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Memorandum

To:	ARLRA Referee Coaches
From:	Michael Stone
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Subject:	MS003/04

NRL REFEREES' ACADEMY

For those who doubted our commitment to developing referees from the grass roots of our game, kindly read the following media release which issued jointly from the NRL and the Hunter Academy of Sport yesterday.

"The National Rugby League and the Hunter Academy of Sport have launched League's most concerted training programme for elite referees.

Piloted for the first time in 2004, the Newcastle based programme is aimed at gathering the best young referees from country areas and preparing them for professional matches.

The likes of Tim Mander, Steve Clarke, Paul Simpkins and other senior NRL Referees will regularly travel to Newcastle to take part in preparing the young officials.

The NRL Referees' Academy will expand in future seasons to increase the number of referees qualified for NRL matches and to provide avenues for former players to fast track their way into the refereeing ranks.

"It's the most professional approach to developing referees that we've seen to date," NRL Referees Coach, Robert Finch, said today.

"We have Mick Stone spending a lot of time helping to develop refereeing programmes around NSW and Queensland but the Referees' Academy provides a link between the local associations and the professional game.

"Not everyone will go on to be an NRL Referee but those that don't will be able to take some significant lessons back to their local districts."

Nine of the elite young referees from Newcastle, Maitland, Group 21, Group 3 and Central Coast division have been invited to take part in the initial course.

Running over 14 weeks, the course encompasses fitness, football, refereeing and interpersonal skills.

The Hunter Academy of Sport will develop programmes to assist the aspiring referees off the field as well as on.

“Officiating is an enormously important part of sport and it’s crucial that at this level we build a professional approach on and off the field,” Ken Clifford, CEO of the Hunter Academy of Sport, said today.

“We want to help people to be worthwhile members of the community as well as to help them establish the option of a professional sporting career.”

The NRL Referees’ Academy will conduct its first course from March 11.”

Gavin West was recruited to describe his feelings about the launch.

“Today, Wednesday 25th February 2004, we (Robbie Bowen, Jeff Hartup, Dean Shaw, Scott Dial, Craig Diebert, Ashley Irvine, Matt Rayment, Drew Oultram and Myself) attended the Launch of the first ever NRL Referees Satellite Academy squad which is being co-ordinated with Hunter Academy of Sport. We were all excited and didn't really know what to expect and this first event of the squad’s activities was a real eye opener.

We were exposed to our 1st media conference with Local news journalists and television reporters in attendance. This was just one of the expectations that we would have to conquer if we were serious in reaching our long term goal of an NRL REFEREE!

Some of the guests in attendance were Graham Annesley , Robert Finch, Matt Cecchin, Shayne Hayne (NRL) , Matt Gidley, Michael Hagan, Stephen Crowe, Warren Smiles (Newcastle Knights), Frank Kitcher (CRLRA), Peter Corcoran (NRAS), Frank Barrett (Newcastle RL) along with Keith Onslow, Mick Stone, Wayne Wilson, Ken Clifford and other people from our associations.

Some of these guest speakers spoke. The group really took in what Matthew Gidley from the Newcastle Knights had to say regarding the squad and the launch.

After mixing in and talking with the various guests and having interviews and photos it was the end of the 1st session of the Satellite

program. This launch has enthused us all as we are looking forward to the intensive 13 weeks ahead.”

I think that he was excited about it all. We are already investigating areas where we can conduct the programme next year. There are a number of possibilities at regional academies throughout NSW. I also need to be informed if there are similar institutions in Queensland.

KEY INDICATORS

It seems that the lecture given to the Level 2 course in Wollongong has hit home. All participants want a copy of the tape as well as the booklet which was provided. They are in the course of production gentlemen. I have also discussed the prospect of providing all Associations with their copy of the tape and booklet for their own purposes with your CEO, Steve Betts, who is looking for the money. At about \$3-50 a tape, one wouldn't think that it would be too expensive. The cost of postage might be more.

The key indicators were introduced to the Junior Reps Seminar last weekend and will be delivered to the NSWRL Advisory Board prior to the start of the NSWRL premiership. Dennis Spagarino has endorsed them and so it would seem, the last class of Level 2's. Peter Ryan has been sent an express issue to discuss with the Group 7 Referees. It appears that we're all starting to sing from the same Hymn book.

RULINGS

Dave Turvey always comes up with some interesting ones.

“1)Attacking player running towards try line a try appears to be on but he is tackled by an opposition player returning to the field of play from an offside position-

2) Same as above except this time he is felled by the opposition first aid attendant-

3)Penalty kick for touch ball travels over touch line is blown back and hits the corner post on the full-
firstly what is the answer
secondly the T/J gives the incorrect signal”

I responded as follows:-

“1) That is misconduct and you would penalize the player making the tackle.

2) Can't do anything but dismiss the ambo from the field. Interesting way for him to say that he wants nothing more to do with Rugby League though don't you think?

3) The ball is out where it FIRST crosses the line. Therefore free kick 10 metres in opposite where the ball first crossed the line.

B) Touch judge is the sole judge of touch and touch in goal. You cannot over rule him. If he signals it dead, 20 drop out. If he waves it back, walk across, take his flag, and hit him with it!"

HELD UP IN GOAL LAW CHANGE

Surprise, surprise. Even after a blaze of publicity about the new Law, Parramatta and Warriors players demonstrated a blissful ignorance last Saturday night on the Gold Coast. The Parramatta lock was held up, everyone gathered for the scrum. From there it was utter confusion as the referee tried to tell these (elite) players what the rule (sic) was. Finally after the Parra prop tried twice to tap the ball forward, we got a play the ball (by the wrong player), and nearly a try because of the confusion that was generated.

At the meeting to debrief the NRL refs on issues arising from the weekend, it was decided that we couldn't trust the players to know the laws and would have to, at least in the initial stages of the Telstra Premiership, lead them by the hand. The following protocols followed.

1. Ref signals "held up" and "time off".
2. Identifies the player in possession who was held up.
3. Takes control of that player.
4. Marches him out to the point of the play the ball.
5. Ensures the defending team knows what is happening.
6. Takes up a position on the GOAL LINE before signalling time back on.
7. This ensures not only the attackers are ready but the defenders are too.

There will be nothing worse than a try being scored through utter confusion that may be easily avoided. **BEWARE** – if our "elite" footballers can get it so horribly wrong, how do you think everyone else will be. As referees, we need to be prepared.

I'll do a couple of drills for you for next time.

MICHAEL STONE
ARLRA PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE CONSULTANT
NRL REFEREES CO-ORDINATOR