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Memorandum

To:	ARLRA Referee Coaches
From:	Michael Stone
Date:	12 February 2004
Subject:	MS002/04

LAW CHANGES

The Rugby League International Federation met in Sydney in February and approved of the following two amendments to the Laws of the Game.

“COIN TOSS (pre game & to commence extra time)

The team winning the toss now has the option of choosing which end of the field to defend, or alternatively may elect to kick-off to commence play. If the team winning the toss elects to kick-off, the choice of ends reverts to the team losing the toss.

HELD-UP IN -GOAL

When an attacking player is held-up in his opponents in-goal area and is unable to ground the ball, play will be restarted by **the player in possession** playing the ball 10 metres out from the goal line directly opposite the point where he was held-up. The tackle count will then continue in the normal manner (ie. if a player is held-up on tackle 3, play will resume with a play-the-ball 10 metres from the goal line and the following tackle will be tackle 4). Please note that if a player in possession is held-up on the sixth tackle, there is no change to the existing rule.”

The exact wording will be conveyed via this memo when it is approved.

NRL REFEREES' ACADEMY

The NRL Referees' Academy will be launched to the media on Wednesday 25 February at Newcastle No1 Sports ground at 10-30am. The first inductees will be there along with the NRL referees squad. The nine inductees were drawn from Group 21, Group 3, Newcastle Division and Central Coast Division. Level 2 coach and Development

Officer from the area, Wayne Wilson, assisted in the selection process and will act as the local co-ordinator of the programme.

The successful referees were:-

Robert Bowen
Scott Dial
Craig Diebert
Jeff Hartup
Ashley Irvine
Drew Oultram
Matt Rayment
Dean Shaw
Gavin West.

Congratulations to you all. You are in for some hard work but I'm sure, commencing Thursday 11 March, you will learn an immense amount from some very talented instructors.

HANDLING THE DIFFICULT SITUATION

At the recent CRLRA Seminar, the majority of the Saturday was spent on Communication skills. David Jay handled the "language" of the referee, Matt Cecchin the difficult situations, and John Meehan the "art" of bargaining. The last session of the day consisted of role plays and practice with the various scenarios raised by the NRL referees at an earlier meeting.

Firstly, we needed to sign off on the **qualities** which a referees needs when confronted with a difficult situation. The following are the qualities which it was agreed that a referee needs in such circumstances.

Confidence
Calm
Clear
Control
Approachable (listen/hear)
Knowledgeable
Professional

The areas which we need to address when evaluating whether the referee is handling the meeting well or not are:-

Posture
Body language
Facial expression
Gestures
Vocal expression, including breathing, pacing, clarity, impact...

Now to deal with the scenarios. The first is when the referee calls the meeting. He wants to tell the player something, caution him perhaps. He must have specific strategies in place to enable him to succeed in this operation. After much discussion, and some meaningful role plays, the following strategies appeared to be acceptable to the group. It is most important that you as coaches instil in your referees the importance of being ready for the meeting. They must know what strategies to use and practice using them in role plays or visualisation drills so that when the difficult situation occurs they are ready to react in the correct fashion.

Strategies to put in place for YOUR meeting

- Determine what the message is going to be before you call the player out
- No matter what the player says, deliver the message
- If the player interjects, don't talk over him. Listen to him, or at least appear to
- Breathe, use the time
- Respond with **your** message again
- If multiple interjections, need to warn (feint?) eg "Do you want to sit down?"
- Be prepared to follow through with any explicit threat
- Finish by turning your back effectively ending the meeting.

Young referees need to study and practice these strategies so that they become second nature to them.

Strategies for THEIR meeting

Players will approach the referee for any number of reasons. It may be a complaint, it may be a genuine question. It may be an attempt at intimidation. Until the player begins to speak, chances are that you are in the dark as to the subject matter of his enquiry. Therefore, the following approach is perhaps the best in all the circumstances.

- If you need to create space, turn away, order time off
- Stand tall, feet shoulder width, face directly towards the player hands by your side
- Listen and **hear** what is being said
- Nods tells the player that you are listening
- Try to respond with "yes and" ... rather than "yes but"
- Do not debate the issues
- Be reasonable to reasonable requests
- Do not lose eye contact
- Use appropriate gestures eg counting, palm down etc
- Slow speech down, use a lower tone to soothe situation
- If the player is excited, you exaggerate your coolness
- Turn your back to finish the meeting

Strategies for the touch judges meeting

Ascertain the crux of the report prior to calling the players over
Referee controls the meeting, he calls the player(s) over
Touch judge looks at the referee and only talks to him
If player interjects, stop, turn to player stepping between player
and touch judge, and inform him that the touch judge is talking
to you
If player continues, issue ultimatum eg “you’re in enough
trouble already...” etc
Touch judge leaves after delivering his report
Continue as per “your meeting”.

Those strategies, or those more suitable to the individual referee,
should be ingrained into the mind of the referee for implementation on
demand. Practice, practice, practice. We, as coaches, need to ensure
that the practice is conducted properly.

LEVEL 2 COURSES

Three months since the completion of the last Level 2 course and Phil
Cooley, George Chehoff, Les Matthews, Brian Bonnie and Martin
Weekes have yet to view assigned matches. We can’t complete the new
Communications Video without your comments and return of the
tapes. **Please return the tapes by 20 February.**

Also, only six people have completed the business plan to achieve
accreditation. You will not be accredited unless you submit your
business plan for 2004. The importance of this cannot be understated
as we need to know your plans and, as a national body, approve of
them. So the following people need to submit their plans by 29
February. Phil Cooley, Brian Bonnie, Martin Weekes, Frank Samyia,
Kevin Roberts, Joe Griffiths, George Chehoff and Peter Watkins. There
has to be a cut off date gentlemen. Don’t embarrass yourselves or
your Associations by failing to comply.

MICHAEL STONE
NRL REFEREES’ CO-ORDINATOR
ARLRA PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE CONSULTANT