

Memo to Blacks Players – late season 1974

1. *The following points are written down for your perusal and I trust improvement over the remaining matches in Season 1974. There are many other points I could make but I feel the undermentioned are the important ones to take the Blacks through to “A” Finals.*

2. “Minding an Opponent”

Not enough concentration is given to minding an opponent. Too many of our players play either too wide of or too far in front of opponents. It may prove fruitful if we gain possession of the ball but can be disastrous if the opposition win the ball.

Not one of our players should be that far away from his opponent that in the event that side winning the ball he cannot immediately close up and block a possible avenue to goal.

Players on the ball – rucks and rovers – should not tear blindly down the field without a thought to where your opponent is. I am speaking of course of when the ball is going in our direction. Certainly, be in front of your opponent but never that far in front that you cannot recover in time to have him covered.

Bear in mind that I don’t want a negative approach or negative players. Leave your man when you know you can win or receive the ball and send your side forward. Once having done that get back on your man as fast as you can. Never go “ball chasing” and that is the point I am really trying to emphasise. Any forward can afford to give his back man three or four kicks and then pick up his one kick and obtain a goal or be responsible for one.

3. “Flying for the ball”

In my opinion we still have too many players attempting to mark the ball, and this naturally means we don't have the balance of power on the ground. This must surely come down to self-discipline in that you must be prepared to let your team mate in a better position or a better mark to fly for the ball. Talking and nominating a player in plenty of time would fix this fault in our game.

There are too many players attempting to mark from behind, and, in particular, those who do so from a standing jump. It is hard enough to mark from behind when you have the drop but nearly impossible without it. Why not discipline yourself to punch.

4. “Teamwork”

I feel there are players on our side who do not make enough use of their team mates. I'm not interested in the player who kicks the ball but rather the one who creates the opportunity for him to have the kick.

It is certainly important to win the ball, but it is more important that you pass the ball to advantage.

Be unselfish and you will feel good and also have the respect of your team mates.

5. “Going in for the ball”

I expect players to approach the ball with endeavour to win it with every ounce of concentration, desire, and ferocity they can muster. The ball should be the object, and nothing should distract you in your effort to win it.

I spoke last Saturday at half-time about players not putting themselves in when the chips were down, that is shortening stride. You might fool some spectators, but I’ve been around too long to be fooled by this one. You may rest assured that I know when a player has put in a 100% effort to get there against the one who has counted the cost. Make up your own mind on this one because you alone have the remedy.

6. “Pressure on Opponents”

This can be achieved in many ways, big tackling, chasing, playing close and in front, punching the ball from behind, shepherding, and going in for the ball like your life depended on it.

All the above-mentioned things will unsettle or unnerve any player when done consistently throughout a game. Too often the above are done too few times to have any real lasting impact.

In my mind a player is not a really good player until he has come up against and overcome the pressures mentioned above. This is what top grade football is all about.

7. “Comment”

I say we are good enough to take out the Premiership. We have all the talent and team balance required but it takes much more than that. It takes a lot of self-sacrifice, dedication, desire, and not forgetting, a hell of a lot of old-fashioned “G & D” to take out a flag, and, in particular, an “A” Section Amateur Flag.

Most players got this feeling after beating St Bernard’s last Saturday, but multiply that many times over and you may start to realise what winning the flag will mean.

If I asked you on Grand Final night if it was worth it all, I know what your answer would be! Think about it! Will you play your part?

Peter O’Donohue
Coach, 1974