as
good as those who operate it. Welsh Rugby needs suitably trained and experienced advisors. The Union is primarily responsible for educating performance reviewers. They must have sound game knowledge and understanding, as demanded by RCS3, to maximise referee development.

The Union needs to provide continuous professional development. Ongoing training for PR’s and periodical reviews are recommended. CPD workshops provide the ideal setting for the acquisition of new knowledge and the sharing of best practice. As PER4 and RCS3 suggested, these gatherings would ensure that PR’s could offer appropriate solutions. Moreover, I propose the provision of annual feedback. For such an interpersonal process, I recommend that PR’s receive feedback from both the Referees Department and match officials.

Shortly after the National Academy opened, the Welsh Society of Rugby Union Referees (WSRUR) convened a review of the referee and advisory structure. The working party comprised the WSRUR President (a senior referee advisor), the WSRUR Honorary Secretary (a Premier grade referee) and a senior match official. Member opinion was sought regarding support for match officials (Appendix E). As a term of reference, the WSRUR was calling for the Referees Department to provide a system that would facilitate realisation of referee potential.

All nine Societies participated in this ‘root and branch’ review. Members gave their opinions on the current referee development structure through various media: verbal, written and electronic communications. The main areas considered in the review process were as follows:
1. A means to identify referees with the potential to be capable of refereeing at the professional end of the game and assisting them to progress to this stage in a timely manner.
2. A coaching tool to ensure that referees have the opportunity to review their performance with a suitably trained coach to agree improvements that could assist in their refereeing progression.
3. A means of monitoring the standard of the referee to ensure they justify the games to which they are appointed. (Appendix E)

Several suggestions emanated from the findings. Members had reflected on current practice and made the following recommendations.

- Introduction of a two-tier grading system
- A performance review system that replicates the elite level system
- Regular fitness testing
- Training and CPD opportunities to ensure consistency among assessors

The NRM welcomed the review findings and was able to implement the following with immediate effect: the performance review process now replicates that conducted with elite match officials and the Elite, Premier, Championship and Academy referees undertake quarterly testing to ensure optimal levels of fitness for officiating elite Rugby. The NRM informs me that a two-tier grade system and regular CPD for assessors are two of the items on the agenda for this year’s annual conference being held at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

5.3.3 Talent identification

With increased numbers and a more pointed advisory structure, the Referees Department would be in a position to introduce a system of talent identification or TI. Any such system need not be complicated or overly time-consuming to ensure effectiveness. After all, volunteers would largely be responsible for its operation.
Of key importance would be an advisor’s ability to recognise in any given individual those essential characteristics associated with elite match officials. The assessment criteria would focus on the referee’s ability to understand and respond to game reasoning (Shields and Bredemeier, 1995). Moreover, the PR would map the individual’s ability to deploy *phronesis* (Aristotle, 1941).

The first stage of TI would see PR’s identifying those who display elite referee attributes. Here, I recommend the use of coaching reports (Appendix C). They are a simple yet effective medium for assessing role suitability. I acknowledge PI’s concern with regard to “fast-tracking” (p. 6), but stress the need for continued high-class refereeing provision. The Referees Department simply does not have the luxury of time. Referees who have had many years’ experience are valued practitioners but the IRB selection policy has an upper age limit of 40.

Referees must demonstrate their suitability in such a time frame that allows them to even be considered for elite status. In this respect, officiating must imitate playing. The talent once identified must be given every opportunity to fulfil its potential. This seems harsh but is a reality of elite practice. Seasoned officials need to be honest and realistic in terms of their refereeing careers. The principle of meritocracy would still apply to any revised development structure. It should guide in part the selection process. TI as an approach has to be seen to be fair and just. It should be one that encourages people to self-interest. If everyone is given an opportunity to ‘audition’, then there can be no cause for anyone to complain.
5.3.4 Mentorship

Once initial practice familiarisation has occurred, I would provide aspiring referees with a mentorship. My proposal is based on the MacIntyrean ideal of the master and apprentice (MacIntyre, 1990). Here, the guardians of officiating (senior referees and advisors) would offer one-on-one and/or small-group support on all matters relating to refereeing. I would suggest that mentorships are created within each of the nine Referees’ Societies. Officials would be more comfortable dealing with senior practitioners whom they have come to know well. This development tool only works by embedding oneself in the practice.

Ambitious officials must consider time spent away from the practice. They cannot rely solely on the efforts of PR’s to guarantee their elevation. Game preparation and training must be undertaken routinely. Sub-elite referees should demonstrate a commitment to attaining excellence. How much preparatory work is needed cannot be quantified. The ratio of instruction to practice will inevitably depend on self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). What is certain is that there exists a very real need to engage with the practice. No one with elite aspirations can afford to have a ‘take it or leave it’ attitude.

Mentoring will allow PR’s to closely assess individual ability. Mentors would collate all feedback and provide the Referees Department with nominations. Then, the Referees Department could use personality profiling (Bartone, Ursano, Wright and Ingraham, 1989; John and Srivastava, 1999; Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988) to determine who might be best suited to elite Rugby officiating.

One example of a very successful mentoring experience was reported by REF2. He was observed in six consecutive games by PER1 who was able to monitor his progress closely. I advocate more of the same. Targeting individuals
for special attention may accelerate development and see them moving onto the elite level sooner. This type of fast-tracking strategy then creates opportunities for others to receive similar treatment. Using this development approach reduces time wasted. More importantly, it ensures a consistent feedback process.

5.3.5 Use of technology

Rugby embraces technology in various ways. For example, performance analysts provide coaches with individual and team statistics to inform the coaching process (Lyle, 2002). Moreover, television assistance is given by the TMO to the on-field match officials to assist with try-scoring decisions and acts of foul play. Technology supports both playing and officiating development.

Feedback is an essential part of the development process (Little and McCullagh, 1989; Magill, 2001). Given the advances in electronic handheld devices (smartphones and notepads), I propose that all assessors should be provided with an iPad or similar device. This would give instant access to game footage and thus, enhance the post-match performance review. Currently, a brief ‘chat’ is had post-match but there is no in-depth discussion. Advisors are often reluctant to make statements before reviewing the game. Instant access to video would encourage referees to take ownership, as I believe an over-dependence on advisors is detrimental. Self-development is crucial for progression; greater proactivity by referees is needed. In the constructs of the present institutional framework, the institution is right to encourage autonomy.

While preparing this thesis, the IRB (2013a) has decided to extend the TMO’s protocol to include ruling on foul play and other infringements up to two
phases before any score. This extended remit will increase the likelihood of greater fairness and more frequent just outcomes.

5.3.6 A Rugby triumvirate

The findings suggest that an all-inclusive approach will benefit the game. Reciprocity could well prove useful. Input from players and coaches would enhance referee development, while referees could contribute to player and coach education. The IRB (2013c) is clearly committed to interactivity.

