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Memorandum

To:	ARLRA Referees' Coaches
From:	Michael Stone
Date:	29 April 2004
Subject:	MS 007/04

BLOODY BEAUTY! A BIT OF PASSION FROM THE TROOPS.

I had been afraid that no one was reading any thing or watching any football. Thank God that isn't right. This memo will deal solely with queries from you guys. God bless you all.

From Frank Samyia.

"I need to get this off my chest as firstly a fan of Rugby League and secondly as a referee.

I have grave concerns on the effect that the video referee is having on the outcomes of games. I've said nothing until now but I always had reservations about their use and in particular now where their powers of usage in the decision making process has been expanded past the in goal area.

I guess the greatest concern I have is that they are taking away the decision making process of the on field officials. The decision that will cause the greatest consternation this week is of Mark Gasnier's 'no try' against the Roosters. This was one of the best, if not the best game of the season. I feel the result of the game was affected by this decision. But the more deeper question I would like to ask (instead of going through the merits of it being a try or not) is - If the on field officials ie. referee & two touch judges were required to make that call what would they have decided?

At a first glance and on 1st instinct everything seemed hunky dory. My training has always taught me to go with your 1st instinct. I also believe that a referee's general positioning in front of the play gives one an A grade look at the possible "obstruction" process anyway. In other words, I think the referee has a better look on things from where he is

than the television camera from the side. Why therefore, would we not use the best possible view of what happened. I noticed that a head on replay wasn't used (maybe it was in the video referees box , I don't know) , but surely that would have given a better view of proceedings.

I fully believe that if that decision was left to the on field officials, a try would have been awarded. A "shepherd" or obstruction if you like , is just one of those things you call straight away - you know and you can see if there has been an obstruction. I believe Steve Clark didn't make a decision on it because he is operating under a system where he is not forced to make a decision. No one can blame him for that - he has the safety net of the video referee. This is the crux of what I believe is most affecting the referees at the top level. If he HAD to make a decision, knowing that he would have to stick with it, a try would have been awarded.

The referee should only be used for decisions relating to the in goal area. This was their original function and it needs to return to this. These well paid and highly skilled on field officials would get more decisions right that wrong if they knew , they had to make a decision. Their senses would be a lot more highly tuned to the game than they are now."

A nice little broad side at the Video Refereeing institution which evolved from the in goal official of the 90's. The video referee has certainly changed the way that referees officiate the game. In my day, you would be dropped for an incorrect decision leading to the awarding of a try. A very rare occurrence these days, as it should be. The benefit which Frank has, and all of you have too, is that you don't have a nine camera coverage of your game. If you think "that wouldn't matter to me", you are kidding yourself. Making a mistake in front of a couple of hundred people, of which maybe a handful would know anyway, is dissimilar in the extreme to making it in front of half a million plus, and regurgitated through radio, television and the popular press for days to come.

So the video ref, together with its short comings, is here to stay. Particularly as it is the agreed position of the major stakeholders in our game, which include our head coaches. We better get used to it. On to the decision which Frank quite rightly says had a dramatic effect on the game.

Firstly, Frank rightly points out that the referee, **if he had indeed been positioned in front of the play**, would have been in an ideal position to rule on an obstruction. In fact, the play came directly from a scrum and Steve was in field and making his way across, and not in your "A grade" position. Steve's "instinct" tells him something is wrong but he plays on. When Gasnier scores the try, he goes upstairs. What the video referee sees is this.

Gasnier is running across field looking to pick up a straight runner. Finch is shadowing him. Hornby runs straight to the line. He needs to be defended because if Gasnier gives him the ball **at the line**, he is through and probably under the posts. (Remember it was from a scrum.) So Cross moves in to defend him. Two things to be remembered. **It is not a bad read in defence by Cross as Hornby needed to be defended. Secondly, Hornby is not a decoy runner UNTIL HE DOESN'T GET THE BALL.**

Hornby doesn't get the ball, Cross is committed to him, Finch is momentarily obstructed, and Gasnier takes the space behind Hornby and makes the break. Both Cross and Finch suffer an obstruction **if Gasnier takes the space**. If Gasnier passes behind Hornby to another straight runner, or a sweep runner, play on because there is no obstruction. Simple isn't it.

