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Memorandum

To:	ARLRA Referees' Coaches
From:	Michael Stone
Date:	19 August 2004
Subject:	MS 014/04

This is likely to be the last memo prior to the NRL Finals Series. As finals are well under way in other areas, may I wish all coaches well and that all matches progress the way that they should. Take pride in your contribution to your referees' performances.

In that regard, Allen Foster told me that he has reached a milestone in his NRL career. He achieved his 100th appointment a couple of weeks ago and passed on his thanks for being given the opportunity to officiate at the highest level. Congratulations Allen, I'd love to take all the credit, but the referee himself is the major factor between success and failure.

ARLRA LEVEL 2 COACHES MEETING

At the recent meeting of Level 2 coaches at Marrickville Anzac Club, I previewed the latest coaching videos. The first is titled "Communication Skills for Referees" and deals with strategies that could be used in the course of on field meetings with players. Concerns were raised about the distribution of the video and who would be the people to present any workshops held to teach these skills. A fair question. I will deal with the answer a little later.

The second video, titled "Quality Decision Making for Referees" is designed for the "newer" referee and will allow the referee to not only make the decision, but also give his reasoning and an explanation of his reasoning. He is also asked to rate the difficulty of the decision and his own confidence in making it. All of this should be deciphered by the presenter to evaluate the quality of the referee's decision making ability. Clearly, it will be a valuable tool for the coach. The video is only 14 minutes long and we intend to create several more to enable a library to be built up. It should be remembered in relation to these videos that the answer will be provided to the presenter and participant. This is vitally important as we are dealing with "new" referees and consistent education across the board is essential.

Remember that the video contents and decisions were arrived at by your Level 2 peers. Samples of the forms which are to be filled out by participants are annexed.

Now to answer the previous question. The suggestion has been made that workshops be held instructing applying Level 2 coaches in the relevant skills mentioned in the videos as well as basic presentation skills that would be required by a presenter of the videos. It is thought that the workshop would consist of no more than a day and would probably be on a user pays basis. Having said that, I wouldn't envisage that the cost would be more than, say, \$20. For that, you get two video tapes, copies of handouts, work sheets, presenters instruction sheets etc.

The first workshop will be held on Thursday night, 9 September at NRL HQ, Bent Street, Fox Studios, Moore Park, Sydney, commencing at 5-30 pm sharp. We will look to finish about 9-30 at the latest. A light meal will be provided.

This workshop is open to ALL Level 2 coaches, so first in best dressed. We should be able to accommodate about thirty. Let me know asap of your application to attend.

FROM THE OL' DART

Stuart Cummings, the refs boss in England, sent the following. I think that it is great that we are working closely enough together that he feels that he can ask a question about what we do here in certain circumstances. Just as well, because if you remember, it wasn't long ago that I sought his assistance on grounding of the ball. He said, *inter alia* :-

"Have attached a video file for you to look at. It has caused a good debate here. For all the world it looks like a knock on. The White player (Sam Obst who was at the roosters) definitely plays at the ball with his hand. However according to the Laws is it a charge down! Would you recognise this as a charge down.

.....

I think we would like to look at the handover position following a knock on, on the last tackle near the opponents goal line! There seems to be some inconsistency there. Should it come out to where the scrum should be? If it is just a handover with no infringement then the handover would take place where the tackle was complete!"

Another area which is causing a slight problem is fouls on the try scorer! The current Laws give you little room to maneuver with the period of time where you can award an "eight point try" being so short. Should this be extended to include the time after he has scored?"

I said:-

“On the issue of position of the handover, if there is no breach, the handover is conducted on the spot. If, however, there has been a breach, such as a knock on for example, the handover is awarded on the spot where a scrum would otherwise have been set, but in the case of the touchline, no further than ten metres in. The importance of the correct implementation of this Law should be obvious. A team receiving the ball say, 1 metre out from their line, will only "bob" out for at least a couple of tackles, and then kick. It puts them at a major disadvantage, which is fair enough if the attacking team have not infringed.

If they have (infringed), the ball should be played 10 x 10 at the very least. The advantage gained here is quite marked. Our referees here are bullied by me to get their rulings right, including the position of restarts, and don't always get them right, much to my disgust.

When the Law relating to offences against a try scorer were first introduced, we had a most ridiculously restricted interpretation of the words "This law applies to the period during which the ball is touched down for a try and not to any subsequent period." Consequently, players were sliding in for tries, coming to a halt, and being belted by a defender without sanction as they lay on the ground. Clearly this was outside the intention of the Law.

We interpret "...the period during which the ball is touched down..." to include any period which the try scorer is on the ground and helpless to defend himself. When he rises to his feet, that "period" is over. Similarly, in a match earlier this year, Brad Fittler was running in to score a try when Shaun Berrigan from Brisbane attempted to kick the ball out of his hands. Because Fittler was not in the process of touching down, but simply running with the ball (albeit in the in goal area), the law did not apply.

Let me know if this is the same interpretation which you attach to the law. It seems to work well for us as it protects the try scorer, the original intention of the law.

In relation to the charge down, if the ball strikes the hands/arms as a kick is rising from the boot, it is considered a charge down. If the player, in this case Obst, is in such a position to be able to react and alter the position of his hands/arms to play at the ball, we would say that he "played at the ball" rather than simply "block the kick from the boot". Not an easy task for a referee, that's for sure. Or me, having not seen the video. Try and send it again please.”

DOMINANT TACKLE

A question from Alex Kiriczenko of Group 19.

*"I have had a question from a spectator which states:
Why does "Dominant Tackle" need to be called in oppose to "Held"? I know the tackle may be different but why is it the rage in the NRL to call "Dominant Tackle, Lost his legs".*

I hope you can help me with this one."

I said:-

"Things in Rugby League constantly change. For example, coaches in the NRL were getting players to "spear" in at the hips of tacklers in an effort to land on their hands and knees and achieve a quick play the ball. Similarly, players were "losing their legs" as soon as they hit the defence line, for the same reason. Lightening quick play the balls meant that defences, particularly the fast moving variety, had no chance to retreat 10 metres before another big forward was jammed into them. If you remember Melbourne circa 1999, or Cronulla a couple of years ago, you would recall this "flat" style of attack with precious little lateral attack. Nothing wrong with the tactics, but it was felt that not to challenge the line in this way was contrary to the intention of the game.

*So, the answer lay with how referees should deal with these so called "surrender" tackles. The Game (meaning NRL coaches) agreed that these type of tackles were to be called "dominant" by referees, which meant that the side tackling would gain a time advantage. This meant that the defenders **could take longer to get up from the tackle**. If a tackle is deemed "dominant", the referee calls "DOMINANT" first to let the players know that the tackler has achieved a time advantage."*

FUTURE ACADEMIES

That hard working DO for the North West of NSW, Harold Sutton, has been in contact to ensure that we don't forget his people. You're lucky to have him, and we'll try and work something out.

MICHAEL STONE

ARLRA PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE CONSULTANT

NRL REFEREE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

DECISION MAKING FOR REFEREES

CLIP 4 Canberra v Wests Tigers

Play on Penalty to Canberra Penalty to Tigers

Reasoning Confidence (out of 10) Difficulty (out of 10)

Explanation: What are the significant features in the clip that make this your decision?

CLIP 5 Bulldogs v Parramatta

Play on Penalty to Bulldogs Penalty to Parramatta

Reasoning Confidence (out of 10) Difficulty (out of 10)

Explanation: What are the significant features in the clip that make this your decision?

CLIP 6 Penrith v Souths

Play on Penalty to Penrith Penalty to Souths