

**Technical Guidelines**

As the game develops, referees need to stay on informed of the latest trends and techniques to ensure their refereeing is on point.

There have been a number of high-level tournaments this year that have exposed new areas that referees need to be aware of.

Some of the content below you have heard/seen before so it will be a refresher but there are sections that are new in refereeing.

It’s good to know this now as this is the direction the Referee Coaching Panel will be heading. Irrespective of your experience or badge level this is a “need to know” in our game

There have been a number of areas we have addressed through the NRL Touch premiership and have video of. I will cut these to small clips and send them to you as things unfold during the tournament.

**Dual Changes / Field Entry Priorities**

In dual changes react to the game by reading it, rather than reacting to the referee that is departing.  So many referees look at what the referee is doing and react to that.   Look at the game and see what it’s doing, and you will have forethought for what you have to do next and will attack for your first position and have full player management.

Know that when you’re on the sideline that in just a few touches, you will be on field, so always be ready, up with play and in a change position.

Also, on field departure, stay live in the game and come straight up to the 5m line to assist the on field referee. This is c a crucial part of teamwork.

**Score Line Interchanges / Positioning / Read / Outcomes**

In the past and even with some of the referee coaching of today referees have been discouraged from interchanges on the score line when in fact it is a great option.

Referee coaches have been concerned about the on-field positioning of the referee and the awareness of the off-field referee and also reaction time.

If we break that down there are better ways.

With lesser experienced referees they tend to stay mid field and only use a small channel to work with. While this is OK at times, it can and does impact of the fatigue level of referees toward the back end of the game.

Here’s an example; The ball is going wide and the on-field referee sees this but is unsure that the winger will get it and so stays infield using a small channel. The ball is dropped with a change of possession and the on-field referee now takes the drives to the other end. If the same scenario happens at that end, the referee is forced to take drives back again and if they can’t find their way to interchange then fatigue sets in and mistakes are made, the knock-on effect toward the back end of the game can be detrimental in decision making and overall game outcomes.

This goes hand in hand with score line positioning. If the referee is behind the line about 2 to 3 metres, then they are looking up and will see which way the attack is coming, and they can now be coached to “take the chance” and chase the ball as it goes wide. They are now in sprint mode with their body facing the sideline. The off-field referee also needs to be coached to be aware of what is happening and be ready to make the change. The off-field referee can in fact be a in a better position and facing the right way, especially if the ball is switched back in field. (**NB.** Referees would not be encouraged to do this on the 5th touch.)

This all comes down to coaching referees to be ready, be in an effective change position at all times and to read the game so they know when they are likely to be called on to take control.

**Touch Count**

There have been many times during games where referee lose the Touch Count. It’s part of the game with referees calling numbers from everywhere and also listening to sideline referees trying to get the link or winger back onside. It’s bound to happen.

However, try this. Call players by their number and the touches by first, second, third and so on. This way there is at least a variation in what you are delivering and less chance of losing the count.

**Common Sense**

Please take a “common sense” approach to attacking players in front of the tap penalty mark.

Do not be over critical if a player(s) is in front of a tap if they are interchanging or not interfering with play. In essence we don’t want our referees to be “penalty hunting”.

**Seven (7) Players on the field**

It’s hard to imagine at this level that there would be 7 players on the field, but it does happen, and we need to keep an eye on this especially when a Touchdown is scored.



*At the NRL Touch Premiership player rotation became an issue. There were numerous times where entry players would be on field before the departing players entered the sub box. This does have an impact on the game and allows the attack a lot more space.*

*We need to do our best to manage the sub box as do the coaches and managers of that team. If you see this happen, it is an immediate penalty. The penalty would be awarded at the mark where the 7th player entered the field.*

**Forward Passes**

Through the NRL Touch Premiership all games were live streamed, and it became obvious that we are missing forward passes and we needed to adjust the way we coach referees to be able to see these. There are two main areas that they are being missed.

1. Short passes from the half
2. The long ball on the score line

**Forward Passes. How to identify they are coming**

One of the biggest problem areas in our game is the number of forward passes that are missed by our referees and we can do better. Teams know there is more than a 50/50 chance that forward passes will be missed, so it becomes a lottery and at times short passes are not seen which has a detrimental impact on our game.

We are now coming under fire more often because of the amount of Live streaming and Television coverage within our sport.

Not sure why this happens but when referees referee on their own, they seem to pick up more forward passes so why, when there is three of them, do they miss forward passes? This has become an almost acceptable part of our game now and we as coaches need to reign this in and we can coach referees to have a better understanding of when this is more likely.

At representative level, all three referees need to be aware of this and be ready to make a decision. This is crucial for the off-field referees should the on-field referee need support.

We all know that unless the on-field referee sees the forward pass, they aren’t likely to look for the off-field referee(s) for assistance and we also know that the off-field referee is likely to have seen the forward pass but will play on because the on-field referee has missed it, so it would be fair to say, that we need to educate the on-field referee on the specifics.

**General Play:**

The on-field referee has a myriad of things to look at when the touch is made and there are times when they look away right at the crucial time.

If attacking players are decelerating or the line is deep, there is less likely hood of a forward pass, however, if in drives the attacker is not decelerating and is in tight, forward passes (short) are more likely and this is where the on-field referee needs to focus and have an awareness of the game. If they think there is a forward pass, look to their sideline for support, if nothing then keep going

**Score Line**

This is where we are also having trouble and referees are using the old adage of “it was backward out of the hands”. Some of the passes I have seen lately that referees have let go are inexcusable. I think everyone knows that every pass motions forward and a pass can start 1m before the line and end up being caught on or even over the line but still be passed backward, but let’s not confuse that with the ball travelling forward. A lot of our problem comes to the positioning of the referees and the amount of points they need to look at. It also comes down to the education of our off-field referees.

