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New Refereeing Structures Information for Referees

Introduction

Earlier this year Fencing Ireland launched a new initiative to deliver our Level 1 refereeing courses and qualifications entirely online.

Alongside this, we are actively taking steps to grow and strengthen our cohort of referees and to improve the culture and level of organisation surrounding refereeing in Ireland. It is Fencing Ireland's goal that, in a few years, Ireland will no longer rely on 'self-refereeing' at competitions, especially at our higher level 'National Circuit' events.

To these ends, we are reviewing our referee training structure and introducing a number of refereeing policies and initiatives.

This document provides the necessary details for referees in Ireland regarding the new policies. The most prominent change will be that, in a system similar to the one used in FIE events, clubs will be required to provide referees for competitions based on the number of fencers from that club entering events. There are a number of other policies being introduced too and we would ask you to familiarise yourselves with the details of these new policies.



Referee Manager

Beginning at the start of the 2021/22 season, Competition Organisers have been asked to designate a *Referee Manager* for each competition.

The Referee Manager will be there as a resource for you and to support you. They will act as a point of contact for you before, during, and after the competition. Some specific moments in which you might interact with the Referee Manager for a particular competition are mentioned in the sections which follow.

If you are seeking to progress in your refereeing qualifications and are logging events to become eligible for the next level, it is the Referee Manager who is responsible for submitting the list of referees who were present and active during the course of a competition.

Referee database

Fencing Ireland will be organising a database of refereeing qualifications and contact details to be accessed by competition organisers. This will allow them to contact referees in advance of competitions so that they can arrange to have a suitable number of referees present for the competition.

Fencing Ireland will be providing this facility as part of our work towards ending Ireland's reliance on 'self refereeing' at our competitions.

You are free to opt out of this database at anytime. You may do so by emailing development@irishfencing.net. Opting out of the contact database will not affect the status of your refereeing qualification.

Clubs' responsibilities to provide referees to competitions

Beginning at the start of the 2022/23 season, fencing clubs in Ireland will be required to provide referees for events based on the number of fencers from that club who enter that event. For every four fencers from a club which enter an event, the club must provide one qualified referee for that event.

For example, if a club enters four women's foilists into the East of Ireland Open, the club will have to provide a qualified foil referee for the women's foil event. If, however, a club enters two women's foilists and two men's foilists, that will not require the provision of a referee as those four entries are split across two events. If a club enters between eight and eleven people to an event, they will be required to provide two referees, and so on for each four entries.

The clubs must submit the name of a qualified referee who has not already registered to referee for that event/day.

Your club or another club might ask you to referee at an event to fulfil this obligation. You do not have to be a member of a particular club to referee at an event in their name for them to fulfil this requirement. You may, of course, turn down a request from a club to referee at an event in their name,

Facilities to which you are entitled

Fencing Ireland is setting a standardised, base level of facilities to which you will be entitled as a referee when working at an event. These are:

- In advance of the competition, referees must be provided with clear start times for the events they will be refereeing. An approximate schedule of the day should also be available in advance.
- Tea/coffee/water must be provided by the organisers.
- Lunch must also be provided.
- Referees must be allowed adequate breaks to consume the water/tea/coffee/lunch provided.

We are also asking competition organisers that referees are treated in a clear and logical manner in the way in which they are assigned matches. Organisers will be asked to make every effort to ensure that qualified referees who volunteer for events are given an appropriate amount of matches to referee.

This is the minimum standard of facilities that must be provided, fencing competitions are, of course, welcome to provide more or better facilities to referees, if they so wish.

Respect for referees

At times, referees in Ireland face disrespectful behaviour or unacceptable abuse from other members of the Irish fencing community.

Fencing Ireland is committed to putting a stop to such behaviour. This will be done in a number of ways:

- A document is being issued to our members to make clear what is and is not acceptable behaviour. Fencing Ireland will also be talking to fencers about this issue in person at a number of competitions through the upcoming season.
- You, as a referee, can make sure you are aware of the relevant rules and take steps to apply those rules and issues penalties to those who breach them. The relevant rules are detailed below. If the breach of the rules calls for the issuing of a penalty card (up to and including issuing black cards), know that the Referee Manager and DT are there as resources to confirm such a decision if



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needed. We would ask that less experienced referees always refer to the DT or Referee Manager before issuing a black card.

