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## Memorandum

To:	ARLRA Referees' Coaches
From:	Michael Stone
Date:	5 May 2005
Subject:	MS 008/05

### **IAS REFEREE'S ACADEMY**

The latest NRL Referee's Academy kicks off next Thursday at Steelers Leagues Club at 6pm. Nine of the best young referees from Group 6, Group 7 and Illawarra will attend for the next 16 weeks what I'm sure they will find to be an engrossing and rewarding refereeing experience.

The participants are:-

#### Group 6

Michael Signoretti  
Trent Cini

#### Group 7

Nathan Bowden  
Rob Hallett  
Chris Trenerman

#### Illawarra

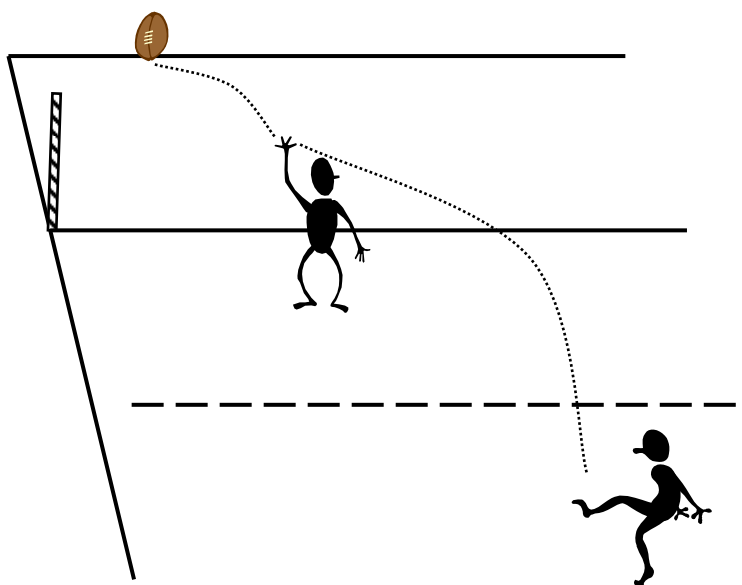
Craig Jones  
Ryan Jackson  
Liam Nicholls  
Darren Van De Moosdyk

Alex Mangovsky is the on the ground Co-Ordinator. Well done to all of you.

## **Parramatta's Ruling of the Week**

After the fifth and last play the ball an attacking player “chip kicks” the ball into the in-goal area. In flight the ball brushes the outstretched hand of the referee before landing in the in-goal and bouncing over the dead ball line.

*What is your ruling?*



### **The Laws**

Section 8.2

*The game is restarted with an optional kick from the centre of the 20m line if*

- a) *an attacking player last touches the ball before it goes out of play over the dead ball line or into touch in-goal except from a penalty kick or from a kick off from the centre of the halfway line.*

Consider

*If the ball has only brushed the hand of the referee has play been irregularly affected? If it has does a different rule apply? Does the same team gain possession of the football? This might have an important bearing on the outcome of the game.*

Please respond with your ruling. The last “Ruling of the week” evoked a response from Michael Quailey.

*“First, if the TJ was a parent or club official – advise the person that you as the referee know the player did not step into touch and that you*

*are awarding the try. Further, instruct the TJ that they are being replaced.*

*Second, if the TJ is officially appointed – call time out and query the TJ as to why they have raised their flag. If the TJ is still adamant that the player has stepped into touch, then rule that way and let the Advisor/ Coach handle the situation at the conclusion of the game. I feel that there would have to be extraordinary circumstances where the referee would question the neutrality of an officially appointed TJ."*

I agree.

## **POSITIONING AT RESTARTS OF PLAY**

Prominent innovator, Tony Fletcher, has penned this interesting piece. He has come to some very interesting conclusions about the “sacred cows” which we in refereeing have worshipped over the years, dating back I’m sure to 1908 in some cases. There is an old saying “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”. Some time ago a wise old man said “if it ain’t broke, break it. When you fix it, it will be better than it was before”. I think that we don’t experiment enough. We don’t embrace change enough. We don’t happily employ vision when looking at how to do things better. Remember, **if you always do what you’ve always done, you will always get what you’ve always got.** That saying always sat on Bill Harrigan’s desk at the NRL. Here’s what Tony has to say.

