



The Siddal ARLFC NCL playing squad met yesterday evening to discuss recent events surrounding the West Hull v Siddal play off match and whether as a squad they would, in all the circumstances, be prepared to travel to West Hull to replay a fixture they had already won.

Prior to the meeting the NCL confirmed no assurances could be given in relation to the imposition of sanctions in the event that Siddal failed to fulfil the rearranged fixture.

Despite the threat of disciplinary action by the NCL the players have confirmed they are not prepared to travel to West Hull for the rearranged fixture.

Head Coach Gareth Greenwood attended the meeting and wishes to set out the reasons why the players have come to the decision to withdraw from the NCL play-offs.

On Saturday Siddal beat West Hull 15 - 14. At the end of the regular 80 minutes the scores were level at 14 - 14. The referee called both captains and informed them that the extra time would be played as golden point. West Hull attempted to drop a goal at their first opportunity near Siddal's try line. After approximately ten minutes of extra time Siddal kicked a drop goal to make the score 15-14, as you would expect the West Hull players dropped to the ground and the Siddal players celebrated their victory. The West Hull players made a 'tunnel' for the Siddal players and both sets of players shook hands as we'd all expect at the end of such an intense play off match.

On Sunday morning at 9.30am David Lowe (NCL) called me to inform me that the result would not stand, and a replay would take place at West Hull the Saturday after. I was also informed that should we beat West Hull in a replay we would play Castleford Lock Lane on the Wednesday, just three days later and that if we were to win that match we would play either Thatto Heath or Wath Brow on the Saturday. I informed David Lowe that both sets of players and coaches were fully aware it was golden point and that there was no way I could expect my players play three away play off matches in seven days. It was the end of a long season and unsurprisingly the players were playing with all kinds of injuries and niggles. To attempt to play three play off games away in seven days and maintain

acceptable standards let alone win was almost impossible. At this point I suggested the NCL take advice from the professional game so, they could understand that no professional side would put there players through a scenario such as this.

I also asked David Lowe if he had spoken to the referee as I believed this would bring matters to a swift conclusion because he would confirm that all players and coaches were aware it was golden point. David informed me they had not contacted the referee which meant the NCL had only spoken to West Hull representatives prior to making the decision to order a replay.

We immediately made our feelings known in writing to the NCL that something was very wrong and we wanted the matter investigating urgently. We also informed the RFL as we believed they would intervene and wouldn't allow this situation to continue. The RFL called an appeal hearing for both teams on Tuesday so that the different challenges raised by the teams could be addressed: West Hull wanting the replay and Siddal wanting the result to stand. The referee was present at the hearing and we are certain he would have stuck by his report, sent to us the day before, which confirmed that all players and coaches played to golden point. In the hearing we felt that it was understood beyond any doubt that players and coaches were fully aware they were playing to golden point and so common sense would prevail. The vast majority of questions during the hearing centred around whether both teams knew it was to be golden point and that certainly appeared to be the main focus of the appeal. Much to our surprise following a lengthy appeal hearing it took the panel less than five minutes to inform both clubs that the result must stand as an operational rule had been broken by the referee.

It came to light straight after the meeting that a member of the panel making the decision was a former team mate of the coach at West Hull who also went into the hearing to put forward West Hull's case. At the earliest opportunity our club made the RFL aware we felt there had been an irregularity at the hearing on the grounds of lack of impartiality and fairness. We were quickly informed our concerns had been dismissed.

The players met on Wednesday night and I made clear that I wanted them to say what they believed was the right and honest thing to do, and to forget the threats of possible sanctions. All the players in that room have worked tirelessly since January and sacrificed a lot of time to get to this point and we absolutely believed we were going to win the play offs from 5th position supported by the fact we travelled to West Hull and won - no easy feat. The players have behaved all season in a way the club can be proud of, we pride ourselves on our discipline and received no red cards or had any major incidents with referees in the 2013 season. These players decided that they had already won this match and that to do something against their morals and beliefs would only let them down.

