



# Memo

**Date:** July 15, 2024  
**To:** NSWTA Affiliates  
**From:** Josh Benham, Events Manager  
**Subject:** Referee Compliance Review

In August 2023, the Regional Referee Directors (RRD), State Panel members, Event Staff, and several Affiliate-based Referee Directors convened to address referee compliance issues for NSWTA events. Various conclusions and outcomes were reached during this meeting and subsequently shared among the RRDs, with only one dissenting response. As a result, these recommendations were implemented for the 2023/24 representative season.

Following the 2024 Junior Regionals, marking the end of the representative cycle, the State Director of Referees, General Manager, Referee Education and Development Coordinator, and Event Staff met to review the first year of these changes. The review determined that while some elements were effective, others were deemed too harsh or failed to achieve their intended goals and needed to be revised.

We engaged with the referee community via a reference group which included-

- All six RRDs- Blake Richards, Ryan Wake, Victor Baptista, Bill Slade, Amanda Draper, Phil Rainger
- Tony Doyle – Penrith TA
- Nick Altin – Griffith TA
- Rina Janson – Northern Suburbs TA
- Lucinda Wherle – Hills TA
- Linda Scott – Macksville TA
- Grant Doherty – Newcastle TA

The feedback we received revealed some common themes and highlighted various differing opinions in certain areas. We have considered all the comments and found compromise solutions in areas without unanimous agreement. However, we recognise that not all requests could be accommodated, primarily due to the need to reach a consensus.

Below, we outline the outcomes of the feedback process, our subsequent discussions, and the proposed actions based on these insights.

The guiding principles to remember are:

- Establish a system that ensures affiliates meet or can work toward meeting compliance through their own resources.





- Ensure affiliates develop referees to enhance their park competition.
- Transition away from the current practice where referees are simply hired for events by some affiliates.

### **The 2023/24 Referee Nomination Timing Regulation**

*Nominations for teams to be opened once referees have ALL registered into MSL/Completed NSWTA documents.*

#### **2024 Review**

Following the review, NSWTA has concluded that the process adopted for 2023/24 was effective as our office was able to engage with Affiliates facing compliance issues and discuss possible solutions in a timely manner. Therefore, the nomination timing will remain the same for the 2024/25 representative cycle; with further details to be included in the relevant event Conditions of Entry.

During the review process, questions were raised about the possibility of Affiliates nominating excess referees. Specifically, if an affiliate nominated more than their requirement, could they go as part of their own contingent, as opposed to nominating these excess referees for the Referee Pool. NSWTA has determined that Affiliates are permitted to take this approach, however, in this scenario the Affiliate will be ineligible to receive any funds from pool allocated referees outlined within this document.

Our experiences over the past representative cycle have taught us that referees are susceptible to withdrawing from the referee pool, on most occasions this is with legitimate grounds to do so, however some withdraw without notice or reason. This has placed an additional strain on the affiliates they have been allocated to, the state referee panel and the NSWTA. As a deterrent, for the 2024/25 representative cycle, referees who withdraw from the Referee Pool without legitimate grounds will be ineligible to be entered into the Referee Pool for a period of 12 months.

#### **Rationale**

Moving dates forward will provide affiliates greater time to prepare and advised teams of the consequences. QTF have a hard and fast rule in this regard. They remove teams from their competitions if an affiliate does not meet compliance requirements. They start at the top team/division and move down. Our view is that we provide affiliates the opportunity to link their nominations with a team, so they are making the choice which team is at risk.

It also became known that there was confusion around the responsibility of accommodation. That is, whose responsibility was it, the Affiliate, the NSWTA's or was it up to the individual. Some affiliates who took extra referees to an event and had them allocated via the Referee Pool were happy to accommodate the referees with their own contingent. Others felt it should be the responsibility of the allocated Affiliate and other instances the referee had their own accommodation.

The NSWTA has concluded that the nomination process needs to indicate the accommodation status of the nominated referee, that being whether the referee will be accommodated with their Home Affiliates contingent, or if they require accommodation from the Affiliate they are allocated to.



Similarly, Affiliates utilising the Referee Pool to meet compliance will also need to advise whether they have accommodation available for allocated referees as part of the nomination process.

The cost of accommodating the referee will be the responsibility of the Affiliate the referee is allocated to, unless the referee's Home Affiliate is able to accommodate the referee as part of their contingent.

### **The 2023/24 Borrowing Regulation**

*Stated that Affiliates will no longer be able to borrow referees from within their region. Any Affiliates with excess referees will place them into the Referee Pool.*

#### *Rationale*

After the review in August 2023, supplementary feedback, and advice to affiliates several RRDs changed their stance on this matter. Some affiliates also continued the process and hope to avoid being caught, causing stress and undue pressure on staff dealing with affiliates who had been misinformed by referees, regional representatives or who those who had ignored the system.

