

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Rugby is managed professionally as a business organisation and, therefore, the competencies of referees and the identification of high potential referees are important (Horn 2003: unpublished interview).

The game of rugby has a tremendous influence on the social and economic life of a large part of South African rugby supporters and players. Approximately 450 rugby matches are played during a typical week of the rugby season, in the Blue Bulls rugby region (Rhoodt 2003: unpublished interview). There are 50 schools involved in and around Pretoria, with matches taking place at 25 schools every week. There are 0/14, 0/15, 0/16, and open team matches. In the case of the bigger schools, there are up to three teams per age group and even more teams in the open league. There are a minimum of 40 club matches during such a week, plus at least 15 University and Technikon hostel matches (Rhoodt 2003: unpublished interview).

Referees handle all these matches and, therefore, they contribute greatly to the enjoyment and satisfaction of the players and supporters. Thousands of supporters attend these leagues and the bigger school and provincial matches are the subject of everyday conversations. The issue most likely to be discussed is the way the referees officiated the matches.

During a week in the Blue Bulls region, with the many matches that take place, it is mostly qualified referees who participate in the games, and in most cases, one referee will handle more than one match per week. In some matches qualified touch judges are also involved (Rhoadt 2003: unpublished interview).

The competencies of rugby referees are important because they impact matches in the following ways:

- They provide the framework within which the game can “flow”.
- They present the opportunity for the players to display their individual skills and for teams to execute their game plans and strategies.
- They determine a climate of fair or unfair refereeing.

Participation in the game of rugby is growing rapidly, and so much is at stake that the competencies of referees need to be improved all the time.

Interest in rugby generally starts at a young age and therefore school level rugby is already very competitive. The Craven Week is a national rugby week for both primary and high schools where teams from around the country battle it out to see which province will be “crowned” as champions. There are also some traditional rivalries between schools that attract a lot of attention, such as the rivalry that exists between the Afrikaans Hoër Seunskool (AFFIES), from Pretoria, and Grey College, from Bloemfontein. This particular rivalry started in 1953. Another old rivalry of this Pretoria high school is the annual game against their neighbours, Pretoria Boy’s High School. These two sides started their battle in 1923 and to date 96 games have been played (Snyman 2002: 8).

After school, there are various age groups in which provincial colours can be obtained. There are 0/20 and 0/23 levels before players move on towards senior rugby. Women’s rugby is also growing in popularity and an interprovincial competition for women rugby players is already in place.

The most prestigious rugby competitions within South Africa are the 0/20 national championship, the President's Cup (Senior B sides of all the provinces), and the most important is the Currie Cup, the traditional championship between all the provinces (<http://www.supersport.co.za>).

International rugby is another aspect of the game that attracts a lot of attention. The Super 12 is a championship between four South African "regional" sides, five New Zealand sides and three Australian sides. The Tri-nations is an international competition between South Africa's Springboks, the Australian Wallabies and the New Zealand All Blacks (<http://www.supersport.co.za>). International tours also take place annually and every fourth year there is a World Cup, in which all the top rugby playing nations partake.

Centre stage in all these games and traditional rivalries are the referees who are responsible for officiating. At senior and international levels, the prestige linked to results is very high and, therefore, referees and their competencies are the subject of public debate and are frequently covered by the media. It is an old cliché that the losing team normally blames the refereeing.

