

RAMOA 2021 Report

Nov 21, 2021

2021 was a unique year for all of us. From not having High School rugby, trying to get members to register in July to just getting that feel for the game back while the season wrapped in mid/late September. RAMOA utilized the dual registration process and although this did require some extra steps for a few Match Officials, Unions and RAMOA it did allow us to more easily handle Match Officials inside SportsLomo.

RAMOA's numbers for registered Match Officials were down approximately 60% for the 2021 season compared to the ~103 registered in 2019.

Total Registrations	44
ERURS	14
CRURS	29 plus 1 CMO

Even with the reduced numbers we still were able to allocate Match Officials over 400 matches of various lengths from u13 through Senior and University.

	Full Games	Shorten/10s	Total
CRU	120	159	279
ERU	35	73	108
University	30		30
Classics	3		3
			420

As in any year there are always challenges, here are some from the 2021 season and ones we see in front of us for 2022:

- Overall numbers are very low, and this is a concern for 2022.
 - In Calgary it took a couple of weeks to understand the scheduling as we had referees moving fields etc. By the end it was flowing more smoothly
 - Calgary did see several referee injuries in 2021 with the start-stop every weekend with all the shorter games
 - It's unknown how many of our 2019 members who did not sign up this year will return.
 - Edmonton numbers are extremely low numbers with only 14 Officials in 2021
- When to run Match Official Courses in 2022
 - We have Educators that are still in training and need sign off so timings need to be scheduled with Rugby Canada
 - High School tournaments are the ideal timing for Level 1 courses
 - Early in season
 - Allows new referees a good starting point in terms of level of games
 - 2022 we need to consider a soft start especially if High School does not go or if there are no High School tournaments

- We need course in both ERU and CRU regions
 - Currently I don't think we can run courses in both locations North and South on the same weekend early in the 2022 season
 - How do we increase new referee confidence and ability before club matches?
- Insurance for the Non-Rugby Canada matches – at the end of 2019 Rugby Canada let its members know that the way in which RC insurance had been extended to cover Match Officials in not Rugby Canada Sanctioned matches was changing.
 - This was new for both us and the Universities.
 - It did lead to some matches being cancelled due to lack of proof of insurance.
 - Realization many of the Universities have different insurance
 - Added overhead to both RAMOA and Rugby Alberta
 - ASAA has told Rugby Alberta to not ask about this until January.
 - This is a concern about being able to get this sorted in time for a High School Season
 - It took 6 weeks for 10 University sides this season

For what the 2021 season turned out to be I can only say it completely not what I expected in the spring. We had contact rugby played and the numbers of games was larger than we originally imagined. One thing that RAMOA did realize was how much the Match Officials use the High School season for recruitment, practice, getting the feel of the game back and more.

RAMOA's major concern for 2022 is not having High School season and being in a position where we want/need to take newer officials and rush them into higher levels of club rugby. We have been asked at the last couple of AGM's how many referees do we need? This is always a tough question to answer. To say we always need more is fine, but we need games with expectations that allow new Match Officials to grow and develop before jumping into a higher-level match. Getting back to the number of senior club matches we saw in Alberta in 2019 might be challenging in 2022 from a Match Officials perspective.

What can the clubs do to help? As we have said before Rugby is a community and the vast majority of Match Officials come from the clubs in our province. Getting u18/u20 players to referee u13 or u15 matches can go a long way to help. Over the past couple of full seasons, we have been successful in both Edmonton and Calgary getting a few junior aged players each year to referee younger age groups. We have found that having clubs encouraging players who they believe would do well or enjoy refereeing has had good results. We need to continue this in 2022. At the same time, we should consider any senior players or recently retired players that might do well as a match official as well as we start to ramp up the number of senior club matches in 2022.

Ultimately, RAMOA got through the 2021 season and was shown that the rugby community in Alberta is resilient, responsive and can adapt to new scenarios. I encourage all the clubs and unions in the province to continue to embrace this philosophy in 2022. We don't have a crystal ball to see what 2022 will bring but we will continue to work with the Unions and clubs as we move forward.

Andrew Petti

RAMOA President