

## **Use of Referee Audio**

### **Introduction**

In recent years, most of our Referees in top games are in communication with their Linesmen and Umpires via radio throughout the game. This has led to interest from broadcasters seeking access to this communications feed so that they can broadcast it live as part of their transmission of games.

The argument put forward for this is that access to the live feed will provide a better understanding to the viewing public, to studio analysts and the broader media of why Referee's take certain decisions. This is something that is permitted in similar field sports such as rugby, but notably not in Soccer.

The counter argument is that our Referee's remain volunteers and inadvertent comments in the heat of the moment - or for example the use of bad language – could have implications for their day jobs, particularly when one considers the prominence of cancel culture in today's world.

The same arguments (in relation to careers etc) apply to players on the field as well as to the referee as they will doubtless be heard on referee audio also. A final concern would be the audio being used in Disciplinary cases to highlight inconsistencies between – for example - the Referee's report and perhaps his words at the time of a sending off or controversial incident.

The GAA has never had a formal policy to date in this area, although the Club, Player and Games Administration Department have largely operated on the basis of the below suggested arrangement. Having spoken with a number of Referee's and Referee Administrators – both formally and informally – and having consulted with our Communications and Marketing Departments, the Ard Stiúrthóir and the Uachtarán, we accept that giving access to Referee audio can have positives for referees in terms of highlighting the reasons for certain on field decisions.

In this context, we propose that broadcasters – on request – be given access to Referee audio via a nominated person to relay information to the commentator or studio rather than sharing audio as part of the live broadcast.

### **Suggested GAA Policy on access to Referee Audio from Games**

- Referee audio is not permitted to be transmitted by broadcasters (Radio, TV or streamed) as part of live coverage, deferred coverage or highlights packages of GAA games, at any level.
- However broadcasters on request may be given access to listen to the referee audio via their producer or nominated person, to enable them to pass on relevant information to their commentators/analysts in the interests of communicating why particular decisions are taken
  - Permission would be granted by the Committee-in-Change.
  - Permission would only be granted at games where this can be facilitated and with the permission of the appointed match officials.

- The broadcasters are not permitted to record or broadcast this audio in any way.
- The referee audio may be used by the GAA as part of training for Match Officials around communication and decision-making.

It is suggested that An Coiste Bainistíochta/Ard Chomhairle adopt this policy position for the moment and that in the longer term, the policy could be reviewed and an assessment of the feasibility of audio being utilised as part of broadcast packages undertaken.

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