*“In MS004/04 – 18 March 2004 the following advice was detailed – “ It was agreed that the positioning for Kick Offs and GLDO’s are as follows:-*

- Kick Off – positioned on the 20m line opposite to where the kick off is to be made.*
- Goal Line Drop Out – Positioned on the 20m line and 1 metre into the field of play and opposite to where the kick is to be made.*

*Following the printing of this indicator about positioning for the GLDO; I have experimented whilst refereeing games in Group 9 during 2004 and into the 2005 season with the positioning for the GLDO and have found that positioning myself on the 10m line and about 20 to 35 metres into the field of play and opposite to where the kick is to be made is an ideal location. In addition, a growing number of Group 9 referees were adopting this position and were glad to be away from under the posts and the associated crowding at GLDOs. On watching a number of NRL games on free to air and pay TV over recent weeks I have noticed that the NRL referees are adopting a similar position.*

*Whilst I thought that I was keeping up to date with the latest trends in officiating; my GLDO positioning action has “ upset “ the Director*

*of Referees/Referee Coaching Panel members in Group 9 including such notable persons such as Tony Young and Pat Walsh.*

*In fact, the Director of Referees ( Tony Young ) has this morning issued the following direction in relation to the GLDOs – “ restart from the Goal Line and NOT from the 10 metre line.”*

*Can you provide to me the agreed positioning for GLDO's that the NRL referees are adopting. Any additional thoughts that you can provide in relation to this matter will be greatly appreciated”.*

There are two issues to address here. One is the technical issue of where is the better position for a referee to stand at the Goal Line Drop Out restart in play. The second is whether we should continually question “sacred cows” in order to improve our refereeing. I shall deal with them separately.

Pads on goal posts are getting thicker and difficult to see around. Referees at NRL level were regularly being caught out missing players jumping the start at GLDO's and the question was put to them “Why?”. Remember that question from your level 1 course coaches? The answer came back resoundingly that by positioning themselves where they always did, their view was severely impeded and players on the far side of the posts jumped prior to the kick. Back pack cameras along the goal line soon highlighted that fact. The NRL referees decided to experiment with changes in position to improve their vision. Obviously, Tony Fletcher's conclusion is the same, that his vision of players has improved in this phase of play. Now the question to ask the Director and other detractors is this. Why should I stand where you want me to stand? Is my ability to make the correct decision improved or hindered by changing position? What is the negative side of positioning myself 10 metres out and 15 metres to the side of the posts? What is the positive side of running out with the players at the GLDO? When you get the answers to those questions, then and only then, can you make a rational and fully reasoned decision about what is best practice as far as positional play from the GLDO is concerned.

Now that the CRL is truly part of the career path of referees towards NRL, it cannot sit on traditions, “TV game” stereotyping, “this is the way it's always been done” etc. We all have to think outside the square occasionally. Sometimes an innovation just doesn't work. If it doesn't, get rid of it. We don't simply make change for changes sake, or to get up the nose of the Director. But if it enhances your game, have the guts to break the mould. Use it. As for Pat Walsh and Tony Young, there are no better people in the game, not just as blokes but as servants of the game and the fountains of knowledge that exists between their ears. They are the type of person who needs to be listened to. Their years of experience is invaluable to the game. It is even more valuable if they ask themselves the questions that I put to them above.

So is positioning oneself 5m out 15m to the side of the posts best practice for GLDO's? NRL Referees will tell you it is. You need to decide for yourself. As the late Denis Braybrook once told me, "You can adopt that position if you wish, but if you get the decision wrong, expect a phone call". Nothing has changed there.

I know the people who read this memo. If this doesn't evoke some emotion, I give up. Let me hear from you. Maybe not you, Finchy! Wait until you hear the next big innovation from Robert.