There are relatively few teams and match officials at the elite level. Frequent encounters are inevitable. This implies that having an unaffected perspective is impossible. Yet, fostering a positive working relationship would enhance this sporting product. The Lensbury conference is a formal event held annually to discuss game policy. Elite coaches and match officials converge to examine current trends. The conference is held prior to the Northern Hemisphere’s flagship tournament, the Six Nations’ Championship. Its main objective is to set out expectations for all practitioners before the start of the international Test season.

The IRB desires an attractive product. The game needs to appeal to a global audience. It seems that match officials are given a large proportion of responsibility for ensuring maximisation of game aesthetics. This is challenging yet seemingly manageable. There are implications for being judge, jury and executioner. Being asked to replace the impartiality of Laws with judgment calls places added pressure on match officials. Asking a referee to make evaluative judgments that are not so much about justice/fairness but based on what is good for the game is problematic. Any established triumvirate would have to
trust referee integrity. More importantly, all would have to appreciate and accept the humanistic nature of the role.

Any such arrangement would need to consider the type of justice that might prevail. Being fair and impartial and refereeing to the Laws of the Game ensures procedural justice (Rawls, 1999). Yet, if the stakeholders were more concerned with game aesthetics, then arguably distributive justice (Rawls, 1999) would be more prominent.

5.4 National Academy: An update

The National Academy has spent the last few years preparing the next generation of match officials. Its commitment to elite development can be seen in the range of personnel that it employs: referee coach, conditioner, performance analyst and physiotherapist. All work under the direction of the NRM and the MOPDO.

Ongoing support is crucial to all levels of match officials. The Academy can be considered a community of practice (Culver and Trudel, 2006). This ‘CoP’ provides an opportunity to maximise the potential for learning and developing through interactions. Practitioners are able to share good practice and learn from each other’s experiences, good or bad.

Up until 2013, the Referees Department had produced only one IRB referee in the last eight years. This summer, REF2 will be joined on the IRB panel of match officials by a fellow elite referee who has been appointed to two summer Test matches. This is on the back of two successful Junior World Championships and a number of ‘A’ internationals. Three other elite referees have been appointed to U20 Six Nations’ internationals for a third successive
season; all have recently taken charge of Tier 2 international matches. Of these three, one has been employed as a match official on the IRB 7’s circuit this past year and another has been appointed as assistant referee in three summer Tests before officiating at the RWC 7’s in Moscow. The third refereed his first ‘A’ international and has now been selected to referee at the Junior World Championships in June. Below the elite level, Academy referees continue to impress. The National Academy is again sending one of its members to officiate at the U18 international tournament in France this April. A fellow Academy referee has been appointed to the U16 international tournament being held at Wellington College, England during the Easter holidays. The NRM said that the Academy would not be “an overnight success story” (p. 2). Yet, it is clear that it is fulfilling its main criterion of producing referees for the top echelons of the modern game.

5.5 Limitations

In this section I acknowledge the study’s perceived weaknesses. Since empirical research is not like any laboratory-based experiment, controllability of all aspects of such a process is limited. Hence, I submit the following as limitations of this philosophical insight into Rugby officiating.

5.5.1 Researcher as insider and other considerations

Every effort has been made to ensure objectivity. By its very nature, undertaking empirical research as an insider is inherently problematic. Yet, the chosen methodological and analytical approaches limit such concern. The study design and research process clearly highlighted the key issues within Rugby.
The study used only 20 participants. This relatively small sample was specifically targeted for its wealth of knowledge and expertise. It was felt that they could offer meaningful insight into the practice. Keen to avoid theoretical saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), the inclusion of more participants was deemed unnecessary. Informed selection of certain individuals proved sufficient for addressing the study’s aims.

Accessibility was largely unproblematic. The lack of engagement by one individual did not affect the overall analysis. Of interest here is that this was the same person who was reluctant to participate in a previous research project that investigated coach-referee interactions (Hennessy, 2007). Again, no reason for non-participation was given. His lack of engagement simply underpins the unwillingness of certain key stakeholders. Such an attitude reinforces the call for greater cooperation within the practice community.

A further limitation of the study can be seen in the interview process. Given the potential benefits of this study, a one-off hit does not allow for follow-up. The opportunity to revisit matters arising may have provided further insights. These in turn may have better informed the recommendation process. Future research projects involving Rugby professionals will need to factor in the time constraints of in-season participation.

The lengthy process of producing transcripts could not be reported as a limitation *per se*, as their subsequent production was deemed invaluable. Their production ensured accurate checking of the data and served as a useful point of reference throughout the qualitative data analysis.
5.5.2 Code of conduct

My unique role allowed me to undertake this novel critique from a position of relative privilege. As an elite match official, I had insider knowledge of the subject (a perceived strength) and can subsequently rule that coaches and match officials were forthcoming in their responses to questions posed. Interviewer and interviewee alike were fully aware of the consequences of knowingly bringing the game into disrepute.

The WRU is no different to any other organisation in having policies relating to compliance and professional practice. All who come under the Union’s banner are constitutionally bound by its code of conduct (WRU, 2011d). The Group does not tolerate those who would unjustly condemn its contribution to both Rugby and society.

It was felt that no extraordinary constraints were present regarding participants’ ability to speak candidly. Furthermore, any presence of either the Pygmalion effect (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1992) or the Hawthorne effect (Wrege and Bedeian, 2008) would be trivial. Prior assumptions regarding the issues that might be raised in this evaluative study did little to detract my approaching each interview with an open mind.

5.6 Future research

Sports officiating is generally under-researched. More specifically, elite Rugby Union officiating has received very little academic attention. Scholars have recently begun to highlight its significance. Research has been undertaken in the fields of sport psychology (Mascarenhas, Collins, Mortimer and Morris, 2005; Mellick, 2005), physiology (Castagna et al., 2007) and sports
philosophy (Berman, 2011; Collins, 2010; Hamilton, 2011). The importance of officiating sports is yet to be fully realised. More research into this crucial aspect of sporting practices is needed.

Three Rugby-specific areas that I perceive as warranting investigation are briefly outlined below. I propose undertaking further research into (i) a model for holistic Rugby development, (ii) a triumvirate-led critical analysis of performance reviews and (iii) a model for elite Rugby Union officiating.

A single thesis cannot be expected to address all relevant concerns. However, as one who has recommended holistic Rugby development (section 5.3.6), it is my intention to construct a model for such an approach. It is clear that there is an overlap across the game’s three main components of playing, coaching and officiating. Operating as three separate entities has limitations. It is hypothesised that establishing a Rugby triumvirate through the operationalisation of an all-inclusive methodology would help to create a better product and provide a more rewarding game experience. I would evaluate the usefulness of a code of cooperation – a practice agreement in line with the existing participation agreement that currently operates between the Union and the regions and the Union and the Premiership clubs.

Moreover, I would research the potentiality of a three-way performance review. RCS3 expressed his desire to be part of any feedback process and I believe that a coach’s perspective would only augment reviews. Any research project of this nature would need to determine the desired outcomes of such an approach. Referee development would need to be the focal point of a well-managed three-way review process.

