

➤ VIOLENCE IN SPORT

It's not always right to fight



HAVE A REST: Wallaroos second-row Mark Belkery gets 10 in the bin against Brothers at Salter Oval.

PHOTO: BEN TURNBULL BUN240515LEA3

Players are ultimately responsible for what happens

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MOST sporting teams have that player who suffers from white line fever – that one person on the team that transforms from a mild-mannered accountant to someone who would take on 100 players if it meant winning the game.

There are some sports that are more violent than others and they hold a culture of aggressive behaviour, but Dr Joann Lukins, Associate Professor of sport and exercise science at James Cook University, said the ultimate responsibility would always be on the individual player to control their actions and being the most aggressive player on the field wasn't always a good thing.

Some sports are more suited to aggressive and assertive personalities but accord-

ing to Dr Lukins regardless of the game being played, the players who step outside the boundaries of the rules don't have enhanced personal performance and the team's cause isn't helped.

Dr Lukins is the sport psychologist for the North Queensland Cowboys and she understands how a player's behaviour off the field has to be different to that on it to be successful in their chosen sport.

She said regardless of the level of sport one of the keys to controlling behaviour is giving the players a defined set of instructions before each game.

"Players need to know what is required of them in their role (on the field) because it will be a little bit different to how they act on a day-to-day basis," Dr Lukins said.

"The challenge for athletes is to be assertive and keep

their sense about them; to be able to make good decisions.

"We know when people are in a very violent frame of mind they are not thinking very clearly.

"It's not beneficial for an athlete to go out and be violent but it's beneficial for an athlete to be aggressive within the confines of the rules."

While there are some players who cross the line and lose control, some others take time during the game before their sense of what is right and wrong.

There are many factors to what causes a player to be violent, frustration at refereeing calls and retaliating to being hit are some of them, and Dr Lukins said it didn't matter what happened in the course of the game the players were the ones who controlled what happened on the field.

"Ultimately I think the athlete has to take responsibility," she said.

"It's the athlete who makes the decisions to be violent; they have to take responsibility with that."

Codes have increased penalties for on and off-field incidences and there are fewer replays of fights shown in televised games and these factors go part of the way to reduce violence, something Dr Lukins is happy with.

"I am pleased to see there is less violence on the sporting field when my kids are watching, I think that is a good thing," Dr Lukins said.

“It's not beneficial for an athlete to go out and be violent ...

Dr Joann Lukins

It wouldn't be good sport to go to court

ONCE upon a time it seemed like sportsmen and women were free to belt each other in the course of game, all this changed when Leigh Matthews belted Neville Bruns and was subsequently charged with assault.

And if you think that because you're playing football in the bush it won't happen to you then you're wrong.

Lance Rundle, a lecturer from the CQU's Bachelor of Laws program, was contacted by the NewsMail and he said any incident that happened in the field that broke the law could be referred to the courts and the courts would view each case individually depending on the type of sport.

"What the court looks at is, is it socially acceptable and is there a good reason for there to be an assault or an injury when people are playing sport," Rundle said.

"If it is socially acceptable somebody might get a black eye or an arm dislocated when they are playing rugby league, then the court will say socially it's acceptable and there is good reason and therefore the person has consented.

"What the court then also looks at is if the violence involved in playing sport (caused the injury) or the violence (itself) caused the

injury in that particular game caused the injury."

What this means is if you are playing a game of league and you fall over and a player who runs past you kicks you in the head by accident, the court is unlikely to consider a charge.

However, if you are playing the ball and one of the markers punches you in the face without provocation the court might hear a charge.

And these rules will vary from sport to sport because the violence on a league field is considered different to a tennis court.

A shoulder charge in a game of league should be met with time in the sin bin and possible suspension, but after the game there might be nothing more said.

But if a shoulder charge happened at the change of ends, it's a different story.

Because hard-hitting physical contact is expected in league the courts may not rule the incident to be assault, but on a tennis court where players should never run into each other it is a different story.

So, when you are firing yourself up for your next game, remember, anything that is not considered acceptable for your sport could land you in court, regardless of the contact.



BLOOD NOSE: Josh Crowley wipes blood from his nose at Salter Oval.

PHOTO: BEN TURNBULL

Old-fashioned boofheads are not welcome in sport

BOUNDARY RIDER

WITH
BEN
TURNBULL



CONTACT sport is not a place for boofheads ... any longer.

That is the impression I get from talking to administrators, players and legal experts.

People from other sports might think their game is played by the purer athlete but every code is different, and the level of violence, allowed in play and outside the rules, is also different.

But the days of the hard-core league prop intent on knocking their opposite number out with a cheap shot to gain an advantage is over.

I have even heard a story

where a coach told his players to punch the bloke standing next to him when the siren sounded at the start of an Aussie Rules game because, and I quote.

"They can't book everyone."

Thankfully for current players, and juniors coming through, those things will be getting rarer as time passes.

Last week the NewsMail

posted a question on its Facebook page asking if there was a place for violence in rugby league and it was met with the usual comments asking to bring back the biff. There were even a few comments saying footy is boring now and I disagree with both statements.

Those who say bring back the biff, take time to imagine how you would feel if your

father, brother, sister or life partner is being belted by a thug on the field.

Change your mind?

Those who say sport is now boring should go to Salter or Martens Oval and watch a game live because even at this level, the footy is pretty exciting.

The players, like they are at the elite level, are fitter, faster and as competitive as they

have ever been. And unless you watch a game, you wouldn't know.

There is no need to throw the first punch, and those who do are usually losing or frustrated because they are outclassed.

Play the game hard and fair and without violence, and if you find yourself throwing punches you might not have a place in your game.