



## Referee Development Strategy 24-25

Dear British Dodgeball members,

I hope you have had an excellent summer, and are excited for the upcoming season. In my role as Referee Manager, I wanted to take some time to tell you about our referee development strategy for the coming season, in the hopes that this added clarity helps you to support us in our endeavours to ensure that the British Dodgeball referee development pathway is world-leading, and that all members of our community have the best possible experience at competition with regards to officiating.

### What we've done so far...

In the last 2 years, we have redeveloped the referee pathway from scratch. First, we developed our Referee Standards so we could highlight what outstanding refereeing looks like and give referees the ability to better self-reflect on their own performances. We created a detailed Referee Manual (which gets added to each season), which covers information such as terminology, positioning, and the role of each referee in addition to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which referees should follow when starting sets, stopping sets, making decisions, conducting safety checks etc., to create a standardised officiating experience across the country.

We moved away from face to face refereeing courses after we found that it was tricky to truly put people under match-specific pressure in an environment made up of learners, and instead developed a new way to train referees: an online officiating course consisting of examples, videos & tasks which new referees complete before shadowing and being observed by more experienced referees. We put an excellent team of experienced referee mentors in place to deliver the vast bulk of this training. In the last season, we trained 24 new referees using this system. We created other resources to aid referees, such as the sanctions guide, which can be found in the back of most score booklets and referred to quickly during matches.

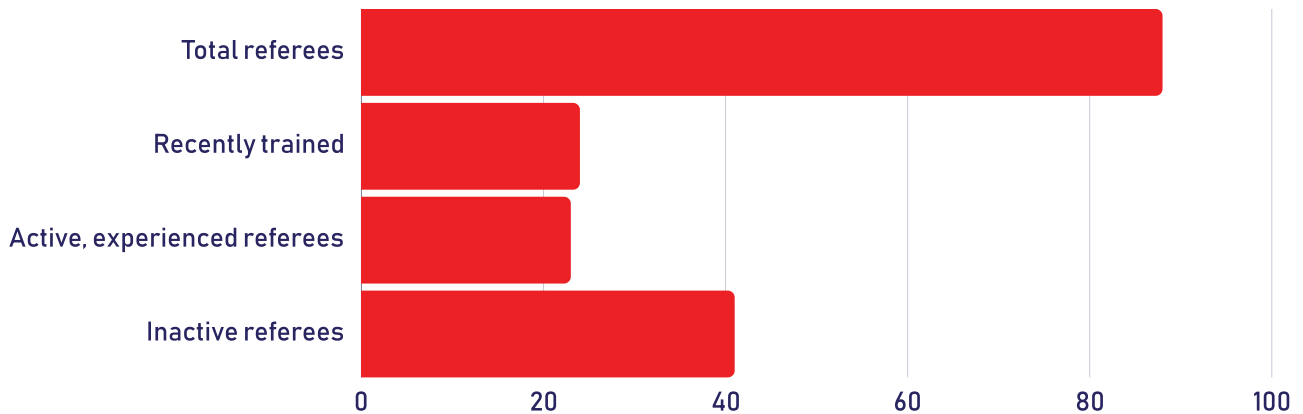
We now require each club to have a listed Referee Lead, who is responsible for ensuring players know how to fulfil their roles when allocated to referee at events. To support them in this role, they receive active training updates from British Dodgeball as well as free access to our online officiating course.

We made a Referee Feedback form, which anyone can complete after any match. We actively monitor this form in order to discover key trends which helps inform future training, and deliver specific, targeted training to individual referees should this be required.

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### The Current Landscape



Unfortunately, due to a high drop-off rate of referees (41 of the referees on our system have become inactive at some point during the past 2 seasons, leaving us with 47 active referees), we now have more newly trained referees (24) than active, experienced referees (23). Through consulting with inactive referees, drop-off occurs for a variety of reasons including individuals shifting priority or having less spare time as they get older, individuals having less financial need for a casual role which takes place at the weekend, and poor experiences whilst officiating. The issue regarding drop-off is something we will continue to explore and prioritise, putting steps in place to lessen the impact this has on our refereeing team.

