

Group 8 Rugby League Referees Association.

President's Report 1974.

Without doubt the most significant development in Rugby League in our area in 1974 was the graduation to Group status of the old Molonglo Shield organization. Although it was not to become legally an independent group until 1975, Group 19 was already so in the eyes of Rugby League people. We in this Association will watch its progress with interest.

With the formation of the new group, the Referees Association is now in the unique position of supplying referees to two Groups. The position gave rise to some concern about the lines of responsibility but there has been no serious suggestion that separate associations should be formed to service the two Groups. In the coming season we will be responsible to the Control Committee which is representative of the two Groups equally, and we will again supply officials to both competitions. It is to be hoped that true equality is achieved, in public regard, in playing standards, in organization and, it must be said, in financial provision for referees.

Since our new responsibilities have made certain sections of our constitution inappropriate, it is necessary to make a number of amendments to it. It would seem desirable to look carefully at the whole of the document to remove certain ambiguities and anomalies. The amendment proposed for this Annual Meeting will make it possible to carry out this updating process at a later date convenient to the Association.

In addition to the two Group competitions, a new competition was conducted for small centres in the Goulburn area. The standard of play and the enthusiasm engendered locally were both somewhat surprisingly high and there are moves to extend this competition in 1975. To provide referees for a growing competition of this kind will tax our resources severely. Moreover, there is some concern being expressed about the effect of the second division competition on the playing standards of the old-established Goulburn teams. It may not be insignificant that neither side reached the Group 8 semifinals in 1974.

In all, active membership of the Association reached 41 during the year, although the number of referees was never as high as this because of retirements, resignations and occasional unavailability. There was a remarkably even standard of refereeing

through the season, with many members receiving senior appointments for the first time. Noel Bissett emerged as our senior referee, being appointed to his first inter-divisional game and producing a fine performance in the Group 8 Grand Final. This was a most memorable game between Canberra Tigers and Queanbeyan United who deservedly took the title which had eluded them for so long. One would wish to note also the remarkably rise of Bill Foran who refereed the Group 19 Grand Final. His late-season performances gave every promise of a long and distinguished career in our sport. Other senior Grand Finals were refereed by Keith Pickard, Tony Pass and Dick Morgan while Alan Laird handled the Division Two game. Congratulations are extended to these members and to all those appointed to Minor League Grand Finals also.

In February, 1974, The annual camp was conducted at Goulburn. Under the guidance of John Ellis, who also emerged this year as a leading referee, the camp was a most enjoyable occasion, even though we might have wished for a greater number of successful candidates. Coaching was as usual under the capable direction of Bruce Chapman who also conducted a late season course. Ten members, among whom Nevil Norris should be mentioned assisted in Canberra, while John Ellis again ran successful schools at his end of the Group. The 1975 camp will be held at Camp Sturt on the Murrumbidgee.

Despite the growing pressure on the Association to provide officials for the widening senior competitions, it was in the Minor League that the most critical shortages occurred. Only because many senior referees were prepared to "double up" was it possible to provide properly-qualified officials. I do not believe that this practice should continue except in cases of direst emergency, and it is admitted that this was the case in 1974. The shortage of Minor League referees is at least partly the result of the extreme pressure under which these often very young men are placed by spectators. Despite the keenest efforts of many Minor League officials, these spectators, usually misguided parents, continue to make it difficult to attract recruits.

Editor Jim Mahoney, with his willing assistants again produced "In Touch", the Association's weekly journal, which continued to act as a forum for the exchange of views on refereeing and the medium for the dissemination of news. Its function as the means of notifying appointments was considerably frustrated this year by the state of turmoil in which the postal services seemed to be. "In Touch", nevertheless, continued to be at the heart of the Association's life.

It is fitting that I again express our thanks to the Canberra Workmen's Club for making its premises available to us for meetings and after-game gatherings. To the Principal of Daramalan College our thanks also for permission to hold lectures at that school.

I want, at this time, to pay a special tribute to Dick Morgan, Secretary par excellence to the Association. He is the latest in a line of Secretaries in whom this Association has been singularly blessed. Dick has been a most efficient administrator and a fearless advocate for referees in many forums. From personal experience I can say that the work he does on our behalf far exceeds the nominal terms of his office. His views are noted and respected at every level of the game in this and wider areas.

I thank those many members of the Association who have assisted in its work in various ways. Social and other occasions were never short of help from members.

It now remains for me to address myself to more personal matters. As members are aware, it is not my intention to seek the Presidency again this year. It is "time for a change". I have held the office for four years and the honour which the Association has done me in that appointment is one which I hold most dear. I am opposed to institutionalising any office, particularly that of President, and the stresses which seem to me to have appeared in 1974 might well have been avoided by the introduction of a new face on the Executive. Let us ensure that the new President has our full and active support as he seeks to carry out the policies decided on by us all.

I appeal to you all to remember that refereeing is first and foremost your sport. Put forward your best efforts at all times on the field, but try to remember that the level of your appointment ought not to be the only measure of the enjoyment to be gained from refereeing.

I wish the Association - my Association and yours - a most successful season in 1975.



Ian Alder  
PRESIDENT