



MEMORANDUM MS010/06 TO ARLRA REFEREES' COACHES

29 JUNE 2006

As coaches, we work at various aspects of a referee's game. David Isaacs, Level 2 coach from Townsville, is no exception. He writes "The reason I wrote the (following) article was due to a response I received from a referee during a coaching review of his game. I commented on how well I felt he controlled the 10m area through his early establishment, however in doing this he appeared to be allowing too much tolerance in the rucks.

He replied that he had been having trouble with his 10m in the past, and as such, he had worked with his local trainer to develop a training drill that addressed this problem. Once he mentioned this it became all too clear that while his high focus on specific training drill had addressed the problems he had with the 10m, it failed to take into consideration other aspects of the game." The article follows.

"INVOLUNTARY ROBOTIC RESPONSE – LOOKING, BUT NOT SEEING!"

As a match official it is important that you strive for continual improvement in your own performance so that you are able to ensure that the outcomes during a match are consistent with that of the goals of all those involved of the game, ie to ensure that the safety of players is maintained at all times and that the decisions of a match official do not unduly influence the outcome of the match.

To achieve continual improvement you need to be able to identify areas in your performance that require improvement and then implement measures that address these issues. Without question the most effective method in which to implement improvement measures is through the development of specific skill related drills.

However, when developing skill drills or training programs that address specific aspects of a match official's performance, it is important that you understand the significant negative impact that these programs can have on performance if they are not developed and implemented in accordance with an overall strategy.

Identifying the preferred outcome and then developing a program that focuses on improving the skills of the match official to attain this outcome is simply not enough. Placing an undue amount of focus on one specific aspect can cause the match



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official to develop what could be described as an “Involuntary Robotic Response” (IRR).

The resultant affect of IRR is that match officials appear to be looking directly at an incident, but in real terms they do not see what really happened. Hence the term that you may be familiar with, “looking, but not seeing”.

The reason this happens can be explained in very simple terms - you play the way you train. Therefore, if you have developed a skill related drill that focuses on one specific aspect of the game to improve your performance, and you do not incorporate other triggers that may influence the outcome, then there is a high risk that in a game situation you will only focus on what you carried out in your training drills.

When this occurs you subconsciously block out other influences and this can result in incidents being left unchecked simply because your level of awareness was not heightened to included external influences.

For example: It has been identified through an on-field assessment that you are lacking urgency in or around the ruck area and this is affecting your control of the 10m area. As a result, it has been suggested you develop a program to help you in this aspect of your performance.

The training drill that is developed by you or your training instructor requires that you concentrate on your movements around the ruck area so that you are able to achieve early 10m establishment, whilst also ensuring that you obtain good positioning to make quality decisions.

While by itself this may be an excellent strategy to improve your control in and around the 10m area, the danger is that you will be so focused on this single aspect of your performance that if an incident occurs during this time, there is a real chance that you will not identify it because in your training you did not allow for any other factors into the equation.

In other words, the drill isolated the potential for other influences, which in and of itself created the potential for an Involuntary Robotic Response in a game situation. You may have the situation that for a small amount of time you actually forget why you’re there in the first place, as your only concern is to repeat the same movements you practiced during your skill drills at training – and for this spit second nothing else matters.

When this occurs, it appears you are focusing on refereeing what is in front of you, but in reality you are more concerned with your “programmed” response, and as a result you may be looking, but you are not seeing. So rather than correctly identifying the cause of the incident, you only see the resultant effect.

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It is at this stage your mind begins to work on the “assumption theory” and it begins to process the information that is available to come up with the most plausible outcome. In this split second you react on what you thought you saw and you take the appropriate action according to your beliefs, when in reality your decision may be incorrect and could impact on the outcome of the game.

Think about it. How many times have you watched a replay of an incident only to ask yourself, “what was I thinking when I made that decision”? Perhaps it was an Involuntary Robotic Response.

The solution to eliminate this potential problem from your performance is not as difficult as you may first think. It really is a simple matter of incorporating other influences that could impact on the outcome of your specific skill drills.

In the case of the above example, rather than isolating your actions so that you purely focus on your movements, you need to include other factors or triggers that would normally occur during a game situation so that you have a heightened awareness and are fully aware that other influences can occur during this time.

If you do this, you will begin to be more aware of your surroundings and you will continually be on the lookout for these external factors so that you are looking AND seeing, and when incidents occur you will be able to take the appropriate action at the appropriate time.”

A very thoughtful piece. Does anyone have anything else that they would like to contribute?

INFLUENCES ON THE MATCH OFFICIAL PART 3

There are certain steps that should be taken by us to reinforce our principles.