- We recognise, however, that it can be difficult to directly confront and address the disrespectful, insulting, threatening, or abusive behaviour. It is also possible, therefore, to report such behaviour to a competition's Referee Manager and/or DT. This can be done either immediately in the moment or at a suitable later point of your choosing. The organisers may issue relevant penalties on the day of the event and will also pass these reports on to Fencing Ireland.

Regarding the specific rules relevant to this situation, we draw your attention to the following section of the FIE offences and penalties chart, the 3rd group of offences (3.1 and 3.4 are the most relevant parts here) and the full text of two relevant rules, t.109 and t.111:

	OFFENCE	ARTICLES	PENALTIES (Cards)		
			1st time	2nd time	
	3rd group				
3.1	Fencer disturbing order when on piste. In the most serious cases, the Referee may award a black card immediately (t.168).	t.108.2, t.109, t.110, t.137.2	RED	BLACK	
3.2	Dishonest fencing *	t.121			
3.3	Offence against Publicity Code	Publicity Code			
3.4	Any person not on piste disturbing good order. In the most serious cases, the Referee may award a black card immediately (t.168).	t.109, t.110, t.111, t.132.2, t.133, t.137.3/4, t.168	YELLOW	BLACK	
3.5	Warming up or training without wearing fencing clothing or equipment that conforms to the FIE regulations.	t.20.2			
3.6	Anti-sporting behaviour	t.121.2			

t.109

Everybody taking part in or present at a fencing competition must **remain orderly and must not disturb the smooth running of the competition**. During bouts no one is allowed to **go near the pistes**, to **give advice to the fencers**, to **criticise the Referee** or the judges, to insult them or to attempt to influence them in any way. Even the **team captain** must remain in the space assigned to him and he may only intervene in the situations and in the manner provided for in Article t.130 of the Rules. The Referee must stop immediately any activity which disturbs the smooth running of the bout which he is refereeing (cf. t.137.1-3).

Any person who, for any reason, threatens or insults an official commits an offence of the 4th group and is penalised according to article t.169.

t.111

The Referee and/or the Directoire Technique, on their own authority or at the request of an official delegate of the FIE or of the Organising Committee, can decide to **expel from the competition venue**, with or without a warning, any person who by his gestures, attitude or language disturbs the good order or smooth running of the event.

The other rules referenced in the above section of the penalty chart can be found on the FIE website. The entire penalty chart can be as t.170 in the FIE Technical Rules. The '4th group' of offences mentioned at the end of t.109 are offences that warrants a black card on the first incident.

As mentioned above, fencers are being informed of Fencing Ireland's focus on addressing this area of concern. Ignorance of the rules will, therefore, not be a valid excuse from anybody should unacceptable behaviour of this sort occur.

Fencers will also be informed that what they can do during a match is to politely request that a referee re-read a phrase.

Per t.172.2, if a fencer believes a referee "is ignorant of or misunderstands a direct rule" they may make an appeal to the DT on those grounds. They may not, however, cast "doubt on the decision of the Referee on a point of fact during the bout" (again, t.172.2). If a fencer infringes rule t.172 they are subject to penalty as a 1st group offence under the heading "Unjustified appeal, casting doubt on the decision of the referee on a point of fact." (1.17 in the FIE offences and penalties chart).

Weapon testing

It is our intention that ranked competition in Ireland will be more consistent in weight and gauge testing foils and épées at each round of competitions (at the start of poules and before every DE match). Many of you are, of course, doing so already. We ask referees to be aware of this and to carry out these tests at each stage of a competition.

Fencing competition organisers have been asked to ensure that they provide the necessary weights and gauges to enable these tests.

Further support from Fencing Ireland

Finally, Fencing Ireland is keen to provide support to our referee community in any way we can. If you have any suggestions of further improvements that we could consider, please do not hesitate to contact us at: development@irishfencing.net. Similarly, if you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch and let us know so that we can help.