

My Rugby World Cup Experience



by Peter Larter
(BIGGA Regional Administrator)

Early last year I was invited by Rugby World Cup Organising Committee to officiate as a Citing Commissioner at the 2011 RWC Tournament taking place in New Zealand.

It took me about five seconds to respond and say that I was prepared to go providing I could get time off work! So I was very grateful to the BIGGA Board for allowing me to take nearly two months unpaid leave to enable me to participate.

On Sunday, September 4, I took the 24 hour flight to Auckland with Air New Zealand and landed in the early hours of Tuesday morning, September 6.

My qualifications for undertaking this task are that many years ago I played international rugby for England in the Second Row and am reckoned to know a bit about foul play! I have also been carrying out citing duties for the past 11 years in the Aviva Premiership, the European Rugby Cup, the 6 Nations Championship and also at the Rugby World Cup in France in 2007.

The disciplinary team for the RWC comprised: six Citing Commissioners (CCs), one from Ireland, one from New Zealand, one from Australia, one from Scotland, one from Italy and myself from England; six Judicial Officers from around the world and the RWC Administrative Staff from Dublin.

Our task as CCs was to watch each match live in the Sky TV Studios in Auckland and take action on any foul play

which we thought warranted sending off (i.e. Red Card), and which had been either missed by the match officials or, in our opinion, had not been penalised correctly.

On arrival on September 6 2011 we wasted no time in acclimatising. That afternoon we met with the Match Commissioners who were going to be our eyes, ears and voices at the many venues around New Zealand, and the Judicial Officers who were to chair the disciplinary hearings resulting from a sending off or a citing by the CC. We also received our allocation of matches; one CC per match. I was allocated nine matches and was to be the CC for the first match New Zealand vs Tonga at Eden Park, the venue for many matches including the two semi-finals, the 3rd place play-off and the RWC Final. I ended up with nine matches; my last match being semi-final between New Zealand and Australia. Thankfully the first match went off without incident, and I found that the system set up by Sky was brilliant. At each venue there would be anything from 10 to 24 cameras, depending on the size of the venue and importance of the match.

We watched the match as broadcast to the world and had an audio link to the referee. We were able to obtain all angles of any incident fed over the internet within an hour of the end of the match, and were then able to review any incident that caused concern and decide whether or not any foul play had been committed; we were able to view incidents



at normal speed, slow-motion, super-slow motion and frame by frame. If a citing was required, we had to prepare a detailed report and send it together with DVD evidence to the RWC Disciplinary Office, when a hearing would be convened. Players had to travel to Auckland for hearings and, if found guilty, would usually be banned from playing for a period of time depending on the seriousness of the offence. In total there were 13 citings in the 2011 RWC Tournament and all were upheld.

I had one citing and had a number of near misses; I had to cite the Italian hooker Ghiraldini for "interference with the eyes" and he was banned for 15 weeks.

During my stay in Auckland I had the opportunity to visit Eden Park on many occasions, one of which enabled me to meet Mark Perham, the Head Groundsman. Mark had previously been a golf

greenkeeper at golf clubs in Timaru in the South Island. He gave me a tour of the Stadium and explained how it was used to provide a test venue for both rugby and cricket. For cricket, what happens is that the lower stand tiers are mechanically withdrawn until the playing area becomes oval shaped.

They then drop a cooch grass playing strip into a metal well in the centre of the ground, which is playable for six to eight days, and is a good enough surface for test and provincial matches. Eden Park is the only stadium to host two Rugby World Cup





finals; New Zealand won the World Cup in 1987 when they defeated France, repeating the feat in 2011. The Eden Park area of Auckland has been in use as a sports venue for nearly 110 years, being first the home to Auckland cricket from 1910 and then Auckland rugby from 1925.

We had more spare time during October after the pool matches had been finished, which gave us

many opportunities to see the magnificent scenery New Zealand has to offer.

The local New Zealanders were great hosts and I don't think anyone begrudged them their narrow victory over France in the final. Once again, my thanks are extended to the BIGGA Board of Directors for allowing me the time to participate in this wonderful event.

P J Larter



TO THE EDUCATION OF GREENKEEPERS

The Northern Region Administrator Peter Larter presents a plaque on behalf of the Northern Region to Peter Fell the Sales Manager of Aitkens Sportsturf Ltd, thanking them for their many years of generous Patronage of the Region, which goes towards the education of greenkeepers

Peter Fell, who has been in the sportsturf industry for 27 years and has worked for Aitkens for the past 22 years, said that he thought BIGGA had been instrumental in bringing together the many different groups of our industry.

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