Even at the highest level or games with our best referees this is happening. So, what’s the fix?

First, the off-field referee that is facing the pass and can see the hands of the attacking player is key in this situation and is vital to assisting the decision. There are times when the on-field referee can’t see this because they maybe behind play and have blocked vision because of the body of the ball carrier. (This is a whole other topic). What is happening at the moment is that the off-field referee, just goes with the on-field referee and then hangs them out to dry. We need to ensure our off-field referees are in a position to make an accurate ruling. There are also times when the off-field referee starts to move back upfield and is not even close to assist. So, on line, it’s more about educating the off-field referee in positioning themselves correctly

With the short passes from the half at the roll ball we changed the thought process of the referee to see the body position of the first receiver. If they are in front, then the pass then they are in an offside position and the pass is forward.

With the forward pass on the score line we will be adjusting the off-field referee position to be in line with the pass so that there is more credibility with decision making. At this stage we have referees behind the attacking line and unable to assist or support the on-field referee. We need you to keep up with play and in line with the last pass so that you can assist/support the on-field referee. That said, the on field referee has the responsibility of the decision.

**Positional Adjustment**

In the past we have had our off-field referees in line with the defence and managing the link and winger, however, some off-field referees have taken a further step behind the controlling referee which is causing a few problems. i.e. If there are any ruck infringements or forward passes and the controlling referee sees this, it may place them in two minds. They can’t get support because the off-field referee is behind them and can offer nothing. In fact, the controlling referee would need to look behind the line to seek support.

What we are now asking is that the off-field referees come back a little from the defensive line and have a clear line of sight with the controlling referee. This way if the controlling referee needs any assistance, it’s just a quick glance. This is in general play and as the game is moving.

If a penalty is given, then we would expect the off-field referees to still set a reference point for the defence to line up to and then adjust from there.

**Touchdown Situations**

Some Touchdowns have been not been awarded or have been overruled by off field referees who can’t see the pass being thrown but indicate a forward pass with 9 out of 10 times the controlling referee going with the off-field person that gives that signal.

There are issues that need to be dealt with;

1. If you are the off-field referee and the ball is coming your way, you are in the best position to rule on the forward pass.
2. If you are the off-field referee and the pass is thrown where your vision is blocked by the body of the player throwing the pass, then support both the on-field referee and your buddy on the side where the pass is coming.
3. If you are the on field referee and you are unsure, all you need to say to the players is, “I’m OK with the Touchdown, but I need to check the last pass with my buddies and then make your ruling based on everything you have in front of you.” If it’s necessary to call you buddies to you, then do that so the decision is correct.
4. If you are the on-field referee and you are undecided, use all options to come up with the correct decision.

**Rolling 5m and Rucking (drives)**

It’s accepted that in drives off the score line that the referees will not hold the line or even be in it, so it will give the appearance that there is no control.  However, earlier communication from both the controlling referee and off field referees will assist this. Further to that, focus on what the set play is on the end of the drives. It’s highly unlikely that players will kill the play on the 6th.  There is always something set up or at least being tried.  Know this and be ready.

**Reading the Attack**

When teams have field position, they will try to isolate a “slow to realign” defender and will work to either get them off side or create a gap.  Try to read this in advance and see who the target is, so your field position improves.  This is more noticeable when the play starts from around the hallway line and the attack goes into static play.  You will see players trying to dump on a defender to set up for the easiest defender to target.  You can see this from off field as well and take it when you become the controlling referee.

**Interchange Zones (sub boxes)**

At this tournament the interchange area will be clearly marked on each field.

##### *Interchange Procedures & Sub Box Gate*

All interchanges must occur at or within the team's interchange area, and only after the substituted player has crossed the boundaries and entered the interchange area. All interchanges must be made on one side of the field and without delay.

Physical contact does not have to be made between interchanging players and players leaving or entering the field shall not hinder or obstruct play and must enter from an onside position.

Following the scoring of a touchdown, players may interchange at will without the need to wait for the substituted player to enter the interchange area.

**Eyes Up Refereeing**

This is something we have been developing for a while now and if we can get referees to look up and see what’s coming, they will read in advance and have better positioning, that in turn will give far more accuracy to their refereeing.

Watch any game where the referee is trying to manage a 5m line and you will see them pointing to a spot on the ground where they want the player(s) to realign to. This comes down to the checklist where referees have been taught to ensure defenders are on an imaginary line and also from the rule book of “both feet on or behind”. Doing this tends to keep the head and the eyes of the referee down and reacting to play rather than seeing it unfold. The flow on from this is late positioning, late 5m management, poor interchanges and more.

It can be demonstrated to any referee, that they don’t need to point to a spot on the ground to have players realign. Referees can do this with peripheral vision, communication, arm and slight body movement.

**Eyes up on the Line and Game Read**

If referees can be coached to position themselves behind the line it will most definitely keep their eyes up and looking to what’s coming at them. Moreover, they can see some of the tactics.

If the defensive winger has their body facing infield, it’s a tell-tale to how they will defend. If there is this shape, then it’s likely that the attack will also see this and send players to the inside of the winger to keep them turned in. Once they have the winger in far enough a long ball will be thrown to the attacking winger and then it’s a foot race to the corner.

If the defenders are faced out then they are pushing the attack to the sideline, it’s then when the referee(s) need to be aware that there is a possible return pass.