Arrival Times at the Tackle / Breakdown: and the 'Community' Rugby Solution?

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Rick Watsford in his study “WHERE THE BALL WILL BE” (2003) discovered that there is a correlation between the position of the referee and whether a referee is accurate in decision making.

He noted that “ The Tackle, Ruck and Maul are the most important challenge for the referee”

This being the fact, providing a simplified tool for the community rugby participants where the lesser skilled Referee Coach can observe the game and notate the errors noticed, and also the position of the Referee when the error was made is seen as a need.

This Study will attempt to discover if there is a link between the arrival of a referee at the Tackle / Ruck / Maul, and whether there is an effect on the referees Accuracy and Compliance at that phase.

The competencies to be studied are:

TACKLE and RUCK/MAUL.

Also to be taken into account will be the referees Ball Line Management. Also other studies to be considered are:

BALL LINE RUNNING AND NON-COMPLIANCE AT KNOCK ON AND FORWARD PASS. Roger Higgins 2003.

WHERE THE BALL WILL BE. Rick Watsford 2003.

Before the start of the study, there will be a few definitions to clarify:

- define the timely arrival at tackle
- define the timely departure at tackle
- define late arrival
- define late departure
- recognise influencing factors on arrival and departure
- How is this information collected, and how can it be used in Referee Coaching.

THEORY:

Rick Watsford study is the essence of where I want to go with this research, that is finding out where the Referee is when he/she makes an error, and having a tool to provide the Referee with the evidence and means to improve position if that is the issue.

I don’t expect to make any great revelations, I merely hope to provide the “weekend warrior” Referee and Referee Coach with a tool that is easy to use and understand so that they may get more enjoyment out of their Saturday.

Most recent advancements are aimed at the elite or higher level of Refereeing where tools such as video and voice recording are available for post match review. These tools are invaluable and are the way forward for Referee improvement. But the fact remains that the majority of our rugby remains without these technology helpers and we need to continue to provide improvement tools for the lesser levels.

With this in mind, this simple Tick sheet to be explained later to record the timely arrival at the breakdown provides a general performance indicator of a Referee at lower levels. This is not designed to replace any of the tools currently at our disposal, but should be used in conjunction with Ball Line Running and forms of the like.

METHOD:

Once we have determined the definitions we can look at 5 videos of various levels of Rugby and see if we can determine which Referees are late, which are timely and which are correct in Accuracy and Compliance at TACKLE and at RUCK/MAUL.

Using a specially developed form for ease of recording we can collect this statistical information and apply it to already formulated methods such as Ball Line Management and Accuracy and Compliance forms.

After this data collection we can analyse the Accuracy and Compliance deficiencies and determine if this has any correlation to poor performance at Arrival and Departure Stats.

THE MATCHES AND REFEREES:

1. Eastwood V Canberra	M Goddard
2. Cats V Blues	S Young
3. South's V Randwick	D Cheever
4. NZ V PIRA	S Dickinson
5. Reds V Waratahs	A Cole

DEFINITIONS:

- Timely arrival at the TACKLE/RUCK/MAUL – Arrival of the referee, on the A Line at or immediately after the breakdown occurs, and before the arrival of any supporting players. The referee should be within 5m of the ball

- Timely departure from the TACKLE/RUCK/MAUL – Referee is on the move as the ball is cleared or passed from the breakdown, this includes pick and go.

- Late arrival at the TACKLE/RUCK/MAUL – Referee arrives at the breakdown after any supporting player has arrived and changed the nature of the breakdown. (eg; Referee arrives at Tackle after supporting player arrives and forms the Tackle into a Ruck)

- Late departure from TACKLE/RUCK/MAUL – Referee leaves the breakdown after the ball has been passed and received, or leaves after the ball has been moved to a new breakdown. (eg; pick and go and the referee is slow to react)

These definitions are ambiguous at best, but there is a need to start somewhere and define them. With time, better definitions could be developed to aid in the recognition of referee deficiencies.

FORMS:

The development of this data collection is entirely based on the Ball Line Running theories.

The form will collect information based on the fact that the Referee is already performing well on the Ball Line Management – that being above 80% in this measure.