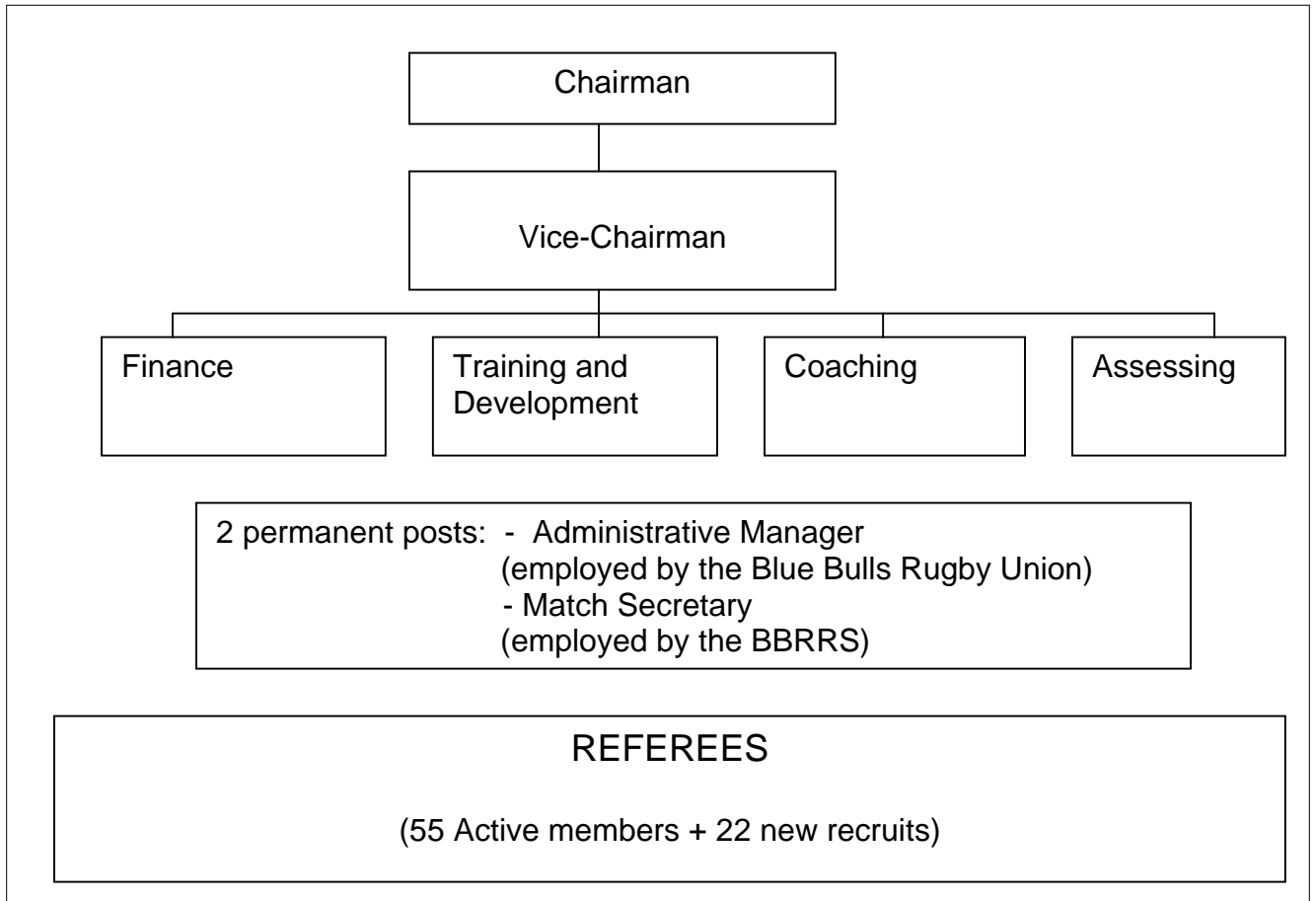
Most rugby unions within South Africa are profit oriented companies and have their own referee association or society. The South African Rugby Football Union (SARFU) has some referees on their payroll and these referees are professionals. Most referees from the different unions referee for the love of the game and make no money from their efforts. However, since the game turned professional in 1996, the demand for competent referees has increased dramatically. Since rugby unions became profit-making organisations, some rugby referees pursue rugby as a career, and the rugby referee societies have become a crucial division of the rugby organisations (unions). Once rugby unions are run as organisations they must function as such and, therefore, the optimal management of human resources is vital (Horn 2002: unpublished interview).

1.2 OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANISATION

The Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society (BBRRS) has been one of the more successful referee unions in South Africa over the past few years. The society started the season in 2002 with a strong contingent of members in all refereeing categories. Although there were a number of transfers to other societies and some resignations, the Blue Bulls Society ended the year with a healthy increase in membership (Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society Annual Report 2002: 3).

The Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society is a division within the bigger set-up of the Blue Bulls Rugby Union. The Blue Bulls Rugby Union is a shareholder of the Blue Bulls Company, which in turn is a profit seeking organisation. The various divisions within the union must therefore perform their functions separately, but it is also important that all the divisions relate to each other to make the "organisation" operate effectively. Within each of these divisions people are at work and must be managed accordingly, and therefore human resources remain essential in the performance of Blue Bulls rugby. Some of the other divisions within the union are a public and media relations office, event organisers, a marketing and sponsorship office, stadium manager, etc, and the Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society also has various portfolios in its hierarchy that must be managed, as can be seen in the following figure:

Figure1.1: Organisational structure of the BBRRS.



