



## **MEMORANDUM MS012/06 TO ARLRA REFEREES' COACHES**

**17 AUGUST 2006**

### **WITCH HUNT ON REFS**

You will see a continuation of the vilification of our occupation in the upcoming Sunday Telegraph. A journalist called Badel will write that Robert Finch and Bill Harrigan have insufficient credentials to coach NRL Referees. The basis is that neither Bill nor Robert completed a CMO course. Robert was granted his Level 2 certificate in May 2003 in Recognition of Prior Learning and his Advanced Standing in the Game, criteria which were in vogue at the time. I presented him with his certificate at a Level 2 course at which he had been lecturing. Others to gain their accreditation (registration) under the same rules were Dennis Spagarino, Richard Johnston, Paul Oliver and.... Myself.

Harrigan is an NRL employee and as such works to their instructions. For some reason, I overlooked the fact that he hadn't done a CMO course. The NRL Referees believe that he has had a positive impact on their performance and preparation, despite paucity of his appropriate credentials.

Make no mistake, this is a continuation of the appalling attack on officiating. When one Refereeing official is attacked, it has an impact on all of us.

### **HOW MATT CECCHIN CAME TO BE REFERRED TO AS A "FRIED CHICKEN"**

The problem with having 12 cameras at a match is that they will inevitably show angles that are not available to match day officials. We non NRL people have the "luxury" of not being scrutinized to an absurd level, then being publicly abused, humiliated, dissected and rubbished for a decision that amounts to no more than an opinion. Yes, it was an opinion with which I disagreed. But I had the benefit of the camera angle behind the goal line. Dave Isaacs was clearly troubled by this ruling and cleverly asks the question "why?". This is what he said

*"Just a quick observation about the infamous "wrong call" by the match officials during the Newcastle v Manly match last Friday night.*



REFEREES' ASSOCIATION

*It's fair to say that in hindsight both match officials got it wrong during this game and you don't have to be Einstein to work this out. Just reading the newspapers and watching the TV proves this point as everyone has an opinion.*

*But rather than taking the easy option and criticising the match officials for coming up with the wrong decision, maybe we need to take a closer look at incident to ascertain what caused the incorrect decision in an effort to find out WHY they got it wrong in the first place.*

*The definition of a 'rebound' is, and always will be, a very ambiguous and contentious ruling. From my understanding, a key factor in determining this ruling is the actions of the offending player. If a player is NOT looking at the ball and makes no obvious movement towards the ball when it comes into contact with them, then it is widely accepted that the player is deemed NOT to have played at the ball - and therefore it is considered to be a rebound.*

*However what the 'decision makers' may not be taking into consideration is the evolving nature of players, coaches and the game itself.*

*As match officials we are taught from the early stages of our development that in order to make quality decisions we must be able to 'read' the game and think like a player so that we are able to get a better understand of what actions players are likely to undertake during a match.*

*Based on these beliefs, effective 'player management' strategies have been developed to ensure match officials are able to adequately identify "problem areas" on the run to ensure these areas can be controlled by taking the appropriate action at the appropriate time - preferably in a pro-active manner.*

*However, I find it amusing that while we tend to focus on how players are coached to react in certain areas of the field, such as in the yardage and urgency zones etc, little focus has been given to other skills that players have had to master due to the various rule changes that occur from time to time - and how as a result of this new mastery, they have been able to circumnavigate (I think he means circumvent) rule interpretations for their own benefit.*

*A prime example of this is the interpretation of the rebound rule.*

*In its infancy, the method for determining whether a player made a conscious effort to play at the ball or not was a very successful strategy. However with the evolving nature of players and coaches, they have since worked out that if they make a conscious effort NOT to look at the ball during rebounding incidents, then the odds are that the decision will go in their favour.*

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*Hence players skills have now developed to a stage where they can now achieve this goal with a relative degree of ease without it appearing to be obvious what they are really thinking or doing.*

*This is never more so evident than in the incident during the Knights v Sea Eagles game. The player in question appeared to be 'playing the man' in an effort to effect a tackle, when in fact his actions clearly indicated that whilst he was indeed concentrating on effecting the tackle, he was also covering his bases by using his peripheral vision to prevent the ball from reaching its intended receiver.*

*And this is not an isolated case. You will see the very same incidents occurring with monotonous regularity in any game, in any venue, on any weekend, and sadly you will see the same mistakes being made. (Ed. I think it is a mistake to refer to these incidents as “mistakes” as they are, as the author acknowledges, opinions). Not for one minute should we assume players do not know what they are doing. On a majority of occasions players are fully aware of the intentions of the ball carrier and they will quite cleverly disguise their own tactics of foiling the pass to ensure they transfer the odds in their favour prior to a match official making a decision.*