There is a concern that allowing this practice will lead some affiliates to poach, beg, borrow, or steal referees from local affiliates or within their regions instead of establishing a development program. Additionally, with the increase in regional and affiliate gala days just before the JSC, some referees are officiating up to six weekends in a row. While some referees appreciate the income, this trend has affected affiliate requirements for the JSC, as many referees prefer to referee multiple gala days for the money and then avoid traveling to referee at the JSC.

#### **2024 Review**

Our review centred around replicating the player pool system to allow affiliates to borrow within their cluster and then within their region. This process would be governed by the RRD in conjunction with the NSWTA REDC and Event Staff.

For the 2024/25 representative cycle, Affiliates will be able to borrow referees from within their cluster and region. We understand that this situation might alleviate some burden on affiliates, but we may require them to provide a development plan if they choose this path. This would still require the payment to the providing affiliate/referee that are providing for the shortfall; however, no strike would be incurred for the Affiliate acquiring the referee via this process.

Interstate and or International Referees must still go directly into the referee pool to be allocated by the NSWTA. The use of interstate and international referees only depletes NSW resources without contributing to the development or growth of affiliate park referees, which is why they will remain available only through the referee pool.

### **The 2023/24 Points/Strike Policy Regulation**

*Affiliates will have a maximum limit of five (5) points over a 3-year period. Affiliates will receive 1 point per Referee short for NSWTA events. Should all five (5) points be exhausted, the affiliate will be placed under a limit on the number of teams they can enter into the next NSWTA event.*



**NB:** An Affiliate who has incurred strike/s will need to complete 3 x FULL Years of compliance at representative events to return to ZERO.

### 2024 Review

This is to move to one **(1) strike per event** rather than one (1) strike per referee shortfall. The cycle for returning to zero strikes is to be **three (3) consecutive events at full compliance** rather than years.

The pool referee payment remains however NSWTA will pay directly to the referee and the affiliate. Referees going into the pool will need to include bank details on nomination so payment can be made. Interstate or O/S referees are not eligible for pool payment.

### Rationale

It was felt that the current strike system is too harsh on affiliates and provides no incentive to them to develop referees. With the change to one (1) strike per event, it does allow for an affiliate to look to develop a plan to increase their referees for the betterment of their park competition as well as their presence at NSWTA events. It will also encourage the affiliate to work with the REDC to implement development programs.

In relation to payments, while many affiliates are doing the right thing and passing on the money to the referee, it has come to our attention that some are not. By making a direct payment from the NSWTA we are ensuring that the pool referee receives the money.

**NB:** A strike may be withheld by NSWTA on the premise below:

*An affiliate might have for example 7 teams. They have put a plan in place and in year one they are 3 referees short. In years two and three they may have improved to be one referee short at each tournament. This level of development demonstrates an affiliates desire to meet compliance and would be considered. If an affiliate was continually well short of compliance as determined by the NSWTA, then this would certainly trigger an ability to enter teams into the next NSWTA event.*

### **The 2023/24 Payments for Referee Non-Compliance regulation.**

*See below the following changes which commenced from the 2023 State Cup.*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Strike \$500
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Strike \$750
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Strike \$1000
- 4<sup>th</sup> Strike \$1500
- 5<sup>th</sup> Strike \$2000 and restrictions on teams

*NSWTA to keep a record to reward those who are consistently above the threshold of referees.*

### **Rationale for scaling the amounts:**

*The premise behind the increased costs per strike is to act as a deterrent for Affiliates who are currently not meeting compliance.*



*It is the belief of the members that attended the forum that the increased costs will encourage affiliates to place further importance on the development of referees within their affiliate.*

*Further to this, as the strike fees will go to the Affiliates that are supplying the referees via the referee pool, there is an incentive for Affiliates to continuously develop excess referees.*

### **2024 Review**

First and foremost, there is a belief within the touch football community that this process is a money-making venture for the NSWTA. This assumption is false. The money collected is passed on to the referees and the affiliates supplying the excess via the pool.

The revised payments are listed below.

- **1<sup>st</sup> Strike** – For each referee required **\$400.00 direct to the referee - \$200.00 to the affiliate providing the referee.**

- **2<sup>nd</sup> Strike** – For each referee required **\$400.00 direct to the referee - \$200.00 to the affiliate providing the referee.**

- **3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Strike**- For each referee required **\$400.00 direct to the referee - \$400.00 to the affiliate providing the referee. - \$200.00 towards a development fund** for the affiliate requiring the referee.

For the 3<sup>rd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> strike NSWTA has sought to impose stronger financial penalties against non-compliant Affiliates with the aim of encouraging these Affiliates to place a greater importance on referee development. Moreover, the \$400.00 the Affiliate supplying the referee will receive provides an incentive to Affiliates who regularly over-supply referees.