The final research proposal relates to the perceived benefit of constructing a model for elite Rugby Union officiating. It is thought that any
model would incorporate best practice from a variety of constitutive games. Like Rugby Union, sports such as American football, basketball and association football also require one or more specially skilled individuals to preside over proceedings (Collins, 2010). Invasion games display similar features. Inevitably then, there are many officiating commonalities. These include ruling on foul play, adjudicating offside and judging when the ball is out of play.

It is hypothesised that an element of ‘tradition-hopping’ would be incorporated into the design process. This involves taking the best customs and traditions from a range of similar sporting practices and integrating them into the proposed model. The need to evaluate the various invasion sports would allow for taxonomy of sports officiating. Classification would be based on the perceived difficulty of task.

This critical analysis of the development of elite Rugby Union officiating in Wales offers an initial insight into a complex sporting phenomenon. The key findings and subsequent recommendations become the foundations for future research into the development of sports officiating as a recognised subdiscipline within the field of sports science.
References


## Appendix A: WRU Referee Performance Evaluation Sheet

**Name of Referee:** Neil Hennessy  
**Date/Referee:** 22/4/06  
**Type of Fixture:** FRIENDLY  
**Game:** Glamorgan Wanderers 1st XV vs Richmond 2nd XV  
**Score:** 80:70  
**Referee Notes:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TACKLE</th>
<th>COMA</th>
<th>GOOD</th>
<th>DECISIONS</th>
<th>MARKS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrived early at tackle situation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensured that the tackler released the ball and moved away</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensured that the tackled player made the ball available without delay</td>
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<td>Ensured that the acting players stayed on their feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensured that acting players entered tackle area correctly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assisted scrum throw-in to the correct team when ball became unplayable</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OFFSIDE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disorientated offside lines through preventative action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scanned the offside lines at set piece, kicks &amp; throws</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured players stayed outside from kicks in open play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that ‘screamer’ were not allowed to slow the game down</td>
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<tr>
<th>ADVANTAGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used all opportunities to play territorial advantage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used all opportunities to play tactical advantage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not return to the original infringement after territorial/tactical advantage had been gained</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciated the differences in application of advantage when the outcome is a penalty or scrum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Played advantage without putting the non-offending players under pressure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spotted that advantage was being played indifferently once</td>
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<tr>
<th>RUCK &amp; MAUL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that participating players in ruck/maul were in their correct positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that players joined from sideline positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that rucks/mauls were not unfairly collapsed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assisted scrum throw-in to the correct team when the ball became unplayable</td>
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<tr>
<th>FAKES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that players remained outside kick-off and restart kicks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that all kicks were taken correctly (place &amp; type)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured 10 metre space available to non-offending team at penalty kick and free kick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that kicks, charges and releases were not obstructed at any type of kick</td>
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<tr>
<th>SCRUMMAGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that the scrum engagement procedure was followed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that the scrum was stationary and square to touch until the ball was thrown-in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that heads and shoulders were above hips until the scrum was over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that all players were bound correctly until the scrum was over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that throw-in was correct ensuring a fair contest for the ball</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<th>LINEOUT</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managed scrum throw-ins effectively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established and maintained a one metre gap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that the throw-in was correct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that actions against opponents were prevented or managed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that actions involving team mates were prevented or managed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description of Game:** A fast open, student type game with some very experienced players which led to some gamesmanship at the breakdown. Not the steepest of tests.

**FINSISH**
- Played up with play
- Arrived early at breakdown situations
- Speeded off the mark
- High work rate maintained throughout the game

**CONSISTENCY**
- Consistently interpreted laws in all phases of play.
- Consistent application of preventative & punitive measures throughout the game.
- Consistent in dealing with law play incidents.
- Refereed both teams equably.

**CONTROL**
- Allowed a balance of preventative and punitive measures to control the game
- Set acceptable standards in all areas of play
- Ensured that the interactions with captains/players were effective
- Managed head play by applying appropriate sanctions
- Managed player infringements/professional fouls by applying appropriate sanctions
- Coined temperament throughout the game

**COMMUNICATION**
- Communicated effectively with the umpires
- Communicated effectively with signs (primary/secondary/system)
- Communicated effectively with the voice
- Communicated effectively non-verbally (Body Language)
- Communicated effectively with other match officials

**Agreed Areas for Improvement:**

1. **At the Rucks and Mauls Be Aware of the Fringing Players That Block. (CPO Docs).**
2. **Don't Allow Player to Talk Indiscriminately. It Can Only Cause Frustration In the Game.**
3. **Be Aware of What Type of Signal You Give When Foul Play is Involved.**

Signed (please print): S. JEFFREYS  
Ref's Initials: J.J.  
Date: 22/4/06
Appendix B: WRU Match Official’s Performance Review Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFEREE: Neil Hennessy</th>
<th>REVIEWER: Clayton Thomas</th>
<th>Date: 02/10/10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MATCH: Carmarthen Quins</td>
<td>v Tonmawr</td>
<td>29pts 28pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEATHER &amp; GROUND CONDITIONS: Fine day, dry pitch</td>
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DESCRIPTION OF THE GAME: Conditions were excellent for a game between a Tonmawr side sitting fairly comfortably in mid-table in their first season in the top flight and a Carmarthen side rooted to the foot of the Premiership table after a disappointing start to their season.

The game itself, whilst by no means a classic, was keenly fought between 2 evenly matched sides and there was never much between the sides on the scoreboard. Quins led by 19 – 16 at the interval, despite being outscored by two tries to one by the visitors, and by the 70th minute had stretched this lead to 29 – 21 and looked to have the game won. However, Tonmawr refused to give up and deservedly scored a converted try of their own in the last seconds to make the final score reflect the game as a whole.

REFEREE’S PERFORMANCE: The first time I’ve seen Neil in action and I must say that I was suitably impressed. He has a nice way about him, obviously knows the game and, very importantly, has a ‘presence’. He looks very comfortable at this level and has many of the attributes that would enable him to successfully make the very large leap to the next level. More testing games at this level would prepare him for that leap.

OVERALL SUMMARY: I would rate Neil’s performance in this game as being in the very good bracket.

TACKLE / RUCK / MAUL: 12 penalties awarded at these phases – 4 for not allowing release, 1 for not staying on feet, 1 for hands in a ruck, 2 for joining offences and 4 for offsides.

This relatively small number of penalties shows how refreshingly trouble free these phases of play were. This was, in large part, due to the fact that Neil’s fitness allowed him to arrive at the breakdown early and after doing so his communication and management skills were good enough to largely prevent any problems that might arise.

I also liked the way he quickly blew for unplayables on three occasions when the resulting ‘mess’ at the breakdown was going nowhere and could only result in a needless penalty against one side or another.