*So rather than focusing on how this 'mountain-out-of-a-mole-hill' incident occurred, perhaps officials should be looking as to WHY it happened and then implement measures to combat this to ensure it is less likely to happen in the future by continuously evolving their interpretations along with that of the players.”*

I note that Steve Matai, the player at the centre of the incident, has publicly announced that he didn't play at the ball. Whilst we can take that with a grain of salt, it adds to the multitude of “opinions” that exist in relation to a split second judgement. Where a player is looking is of course, only one indicator as to whether a player has played at the ball or not. Another, and the most telling factor in the Matai incident, is the distance that the ball travelled. If the ball had just left Johns hands before striking Matai, we could reasonably assume that Matai had no time to adjust and play at the ball but was simply completing a “ball and all” tackle. The ball in fact travelled some distance (according to the camera behind the goal line), before it struck Matai's hand and according to our own indicators, he has played at it.

Some really good observations by Dave, not all of which I agree with, but that is only MY opinion isn't it? Let me know what you all think.

## **RULINGS**



Tony Young from Group 9 recently sought some clarification on a couple of rulings.

“Q, [1] Attacking player kicks the ball on the full on 5<sup>th</sup> and last tackle from 40 metres out, the ball goes over the dead ball line on the full.

THE RULING WAS= A HAND OVER ON THE 40 METRE LINE.

Q, [2] Same again only this time on the third tackle

THE RULING WAS= A SCRUM TO DEFENDING SIDE WITH FEED AND LOOSE.

I disagree – My opinion is a 20 metre optional kick for both incidents as the ball has been made dead ....by the attacking side”

Of course, Tony is 100% correct.

The Canterbury Referees’ Association has always been one to throw up (sometimes) obscure rulings and debate them at meetings. This is a very healthy trait although it often has me scratching my head. Here we go with a mini mod question which is applicable to international rules also.

*"At a conversion the players punts the ball instead of drop kicking it. The kick is successful. The official touch judges don't realise it was a punt and both put their flags up. Must the referee award a goal or can he overrule the tjs."*

*Most refs were happy to overrule the touch judges, but Section 6, Rule 11 says otherwise.*

*My argument for not allowing the goal is that it's an illegal kick. This is no different to the kick being taken off the mark or, in the case of a penalty kick, the kicker's team-mate being in front of the kicker."*

I said *"In my opinion, the touch judges are merely ruling that the ball has gone between the posts. If the kick has been taken illegally, then the goal should be disallowed."*



REFEREES' ASSOCIATION

I trust that everyone agrees. The next Laws exam is attached. Be careful with this one as it cost the NRL boys some money. Just apply the Law.

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

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## NRL QUIZ #7

Q1. A player drop kicks a ball at the opposition's in-goal with the intention of getting the best hang time for his chasers. The ball goes over the cross bar, between the upright and is caught by an attacking player who forces the ball and claims a try.

Q2. Red after the fifth play-the-ball kicks the ball which hits a Blue opponent on the full and rebounds backwards into touch on the full. Give the touch judge signal and the referee's decision.

Q3. Red is awarded a penalty 10 metres out from their own goal line and elects to kick for touch. The ball enters the Red touch-in goal line on the full.

Q4. Red takes a drop for goal. An onside Red player runs through and fouls a Blue player in the in goal area. The ball goes dead.

Q5. Red is penalized for being offside. A Blue player then punches a Red player. The Referee reverses the penalty. Is that permissible?

Q6. The ball is kicked in General play and whilst in the air, strikes a passing sky diver. The ball subsequently goes out on the full.

Q7. The full time bell goes and, the ball being out of play, the Referee signals full time. As the Match Officials are leaving the field, a player who is still on the field, abuses and threatens the match officials. What, if any, action can the Referee take?



Q8. The ball is passed to an onside player. Rather than risk knocking the ball on, the player deliberately heads the ball in a forward direction, regathers and claims try by placing the ball over the goal line.

Q9. The ball is passed to an onside player. It goes behind him and bounces on the ground. He misses an attempt to catch it and deliberately heads the ball towards his own goal line to prevent an opponent from gaining possession. He then regathers the ball.

Q10. What is the definition of grounding the ball? All three elements.

Q11. The ball is passed to a player who knocks it forward with his hands. The ball hits the ground and the player kicks it immediately as it rebounds from the ground. The ball passes through the opponent's goal posts.

Q12. A player is dazed in a tackle. He regains his feet but plays the ball facing his own goal line. An onside opponent picks the ball up and places it over the goal line, claiming a try.