HOW TO USE THIS MATRIX

This matrix is designed to provide a structured and consistent way to assess potential Match Official Abuse cases. It should be used to identify whether the conduct crosses the threshold for Match Official Abuse and, if so, to direct the decision-maker to the appropriate scoring pathway and sanction, if any.

Step 1: Scope

First, identify whether the conduct is within scope.

Use the matrix only where the conduct is directed at, or about, a Match Official. The conduct may arise through publication, broadcast, social media, press comments, interviews, or direct in-person conduct toward a Match Official.

If the conduct is not directed at, or about a Match Official, the matrix does not apply.

Step 2: Threshold

Once the conduct is within scope, decide whether the conduct crosses the Match Official Abuse threshold.

The threshold is met if **any one** of the Step 2 categories is satisfied. These categories are intended to capture three broad forms of misconduct:

- allegations of bias, prejudice, improper motive, external influence, or deliberate bad faith;
- abusive, demeaning, threatening, intimidating, or humiliating language or conduct, including in-person confrontation, gestures, or aggressive physical approach; or
- comments or conduct which, viewed objectively, a reasonable person would conclude were an attack on the credibility or competence of the Match Officials.

If the conduct does not meet any of the categories in Step 2, there is no further action.

Step 3: Choose the pathway

Once the threshold has been met, select the appropriate route.

- Step 3A should only be used for publication-based cases, including press conferences, interviews, podcasts, broadcast content, social media posts, and other communications where publication or onward circulation is a key factor.
- Step 3B should only be used for direct in-person abuse cases, including face-to-face verbal abuse, aggressive approach, threatening gestures, intimidation, humiliating conduct, or physical contact or attempted physical contact toward a Match Official.

Only one Step 3 pathway should be used for the same conduct. The decision-maker should apply the pathway that best reflects the main character of the conduct.

Step 4: Context and aggravation

Once the relevant Step 3 score is identified, consider aggravating features.

Step 5: Outcome

The final score determines the regulatory outcome which ranges from a guidance letter, to a formal warning, or an automatic sanction as set out in Appendix 2.

MATCH OFFICIAL ABUSE – DECISION MAKING MATRIX

STEP 1 – Conduct Classification

Q1: Was the conduct directed at, or clearly about, a Match Official?

- ☐ Yes – **Proceed to Q2**
- ☐ No – **Outside of scope**

Q2: Was the conduct communicated in a public forum, or in circumstances where publication was reasonably likely?

- ☐ Yes – **Proceed to Step 2**
- ☐ No – **Proceed to Q3**

Q3**:** Was it in-person conduct toward Match Officials, including approach, gesture, shouting, verbal abuse, intimidation, or humiliating conduct in or around the field of play, tunnel, changing area and/or hospitality areas?

- ☐ Yes – **Proceed to Step 2**
- ☐ No – **Outside of scope (unless later published or republished)**

STEP 2 – Threshold Test

The conduct **meets the Match Official Abuse threshold** if **ANY ONE** of the following is satisfied.

A. Integrity or Bias Allegation

Does the conduct **explicitly or implicitly** allege that a Match Official:

- Acted with bias or prejudice
- Had an improper motive
- Was influenced by external factors
- Deliberately influenced the outcome

☐ Yes –**Proceed to STEP 3A if publication/broadcast case or STEP 3B if in-person abuse case**
☐ No – **Continue to B**

B. Abuse, intimidation or humiliation

Does the conduct, whether by words, gestures, proximity or physical approach:

- Involve abusive, demeaning, or threatening language or conduct, or;
- Seek to intimidate or humiliate a Match Official, or;
- Attack the Match Official personally rather than solely referring to their decision

☐ Yes – **Proceed to STEP 3A if publication/broadcast case or STEP 3B if in-person abuse case**
☐ No – **Continue to C**

C. Attack on Credibility/Confidence

Would a reasonable person conclude that the conduct constituted an attack on the credibility and/or competence of the Match Officials.

☐ Yes – **Proceed to STEP 3A if publication/broadcast case or STEP 3B if in-person abuse case**
☐ No – **No further action**

If all three tests are "No" the conduct does not meet the threshold and no further action is required

STEP 3A – Objective Scoring Matrix – FOR PUBLICATION, MEDIA, SOCIAL MEDIA, BROADCAST CASES ONLY

A. Type of Criticism

Score			
0	Disagreement with decision(s)		
1	Suggestion of unfairness, incompetence, or poor judgment		
2	Allegation of bias, partiality, or deliberate bad faith		

B. Precision of Target

Score			
0	General disagreement with decision(s)		
1	Target inferable		
2	Target explicit		

C. Reach/Uncontrollability

Score			
0	Private or limited audience, no meaningful onward spread reasonably expected.		
1	Structured media or semi-public channels such as post-match press conference, mixed zone interviews.		
2	Open or uncontrolled publication, such as live broadcast, open social media, or content likely to be rapidly reshared.		

