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Dear Clubs

INTERNATIONAL TICKET ALLOCATION SANCTIONS

As you may be aware, at least 50% of all tickets for England internationals at Twickenham are allocated to the club game. Profits from ticket sales are reinvested in the game, both at grass roots and elite level.

The black market in tickets, either ticket exchanges or unofficial hospitality around Twickenham on a match day takes money out of the game and tarnishes the reputation of the sport. We monitor the ticketing and unofficial hospitality marketplaces and take action both against those selling on the black market, and those individuals, clubs, CBs or referee societies who allow their tickets to be sold in this way.

By the end of this season, we will have sanctioned 79 clubs, CBs, referee societies and individuals by restricting access to international match tickets for certain periods. Whilst we take no pleasure in doing so, taking such action sends out a strong message to those that don't respect, enforce and protect the rights of our members to have access to international tickets.

We have also successfully brought legal action against unofficial hospitality operators. This has recently included the High Court granting an injunction to prevent a high profile hospitality operator from selling ticket inclusive hospitality to England international matches at Twickenham. The High Court also required that operator to disclose the source of its tickets, and again we sanctioned those clubs and individuals who provided that operator with tickets.

Clubs can provide a ticket plus hospitality package to existing club members or to bona fide club sponsors, where it can be evidenced that such arrangements are genuine. For members,

that means being able to show benefits in return for a membership fee. For club sponsorships, there must be a range of sponsor rights over and above rights to tickets (e.g. sponsor brand activation; access to club facilities etc) in return for a sponsorship fee. Tickets cannot be transferred to hospitality businesses, agents or other restricted persons, even in a member or sponsorship capacity. This encourages the unofficial market and while there appears to be a short term financial gain the selling organisation, the longer term implications are a sanction on the selling party and less money available to invest in the game. The RFU is actively fighting against such markets to protect our members, fans, and supporters. Clubs are entitled to provide hospitality-only offerings to anyone they choose.

As we continue to take action against unofficial operators, we are gaining more information about the source of these tickets. In order to continue policing this, we are always interested to hear from clubs about how they distribute their international match tickets. If a club has in the past provided international tickets to unofficial hospitality providers, we are willing not to sanction that club if we are provided with full details of the transfers. Clubs can provide such information, on an anonymous basis if deemed necessary, to legal@rfu.com.

Together, we can help protect the game.

Steve Brown
Chief Executive, Rugby Football Union