The players also spoke about not wanting to negatively affect Castleford Lock Lane's chances of progressing as they were being forced to now play their play off fixture mid-week and they had let us know they were rightly not going to do this.

It was against this background the players decided virtually unanimously that they were not prepared to travel to West Hull to replay a match they had already won.

We genuinely want to thank the NCL clubs and rugby league public who have sent messages of support and shock. We are aware that sending the losing team through to the next round may detract from the competition albeit it would have significantly less of an impact than having to reschedule fixtures midweek with below strength teams competing. We therefore feel we must stand by what we believe is the right thing to do. Gareth

As a Club we are mindful that the decision taken by the players is likely to result in disciplinary action and potentially serious sanctions from the NCL. However, we understand and are fully supportive of the decision they have taken. As a club we pride ourselves on doing things in the right way and we are comfortable our integrity is intact and we have acted in the best interests of our players, the Club and the Competition.

As we previously communicated, Siddal values the welfare of its players above all other considerations and given the proposed revised schedule we feel that they would not be given adequate recovery times between fixtures, thereby endangering their well-being plus potentially their ability to support themselves and their families. This would also potentially be true for the players of West Hull and Lock Lane.

We furthermore feel that the revised schedule would undermine that ability of all three teams to effectively participate in what is arguably the jewel in the crown of the amateur game and we would rather therefore withdraw than denigrate what should be the climax of our great competition in this way.

Whilst we accept the referee made an error under NCL competition rules the fact that all players and coaching staff were aware that golden point would be applied from the start of extra time coupled with the fact such a rule is the norm in several other RFL competitions should have meant common sense be applied and the result allowed to stand. Settling matches by golden point from the outset is common throughout the game and given those were the rules under which both teams believed they were playing the NCL had every opportunity and justification in allowing the result to stand. Sadly and without being bound by precedent they chose not to do so.

Finally, as a Club we are disturbed both by the way in which the original decision to order a replay and subsequent appeal decision were reached. Such concerns merely serve to heighten the sense of disappointment and bewilderment felt by everyone at the club over the way this whole matter has been handled.

Marc Lovering
SIDDAL ARLFC
30.10.2013

APPENDIX 1

STATEMENT OF MATCH REFEREE TOM HUDSON AS SENT TO DAVID LOWE NCL

After the 80th Minute of normal time had passed, I blew for full time with the score standing at 14-14. Following the full-time whistle both coaches separately approached me asking what was to happen regarding extra time, neither were sure what was going to happen. I was in no doubt that the game should continue to golden point, I was so confident this was correct, that I didn't feel the need to check the information. I told both coaches that golden point was to be played, both accepted this and neither raised any doubts or concerns.

Before extra time began, I did the toss with both captains, informed both of them that golden point was to be played. The captains' reacted in the same way as both coaches, accepted the information and didn't express any doubts or concerns, or query that these were the correct rules.

Extra time commenced, West Hull attempted a number of drop goals when in close proximity to the posts, missing on all occasions. In the 7th minute of golden point, Siddal successfully scored a drop goal. I awarded the drop goal and immediately blew to signal the end of the match. After this, many of the West Hull players dropped to the floor and the Siddal players began to celebrate their victory.

After the full time whistle, I walked through the crowd of players, shook a few players' hands and waited for my touch judges to catch up with me. We walked off of the pitch from the far side towards the changing rooms which took a couple of minutes.

As we walked off, a number of members of the crowd began to vent their anger at my decision to go straight to golden point and not play two halves of ten minutes before going to golden point. This was the first time that anyone had raised any objections to me going straight to golden point.

It wasn't until I was back, waiting outside of my changing room, that a West Hull official showed me an email from you, stating that in the event of a draw, two periods of 10 minutes shall be played, and then golden point shall be played afterwards if needed.

Later, we spoke about the incident, and you suggested that I ask both teams to go back out onto the pitch and restart play. Unfortunately the teams were already changed and leaving the ground.