D. Timing of statements

Score			
1	Reflective same-day but post-match		
2	In-match or immediately post-match		
3	Longer term delayed (+24 hours)		

3A Base Score

STEP 3B – Objective Scoring Matrix – ONLY FOR IN-PERSON ABUSE CASES WHERE THE CONDUCT IS DIRECT, FACE-TO-FACE, OR PHYSICALLY PROXIMATE TO OFFICIALS

START AT A BASELINE OF 5 AND ADD 1 POINT FOR EACH APPLICABLE FEATURE OF THE CONDUCT

Abusive or demeaning language used directly towards the official		
Aggressive approach, blocking movement, or invasive proximity		
Conduct occurs within the tunnel or Match Official changing rooms		
Threatening or humiliating gestures/body language		
Presence of others or ceremonial/public setting (including on-pitch) increasing impact		
Repetition, persistence, or refusal to disengage		
Physical contact or attempted physical contact		

3B Base Score

STEP 4 – Aggravating Factors (Tick each relevant one)

Each aggravating factor adds 1 to the base score

Pattern of similar conduct within preceding 12 months (including if the Speaker received a warning previously)		
Conduct caused, or the Speakers was reckless as to whether it caused, a social media pile on		
Pre-emptive or preview bias allegation		
Disclosure of private and confidential match official review information		

Aggravators Score

STEP 5 – Outcome

Final Score (3A or 3B plus Aggravators)

Final Score	Outcome	
1-3	Guidance letter	
4–6	Formal warning	
7+	Automatic Sanction per Appendix 2	

APPENDIX 1 OF REVISED PROCESS – MATCH OFFICIAL ABUSE PROCESS

This sanctioning process applies to all Team Officials as follows:

1. Where there is a referral received from any of the sources of referral, the details will be sent to the Match Official Abuse Panel ("MOA Panel") and shall identify the offending words/conduct and a link to a single space for documentation, videos, files, and any other relevant documentation.
2. The MOA Panel shall review the offending words/conduct and apply the decision making matrix. Once the MOA Panel have arrived at an agreed score, the relevant sanction in accordance with the sanction table at Appendix 2 shall apply. The outcome shall be communicated to the relevant World Rugby member of staff.
3. World Rugby will inform the Team Official that a breach has occurred and the sanction which is being imposed.
4. In circumstances where the offending falls short of a suspension, the Team Official may be issued with a formal warning which remains on the Team Official's record for a period of 12 months.
5. If the Team Official wishes to challenge the sanction imposed (including a formal warning), the Team Official may request an independent hearing in line with World Rugby Regulation 18 (Misconduct).
6. The independent judicial committee shall:
    a. uphold the allegation(s) of misconduct,
    b. uphold some, but not all, of the allegation(s) of misconduct, or
    c. dismiss the allegation(s) of misconduct.
7. If the Committee upholds a misconduct allegation, it may not impose a sanction below the sanction prescribed in Appendix 2 for the primary conduct on which the allegation is based.
8. The abbreviated process is not appropriate for:
    a. Persistent offences;
    b. Incidents where the facts are not immediately apparent or a complex set of circumstances is involved that would benefit from a full hearing of the matter;
    c. Serious incidents where World Rugby deems it appropriate to refer the matter directly to an independent judicial committee.
    d. Any other incident at World Rugby's discretion.
9. Where, for whatever reason, a matter has been referred to an independent disciplinary hearing, a provisional sanction will be imposed pending the outcome of the substantive hearing. The provisional suspension imposed will remain in place until the substantive hearing of the matter. An expedited appeal of the provisional suspension may be requested.
10. A suspension, whether provisional or imposed following an independent hearing, will apply to all match day activities including:
    a. any match day involvement including coaching, including any direct or indirect contact (via communications devices or otherwise) with team management or players on match days;
    b. entering the stadium, coaches' box, playing enclosure, technical area, approaching and/or communicating with match officials on match day;
    c. engaging in any 'feedback' process with match officials during the period covered by the suspension; and
    d. engaging in media duties during the period of suspension, unless the Committee considers that such a prohibition would be disproportionate, including where the individual's participation in match day activities would not otherwise occur for a significant part of the suspension period.
11. A "Match Official" for the purposes of this Process includes any official appointed in relation to a tournament or match including a referee, assistant referee, television match official, foul play review officer, citing commissioner, judicial officer or committee member, match commissioner, independent match day doctor, or any other similar tournament official.
12. A "Team Official" for the purposes of this Process includes coaches, players, Directors of Rugby, and any other person connected with, acting for, or representing the team, Club, or Union, whether accredited or not.

APPENDIX 2 OF REVISED PROCESS - SANCTIONS TABLE

Offence	First Offence	Second Offence
Disrespecting the authority of a match official (including disparaging a match official; impugning the integrity of a match official; abusive, insulting, intimidating or offensive words or acts directed at or about match officials)	2 Matches	6 Matches
Verbal abuse of a match official (verbal abuse includes but is not limited to, abuse based on: religion, colour, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation)	6 matches	12 matches
Making physical contact with a match official	6 matches	12 matches
Using threatening actions or words towards a match official	12 matches	24 matches
Physical abuse of a match official	24 matches	48 matches