



PRESS RELEASE

Paris, May 22, 2026

FOR THE 1st TIME, REFEREES WILL WEAR A NUMBER ON THEIR BACKS: THE NUMBER 84, TO CURB INCIVILITY

The French soccer, handball, basketball, and rugby federations are partnering with La Poste to combat incivility toward referees. For the first time in France, this initiative will be highlighted during the national end-of-season finals, during which referees will wear, like the players, a number on their backs: the number 84. This choice is based on an IPSOS/BVA study according to which 84% of French people believe that valuing referees helps protect the sport.



They blow the whistle, they explain, they keep the game moving. And yet, every week, referees face disrespectful behavior that undermines the sport at every level. La Poste, which has been a partner of the 58,000 referees for 19 years, wanted to work with the four federations to launch this awareness and prevention initiative to foster a collective awareness, which has now become a symbol of national mobilization.

84: a striking figure

The number 84 comes from an IPSOS/BVA study, the full results of which will be revealed during La Poste's Refereeing Days in October 2026. 84% of French people believe that valuing referees means protecting the sport.

A visible mobilization on the most high-profile sports fields

From May 22 to June 28, 2026, the number 84 will appear on the backs of referees on the most high-profile fields during men's and women's matches:

- Soccer: Crédit Agricole French Cup Final
- Handball: French Cup Finals presented by Caisse d'Épargne
- The Crunch Creator at Stade Atlantique in Bordeaux
- Soccer: Second-leg playoffs of the McDonald's Ligue 1 and BKT Ligue 2
- Soccer: Arkema Première Ligue Final
- Basketball: Betclic Elite Finals
- Rugby: Top 14 Final
- Rugby: Axa Elite 1 Women's Final

Behind this number lies a reality: referees are on the front lines when it comes to disrespectful behavior. By wearing the number 84, they become the voice of a simple, universal message: **no referee, no game. Without respect, there is no sport.**

Putting respect back at the heart of the game

This campaign is part of the associations' long-term commitment against incivility: prevention and awareness initiatives, measures to protect and support referees, stricter penalties... These are just some of the concrete initiatives rolled out throughout the season by the four sports.

Marie-Ange Debon, Chairwoman and CEO of La Poste Groupe:

"At La Poste, we are convinced that respect is the foundation of all cohesion, both on the field and in society. Standing alongside the 58,000 referees of the French soccer, handball, basketball, and rugby federations for nearly 20 years, we want to highlight their essential role, as they are all too often on the front lines of incivility. With this initiative, 'A Number for Referees,' we are calling for collective awareness: valuing referees means protecting the sport."

Philippe Diallo, President of the French Football Federation:

"Refereeing is a priority for the French Football Federation, which acts at all levels to better support, protect, and value those who make the game possible. Without referees, there is simply no match. They are essential players in the game and must be respected and protected as such, just like players, coaches, volunteers, and fans. We are proud to join forces, alongside the handball, basketball, and rugby federations, in this collective initiative led by La Poste, which has been committed to supporting referees for nearly twenty years. This joint effort by the four federations is essential for lasting change in behavior and placing respect at the heart of our various sports. Protecting referees means protecting the sport."

Florian Grill, President of the French Rugby Federation:

"Referees are indispensable to our sport. Without them, there simply are no games. We must also remember a simple fact: violent or disrespectful behavior is often the act of a minority. But even if it is a minority, it remains totally unacceptable. A single act of violence against a referee is already one too many. With this initiative led by La Poste and the participating associations, we want to send a clear message: respecting referees must be a given for everyone, on every field and at every level. The figure of 84% shows that the French overwhelmingly support their referees. It is up to us collectively, associations, clubs, players,

coaches, officials, and fans, to ensure that this support is reflected everywhere in our behavior and actions.”

Philippe Bana, President of the French Handball Federation (FFH):

“The fight against violence is a battle we must wage relentlessly. As a team sport, handball has a special responsibility: to set an example in terms of ethics and respect. Refereeing is at the epicenter of this violence, and as a Federation, we must fight and take action at all levels to better support and protect our referees. We are proud to participate in this unprecedented campaign alongside our partner La Poste, as well as the soccer, basketball, and rugby federations, to highlight this indispensable role in all sports.”

Jean-Pierre Hunckler, President of the French Basketball Federation:

“Referees play an essential role in basketball, and this new initiative by our partner La Poste serves as a concrete reminder of that. Wearing the number 84 is a powerful symbol. It reflects both a collective awareness and a determination to act against the incivility that is increasingly affecting sports. Referees are committed and passionate individuals who ensure fairness and adherence to the rules. They must be protected and valued at all levels of the sport. We are proud to support this initiative alongside La Poste and the three other team sports involved. Together, let’s reduce violence and foster respect, both on and off the court.”

About the La Poste Groupe:

La Poste Groupe is an international multi-business group operating in more than 60 countries across five continents, with its capital held by Caisse des Dépôts and the French State. In 2025, it generated turnover of €34.4 billion, over 45% of which came from international operations. The group employs more than 227,000 people (including more than 177,000 in France). It is structured around two main business lines, logistics and mail and parcel delivery, and bancassurance, and is expanding into diversified activities, particularly in digital and local services. La Poste also fulfils four public service missions: universal postal service, regional development, banking accessibility, and press transport and delivery. The parcel business, operated by the group’s subsidiaries in France and internationally (Colissimo, Chronopost, DPD, SEUR, BRT, etc.), accounts for nearly 54% of turnover. In 2025, the group delivered 2.7 billion parcels worldwide. La Banque Postale and its subsidiary CNP Assurances are the 12th-largest bancassurance provider in the eurozone. With 18 million customers and as the leading lender to local authorities and hospitals since 2015, La Banque Postale aims to build a European leader in bancassurance and to consolidate its pioneering role in socially responsible finance. In France, La Poste Groupe relies on the largest local network comprising more than 43,400 service points, including over 17,000 contact points (post offices, local postal agencies, and retail postal outlets). As a key player in national digital sovereignty, La Poste, together with its subsidiary Docaposte, is one of the leaders in digital trust services. As a mission-driven company since 2021, committed to the ecological transition, La Poste is pursuing its goal of achieving ‘net zero emissions’ by 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement. Drawing on its multi-business model, La Poste Groupe aims to be a sustainably profitable and responsible company.

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