The development funds for a 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> strike, can be used towards courses, room hire, the purchasing of training equipment and upskilling sessions. Additional information will be sent out to Affiliates in due course.

### **Rationale**

It was again felt that the current escalation of payment is too harsh on affiliates and provides no incentive for the Affiliate to develop referees.

Further the rationale behind the 2023/24 scheme clearly did not work with affiliates and the view that a larger fee would be a deterrent did not eventuate. Affiliates still struggled, some legitimately and some through their own vices, regardless the system did not work as a deterrent as was thought to occur.

With the change it ensures that the pool referee is compensated and the affiliate undertaking the development receives funding back.



## **2024 Review**

New elements from the 2024 review highlighted the transition from Level 1 to Level 2 at NSWTA events and the need for Referee Coach development.

### *Level 1/Level 2 transition at NSWTA events*

To sit the Level 2 course at a NSWTA events, the referee must have a minimum of three (3) months referee experience (on field experience) with RRD endorsement.

For JSC the referee must have been assessed prior to the event.

### *Rationale*

Increasingly, affiliates are nominating Level 1 referees, some with only a few weeks of experience, to attend a Level 2 course at NSWTA events. Our minimum event standard is Level 2, and there are compelling arguments that it should be Level 3 for some events. However, we believe maintaining Level 2 as the minimum is necessary now, provided referees have practical experience. This is the reason for the three (3) month clause. Additionally, TFA regulations require referees to hold a Level 1 certification for a specified period of a minimum six (6) months before sitting for a to Level 2 with RRD sign off.

Regarding the JSC and prior assessments, there are two key reasons for this requirement. First, we are all aware of the parental behaviours at JSC and assessing referees' beforehand acts as a protection mechanism to prevent losing inexperienced referees due to potential negative encounters. Second, given the size of the events and the number of referees, the panel lacks the human resources to adequately assess potential Level 2 referees during the JSC itself.

### *Referee Coach Development at NSWTA events.*

It was identified we need to put in place a process/program to increase referee coaches first by region, and then at a point in the future by cluster. The plan is to use the Country Championships to develop 12 Referee Coaches per annum (2 per region).

Where required NSWTA would provide accommodation and the costs of the Referee Coaches Accreditation course.

There would also be a requirement to attend 3 x Zoom sessions.

### *Rationale*

Increase the number of referee coaches in each region to assist the RRD to assist affiliates.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Ian Matthew or myself.



Many thanks,

**Josh Benham**  
NSWTA Event Manager

**New Referee Event Pathway and Compliance Regulation Summary.**

<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Detail</b>
<b>Referee Nomination Timing</b>	<p><i>Nominations for teams to be opened once referees have <b>ALL</b> registered into MSL/Completed NSWTA documents.</i></p> <p><i>Affiliates <b>can</b> nominate more than their requirement, and go as part of their <b>own</b> contingent, as opposed to nominating these excess referees for the Referee Pool.</i></p>
<b>Pool Referee Accommodation</b>	<p><i>The <b>cost</b> of accommodating the referee will be the responsibility of the Affiliate the referee is allocated to, unless the referee's Home Affiliate is able to accommodate the referee as part of their contingent.</i></p>
<b>Borrowing within Region</b>	<p><i>Affiliates <b>will</b> be able to borrow referees from within their <b>cluster and region</b>. This would still require the payment to the providing affiliate/referee that are providing for the shortfall; however, no strike would be incurred for the Affiliate acquiring the referee via this process.</i></p> <p><i>Interstate and or International Referees <b>must</b> go directly into the referee pool to be allocated by the NSWTA. Interstate or O/S referees are not eligible for pool payment.</i></p>
<b>Strike Policy</b>	<p><i>One <b>(1) strike per event</b> rather than one (1) strike per referee shortfall. The cycle for returning to zero strikes is to be <b>three (3) consecutive events at full compliance</b>.</i></p>
<b>Payments for Referee Non-Compliance</b>	<p><i><b>1<sup>st</sup> Strike</b> – For each referee required <b>\$400.00 direct to the referee - \$200.00 to the affiliate</b> providing the referee.</i></p>





	<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Strike</b> – For each referee required <b>\$400.00 direct to the referee - \$200.00 to the affiliate</b> providing the referee.</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Strike-</b> For each referee required <b>\$400.00 direct to the referee - \$400.00 to the affiliate</b> providing the referee. - <b>\$200.00 towards a development fund</b> for the affiliate requiring the referee.</p>
<p><b>Level 1/Level 2 transition at NSWTA events</b></p>	<p>To sit the Level 2 course at a NSWTA events, the referee must have a minimum of three (3) months referee experience (on field experience) with RRD endorsement.</p> <p>For JSC the referee must have been assessed prior to the event.</p>
<p><b>Referee Coach Development at NSWTA events.</b></p>	<p>The NSWTA will use the Country Championships to develop 12 Referee Coaches per annum (2 per region).</p>