During the first half in particular there were numerous instances of back foot offides close to the breakdown by both attacking and defensive sides and although they might have appeared to be non-material, if they happen more than once or twice they become material.
**SCRUMMAGE:** There were 18 primary scrums in the game. 2 of these needed resetting for poor engagements, 1 resulted in a free kick for early engagement and 6 resulted in penalties (1 for taking a scrum down, 2 for binding offences, 1 for hands in a scrum and 2 for offsides). Once again these figures are far more acceptable than many of the games I’ve seen lately and again this was, in large part, due to sympathetic and effective management of this phase. They were untidy at times and Neil could probably have remedied this by slowing down the engagement in line with recent IRB directives. The cadence of his engagement procedure was much too quick with no noticeable gap between the ‘pause’ and the ‘engage’. (He did free kick for an early engagement on one occasion but on two further occasions he allowed front rows to escape sanction when they engaged without him even calling ‘engage’!). Needs to be aware of ‘slingshot’ binding by No 8’s!

**LINEOUT:** Lineouts (21) were well managed and resulted in quality ball for both sides. He insisted on a meaningful gap up until the very last minute and this paid dividends. He correctly free – kicked for numbers on 2 occasions but on the minus side he does sometimes drop his hand prematurely to indicate ‘lineout over’ which gives the defending three-quarter line license to illegally encroach.

**ADVANTAGE, CONTROL, OFFSIDE & COMMUNICATION:**

**Advantage:** Always looking to play advantage. His use of advantage was sensible, sympathetic and consistent. All understood signals were understood and he invariably brought play back when no advantage had accrued.

**Control:** control was never in question in this game – he controlled a potentially explosive game firmly yet sympathetically. He awarded 21 penalties during the game (12 at the breakdown, 6 at the scrum, 1 in the lineout and 2 in open play) and looked in control at all times. He justifiably awarded yellow cards to 2 Quins forwards in the 40th and 43rd minute of the first half for slowing ball down at the breakdown but showed a lack of consistency in the 1st minute of the second half when he failed to deal similarly with another Quins player for a similar offence at the breakdown in the ‘red zone’ whilst his team were down to 13 men.

**Offside:** I have already mentioned close-in offsides earlier in this report but with regard to offsides in open play and at other phases they were never a problem.

**Communication:** His use of the whistle was sensible and informative and both primary and secondary signals were conventional and understood by all. The way he spoke to players was respectful yet authoritative and as a result they responded positively to his promptings or instructions. I do, however, find that he talks a little too much at times particularly in ‘down time’ and he needs to realize that there are times when players could do with a break from the referee! Communication with his AR’s was hindered by some niggling problems with the comms.
Appendix C: WRU Referee’s Coaching Report

WELSH RUGBY UNION
REFEREE’S COACHING REPORT

REFEREE: Neil Hennessey
DISTRICT: 4

FIXTURE: Parc-Y-Brecon v Aberavon G.S. Date: 8 Sep '07

Conditions:
Ground: ☑ Flat
Weather: ☑ Fine
Match: ☑ High Speed

☑ Areas Managed Well
☒ Areas Requiring Attention

Areas of competence:

Tackle ☑
Ruck and Maul ☑
Ruck/Maul Offside ☑
Open Play ☑
Open Play Offside ☑
Open Play Obstruction ☑

Scrum ☑
Scrum Offside ☑
Lineout ☑
Lineout Offside ☑
Near and In-Goal ☑
Foul Play ☑
Advantage ☑
Voice ☑
Whistle/Signals ☑
Fitness/Mobile/Speed ☑
Positioning ☑
Consistency ☑

NB: Not all boxes need to be marked

Referee’s Strengths:
Good standard of fitness and stamina
Organises set pieces well
Good man-management skills, reads the game well

Coaching Points:
Step back further when ball won at rucks and maul to improve running angles.
Keep decision making clear at all times. Keep patience, try when opportunity arises.
Offload at scrum to see technique/tactics

Referee up to standard of appointment: Yes
Discussion with Referee: Yes
Development/Action Plan Agree: Yes

Referee’s Coach: NIM GRANG Signed: [Signature]

Assessor: Neil Hennessey Date: 8 Sep '07
Appendix D: Set 1 Interview

PAST

Please give a brief description of your rugby background.

How long have you been in your current role as a referee/TMO/referee coach/advisor?

EARLY EXPERIENCES AS A REFEREE

What sort of support system was in place then, and in what ways did such a system benefit/hinder your progress?

- Did you receive regular progress reports?
- Were you satisfied with the feedback?

Did you do anything to help your own progress?

Were key personnel such as senior referees and advisors accessible to you?

How well were you received by players and coaches then?

PRESENT

CURRENT EXPERIENCES AS A REFEREE/REFEREE COACH

What do you see as the main priorities of a referee/referee coach?

Are you satisfied with the current standard of officiating in Wales?

There appears to be a high level of cynical play by players in the modern game. Would you agree with this statement?
How might we deal with this? Specifically, how might a referee deal with playing issues such as cheating more effectively?

Do referees have a part in improving the game as a whole? If so, what support can be offered them in order to facilitate improvement?

- How do you perceive the relationship between match officials and coaches?
- Do coaches communicate with you regularly regarding referee performance? If so, what are the main issues?
- How would you improve the existing ‘them and us’ tag?
- How could Welsh clubs make better use of match officials?

How do you perceive the relationship between match officials and players?

It is suggested that players will frequently and wilfully bend the laws or engage in gamesmanship, yet when on the receiving end of an unfair act, then they are quick to turn on the referee; this is especially true when the referee has not seen the incident. Your thoughts on this.

REFEREES’ SOCIETY

Are you satisfied with the training and support that it provides?

Are you still assessed?

What do you think of the current procedure for assessing referees?

Are there many opportunities for career development/progress to higher levels?

What kind of person makes an elite match official?

- What skills/characteristics should they possess?
ACCOUNTABILITY OF MATCH OFFICIALS

Have you had any bad experiences with supporters and/or committee members?

Should we encourage referees to be more accountable in the professional era, for example, give interviews following a critical incident to explain their decisions?

Do you think that referees should be accountable for their actions in the way that players and coaches are?

FUTURE

Are there any aspects of the game that you would like to see managed differently?

Are there any changes that you would like to see made to the existing advisory system?

Do you have any suggestions as to how you might like your performances assessed?

Materiality is often discussed at Society meetings. Do you think that allowing the referee more freedom in his decision-making would lead to a higher standard of officiating in Wales?
Appendix E: WRU Referee and Advisory Structure Review

Working party members

Tony Lynch  WRU Advisor and President, WSRUR
Huw David  Senior WRU Referee
Martyn Lewis  Honorary Secretary, WSRUR

Terms of Reference

To provide a system that can allow for the development of referees to fulfill their full potential

Framework

Main areas considered were as follows:

1. A means to identify referees with the potential to be capable of refereeing at the professional end of the game and assisting them to progress to this stage in a timely manner.
2. A coaching tool to ensure that referees have the opportunity to review their performance with a suitably trained coach to agree improvements that could assist in their refereeing progression.
3. A means of monitoring the standard of the referee to ensure they justify the games to which they are appointed.

