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Memorandum

To:	ARLRA Referees' Coaches
From:	Michael Stone
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Subject:	MS 008/06

INFLUENCES ON THE MATCH OFFICIAL

I recently read a paper entitled "Is society complimenting what we ask of our sports people?" written by former Olympic swim coach, Bill Nelson. It was a very thought provoking piece which could just as readily be applied to refereeing. Bill works closely with the NRL squad on matters including leadership, teamwork, motivation etc. I am fortunate enough to speak with Bill on a regular basis and he invariably gives me something to think about. For instance, the other day he was asking how the Premier Squad was progressing. I said "fine". He said "how many hours a week do you have them face to face?" I thought about it and calculated that three training nights together amounted to about 5 hours, more than any coach has had before me. His response to that really staggered me. He said "that means that everyone else has 163 hours a week in which to influence your squad members." Now that really shook me up!

As coaches, our influence on our referees is quite large. However, that influence will vary from individual to individual depending upon the personality of the individual involved, the effectiveness of our own communication, coaching methodologies, training standards, peer group pressure etc. We cannot guarantee success to anyone. But our job as coaches is to provide an environment whereby success becomes inevitable. We do that, inter alia, by providing efficient programmes, philosophies and standards for the referees to follow. However, there will still be other influences that can add to or hinder the success of the referee.

As a coach, we must continually look at the areas that will have an influence on the understanding, acceptance and ultimately the success of our training programme. Bill says in his paper that the rate at which a (referee) develops can and will be influenced by a number of areas including:

Living Habits, Daily schedule, sleep cycles, optimum diet, social life, personal hygiene, recovery time, leisure activities.

Environmental Influences, Family life, Friends and Colleagues, Relationship with the team, Job satisfaction, Time management skills, Commuting distances, Family support.

Training Programme, Long term, Seasonal, Training facilities, Training equipment, Medical support, Officiating programme, Quality of coaching.

The list is certainly not exhaustive. But is it not our responsibility to try and co-ordinate the above in a planned and structured manner so as to let the individual develop as a person as well as a match official? Whilst refereeing is a major part of their lives it is not the only thing. We need to put all of this into perspective when designing and implementing individual training demands.

The environment in which the referee operates will have a major effect on the development of the referee. Bill Nelson's 5 key elements of this development are:

1. The quality of the training plans both short and long term
2. The amount of training and officiating.
3. The structure of training load increases (inc class room education)
4. The quality of infrastructure that accompanies the programme
5. The knowledge and commitment of the people associated with the training programme.

The environment of the training programme gives us the opportunity to influence the individual but also the team concept should support our philosophies, standards and directions. However, as we all know, the official has to operate in the world at large that exists outside the controlled environment of the officiating programme.

Bill Nelson says "the influence of a coach is strong and hopefully backed up by a long standing and rewarding relationship between coach and athlete. Remember though familiarity breeds contempt and in that world that exists outside of the program and its influence there will be opportunities presented in many situations to these athletes that will certainly be in direct contrast to our teaching and direction. At the end of the day hopefully the athlete will be in a position to make a decision based on what is best for them and not one based on the influence of the situation or the people involved."

Continued later.

Based on the paper "Is society complimenting what we ask of our Sports People" written by Bill Nelson.

A COUPLE OF INTERPRETATIONS

There is always something that will arise that isn't covered explicitly in the Laws of the Game. We need an interpretation to ensure that we are consistently ruling on similar situations. Here are a couple of them.

Red grubber kicks after the 5th play the ball. The ball rebounds off a Blue player standing in his own in-goal and goes forward into touch on the full.

As we know, we cannot disadvantage Blue by ruling a goal line drop out. We can't give a 20 metre restart because the ball was not made dead. We cannot rule a handover because the ball was not kicked directly into touch by Red. Damn, what do we do?

Although not within the strict reading of the Laws, the ruling is a scrum 20 metres in opposite where the ball crossed the line, feed and loose to Blue. By doing this, it complies with the requirement that Blue not be disadvantaged and is the closest thing we have to being within the Laws. And yes, I know that the ball has actually gone out on the full from a rebound.

Second one.

Red knocks on five metres out from the Blue goal line. The ball enters the Blue in-goal where Blue picks up the ball runs and passes to another Blue player also in-goal. This player knocks on and the loose ball is forced in the Blue in-goal by a Red player.

Following many hours of discussion with people such Richard Johnston, and not without some misgivings, we agreed that the answer is *Scrum for the knock on by Red but no close than 10 metres to the goal line and 20 metres from the touch line. Loose head and put in to Blue.*

Why? We believe that for an opportunity to take advantage to exist, the defending team needs to get to the field of play. As they didn't, they have not expunged their advantage.

Now if those two rulings don't generate some correspondence, nothing will.

In the meantime, if you won't change, don't stop others doing it.

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