### What's Next...

Over the course of the 2024-25 season, we plan to do the following:

#### **Improve The Support Which Allocated Referees Provide to Main Referees**

We plan to make significant changes to the expectations we put on allocated referees (players from other teams who are allocated to help act as line referees or centre referees for a fixture). Each match has one main referee (possibly two at specific events), and 4-5 allocated referees. If these 4-5 allocated referees are observant, knowledgeable and actively monitor the court in the necessary order, then this provides a huge element of support to the main referee. Unfortunately, even at the recent British Championships event which consists of the most talented and experienced players across the UK, we observed allocated referees not always actively engaged in their duties; this may result in incorrect decisions being made.

Currently, there is a potential for misunderstandings between centre referees and line referees. Consider the following example: a player is hit by a ball on the shoe, and the main referee is not sure if the ball bounced or not. The main referee briefly looks to the closest return line assistant referee, who had the best view of the event, but this line referee does not move or signal anything. The main referee calls for the player to stay in, based on their own observation and best judgement. The main referee does not actually know at this point if the assistant referee actively observed a bounce and so did not call for a hit, or simply was not paying attention. We will aim to improve this communication by introducing a new set of non-verbal signals, and the expectation for assistant referees to actively use them throughout a match.



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### **Increase Referee Pay**

We are increasing referee payment from £10/hour to £12/hour for all British Dodgeball events. This is a reflection of the hard work that referees perform, and helps to make officiating more attractive to new & existing referees. It also puts us ahead of many more established sports, including cricket where officials referee voluntarily or receive a £70 match rate (with matches lasting for an average of 7 hours). Members should note that we pay over £30,000 per season on referees; increasing the referee payment rate at the same time as trophy and medals costs going up by 50% and venue costs going up across the board by a variable but significant amount means we need to increase fees for our events to remain viable.

### **Improve Online Provision and Continue to Develop Resources**

We will continue to increase the amount of information provided via the online course. We will make videos highlighting new rules changes in addition to how referees should communicate non-verbally.

### **Promote Referees**

Did you know that 50% of the cloth centre referees at the recent World Championships Finals were British referees? We have some brilliant individuals to showcase, and will share case studies and interviews from current referees in order to promote the role.

### **Improve the New Referee Training Process**

Currently, all individuals who are looking to train as a British Dodgeball event referee must shadow and be observed by a [British Dodgeball Referee Mentor](#), of which there is one in each region of the UK. Whilst this ensures a high level of quality, it does unfortunately create bottlenecks if a mentor in a particular region is not actively officiating at many events. We will adapt the mentor idea and expand the list to include more experienced referees who will be able to deliver training.

### **Highlight the Importance of Complete Referee Feedback Forms**

The [Referee Feedback Form](#) is the sole mechanism we have for gathering feedback on specific referees. It is therefore absolutely vital that members use it to provide feedback whenever you deem it necessary. When you fill in the form, you are helping us to improve the quality of refereeing around the country. Your identity is always protected, and you can use the form to let us know of a referee misunderstanding a rule, something small you'd like us to keep an eye on or to congratulate referees for a job well done. Please note: if a referee has broken the code of conduct, you should submit a complaint (see our [complaints policy](#)) rather than referee feedback - this feedback form is formative to help referees develop and learn.

### **Expand Scotland and NI Referee Teams**

In Scotland, NI and some English leagues where we do not have any individuals who are willing to act solely as main referees, we have designed a system where our competitions staff can allocate individuals who are already playing on the day to be the official referee for some of the fixtures (when the individual isn't playing). We have had successful uptake of this system in England, with many referees offering to partially referee when they are not playing, but the same cannot yet be said of Scotland and NI. If we get no referees offering, then the allocated refereeing team must assume total responsibility for the game, and nobody is paid as a British Dodgeball event referee. We will make effort to highlight the opportunity to be paid for partially officiating to players in these areas.



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### **Encourage Existing Referees to Purchase an Official Refereeing Top from Kitlocker**

We expect all new referees to purchase a [British Dodgeball Refereeing top](#) from Kitlocker - it costs approximately £22 which is made back in a new referee's first two hours of officiating. We will encourage all existing referees to purchase a shirt in order to maintain a standardised look across our refereeing team. We will not enforce this requirement this season, as we do not wish to risk losing any existing referees at this time, but this will become a requirement for existing referees as well as new referees in the near future.

Many thanks for reading. I hope you have a wonderful season, and look forward to your support in developing a world-leading referee team.

Kind regards  
Aden Woodall  
Referee Manager