

Memorandum

To: NSW/ACT Affiliates

CC: Andrew Knott; Paul Habel; Umpire Coaches; Umpire Development Staff

From: Graham Glassford

Date: 8 February 2010

Re: 2010 Laws Changes/Interpretations & Umpire Appreciation Round

In 2010 the following **Law Changes** will apply to all competitions:-

- Deliberately rushed behinds
- Free After Disposal (Free Kick and 50 metre penalty)

Both of the above laws were introduced into the AFL Premiership Season in 2009 in March last year and were not the 2009 Laws of Australian Football. I can confirm that both these laws will be in the 2010 Laws of Australian Football.

Deliberate rushed behinds

A Free Kick shall be awarded against a Player from the defending Team who intentionally Kicks, Handballs or forces the football over the attacking Team's Goal Line or Behind Line or onto one of the attacking Team's Goal Posts. In assessing whether a Free Kick should be awarded under this Law, the field Umpire shall give the benefit of the doubt to the Defender. A Free Kick awarded under this Law shall be taken at the point where the football crossed the Goal Line or Behind Line or from the relevant Goal Post.

When an Umpire is determining whether to award a free kick for a deliberate rushed behind the considerations are:

- What is the player's intention?
- Is the player contesting the ball?
- What is the degree of pressure the player is under?
- Was there a team mate in the vicinity of where the ball crossed the scoring line?

For clarification:

- Players who are contesting the ball in a marking contest or in general play may punch or knock the ball away from their opponents to prevent them from gaining possession of the football or from scoring. This will not be deemed to be deliberately rushed.
- Where a player is in possession of the football and is tackled near the scoring line, he must dispose of or attempt to dispose of the ball in complying with the laws of the game. A player will receive the benefit of the doubt in this situation.

Free after disposal

Award a 50m penalty in addition to a free kick for players who tackle or hold an opponent after the opponent has disposed of the football for the purpose of preventing them from taking part in the next act of play or being able to run on to the next contest.

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Along with the two law changes the AFL Laws of the Game Committee have recommended the following in relation to law **interpretations**:-

CLARITY ON RULES THAT ALLOW TEAMS WHO HAVE EARNED THE BALL TO MOVE IT ON QUICKLY
Clubs emphasised the importance of having clear and consistent application of rules that allow teams who have earned the ball to move it on quickly. In particular, Clubs noted that clarity and consistency was required on rules such as preventing players encroaching the mark and giving the ball back slowly to the opposition after a mark or free kick. Our feedback was to the effect that clear and consistent application of these rules will assist in countering defensive tactics and facilitate a more attractive style of play.

50m penalties for encroaching the mark

This includes players who delay the play by cribbing over the mark or entering the protected area 5m either side of the player with the ball. Players will not be asked repeatedly by umpires to come back on the mark. If they do not immediately get back on the mark a 50m penalty will be awarded. Players must not move in front of the mark until "play on" is called. They can move horizontally but must not move forward of the mark.

50m penalties for not giving the ball directly back to an opponent after a mark or free kick

A 50m penalty will be awarded against a player who doesn't return the ball directly and immediately to the player who has the kick. Players will be expected to return the ball in the same manner as if returning the ball to a team mate. Looping the ball in the air and delaying by asking the umpire to clarify who the ball should go to when it is obvious will not be tolerated. They should also return the ball directly to an umpire for a bounce or throw in.

Continuing to award a free kick for holding the ball where a player has no prior opportunity but makes no real effort to dispose of the ball

The number of ball ups increased for the third subsequent year to an average of 29 per game in 2009, having been as low as 19 per game in 2006. Although this has much to do with the number of players around the ball at stoppages, a number of players continue to "take" or "absorb" the tackle. This is contrary to the intent and terms of the holding the ball rule. There are three different types of free kicks for holding the ball – 'prior opportunity' and 'diving on the ball' is well understood. However, the third type; where there is 'no prior opportunity' is not as well understood. When a player has had no prior opportunity, he must still make a genuine attempt to dispose of the ball when legally tackled or be penalised for holding the ball. The umpire will hold his whistle in these circumstances to provide the player with reasonable time to attempt to dispose of the ball. If the ball is knocked out in the tackle or the player has attempted to dispose of the ball correctly, the umpire will call play on. In all contests the umpire's first objective is to be to protect the player who makes the ball his sole objective.

Holding at stoppages

Clubs have raised holding at stoppages as an area of concern. It has become difficult for field umpires to detect all holding infringements because of the number of players around the ball, the bouncing umpire having his head down to bounce, and the need to position the umpires so they can move quickly to either end of the ground for a quick clearing kick. For the coming season, the positioning of the two end zone umpires will be amended slightly and they will be moved closer to the stoppage to assist detection of these infringements. There will also be continued scrutiny of holding tactics. Having arms around either side of an opponent's waist will be interpreted as a hold. The use of four field umpires will also continue to be explored. In the NAB Cup, a trial will also take place with the boundary umpires being able to award free kicks for holding and high contact infringements.

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In 2010 the AFL Tribunal will also be implementing harsher penalties for players found guilty of umpire abuse:-

Abusive Language

The fine for abusive, insulting, threatening, obscene language has been increased. This is in line with the need to set a positive example to the broader football community regarding Umpire Abuse. Abuse and intimidation towards umpires from players, coaches and supporters has resulted in a 25% turnover of umpires at Community Level.

The following fine scale now applies:

- 1st Offence \$2600 early plea \$1950
- 2nd Offence \$3800 early plea \$2850
- 3rd Offence \$5000 early plea \$3750

All leagues are requested to follow suit and instruct tribunals to impose greater sanctions on umpire abuse.

Umpire Appreciation Round

As advised at the Affiliates meeting in December the weekend of 17/18 April will be Umpire Appreciation Round nationally and all leagues in NSW/ACT are encouraged to participate over the course of the weekend. The goal would be to have every game acknowledge the umpire and the role they play within the game. A couple of suggestions from the Affiliates meeting were:-

- Players line up prior to the start of the game and shake hands with the umpires;
- Players form a guard of honour for the umpires when walking out on the ground (this may be impractical as often umpires are on the ground prior to the players);
- Ground announcements introducing the umpires and the fact it is Umpire Appreciation Round;
- Where there is a 'Green Shirt Umpire' the "If you see green then don't see red" corflute should be displayed prominently;
- Silent round whereby crowds are encouraged to not abuse umpires/players etc.
- Use of the Football Record to highlight the round and any umpire interest stories.

The list above is by no means exhaustive and would encourage leagues and their umpiring groups to work together in promoting the round.

The AFL Umpiring Development Department have also created a slogan.

Umpiring is everybody's business

Over the course of the 2010 season it would be appreciated if Affiliates can publicise this as much as possible.

The 2010 Laws of Australian Football DVD will be released shortly and sent out to Affiliates via either Andrew Knott or Paul Habel and contain the laws and interpretations described in this memo. Each club will also receive a laws DVD per team.

If you have any queries relating to the above information please do not hesitate to contact Kevin Tingey, Luke Olsen, Carl Fletcher or myself.

Kind regards



Graham Glassford
State Umpiring Manager