Horn (2003: unpublished interview)

The referees fall under the jurisdiction of the BBRRS and, in a sense, are employees of the BBRRS even though they operate mainly on a voluntary basis. It is, because of the voluntary nature of their service, even more important to manage these referees effectively in order to retain their services. To create employee satisfaction and to strive in making employees more competent falls under the human resource function.

The vision of the BBRRS is: “A Rugby Referees’ Society with world class referees” (<http://www.bullrefs.co.za>).

The mission of the Blue Bulls Rugby Referees’ Society is to provide world class referees by:

- Effective and competent management of the society
- Creating and maintaining a culture of enthusiasm, caring and devotion
- Maintaining open communication within and outside the society
- Providing excellent training, coaching and support to all members
- Providing excellent service to the BBRU and SARFU

(<http://www.bullrefs.co.za>).

The Blue Bulls Rugby Referees’ Society also has seven important values namely:

- i. Transparency – management, committees and members conduct business in such a way that all are aware and understand what is happening within the society.
- ii. Loyalty – all members are loyal and committed to the society.
- iii. Integrity – an attitude of sincerity within which all endeavour to be honest in word and deed.
- iv. Professionalism – commitment and dignity, both on and off the field.
- v. Cooperation – willingness to cooperate and to sacrifice while striving to secure the objectives of the society.
- vi. Accessible – management, committees and members are approachable.
- vii. Dignity – to act in such a way that both individuals and the society are respected.

(<http://www.bullrefs.co.za>).

The referee numbers of the Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society were as follows at the end of 2002:

Table 1.1: Compilation of the Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society – 2002.

	Pretoria			Limpopo Region			
MEMBERS	WHITE	BLACK	LADIES	WHITE	BLACK	LADIES	TOTAL
START (2002)	111	11	3	17	2	0	144
NEW RECRUITS	12	4	2	14	4	0	36
TRANSFERS	3	0	0	1	0	0	4
RESIG- NATIONS	11	2	0	8	0	0	20
TOTAL	115	14	5	24	6	0	164

Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society Annual Report (2002: 4)

With the Blue Bulls Rugby Union being one of the so-called “bigger” unions in South Africa there is a lot of pressure on them to perform, not only their various rugby teams on the field, but also their referees. Effective recruitment and selection of referees is therefore very important.

1.3 RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF REFEREES

The Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society takes in new referees during January of every year. There is no set number of intakes and anybody is allowed to apply. Applications close on the 31st of January and any late applications have to wait until the next year. During 2002 there were 24 new recruits.

Once an application has been successful the aspirant referee must undergo training to qualify as a Blue Bull referee. All this training is carried out free of charge.

Table 1.2: Table of the various leagues (levels) used by the Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society.

Highest Level	Carlton league and higher (Club 1 st teams)
Middle Levels	Senior Reserve League (Club 2 nd teams)
	Reserve league
	League 2A
	League 2B
	League 3A
	League 3B
Entry Level	4 th League

Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society Annual Report (2002: 11-17)

The Blue Bulls Rugby Union uses a different structure to separate the various leagues and levels of play to that used by the Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society. They use a two league system with the third level being school rugby.

Table 1.3: Table of the various leagues (levels) used by the Blue Bulls Rugby Union.

SENIOR	RESERVE	SCHOOLS
Carlton	1 st league	Big schools
Senior Reserve (2 nd teams)	2 nd league	Medium schools
U/21A league	3 rd league	Small schools
U/20 league		
Senior reserve 2 nd league (3 rd teams)		
Senior reserve 3 rd league (4 th teams)	Women's league	

Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society Annual Report (2002: 11-17)

At the moment, most referees receive only a honorarium, and there are no big financial incentives except for the yearly amount paid for travelling costs. The referees receive honorariums twice a year in June and October, and the amount is dependent upon the amount of money available within the Union. Referees are also paid according to the league they operate in (Table 1.2 indicates the layout of the various leagues used by the BBRRS).

During 2002 the honorariums for the different leagues were as follows:

- Carlton - R90 per game
- Senior Reserve - R70 per game
- League 2A - R55 per game
- League 2B - R40 per game
- League 3A - R25 per game
- League 3B - R15 per game
- 4th League - R15 per game

The first step in the training of an aspirant referee is a theoretical examination on the rules of the game. Again it is important to note that all the training is free of charge. If the theoretical exam is passed successfully, three courses have to be attended and passed (Horn 2002: unpublished interview). They are:

- i. A touch judge course
- ii. Level 0 course (a referee introduction)
- iii. Level 1 course (referee course)

All three of these courses are SARFU accredited.