Consultation

Means by which the working party consulted:

All referees and advisors were asked to participate in the “root and branch” review either directly or via their society following the November Parent Body meeting. Thanks are given to those that sent detailed papers and various e-mails and telephone calls expressing their opinions and suggestions sometimes with experience of how other countries / societies operate.
Proposed Structure

Owing to the fact that the game has changed dramatically over the last 10 years with the escalation in professional structures on the playing side, the current system was felt not to be fulfilling its function as best it should.

Premier and Division 1

A system of PR (Performance Review) with forensic analysis should be used in line with that used at ERC and Magners League.

Compulsory fitness testing for Premier and Grade 1 referees.

Division 2 and below

This is the largest group of referees and advisors within our membership and therefore arguably the most important to cater for.

Points 2 & 3 of the Framework (as noted above) apply in the main to this group.

We feel it is extremely important to develop the structures within this group to allow for the advancement of any referee that is ambitious to progress to the highest grades and whose performance confirms they should be invited to join the “Development Group” (see below).
An advisory or coaching system based on an amalgamation of the two currently used coaching forms should be used for the “Community Game” without a score or mark.

**Why have a “Two-tier” system?**

It was felt at present we have a 4- or 5-tier system, which all parties agree requires an overhaul.

**Premier & Division 1**

The Performance Reviewers should base their comments and marks on a forensic analysis (statistical) approach and should be trained to ERC level, as this approach will gear both the referee and advisor to get used to ERC structures.

The Elite Coaching Group should continue to work closely alongside PR’s at the professional and semi-professional end of the game utilising the same reporting method.

**Community Game**

The “Advisory Coaching Forms” should have an expanded “Description of the game” which should make it very clear to all referees how they performed *in that game* and in part will cover whether or not they were “Up to the standard” of that game.

The coaching points should reflect the tick box descriptive [descriptors].
This coaching form should be in duplicate and handed to the referee immediately after the review concludes.

The failure of the current system is that a “score” at the bottom of the Assessment has been seen as a method of meritocracy. However, this can only work if all referees within a grade are assessed by all advisors working at that grade and due to the exceptionally large number of referees currently Probationer to Grade 2, the working party felt it makes the mark statistically inaccurate and therefore inappropriate in developing referees.

One particular area of concern is the variance in and often conflicting feedback given to referees by advisors. As such training of the advisors in terms of current best practice and communication processes needs to be addressed with regular ongoing training for advisors.

**Development Group**

In addition to grade-based groupings the working party very much supports the (belated) work done by Rob Yemen and Joe Lydon in conjunction with DR Davies in establishing a “Development Group” or “Academy”.

To achieve point 1 of the Framework as noted above, the working party wholeheartedly support a fast-track approach for those thought to have the skills set to rise quickly within Welsh refereeing.
The Development Group should be regularly reviewed with the opportunity for “late starters” to be added and underperforming members to be removed, thus making best use of resources by focusing on those members who warrant the ongoing fast-track development.

To this end we believe the “Development Group” should be managed through the Elite Coaching Group.

Compulsory fitness testing should apply to the Development Group.

**Advisors/Assessors/Coaches**

The working party believes that more investment and training is required for advisors. We acknowledge that attracting new advisors has been difficult as referees continue officiating much longer than they used to and WRU needs to review ways to encourage greater involvement in coaching/assessing.

Advisors should regularly shadow other advisors from a different grade as a two-way process of ongoing advisor training and true reflection as to where the referee being watched should be positioned within the grading structure.

Such a structure should be used (in part) for the promotion or relegation of advisors, as the working party believes that, as with referee promotion/relegation, advisors should be more closely monitored.
Other points to consider

1. Is there a requirement for formal “Grades” (i.e., 2-5) within the Community Group?
2. All meaningful midweek games to be picked up by advisors or advisor groups for training purposes.

Conclusion

The above are the suggestions of the working party on behalf of all members of WSRUR.

It is not definitive and this paper is meant to be used as part of the consultation process and all referees and advisors are requested to feedback their comments in the first instance through their own Society secretary or if they prefer, to Martyn Lewis, Honorary Secretary, WSRUR.

All Societies are asked to bring their comments to March Parent Body meeting so that an agreed format can be finalised in advance of July’s National Conference for implementation in September 2010.

The working party (with support from the Executive) urges you to voice any concerns as soon as possible because when a process is finalised all members need to get behind it to make it work in the interest of the game in Wales and our standing as referees and advisors on the world stage.
Appendix F: Pilot Interview

PAST

Please give a brief description of your rugby background.

How long have you been in your current role as a TMO and referee coach?

EARLY EXPERIENCES AS A REFEREE

What sort of support system was in place then, and in what ways did such a system benefit/hinder your progress?

- Did you receive regular progress reports?
- Were you satisfied with the feedback?

Did you do anything to help your own progress?

Were key personnel such as senior referees and advisors accessible to you?

How well were you received by players and coaches then?

PRESENT

CURRENT EXPERIENCES AS A REFEREE/REFEREE COACH

What do you see as the main priorities of a referee/reefer coach?

Are you satisfied with the current standard of officiating in Wales?

There appears to be a high level of cynical play by players in the modern game. Would you agree with this statement?

How might we deal with this? Specifically, how might a referee deal with playing issues such as cheating more effectively?
Do referees have a part in improving the game as a whole? If so, what support can be offered them in order to facilitate improvement?

How do you perceive the relationship between match officials and coaches?

- Do coaches communicate with you regularly regarding referee performance? If so, what are the main issues?
- How would you improve the existing ‘them and us’ tag?
- How could Welsh clubs make better use of match officials?

How do you perceive the relationship between match officials and players?

It is suggested that players will frequently and wilfully bend the laws or engage in gamesmanship, yet when on the receiving end of an unfair act, then they are quick to turn on the referee; this is especially true when the referee has not seen the incident. Your thoughts on this.

**REFEREES’ SOCIETY**

Are you satisfied with the training and support that it provides?

Are you still assessed?

What do you think of the current procedure for assessing referees?

Are there many opportunities for career development/progress to higher levels?

What kind of person makes an elite match official?

- What skills/characteristics should they possess?
ACCOUNTABILITY

Have you had any bad experiences with supporters and/or committee members?

Should we encourage referees to be more accountable in the professional era, for example, give interviews following a critical incident to explain their decisions?

Do you think that referees should be accountable for their actions, in the way that players and coaches are?

FUTURE

Are there any aspects of the game that you would like to see managed differently?

Are there any changes that you would like to see made to the existing advisory system?

Do you have any suggestions as to how you might like your performances assessed?