1. Regular communication with each official.
2. Understand each individual’s circle of influence and know how they operate within it.
3. Have your program well planned and organised
4. Program philosophy constantly reinforced and communicated by all members of staff or those who work with you.
5. Have your team in close.
6. Teach them the necessary skills to make well thought out and rational decisions.

All of the above are reasonable and understandable steps. The second is perhaps the most difficult for some people to come to grips with. The more we know about

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our match officials the better the prospect of us understanding them and creating a well planned and personal program for them. There is no doubt that influences other than football have a very real effect on the manner in which our match officials perform on the field.

There is no right way or wrong way to develop match officials. There are probably as many different ways to develop match officials, as there are match officials. The ability to coach effectively is determined by many complex issues but the basis is a well planned and implemented program, suitably qualified coaches, the standard of official involved, the ability of the coach to effectively communicate the program standards and philosophies, and the commitment of those within the program, match officials and coaching staff alike.

Not only is it our responsibility to provide an environment that continually supports our philosophies and standards but we must take the time to educate the individual with the necessary skills that allow them, when the time arrives, to make the correct decisions based on their own individual wants, needs and desires. More importantly they will have the correct education and background to make the right decision.

Peer group pressure is a major part of modern day decision making. Rightly or wrongly a majority of these decisions are based on what Bill Nelson calls “personality” based criteria as opposed to “character” based traits.

He writes

“In days past most decisions made by a person were made on the basis of their “character”, the philosophies, the background, the standards, the morale fibre of a past society and more importantly the character of their family and the teachings of their parents. In most cases decisions and actions were verbalised and acted upon without the influences of too many others outside of the family unit and very much paralleled what was deemed as appropriate behavior by society.

Today it seems we operate in a vastly different arena. It is my belief that the majority of decisions by our youth are made on the basis of what I call personality-based situations. That is, the decision and/or behavior is based on the particular personalities of the group or situation with which the individual is involved. Hence their personality based actions and decision making is reliant on the present requirements, not based on the character or background of the individual.

Many times this type of behavior leads a person to not being able to develop their own beliefs, their own identity and more importantly, their own philosophies and

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*hence, an individual personality. These people can exist in many different circles. However if this person is under any pressure or in a situation where no one is there to prop them up the situations can become very difficult for them to cope with and in the majority of cases they either cannot handle the situation or fail in that particular pursuit. Those that can and will survive in these situations are the ones that are in control of their own destiny. They are the people that understand that **their** problems are **their** problems; no-one else's. It is an acceptance of responsibility. Those that can survive in society past present and future are the individuals that have determined what direction and actions **their** life should take."*

Acceptance of responsibility is the starting point for creation of character. There are a number of areas that lead towards the development of character. The elements of honesty, integrity, self-discipline and resolve are but a few. Members of my Premier Squad will tell you that discipline and honesty were the first two lessons that they learnt the hard way starting from last November. Financial penalties mounted up until they learnt that I had a bit of resolve in me too. Sometimes there needs to be a sting in the tail to uncover the honesty that is there, but sometimes well hidden.

Honesty starts with the ability to look at yourself and the real picture. This is not an easy trait. Self-examination is multi faceted. It is a task that requires you to be able to place fair judgment upon yourself but at the same time maintain the ability to be flexible in your approach and demands whilst not compromising your core beliefs.

In years gone by, fault was assigned and you were held accountable for your actions. In most cases, people accepted this responsibility. Today things seem to have changed. Everyone is a victim. It is someone else's fault. We strive for understanding rather than confronting the issues. This is certainly politically correct and comforting but what happens when you step into the real world? The real world demands discipline and without it you are bound for failure.

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

ANSWERS TO QUIZ # 6

1. Penalty to Red 10 metres out in front.
2. Award goal and then award penalty 10m out in front. Irrespective of the result of the kick, must kick off at half way.



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3. Penalty to Red where the ball lands or is caught, or 10m in from touch or Goal line opposite where the ball 1st crossed the line.
4. Same answer.
5. Award goal and deal with offender.
6. Pen to Red 10x10
7. Goal line drop out
8. Goal line drop out
9. Blue must remain 10m from the original mark or behind the goal line.
10. Scrum as you cannot take a free kick back from the mark.
11. Advance the mark 10m ONCE ONLY.
12. Award another penalty 10m further downfield in line with the breach.
13. 1. Award the try. 2. Call the offending player out for caution or worse. 3. Instruct a touch judge to take up a position 10m out opposite the centre of the goal posts. 4. After the touchie has retired behind the posts, allow the conversion attempt. 5. Award penalty in front. 6. After the attempt, irrespective of the result, kick off from the half way line. **NB There is some debate on whether 1 and 2 should be reversed. I accept that circumstances may well dictate that this be so**
14. Penalty to Blue on the mark for pretending to kick for goal and kicking elsewhere.
15. Feed the scrum.

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

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