



## **MEMORANDUM MS07/07 TO ARLRA REFEREES' COACHES**

**19 July 2007**

### **COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Now I know that the boys from the NRL attract some criticism for their sometimes "repetitive" vocab that some people label boring. It is a fact, however, that the communication strategies employed have been so successful that we have had little opportunity to practice on recalcitrant players. I think that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the Referees have been feasting on their success in this area.

Jared Maxwell's listening with Hornby and his accurate responses meant that the St George/Illawarra skipper had nowhere to go and no answers. Gavin Badger's discussion with Newcastle and NSW captain, Danny Buderus, was emphatic and his sin binning of Simpson two tackles later, placed an explanation point behind the previous caution.

With permission from Daryl Durham of the Australian Sports Commission, I reproduce an article that he wrote for the website. Clearly alluding to grass roots footy and I think, appropriate advice and comment for all officials.

### ***EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: A KEY TO EFFECTIVE OFFICIATING***

***Effective communication is the key to managing the majority of people that we come in contact with in all aspects of life.***

*The management of people through effective communication is also the key to managing the competitive environment. Do officials focus too much on administering the laws of the game rather than managing the people within the game?*

*I recently observed one of the best officials that I had seen in many years. It was not an international game nor was it a first-grade match, it was not even a senior's game. It was an under-11 division 2 NSW rugby league game in Cooma, New South Wales. I was the 'freezing' dad on the sideline watching my son play his third game of rugby league. As an observer, I saw a referee who not only administered the laws of the game through effective interpersonal communication, but also coached the kids as he went. The manner in which he spoke to the players, the way in which his body language supported his verbal cues and his relaxed manner led to a positive experience for all concerned. That day, my son's team lost to Cooma. As always I spoke to my son after the game, asked if he had fun and asked what*

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REFEREES' ASSOCIATION

*he had learnt. He gave me his post-game analysis from an 11-year-old's perspective and then said he thought the 'ref' was really good because he talked to them all game. It was good to hear a positive remark about the referee who had also impressed me.*

*The key is developing officials with good interpersonal communication strategies and a good knowledge of the laws who can manage the competitive environment. So, what do you, as an official, need to focus on when it comes to good interpersonal communication strategies within the competitive environment?*

- *Set up a positive rapport with the team captains prior to the competition and during the season.*
- *Always view effective communication as a two-way process. Sender/receiver strategies are very important within the competitive environment. Do not just be a sender.*
- *Use positive verbal reinforcement throughout the competition.*
- *When dealing with 'boofheads' solicit support from the captains. Always remember that the competitive environment is a highly emotional and passionate setting. Sometimes you will need to invoke the laws of the game to their fullest because some people just do not listen. They are not good 'receivers'.*
- *Manage the participants by continually implementing communication strategies to get what you require. Constant communication will allow for some 'passive manipulation' of the participants. This is a key to managing the environment.*
- *Do not create conflict through an officious manner and poor 'sender' communication strategies.*
- *Non-verbal communication can be your greatest strength or your greatest weakness. Use positive non-verbal cues to reinforce your messages. For example, a look, hand signals or a nod of the head will reinforce your verbal messages.*
- *If your competition allows it, always officiate on the run. It is better to allow the competition to flow than for you to be the centre of attention.*
- *Always use your eyes to gain attention when communicating in one-on-one situations.*
- *Questioning can be one of your greatest tools — use it when you can.*

*Officiating is one of the most challenging experiences that an individual can face within the sporting environment. Officials play a key role in the essence of sport within Australia. We must continually try to support and assist our officials by providing them with the survival skills to make it through current and future seasons. Effective communication strategies are survival skills that officials can take with them into the competitive environment.*

Ref: [www.ausport.gov.au](http://www.ausport.gov.au)



## **RICHARD JOHNSTON'S CONTRIBUTION**

As always, a worthy contribution.

*“COMMUNICATION: As the song says, That’s the name of the game. So it is in Rugby League. Many people question the action of the Referee who STRUCTURES his/her game by taking time out to talk to Captains about actions which incur PENALTIES or impact on the TRUE SPIRIT of the Game. This is the same as setting standards in daily living. Go outside the acceptable parameters and you suffer the CONSEQUENCES. Unfortunately some Match Officials’ timing in this area is left too late as they hope players will be satisfied with a PLETHORA of PENALTIES .Sadly this is not the case and this NON-ACTION simply leads to player FRUSTRATION and a QUESTION on the Referee’s ability to read the SUBTLE and often OBVIOUS changes in the RHYTHMS of the Game. STRUCTURE, TIMELY and WISELY used is a great TOOL for Match Officials who desire to be ASTUTE FACILITATORS of the GAME.*

*TACKLE IDENTIFICATION: Here is another classic example of PLAYERS being IN TUNE with the Referee’s CALL. Match Officials need to ensure there is CONSISTENCY and ACCURACY with these calls which can REDUCE Player Frustration and Referee inflicted DISCRETIONARY PENALTIES. It is the SMART TALK that gets the desired OUTCOMES and creates a MARK of PLAYER RESPECT for Match Officials.*

*POSITION: A very wise man (Mick Stone) once remarked, “ I won’t tell you where you must stand but when your judgment is affected, we will need to discuss the ISSUE. So ASTUTE and non-threatening. A rather CONSULTATIVE approach but there is no CONFUSION in the MESSAGE. To be successful in this CRAFT it is essential Referees are AWARE of their LOCATION on the FIELD, READING what is in FRONT of THEM and MOVING and REACTING ACCORDINGLY. Referees at all levels should be familiar with and understand the terms: YARDAGE, GUTS and URGENCY and those ASPECTS requiring attention in these specific AREAS of the FIELD. How often in DE-BRIEFING SESSIONS does the discussion come back to the aspect of the APPLICATION of LATERAL SHIFT which reflects ones ability to READ PLAY, be PROACTIVE with ASTUTE POSITIONING and exhibit URGENCY to be in a POSITION to make CREDIBLE DECISIONS. There are only a very few games that have the luxury of the VIDEO REFEREE.*

*Refereeing is likened to being a CONDUCTOR of an orchestra. You can create MUSIC or NOISE. Where do you figure in this ANALOGY?”*



## **A KINDER GENTLER SPORTS OFFICIAL**

This is an article that was published on [www.referee.com](http://www.referee.com). An American perspective, but officiating knows no bounds, does it?

It is attached to the email.

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

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