The form will collect information on whether the referee was Timely or Late in his/her arrival at the TACKLE/RUCK/MAUL – and collects information on whether the referee was correct, or incorrect in the decision made. This is collated via a simple Tick/Cross method, and I would suggest a time notation for any crosses detected, along with the description that was noted as incorrect. This would allow for cross-referencing back to any Accuracy and Compliance form and allow for better education of the Referee as to why they may have made an error.

LEVEL III PROGRAM

REFEREE:	**MATCH:**	
		Date:
1st Half		
Timely	**Late**	
2nd Half		
Timely	**Late**	
✔ Indicates Correct decision		
✗ Indicates Incorrect Decision		
Note, add ‘P’ for any penalty, and add Time Notation		
Note, add Time Notation for any error.		

The idea is to keep this form as simple as possible to allow ease of information collection and subsequent coaching. Also it is envisaged that any crosses would directly correlate to any errors detected via Accuracy and Compliance, therefore at a glance a coach will be able to determine where the Referee was when he/she made a decision.

NOTE:

Upon the beginning of data collection it became apparent the collecting of departure time stats, as well as arrival stats was not easy, nor conducive to good observation. It was worth noting that late departure could, and probably will affect a Referees arrival at the next breakdown.

Not as many decisions are made upon departure from a breakdown, as there are upon arrival at the breakdown, so it was decided to ignore this aspect for now and leave it for another time.

RESULTS:

As expected the Data showed a direct correlation between poor positioning and Error at the TRM.

<u>Game 1, Eastwood V Canberra TNC</u>

BLM Aline. 92% 8% Bh
Timely 39 times, 2 occasions the referee was incorrect. 95% Correct
Late 15 times, 6 occasions the referee was incorrect. 60% Correct

Overall 27% of the time referee was in bad Position, 73% in good position.

<u>Game 2, Blues V Cats S12</u>

BLM Aline. 86 % 10% If 4% Bh
Timely 42 times, 2 occasions the referee was incorrect. 95% Correct
Late 28 times, 5 occasions the referee was incorrect. 82% Correct

Overall 40% of the time the referee was in bad position, 60% in good position.

<u>Game 3, Souths V Randwick TNC</u>

BLM Aline. 93% 7% Bh
Timely 53 times, 2 occasions the referee was incorrect. 96% Correct
Late 16 times, 7 occasions the referee was incorrect. 56% Correct

Overall 30% of the time the referee was in bad position, 70% in good position.

Game 4, PIRA V NZ INT

BLM 82%, IF 14%, Bh 4%
Timely 53 times, 1 occasions the referee was incorrect. 98% Correct
Late 8 times, 3 occasions the referee was incorrect. 62% Correct

Overall 13% of the time the referee was in bad position, 87% in good position

Game 5, NSW v QLD S12

BLM 82%, IF 18%.
Timely 59 times, 1 occasions the referee was incorrect. 98% Correct
Late 8 times, 3 occasions the referee was incorrect. 62% Correct

Overall 12% of the time the referee was in bad position, 88% in good position

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY:

It is clear to see that the referees are making more errors when they arrive late to the Tackle/ ruck/ maul. If they are timely and in good position they are able to make correct calls more often, and perhaps manage the situations more effectively with communication. Using this tool in lower levels should give developing referees clear feedback as to where they are when they are making mistakes.

In each of the games examined the referees incurred more errors most probably due to being unsighted or unable to recognise the infringement and mange effectively. It also shows that the referee can often get in to good position to rule even if they are not high in Ball Line Management, in fact the best performing referees had lower ball line scores than the lesser performing referees. This tells me that the better referees may have better skills of reading the game, and do not always run Ball Line to ensure they are in the best position to adjudicate at the next breakdown.

It is yet to be proven if this tool is to be effective for use in the field as I have not yet had the opportunity to use it live. But I can see it as an effective way to show via data collection and summary of that data whether a referee is arriving to the breakdown timely. This information would clearly show to a referee that he is making mistakes when he is not arriving in a timely manner, and coaching strategies could be devised to improve this performance aspect.

Used in conjunction with Ball Line Running statistics, this would show the referees deficiencies regarding position at the tackle and solutions could be easily devised. In Conclusion, with some modification, collection of information of this nature can only be beneficial to the Referee and Referee Coaching at lower levels.

appendices:

(i) Australian Referee Competencies
(ii) Data Collection Sheet
(iii) Completed Data Collection for Games 1-5