First International Conference on the Science and Practice of Sports Refereeing  
22-24 September 2014 - Clermont-Ferrand (France)

Despite their importance in sports performance, referees received little scientific attention in the decades prior to the year 2000. Since then, research on sports officials has begun to proliferate, with investigations into stress, decision making and judgment, communication and physical performance. Sport refereeing is becoming a scientific field in its own right (Dosseville & Garncarzyk, 2007; Dosseville, Laborde, in press). However, a citation analysis reveals very little connectivity between the different studies into sports officials (Hancock, Rix-Lièvre, Côté, in press).

The aim of this conference is to provide researchers studying sport refereeing with a discussion space in order to increase and improve the scientific network in this area. This network is then expected to answer new queries and to meet the practical challenges of sport refereeing.

Referees are often subject to criticism from various sources: the media, the staff of sports clubs, coaches, and supporters - not sure whether criticisms are ‘correct’/justified or not. Many rules of sport are complex and ambiguous, which leads to differences in interpretations. Furthermore, refereeing in naturalistic settings is not a robotic application of the letter of the law. The referee must take into account the entire game context, to “sell” decisions, and to balance flow and control issues (Mascarenhas, Collins, Mortimer, & Morris, 2005; Mascarenhas, O’Hare, & Plessner, 2006). As referees are often interactors – i.e., they are in interaction with the players on the pitch (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008), they must balance the need to make decisions and enforce the rules, with the need to move about the performance space, and manage the athletes and ensure their safety. In such a complex task, it is challenging to determine the optimal methods to measure, teach, refine, and enhance performance.

Few researchers have studied the complexity of sport refereeing in naturalistic settings (c.f., Rix, 2005; Mascarenhas, Button, O’Hare, & Dicks 2009). More research is needed, therefore, to understand and to identify the barriers and facilitators to elite refereeing performance. Several studies have already proposed and evaluated the interest and the impact of referee training programs (e.g., Mascarenhas, et al., 2005; MacMahon, Starkes, & Deakin, 2007). In order to continue and grow this area of work and the application to on-field performance and demands, additional study is required.

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Given the state of the research on sports refereeing at present, the scope of this conference includes a broad range of work which contributes to a greater understanding of refereeing performance and/or provides some directions for the development of this area.

This conference also aims to bring together the research and the practitioner (e.g., referees, referee managers). Several recognized practitioners will be invited to provide an applied perspective on research, and account for the main practical challenges present in the current sport refereeing environment.
Draft program

Monday 22th September

9h - Opening session
10h - Georges VIGARELLO
10h15- Geraldine RIX-LIEVRE - A Lack of Interconnectivity for Research on Sport Officials

10h45-12h: Cognitive and physiological constraints on referees' performance 1
ELSWORTHY Nathan - Comparison between the match demands of elite and sub-elite Australian football umpires
DIXON David - An examination of the relationship between decision making and hydration status in Futsal Referees.
METZ Lore - Nutritional adaptations in referees: a pilot study

14h Werner HELSEN, Expert Perception and Performance in Refereeing: did 20 years of research make any difference?

15h-16h15: Cognitive and physiological constraints on referees' performance 2
LARKIN Paul - Exploration of the perceptual-cognitive processes that contribute to in-game decision-making of Australian football umpires
BAPTISTA António M. G. - Visual Characterization of Elite Football Referees & Assistant Referees
PIZZERA Alexandra - Can decisions by soccer referees be improved by technology?

16h30-17h45: Cognitive and physiological constraints on referees' performance: training perspectives
ELSWORTHY Nathan - Psychomotor skill training and match simulation performance: a training study for team sport officials
HEWITT Phil - The link between monitoring and programming: examples of current practice in the fitness training of full-time professional soccer referees'
PUT Koen - Offside decision making from a social cognitive perspective

17h45-19h: Refereeing and media
ALPUIM José Pestana - Respect for rugby referee
BOREL-HANNI François - Journalists’ Responsibility towards Football Referees: a Case Study of Referees’ Vulnerability to Sports Media
TERFOUS Fatia - The question of refereeing performance in média narratives: the case of the rugby world cup.

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Tuesday 23th September

8h30-9h45: Football Refereeing in Portugal: organization, education and research
PEREIRA Vítor - Organization of Football Refereeing in Portugal
PINA João - Education and training towards excellence in Portuguese
ARAUJO Duarte - Research in Football Refereeing in Portugal

10h-12h05: Refereeing : what values are at stake ?
WEBB TOM - Standardising elite Association Football refereeing: An historic problem, no easy solution.
CHAPRON Tony - De quoi l’arbitre est-il garant ?
HARDMAN Alun - Truth making & judgment calls: the case of elite rugby officiating
RECOPE Michel - Emotion and decision making in refereeing: the affective core of judgment acts
RUSSELL Scott - Interacting constraints shape emergent decision-making of football referees.

14h Henning PLESSNER, University of Heidelberg, Institute of Psychology (Germany)

15h-16h15: Representation and belief on refereeing
DUTREVIS Marion - How referees are socially perceived? A first study about referees stereotype content
CABAGNO Geneviève - Reputation or situational information about severity of referee: what information is preferably used by soccer players when then intend to behave aggressively?
JIQUEL Florent - Effects of soccer refereeing education on young soccer players’ behavioral and social representations of referees and refereeing

16h30-18h10 Referee team
SCHNYDER Urs - Gaze behaviour in offside decision-making in football: A field study
SPITZ Jochim - The use of a web-based platform to measure the decision-making accuracy of additional assistant referees
HANCOCK David - Are Referee “Groups” Actually “Groups”?
BOYER Simon - Prerogatives and coordination among officials in soccer during a match: rules to activity

19h15 - Round table and Reception
Wednesday 24th September

8h30-10h30: Motivation and constraints
BALDWIN Christopher - Women referees’ experiences officiating rugby union
MUAMBA Johnbosco Kioko - An Investigation into the intrinsic and extrinsic goals that motivate Kenyan Rugby match officials
VAN HOYE Martin 1 - To be or to become a basketball referee: Which difficulties and/or constraints?
VAN HOYE Martin 2 - Could the level of knowledge of basketball’s rules be one of the reason of the lack of referees?
LOUVET Benoit - Anxiety and coping relationships among high-level soccer referees: a multi-trajectory model

10h45-12h: Refereeing performance, a co-construction
RIX-LIEVRE Géraldine - How to study the refereeing performance?
CUNNINGHAM Ian - Concepts of communication and interaction in sport officiating
CALVIN Sarah - Coaching program of French elite rugby referees

14h-16h: About the development of sport officials
ANTONIE Andrei - Developing a career promotion model for Romanian football referees
SYNNOTT Ashley - Developing and supporting officiating talent in Australia
PEGG David - Generic Standards for Sports Officials-Sports Officials UK Limited
MAC-MAHON Clare - A Framework for the Development of Sports Officials
DUME Joël - Enhancing and developing generic referees skills: a collaboration between federation and university

16h15-17h: Conclusion - Closing session

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