Materiality is often discussed at Society meetings. Do you think that allowing the referee more freedom in his decision-making would lead to a higher standard of officiating in Wales?
Appendix G: Voluntary Consent Form

The following interview will be used as part of a doctoral thesis. The study will undertake a critical analysis of the developmental structure of elite match officiating in Wales. The data will be examined in order to offer recommendations for future practice within the Welsh Rugby Union.

Approval and support for this study has been sought and received from Mr. Joe Lydon, Head of Rugby Performance and Development, and Mr. Robert Yeman, National Referee Manager.

By undertaking this interview I am consenting to any information that I provide being used as part of this study and am satisfied that any findings will be published and presented to the WRU for the good of the game. To this end, I understand that anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

Signed:

Dated:
Appendix H: National Referee Manager Interview

PAST

Please give a brief description of your rugby background.

- How long have you been in your current role as the National Referee Manager?

What support system for referee development was in place when you took up the role and how has that evolved?

- Does the WRU control the assessment of its referees or does it take its lead from the IRB?

PRESENT

What do you see as your main priority in the post of NRM?

Are you satisfied with the current standard of officiating in Wales?

- If not, then why not?
- How might this be improved?
- What performance indicators, if any, are you using to measure the success of the new advisory system?

What type of person is likely to make it to elite level as a match official?

Please outline the existing protocol for club coaches who wish to raise issues with regards to match officials.

How do you perceive the relationship between players, coaches and referees? How might the “them and us” tag be improved?

How could Welsh clubs make better use of match officials?

What are your major concerns for the game in its current state?
Is abuse/criticism of referee performance acceptable?

- How accountable should a referee be and to whom?

FUTURE

What changes are needed in order to produce a higher standard of officiating in Wales?

What are your initial thoughts on the new Academy structure that you recently implemented?

Please comment on the selection process undertaken for choosing the Academy Referees.

How does the Academy record data in such a way as to build an accurate and potentially accessible and transparent record of a referee based on performances and other relevant profiling data?

Should referees be more involved in the evolution of the game? If so, in what capacity?
### Appendix I: Junior Academy Referee Profile

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<td>6</td>
<td>7+</td>
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</table>
Appendix J: Set 2 Interview

Please give a brief description of your rugby background.

How long have you been in your current role as regional director of rugby/head coach?

**EARLY EXPERIENCES WITH MATCH OFFICIALS**

Coaches have been given the opportunity to contribute to the assessment of referee performances for many years via the card system. Your thoughts on this practice.

What, if any, has been the procedure for articulating your concerns with regards to refereeing issues? How has this evolved?

- Were key personnel such as referee advisors accessible to you?

Has your relationship with referees changed over the years?

- If so, how and why?

**CURRENT EXPERIENCES WITH MATCH OFFICIALS**

What do you expect from the appointed match officials?

Are you satisfied with the current standard of officiating in Wales?

There appears to be a high level of cynical play by players in the modern game. Would you agree with this statement? Is this coached?

How might we deal with this? Specifically, how might a referee deal with playing issues such as cheating more effectively?

Who do you think should be responsible for moving the game forward?
How do you perceive the relationship between match officials and players and coaches?

Do you use the full-time referees as part of your rugby development? If so, in what capacity?

It is suggested that players and, in some cases, coaches will frequently and wilfully bend the laws or engage in gamesmanship, yet when on the receiving end of an unfair act, then they are quick to turn on the referee; this is especially true when the referee has not seen the incident. Your thoughts on this.

DEVELOPMENT OF MATCH OFFICIALS

Are you familiar with the existing support structures for Welsh referees?

Do you have any suggestions as to the way match officials might be assessed?

Are there any aspects of officiating that you would like to see improved significantly?

Do you actively engage with the National Referee Manager?

What kind of person makes an elite match official?

ACCOUNTABILITY OF MATCH OFFICIALS

Do you think that referees should be accountable for their actions in the way that players and coaches are?

Should we encourage referees to be more accountable in the professional era, for example, give interviews following a critical incident to explain their decisions?

Are there any aspects of the game that you would like to see managed differently in order to reduce the ‘human error’ factor?
Appendix K: Set 3 Interview

Please give a brief description of your rugby playing background.

How long have you been on the List of WRU referees?

EARLY DAYS

Please comment on your refereeing development to date; specifically, your journey from Level 1 novice to being a member of the WRU Junior Referee Academy.

What support system did you experience during your time as a Level 1 and 2 referee?

Were you satisfied with the training that you received? If so, why? If not, then how might this have been improved?

Were key personnel such as referee advisors, senior referees and coaches accessible during this period?

PRESENT ISSUES

What are your current goals as a match official? How might these be achieved?

There appears to be a high level of cynical play by players in the modern game. Would you agree with this statement? How might we deal with this? Specifically, how might a referee deal with playing issues such as cheating more effectively?

It is suggested that players will frequently and wilfully bend the laws or engage in gamesmanship, yet when on the receiving end of an unfair act, then they are quick to turn on the referee; this is especially true when the referee has not seen the incident. Your thoughts on this.

How would you describe your current relationship with players and coaches? How might this be improved?
ACCOUNTABILITY OF MATCH OFFICIALS

Do you think that referees should be accountable for their actions in the way that players and coaches are?

Are there any aspects of the game that you would like to see managed differently in order to reduce the ‘human error’ factor?

Do you think that referees should have more freedom to determine materiality?

FUTURE NEEDS

What will you do to achieve your goals?

What kind of person makes an elite match official?

Do you have any suggestions as to the way match officials might be assessed?

Are there any aspects of officiating that you would like to see improved?

Do you communicate with any specific rugby personnel with regards your own personal development? If so, who and how often?
Appendix L: Set 4 Interview

Please give a brief description of your rugby background.

How long have you been in your current role as a referee?

**EARLY DAYS**

Please describe the support system that you experienced as a new referee.

- Did you receive regular progress reports?
- Were you satisfied with the feedback?

Did you do anything to help your own progress?

Were key personnel such as senior referees and advisors accessible to you?

How well were you received by players and coaches then?

**CURRENT EXPERIENCES AS A REFEREE**

What do you see as the main priorities of a referee?

Are you satisfied with the current standard of officiating in the Magners League?

There appears to be a high level of cynical play by players in the modern game. Would you agree with this statement?

How might we deal with this? Specifically, how might a referee deal with playing issues such as cheating more effectively?

Do referees have a part in improving the game as a whole? If so, what support can be offered them in order to facilitate improvement?

- Describe your relationship with coaches and players?
- Do you have much interaction with coaches with regards to your performances? If so, what are the main issues?

- How would you improve the existing ‘them and us’ tag?

- How could clubs make better use of match officials?

It is suggested that players will frequently and wilfully bend the laws or engage in gamesmanship, yet when on the receiving end of an unfair act, then they are quick to turn on the referee; this is especially true when the referee has not seen the incident. Your thoughts on this.

What do you think of the current procedure for assessing referees?

How well are referees supported by their respective Referee Societies?

Are there any career opportunities following a full-time role as an elite match official with your union?

What kind of person makes an elite match official?

- What skills/characteristics should they possess?

