

Greetings all.

Having reffed a professional match yesterday and I thought my thoughts on it may be something that the society might like to hear.

I came into this game not really sure on how it would be played. All the internationals were on national duty but that meant all the "2nd choice" players were there to stake their claim. Previous games were not much use because of this but I did have a fairly good idea of the type of game it was going to be - open and fast. There was no way this was going to be friendly match. Second choice players would want to show their value. And so it was to be.

Meeting the front rows was uninspiring other than the fact these chaps were massive. Everything about their demeanour was professional. It soon became apparent that scrums, whilst not uncontested, were not going to be a concern. Everything else was full on, as I found out when, at the 1st penalty, they went for the lineout. Everything was run or a scrum taken.

The thing that struck me most was despite the language barrier, it made no difference - the players just got on and played. No matter what I did, said or adjudicated upon, the players accepted it and got on with the game. Maybe once or twice from one captain each half a question was asked by the captains. There was no running commentary, there was no whining or bitching about my decisions. They may have said things to each other about me in French but I couldn't hear it or understand it, they just got on with the game. Hong Kong players could learn so much about a professional outlook on the game.

Lineouts were very clear apart from one offence early on where players left early from the line out. Despite the strong wind the ball was always thrown in straight.

The breakdown as always was a key area. Players knew where they were and where they had to go. I believe I got 98% of all of the decisions at the tackle / ruck correct. A couple I would like to watch again on the video but overall I think I did a good job there.

I had some good calls from both Patrick and Warren throughout the game. One call resulted in an amusing conversation between myself and the ex-South African hooker chilli boy. A call came from Patrick that a knock-on had occurred by Racing. As I was unsighted I could not tell but the Racing guys told me to ask the Toulouse guys and chilli boy said "yes it was a bullshit call". In reply I said "yes but sometimes bullshit happens" at the very same time that chilly boy said the same thing.

At the end of the game with only one yellow card to a Racing player both coaches came up to me and congratulated me on the game. Indeed I was asked by one of them to come across and referee in France as he thought I did a better job than most French refs.

It would've been wonderful if all first grade coaches could have been there to watch how professional players are refereed by amateur refs. I felt confident of my ability before the game and I felt confident about my ability after the game. I feel that I reffed a game in the manner that was required, I did not make the decisions that influenced the outcome of the game. I was asked by one of the prem players who watched the game "Tobi next week can you referee us like that" to which I replied "you play like that I will ref like that".

As Les said "how come so many of our guys go overseas and come back with glowing reports, yet when they return to Hong Kong they get told they are so bad?" I feel that it is something to do with the setup within the players of Hong Kong. It may be familiarity it may be contempt but one thing is for sure I know I reffed a good game and if I can ref a good game at that level I can certainly ref any game in Hong Kong.

Hopefully this will not be the last time such a high level game will be played in Hong Kong. And hopefully other HK refs will also have the opportunity that I had to ref such a first class game.

I look forward to HK players replicating the professionalism that I reffed at yesterday