### **SPEAKING OF INNOVATIONS.....**

Steve Toms innovatively writes the following.

*"Have been giving this some thought after the St. George/Illawarra v Brisbane game at WIN Stadium the other week.*

*Not sure of the time frame but the incident was when Steve Clark called a tackle on Mark Gasnier who passed the ball at the time the tackle was called.*

*Not sure how this will be received but call it a refereeing error in much the same as the referee may be deceived and blows his whistle thinking that an incident may have occurred only to find out that he was mistaken.*

*When such an event occurs the side in possession is not penalised by being given the LHF in the following scrum.*

*It seems in these days a harsh penalty against the side in possession when for all apparent reason the side in possession has not made a mistake. In the case where the call of tackled and a pass occur simultaneously would it be possible for the side in possession to retain such via the LHF in the following scrum.*

*A topic for thought if nothing else."*

Answering my own questions above. Why should the *status quo* remain? Answer: Because, in the opinion of the referee, the tackle has been completed prior to the player passing the ball and that constituted a breach of the Laws.

What is the negative side of packing a scrum LHF to the defending team? Answer: If the Referee erred in his judgement, the attacking team should not be penalized by losing the ball.

What is the negative side to packing a scrum LHF to the attacking side? Answer: Anything that we do we try to be consistent. So if the Law were to be changed, we would need to consistently hand the ball back to an attacking team who passes the ball after the tackle has been called by the referee. Tackle four, player held by one or more players, ref calls "held", player passes ball. "I didn't hear you Ref" he exclaims. "Don't worry son", says the Ref, "you get the ball back from

the scrum FOR ANOTHER SIX TACKLES”. Call me cynical, but I think there is scope there for coaches to manipulate the Law.

OK. So you say only pack scrum LHF to the side last in possession if the call is “simultaneous” perhaps. This is also a bad move as it allows Referees “discretion” in their decision making. Do you know what the trade off is with discretion? Consistency.

No Steve, honourable thought, and one outside the square, but not one which I think is feasible. By the way, Des Hasler, Manly coach, came up with the exact same idea. Has he been talking to you?

## **BENCH PLAYERS DISMISSED AGAIN**

From Brett Lynch.

*“Last weekend, we had an incident in a local game where two players from opposing benches become involved in a fight and were subsequently dismissed. The Referee on the day ordered both captains to remove a player from their side and recommenced the game with twelve playing twelve. I am aware of the ruling from you previous coaching memos but want to ask you about the following.*

*In the Penrith district, we have reserves benches that can be up to 7 players with unlimited interchange. Under these conditions, is reducing the bench by one player really going to hurt either team. I understand that on a bench of 4 players with twelve interchanges that one player short is a big deterrent. I guess my gut feel is that the Referees actions on the day whilst not strictly correct appear, on face value, to be a more appropriate deterrent. I need to make a ruling on this for the Penrith District (although it may never happen again) and I wanted your opinion given our reserves situation.”*

I said:-

*“Your referee's ruling is contrary to the Laws of the game. Show me where he is permitted to dismiss a player who has done nothing wrong. If the captains refused to send off one of their own players, (as I would have done), where does that leave the referee? He has no jurisdiction to do what he did. Given the number of times this has arisen in the last few months, I am beginning to wonder whether the rulings given in the newsletters are being passed on to the rank and file. Frustrating!!!”*

To which he replied:-

*“Thanks for your advice. Taking it one step further, if the brawling bench players end up on the field of play, does that change anything? Just curious.”*

To which I said:-

*“No.”*

Folks, this is something that has been canvassed a number of times. I know that people read these memos but do you pass them on? Do you take it in? Do you just ignore the contents as the inane bleatings of a silly old fart from the NRL? To paraphrase Walter Mattau in “Hello Dolly”, the memos are like manure. They’re not worth a thing unless they’re spread around helping (referees) to grow. Think about it.

And while you’re at it, don’t take your eye off the ball.

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