

IRB Names Refs for November Tests

Written by RUGBYMag Staff
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The IRB has announced match official appointments for the entire November international schedule, which contains an unprecedented number of tests.

Among the matches will be three tests for Canada and three for the USA.

The assignments for those games are:

Nov. 9 USA v Russia. Referee: Leighton Hodges

Nov. 9 Canada v Samoa. Referee: Francisco Pastrana

Nov. 17 Canada v Russia. Referee: Lourens van der Merwe

Nov. 17 USA v Tonga. Referee: Francisco Pastrana

Nov. 23 Canada v Maori All Blacks. Referee: Assigned by RFU

Nov. 23 USA v Romania. Referee: Leighton Hodges. Assistant referees Andrew McMenemy and Ian Davies

Assistant referees for the first four matches assigned by the Welsh Rugby Union.

Leighton Hodges is from Wales. Francisco Pastrana is from Argentina, and is the first person from outside Australia, New Zealand and South Africa to referee a Super Rugby match.

Lourens van der Merwe is from South Africa.

Chairman of the selection committee and IRB Council member for Scotland John Jeffrey said: "With an unprecedented number of international matches being played over the next few weeks, it has given us the opportunity to appoint a number of up-and-coming referees to some exciting test matches."

"It is all part of ensuring that we have the best possible match official team available for Rugby World Cup 2015 while also providing the best referees for the highest-level matches."

A key objective of the IRB's Strategic Investment Programme is to increase the number of international fixtures for Tier Two Unions and this has been achieved through the comprehensive fixtures programme that has been implemented for this November and which will be replicated in future years.

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Jeffrey added: "While the expanded international match programme places additional pressures on the match official appointments process, it also offers the selectors the opportunity to widen the opportunities for the high performance match official group. In considering the appointments, the committee took the view that the selection criteria should be based on a strategy of selecting the current high-level performers underpinned by a growth philosophy towards having the best match official team available for selection for RWC 2015."

At its most recent meeting in Johannesburg last week, the panel reconfirmed its commitment to the "Big Five" key priorities:

- All aspects of the tackle with particular emphasis to be placed on the tackler releasing the tackled player and rolling away and arriving players staying on their feet
- Offside at the breakdown
- Offside from kicks
- All aspects of the scrum, particularly the engagement process and front-row binding
- All aspects of the maul, particularly what constitutes legal maul defences

Sitting on the IRB Match Official Selection Committee was: John Jeffrey (Chairman), Tappe Henning, Lyndon Bray (both SANZAR), Donal Courtney, Clayton Thomas (both 6 Nations) and Joel Jutge (IRB Referee Manager). The panel meets four times per year with all performances reviewed as part of the next round of international selections.