



MEMORANDUM MS04/07 TO ARLRA REFEREES' COACHES

26 April 2007

RICHARD JOHNSTON ENTERS

One of our most experienced coaches, Richard Johnston has presented some wonderful food for thought with a number of insightful memos. I trust that he will continue to provide us with his innermost thoughts.

Aspects of Pro-active Officiating

It has been well documented that the Givens in officiating are Knowledge and Fitness. However being an expert on Law doesn't necessarily mean one will be a top referee. There is a definite need to exhibit that quality which separates one referee from another, namely a feel for the game.

It has often been stated that '**he had the shots but did he have the game?**'

So what is required by a match official to '**have the game?**' The following aspects if adhered to, through diligence and application will put you on the path to success.

Credibility The height of the bar in this domain is established by the referee through his decisions and outcomes in the context of the game. Soft calls can impact on the game, create player tension and bring unwanted attention to the referee for all the wrong reasons.

Positioning In all aspects of play whether it be the kick off, play the ball or positioning when attacking the line, a referee's ability to read the play will have a major influence on the outcome of the game and determine his standing in the game.

Communication Some referees talk a lot for little result whilst others say little and yet are effective. Being selective in directions and setting the standard early in the game are yet other attributes to be mastered by all.

Awareness To be in control of situations there is a need to '**smell the dencorub**'. There is nothing better than being in the right place at the right time. Presence can be a great deterrent for negative actions and a credibility enhancer when and where the right decision is required.

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Let us all work on these aspects to ensure we can say, we do in fact ***'have the game!'***

The following skill related drills can assist in enhancing on-field performance.

- Review an NRL game focusing on the following
 - mandatory v discretionary penalties
 - consistency of decisions
 - impact calls
- Practise positions in relation to play eg Yardage, Guts and Urgency
- Review DVD on Tackle Identification and Delaying Tactics
- Practise visualization drills for repeat sets of 6.

AND THEN...

“After reviewing referees from over the last few weeks there were some promising efforts but still the issue is Consistency and refereeing “What is in front of you”

If a referee in the context of the game is perceived to be a ‘rule book’ referee and nit picks the minor but doesn’t address the major incidents we will develop a recipe for drama. We often speak about the discretionary and mandatory penalties in a game. It is appropriate for all referees to reflect on this area and critique current performances.

Referees bring undo attention to themselves when addressing a minor infraction eg foot to the ball but take no action on a “Dangerous Throw” or continual working of a player on the ground once tackled.

It is also obvious that many referees are fairly robotic and predictable in their movements off the 5/10 metre line. Many referees’ first step is backwards which results in too much ‘traffic’ between the referee and the ball carrier which leads to dubious calls and a question mark on the credibility of the referee (See Memo 1 , Feb 2007). This is a classic example of the “Domino Principle” as the outcome is created by the initial position or movement.

There is a definite need in relation to position to not be the ‘accidental referee’ but the ‘directed’ or referee with purpose. Far too many soft option penalties are initiated by a referee who starts the play from a poor position in relation to vision and control.



REFEREES' ASSOCIATION

This is why we need to be involved in skill related drills, imagery and video reviews.”

AND THEN AGAIN...

“The following points need to be addressed by all referees.

Control of players and of self in the key areas of:

- **THE 10 METRES** – maintaining space and identifying early starters.
- **THE RUCK AREA** – ensuring tacklers move clear, ball carrier gains his feet before playing the ball, markers remain square, no pushing by either player.
- **SCRUMS** – formation is correct, locks are in and stay in until ball is clear, halfback feeds correctly, non-feeding halfback to be positioned behind his last row of forwards, backs don't move early.
- **PENALTIES** – clear signals indicating the type of penalty, give the mark and quickly adjust for vision and control.
- **TACKLE IDENTIFICATION** – flops, high tackles, delay tactics and lifting tackles that endanger players must be identified and controlled with the appropriate action taken.
- **URGENCY** – referees must reflect urgency in the following facets of the game – kicks in general play, early arrival for in-goal decisions, and when awarding penalties. Hesitancy or refereeing via assumption will impinge on a referee's level of credibility which will affect player control and self control. To be a successful match official it is essential that we “sense the changing rhythm of the game” .It is no good waltzing whilst players are rock and rolling. Simply put, referee what is in front of you and take the necessary action to ensure a safe environment for all concerned so that players' actions are in accordance with the true spirit of the game.
- **VISION** – we are constantly told to “never take your eyes off the ball!” yet, week after week, match officials in their haste to go to the mark for the scrum, take their eyes off, “the heat in



the kitchen”. Then when the storm erupts, the lack of vision is reflected in the quality of the match official’s response.

- **FITNESS** – without the appropriate level of fitness, all of the above will not eventuate. As fatigue raises its ugly head, the quality of decisions made by match officials will impact on the outcome of the game.”

GROUNDING THE BALL

I received the following query.

*“A defending player in his own in goal forces the ball.
What part of the body does he need to force the ball to deem the ball is dead?”*

Whilst it is not written in the rule book, is it similar to that of an attacking player forcing the ball in his opponent’s in-goal to claim a try? - eg with the upper torso.

Or is it any part of the torso - as in the nullification rule?

Some people appear to think that when a defending player makes contact with the ball in his own in-goal the ball becomes dead. I would think that he would have to have some control over the ball for this to occur. A player forcing the ball with his leg or with his hip would, in my humble opinion not demonstrate they have control over the ball and would/should not mean the ball is now dead and restarted with a goal line drop kick.”

I replied

“See Glossary definition of grounding the ball. It is the same principle whatever end of the field you are at.” I’ll let you look it up.

DELIBERATE THROW FORWARD?

Mark Edwards was on the ball.

“I have noticed on two occasions players deliberately throw the ball forward to prevent themselves from stepping into touch or over the deadball line. They then have regained the ball and play was allowed to continue. I believe this to be an illegal play under section 10 in the rules of the game. What would be different if a player was to run to an opponent and throw the ball over his head run around him and regather.”



Of course Mark is right. It is difficult to penalize someone for such a great initiative but of course we are Referees and we need to implement the Laws don't we. In relation to Hodges, though, it could possibly be argued that the ball didn't really travel forward but merely up in the air. A good argument when you consider that I have seen Scott Prince and Brett Kimmorley throw the ball in the air in front of them to fake a pass and regather it to play on. Let's not look for ways to stop play and look for ways to reward cleverness. But well spotted Mark.

Although it is our 100th year, let's still look young and enthusiastic!

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