**ACCOUNTABILITY OF MATCH OFFICIALS**

Have you had any bad experiences with supporters and/or committee members?

Do you think that referees should be accountable for their actions in the way that players and coaches are?

Should referees be expected to give interviews following a televised game?

Are there any aspects of the game that you would like to see managed differently?

Do you have any suggestions as to how you might like your performances assessed?
### IRFU REFEREE ASSESSMENT

**NAME OF REFEREE:**

**NAME OF TOUCH JUDGES:**

(If applicable)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
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**MATCH:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pts</th>
<th>v</th>
<th>pts</th>
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**WEATHER & GROUND CONDITIONS:**

**DESCRIPTION OF THE GAME:**

**CRITICAL INCIDENT DESCRIPTION:**

**OVERALL PERFORMANCE:** (May include TJs)

**POSITIONING:**

**FITNESS:**

**FINAL SCORE:**

**ASSESSOR:**

**SIGNATURE:**
### KEY AREAS OF THE GAME - to be marked 1-5, (with 5 being the highest)

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<th>TACKLE/RUCK</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tackler released tackled player &amp; moved away</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tackled player made ball available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players entering tackle and joining ruck correctly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arriving players did not go to ground/handle ball illegally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruck offside correctly monitored</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAUL</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Sub total:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Players joined correctly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maul collapsed legally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offside correctly monitored</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrum correctly awarded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ADVANTAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESTART KICKS/OPEN PLAY</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Offside from kicks in open play]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SCRUM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Sub total:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### LINEOUT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Sub total:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### CONTROL

### COMMUNICATION
Appendix N: SRU Referee Coaching Form

SCOTTISH RUGBY UNION – REFEREE COACHING FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referee:</th>
<th>Society:</th>
<th>Grade:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Match:**  
League ☐ Cup ☐ Bowl ☐ Shield ☐ Friendly ☐ Other ☐

**Game and Result:** _____________(__pts) v _____________(__pts)

**Description of the game including conditions:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRE, POST and MATCH MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>NCR</th>
<th>MCR</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>UCR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management of pre / post match events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used all opportunities to play advantage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws: knowledge and application</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of foul and negative play</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments and Coaching Points:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFEREE ATTRIBUTES</th>
<th>NCR</th>
<th>MCR</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>UCR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assertive but not aggressive or arrogant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance – preventative / punitive for control of the game</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy with the game and players</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kept up with play throughout the game</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referee's mobility during the game</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications: Voice, whistle and signals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments and Coaching Points:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### THE SCRUM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NCR</th>
<th>MCR</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>UCR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement procedure at the scrum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured a fair contest for the ball</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players bound correctly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The offside lines were managed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Comments and Coaching Points:**

### THE LINEOUT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NCR</th>
<th>MCR</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>UCR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The gaps in the lineout were maintained throughout the game</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured a fair contest for the ball</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The offside lines were managed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Comments and Coaching Points:**

### THE CONTACT PHASE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NCR</th>
<th>MCR</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>UCR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensured a fair contest for the ball</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The offside lines were managed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players involved took the correct action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed unplayable situations correctly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments and Coaching Points:**

**ADDITIONAL COACHING COMMENTS**

---

Referee Coach: ___________________________
### Appendix O: Data Analysis Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PER2 7 VE</th>
<th>PER2 7 PH</th>
<th>PER2: It boils down to one thing in my opinion. I’ll qualify this now. When I first started refereeing we had the Secretary of West Society was an individual, lovely chap called Ray Nicholson. Now, Ray Nicholson was a solicitor; highly intelligent guy, right. Ray Nicholson could quote Law 10, paragraph 3, sub-section 6...and put him on the field with a whistle in his hand, he didn’t have a clue and it brought it home to me then right, that you can never compensate for good old-fashioned common sense.</th>
<th>The referee needs to have game knowledge and understanding; knowing the Laws only will not suffice.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PER2 7 VE</td>
<td>PER2 7 PH</td>
<td>PER2: And that means reading it, you know, knowledge of the game has got a lot to do with it as well. Appreciating what the players do. Empathy with what they’re trying to do. One of the things that always weighed heavily in my favour as well, I felt, and still does to a large extent is knowing what’s happened in the scrum.</td>
<td>Understanding the nature of the game, having an empathy for what the players are trying to achieve, thinking about the game...a referee must do more than turn up on a match day and referee. He should work on his own game, prepare mentally and physically, so that he may contribute to the game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER2 19 PH</td>
<td>PER2 19 JD</td>
<td>PER2: You question one thing: what was the intent of that player? Was he being destructive or constructive? And you’ve got that split second [PER2 snaps his fingers] to make up your mind, haven’t you? That’s what makes the better referees.</td>
<td>A clear thought process is key. REF4 suggests that painting a picture of what it is you would hope to see unfold is a useful tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER2 11 IN</td>
<td>PER2 11 DS</td>
<td>PER2: ...when James was doing a training topic and he showed a clip of film, which was shown in Lensbury. This is what we’ve got to penalize and I said, “Who you penalizing?” “Loose-head prop.” I said, “You’re penalizing the wrong man”, so we had a discussion about that. So, James gave his point of view and I gave my point of view based on the actual film of what was happening, you know? And of course, it created a good discussion, you know? It was very helpful and a couple of the younger lads from Neath and District said to me after, “Oh, that was great that was because I always wonder what’s happening in the scrum, you know?”</td>
<td>Discussion between match officials is healthy and to be encouraged. Debating grey areas of the game will help to create a clearer picture and help to create a more consistent approach to Law interpretation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix P: Profile of an RFU Elite Match Official

Has been a professional referee since 2000.
Sociable guy who enjoys events on and off the pitch.
Cool, calm and doesn’t over-react to situations.
**Fitness** is good and always up with play to detect forward passes.
Enjoys an open game so our style will suit him.
He does a lot of analysis so he will have watched us before Friday.

**Scrums** are not one of his strengths, he tends to only reset early scrums, then after that he awards free kicks especially for early engagement. He stands a lot of the time at the other side of the put in. Very rarely gives free kicks for feeding.

**Lineouts** He encourages big gaps. Stands mainly at the front of every lineout.

**The Tackle** This is where the majority of penalties are awarded. He insists on refereeing the tackler and the ball carrier can do no wrong!! Very strict on entry via the gate. Very few penalties for holding on, he looks at getting the tackler to move before looking at the jackler. Wants quick ball and very seldom blows for an unplayable, he has always penalized the tackler for not rolling away even when trapped.

**Ruck** Good all round management and communicates well at this phase.

**Kick chase** Forwards are sensible on the kick chase and allow chaser to put them onside before they get into the line.

Refereed Dragons v Clermont Shield Semi Final 2007………..2 cards after allowing Clermont momentum early in game.