Not really, but you guys who have the Key Indicator tape from the Level 2 course earlier this year will know exactly what I am talking about. You see, Frank was right about another thing. The decision had an effect on the game. The decision was correct, so the proof of the pudding should always be in the eating. The time to criticise an institution is when they get it wrong. Not right.

FROM KEVIN RIOLO

"With reference to the 'no-try' ruling against the Roosters in Sunday's game, because neither the kicker nor an opponent had placed the player in the offside position onside, I would like to present some possible scenarios for consideration.

Scenario 1: A Team No 6, kicks the ball in general play and is tackled legitimately by a member of the B team as he kicks the ball.

He therefore cannot chase the kick. A team No 4, who is onside, chases the kick and reaches the ball before any B team players. A team No 10 is in an offside position outside the 10 metres. As A4 is being tackled as he gets the ball, he throws it back 10 metres to A10 who catches the pass.

Decision?

Scenario 2. Same situation, same players. This time, A4, after gathering the ball runs 15 metres. A10 supports him and receives the ball and crosses the goal line.

Decision?

In neither situation does the kicker, nor a B team player put No 10 onside. My point is, either the rule is written clumsily or the interpretation is incorrect. I believe that Section 14 "Offside", 3 (e) allows a different interpretation, where it says that an offside player is placed onside when 'he retires behind the point where the ball was last touched by one of his own team'.

If that is the case, I believe that the Roosters player, who was outside the 10 metres, was placed onside by the team member who had come from an onside position and actually touched the ball."

In both the above instances, a try would be awarded. Player A10 is placed onside by Law 3 (c) which says "...one of his own team in possession of the ball runs in front of him." I think that the video ref on the day ruled that the eventual try scorer was within ten metres of an opponent who was waiting for the ball. It was a tough decision to make, but within his ability to make it. Remember, the in goal areas in NRL matches are 8 metres, not ten.

If the player A10 in Kevin's scenario is within ten metres **of an opponent who is waiting for the ball**, then he is offside and no one can put him onside.

PAUL OLIVER WRITES

"There has been a lot of media talk re: the disallowed Dragons try against the Roosters last Sunday.

I heard Ricky Stuart say on 110% Tony Squires on Monday night that by the guidelines NRL Clubs were given at the start of the season there is no doubt that there is an obstruction by the Dragons.

I would now like to ask the following questions.

- 1. Are the guidelines Ricky Stuart is referring to the Key Indicators?*
- 2. Could you now explain why the video referee ruled the Roosters defence was obstructed?*
- 3. Would Steven Clarke (he was the referee I think) have awarded a try if there was no video ref or the video ref said refs call?*
- 4. Was the video referees' decision correct?"*

Answers.

1. Yes.
2. See above.
3. No.
4. Yes.

TOM BOWDLER (tom.bowdler@dpi.qld.gov.au) WRITES

"Red player, after being tackled, gets up to play the ball. In doing so, he ACCIDENTALLY kicks the ball forward. Blue player (in marker position) picks up the ball and a) gets tackled immediately by Red dummy half or b) runs and gains 12 metres before being tackled or c) scores a try.

Decision:

- 1. Scrum (loose head and feed to Blue)*
- 2. Scrum (loose head and feed to Red)*
- 3. Play on - Tackle zero*
- 4. Play on - Tackle one*

5. *Penalty to Blue*
6. *Penalty to Red*
7. *or for Scene c) - award a try.*
8. *Don't Know - be honest!*

Answer a).....

Answer b).....

Answer c)..... “

I know the answer(s). Don't write to me. Address all responses to Tom above.

Make sure that you let me know if you want to participate in the workshop next month. Plenty of spaces available.

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