If the courses are completed successfully the candidate must undergo a fitness test before management decide if the candidate will be accepted as a referee. Once accepted, the new referee will only act as a touch judge for two months before starting to officiate in the less important 4th league games.

Another aspect of refereeing is that standards are continuously monitored and referees are promoted and demoted accordingly between the categories mentioned earlier (Table 1.2). Grading of referees happens twice a year, during June and October.

There are five dimensions considered for the promotion and demotion of referees (Horn 2002: unpublished interview), namely:

- I. Three exams per year of which the referee must pass two. The minimum percentages for the tests are as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| a. Carlton league | - 75% |
| b. Senior Reserve league | - 70% |
| c. Reserve league | - 70% |
| d. League 2A | - 65% |

e. League 2B	- 65%
f. League 3A	- 60%
g. League 3B	- 60%
h. 4 th League	- 55%

II. Three compulsory fitness tests, which involve a 2,4 km time trial run, called the Cooper run. The different times for each level of referee are as follows:

a. Carlton league	- 11 min
b. Senior Reserve league	- 11,30 min
c. Reserve league	- 11,39 min
d. League 2A	- 12 min
e. League 2B	- 12 min
f. League 3A	- 12,30 min
g. League 3B	- 12,30 min
h. 4 th League	- 13 min

III. Referees must pass at least level 1 and 2 refereeing courses.

IV. There are assessors and coaches appointed to evaluate referees while they officiate – these assessors and coaches get paid a small amount for their services. The coaches are more involved with the junior referees (lower league classes), whilst the assessors work more closely with the senior referees.

V. Taking part in the activities of the society such as rule discussions, meetings, etc., also plays a part in the “grading” process of the referees.

In all of the above processes there are no cost for the aspirant referee, until that person becomes a Blue Bulls referee. All the training costs are therefore the burden of the Referee’s Society. Once the aspirant referee becomes a qualified referee all the other costs are for their own account, like the compulsory kit they must wear during games, their traveling costs etc., and, as mentioned earlier they

do get paid a small amount twice a year mainly to cover their traveling costs (Horn 2002: unpublished interview).

During the training of such aspirant referees, together with the grading (that is, the promotion and demotion process), there is a substantial expenditure involved per candidate for the Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society. Below is an example of some of the real expenses for the 2002 season per person:

- o A rule book - R40
- o Touch judge course - R50
- o Level 0 course - R50
- o Level 1 course - R100
- o Fitness test - R60

Together with these "real" costs there are hidden costs, such as the people involved in the training who must be paid for their services. The coaches and assessors must also receive their awards. It would therefore be fair to estimate that it costs R400-R500 to train each referee and to maintain current standard of the referees within the Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society (Horn 2002: unpublished interview).

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society experience difficulty in identifying the competencies required for individuals to become successful referees at National and International levels.

In addition they also experience a high drop-out rate among applicants accepted as Blue Bulls referees. These referees complete the induction process only to realise, after a couple of games, that they do not like being a referee. The Society cannot prevent them from resigning because refereeing is voluntary, and the

referees must be replaced. The total identification process must be repeated at additional expense. Not only does this cause the Society significant financial loss, but time and resources are also stretched to the limit.

Furthermore, some of the referees lack the required competencies and this impacts negatively on the worth of the game for spectators and players. The players and spectators perceive these referees as biased and/or incompetent.

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is therefore to identify the competencies required by a referee to become successful at the highest level. Once the competencies are known, it will be easier during the screening and selection process of referees for the Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society to make the correct selection, and prevent newly trained referees from quitting or leaving the union.

Other purposes of the study include:

- The study should show the differences, if any, between the perceptions of the various referee groups and player groups within South Africa.
- The results of the study should assist the Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society to select their referees more effectively in future.

In order to fulfill the aim of the study, the survey method will be used to gather data. The Delphi technique will be used to gather data from the active Blue Bulls referees and to help identify the final competencies to be included for rating by other referees and players.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This study will be discussed in terms of the following:

- Chapter 2 and 3 will contain the literature study.
 - Chapter 2: The literature on competencies and competencies of rugby union referees.
 - Chapter 3: Refereeing, in the broad sense, will be discussed. This chapter will include literature on refereeing in any sport and not necessarily rugby alone.
- Chapter 4 covers the research methodology used during the study. The chapter describes the research process, methods of research, and the measurement techniques employed.
- In Chapter 5 the results of the study will be presented and discussed.
- Chapter 6 contains the identified competencies, and how the Blue Bulls Rugby Referees' Society can use these competencies to select new referee recruits that will be successful at the highest level.