Appendix Q: PRO12 Referee Performance Review
Referee self review

Technical [0]

Picked up the clear and obvious infringements (11:47) but 2-3 harsh/incorrect calls (70:26). TRM - worked hard to facilitate continuity in these areas; majority of calls were accurate. S - consistent engagement process and good player compliance with only 3 FKs and 3 resets. L/O - no problems with not straights sanctioned accordingly. Foul Play - no incidences other than two, which were flagged by ARs (1 correct; 1 incorrect). Kicks - good management of players at kicks (13:25, 45:11, 66:08).

Referee performance review

Technical [0]

SCRUMS; 21 primary, 2 resets, 1 penalty, 3 free kicks.

As we can see from the stats this was an area that we had little trouble in. Neil followed the protocol in the engagement procedure and we only had 2 resets in 21 primary scrums, in this season that is remarkably low. Front rows listened to instructions and responded and therefore we had very little trouble in any area with the scrum.

Players were kept bound with good management skill and backs were kept on the offside line with good work by the AR officials.

All scrum feeds looked creditable.

LINEOUTS; 25, 1 quick throw, 2 not straight throws.

Again as the scrum a well refereed area and a little sympathy used on occasions. There were no free kicks or penalties in the descriptor but all aspects were well dealt with in down time with good management skill.

Again all players were kept onside with good work by the AR’s.

The one thing I would like Neil to do is to hold his arm up to indicate that the line out is still in progress, this will also inform the backs when the line out is over and they can encroach.

TRM; 20, penalties.

An area that had 20 penalties awarded in the game, rather high but correct, perhaps a look at the DVD and this could be reduced, as a couple were not material. 19.46, being an example and 50.41 and 54.19 when it was more of a pile up and then penalty awarded an early whistle would have benefitted the situation. Also 52.47 when a player was penalised for pulling in the scrum half a warning as let go would have done the job and another penalty less.

We had the usual incorrect joining and a couple of pillars (see time line) not sanctioned.

There was one Yellow card issued in this area for deliberately slowing the ball down which was correct. There were 2 unplayable situations in the game both were correctly handled.

I would like to see Neil scan the backs more regularly for offside and not have his gaze fixed on the TRM area.

FOUL PLAY;

In a high intensity game there was one instance of foul play reported by AR for miss use of hands, this was quietly but effectively dealt with by Neil. There
was a high tackle flagged by AR 2 at 22.02 but was it high?

ADVANTAGE;
There were 13 advantages played of which 7 were brought back to the original offence. No pressure was put on player or team when advantage was being played and the only try of the game was scored by a very good advantage call. Advantage and advantage over calls were very good.

KICKS, KNOCK-ONS, FORWARD PASSES:
All kicks in the game were correctly taken and the team of three worked well to keep all players on side and no penalties were awarded for offside in open play. There were 11 drop-outs in the game, which is a very high count.
4.26. knock-on was awarded against D 4 I think should have been a penalty for deliberate knock-on. 8.31 and 31.18 good forward pass calls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management [0]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive relationship with both captains. Maintained control but needed greater preventative measures/better positioning on 2-3 occasions. Communication with players was productive at S, with players generally responding well at TRM. Even though PKs were not conceded frequently in clusters, 1-2 YCs might have helped.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management [0]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This was first game in an all Welsh derby. The game was very intense if not great but the score kept a large crowd on their feet. Dragons missed 5 kickable penalties some from in front of the posts, which would have given them a deserved victory. NH handling of the scrum and line out area was very good. At TRM there were 20 penalties and I am sure with a little more experience this will be reduced. Has very good management skill and communication sense and uses them well. Has good rapport with players and captains even had time for a little humour.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Referee Performance [0]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generally pleased with the performance in what was my first derby match. Overall, I felt that I had the respect and co-operation of both teams. Some good communication and management skills displayed but a greater emphasis on preventative measures needed to reduce PK count (despite 4-5 'silly' penalties that were impossible to prevent, e.g., PK v P20).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Referee Performance [0]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This was an impressive performance by a referee in his first Welsh Derby, there was high intensity in the game but it was well handled by . Has very good management and communication skill and uses them correctly. The penalty count (31 including 3 free kicks) is a little high but that could have been reduced and I am sure with that little more experience it will be. can be satisfied with this performance and lets hope it leads to greater challenges in the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of AR/TMO Performance [0]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good support and communication from ARs; some very good calls with 1-2 marginal calls that I, as referee, should have filtered. The TMO was not called upon in this match.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of AR/TMO Performance [0]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The team of 3 worked well together. There was good input given and acted on it well. AR2 gave an illegal tackle call 22.02 but I think it was marginal and perhaps not high. No decisions were referred to the TMO.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game time line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Times of note</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game time line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Times of note</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1st half

04:23 Knock-on by P4 - PK would have been harsh call, as pass was not on
05:44 PK v P11 - marginal call; consider b/s position to manage better
15:00 PK v R9, offside - good call by AR1
16:51 Knock-on by P - good use of advantage leads to a try for R
19:47 PK v R5, off feet at tackle - correct decision
22:06 PK v P5, dangerous tackle - incorrect call by AR2
23:20 PK v R6, obstruction - correct decision but preventable?
30:55 Good management of players (P7) at T to maintain continuity
32:07 PK v P5, off feet at tackle - correct decision
34:13 PK v R7, off feet at R - goes straight to ground; no issue
40:00(+1:15) YC for R8, obstruction - no issue. R7 was also liable for not rolling away

2nd half

40:22 PK v R5, playing opponent without the ball (40:15) - good call by AR1; possible YC?
42:33 PK v P1, binding at S - called by AR1; possible reset?
47:47 Good use of proactive communication when instructing P22 to release
48:05 Positioning - too close to play; better to restart with scrum award to P
52:50 PK v P7, playing opponent without the ball; further preventative measure useful?
54:19 PK v P7, handling in R; further preventative measure useful?
58:55 Incorrect entry at T by P6?
60:09 Played on following T as both tackled player and tackler had rolled off the field of play; T was over, so R8 was OK to play ball
62:30 PK v R20, offside at R (62:20) - filter this marginal call by AR2 (by better use of scanning)
68:36 PK v R16, offside at R (68:27?) - video suggests incorrect call by AR2
70:26 PK v P, off feet at R - incorrect call; first offence was R7 off his feet at T
71:34 Unsuccessful M - good call

D- Dragons, S-Scarlets
4.00. D 3. off feet
4.26. Knock-on is it deliberate and therefore a penalty.
5.47. Was the penalty correct was it offside or did the scrum half have his hands on the ball.
8.31. Forward pass good call.
15.03. S 9 given offside was he.
19.46. Was it a pen.
22.02. Was it High?
25.04. S 5 Pillar.
31.18. Forward Pass good call.
41.20. S 7 Entry.
44.58. D 8 off feet.
50.41. Mess a pile up blow up not penalise.
52.47. D 7. Was it material pulling the scrum half in.
54.19. Mess on floor blow up not penalise.
70.12. D 6 off feet.
77.37. S 22 off feet.