I hope the following will provide colleagues with food for thought and help improve your refereeing of the game:

**The role of the referee is:**

* to ensure that 30(+) players can play with safety, equity within the laws
* to create time and space to maximise opportunities, whatever their abilities
* to enjoy a fair, safe and equitable contest

**Checklists:**

The referee’s checklists – in helping to achieve the above, remember to set out your stall right from the outset and to be consistent throughout.

**The basics:**

* Players are on their feet
* They are on-side
* Advantage must always give opportunities to the non-offending side

**Communication:**

* Voice, signals and whistle – in varying tones and volume i.e. make your whistle talk too!
* To be preventative – how to penalise without having to blow the whistle
* To allow the game to flow – within acceptable parameters – ATP – Ask, Tell, Penalise – the ask is often in the pre-match briefing
* To be approachable but not gullible – Captains only - not open forum
* To maximise downtime to help get your message across, reiterating the points made in the pre-match briefing
* To be firm and calm

**Scrummage:**

* Get them level
* Crouch – Bind - Set. It’s your call, not theirs
* Keep them a suitable/comfortable distance prior to the above
* Square and stable – they must be comfortable too
* Full arm bind and attached 'til the end
* Backs 5m away 'til ball is out

**Lineout:**

* Has it formed?
* Two straight lines with a clear space
* The thrower – behind the line. The throw without delay – the jumpers wait til it’s in.
* A fair contest – priority anything untoward across the line!
* The threes back 10 til it ends

**Tackle:**

* Get there/Be first there to see … then move to get the wider view
* The tackler to release the tackled man and roll away
* The tackled man to be free to place the ball as far back as possible and roll away
* All other players to arrive and stay on their feet
* To arrive through the gate

**Ruck and Maul:**Know the difference and call it

* Check on those joining and then those outside
* Call “Ruck”
* Call “Maul”
* Having got there and seen it – move to get the wider view

**Advantage:**

* The best law in the book:
* Where is it on the field of play? Close to the non-offending goal line, midfield, close to the tryline?
* What’s the offence/issue – knock-on, therefore scrum or penalty kick?
* Tell them - Scrum advantage; penalty advantage; advantage over
* Talk to them – signal to them – the key players need to know
* Tactical or territorial – wait and see. The class referee always has time!
* Don’t call them back – bring them back

There is a difference between empathy and sympathy. The former is the trait of a good referee; the latter shows weakness.

Fitness is both physical and mental – without the first the second becomes a struggle.

Make your own checklists – use these. Go through them when training, when warming up, when pre-match briefing, at the next situation – tackle, maul, ruck, scrummage, lineout, kick, injury, etc.

I hope the above will help focus your mind on the key issues. Physical fitness and speed of thought and reaction go hand in hand!

John R Masters