

**RFU INVESTIGATION INTO
COMMENTS MADE BY PAUL MORIARTY
ON 30 OCTOBER 2010 DURING MATCH**

NORTHAMPTON SAINTS v NEWCASTLE FALCONS

Background

During the half time interval in the Aviva Premiership match between Northampton Saints and Newcastle Falcons on 30 October 2010, Paul Moriarty (Newcastle Assistant Coach) was interviewed by EPSN. He made comments which suggested that a prop forward had been taken off as a temporary replacement but would be put back onto the pitch in the second half after having a rest to replace a player who would be injured. This statement appeared to suggest that Newcastle Falcons were deliberately cheating. As a result of this interview the RFU commenced an investigation.

I have subsequently received a number of statements from members of Newcastle Falcons and I interviewed Paul Moriarty on 8 November 2010.

Facts

Newcastle Saints started the match against Northampton with a front row of Kieran Brooks (1), Rob Vickers (2) and Tim Ryan (3). The three replacement front row forwards identified on the match card were Joe Graham (16), Grant Shiells (17) and James Hall (18). During the preceding week Ryan had been undergoing extensive physiotherapy treatment following a back injury sustained on 23 October. He had not trained until Thursday 28 October and did not do any scrum sessions at all. He was declared fit to play on Saturday 30 October.

During the course of the first half, Brooks (loose head) received a knock to his ribs. He believed he could have played on by the coaching staff decided to replace him in the 32nd minute. He was replaced by Shiells and the Match Result Card noted that this was a tactical replacement.

On leaving the pitch Brooks was given a post-match recovery drink, he put on a jacket and sat with the rest of the replacements. He was not told that he might be needed later in the match and assumed that he would take no further part. At the start of the second half he did not warm up with the unused replacements but remained in the stand.

At the end of the half time break Paul Moriarty was interviewed by ESPN. He was asked how Newcastle would combat the Northampton scrum. He replied:

“We’ve spoke about it by there now, and there’s a lot of pressure coming on to our tight head. We’ve made a tactical decision to take our loose head off. I know this sounds strange. We’ve taken our loose head off at the moment who is normally a tight head, give him a couple of minutes’ break and then maybe move him back on into the tight head side. We know that they’ve targeted that

side of the scrum, and we need our hooker and tight head to start working together to give us a bit more of a platform.”

About 5 minutes into the second half the Newcastle team manager (John Stokoe) asked Brooks whether he was fit enough to go back onto the field. He replied in the affirmative and in the 6th minute of the second half he replaced Ryan at tight head. The Match Result Card noted that this replacement was caused because of injury.

The Law

Law 3.12(a) states:

If a player is substituted, that player must not return and play in that match, even to replace an injured player.

Exception 1: *(blood injury)*

Exception 2: *a substituted player may replace a front row player when injured, temporarily suspended or sent off unless the referee has ordered uncontested scrums.....*

There is nothing in law which states that unused replacements should be used before players who have been substituted and there is nothing in the RFU or Aviva Premiership Regulations which requires a medical person to assess a front row before he can be replaced by reason of being injured. In this case the Newcastle coaching team were aware that Ryan had been injured leading up to the match and, although he was declared fit to play, they expected that he would not last a full 80 minutes. When he was replaced, and the Match Card noted that he was injured, that assessment was made by the Newcastle coaching staff.

Evidence of Paul Moriarty

Moriarty said that when Brookes was replaced there was no intention that he should return to the pitch. During the half time break it became clear that Ryan was struggling with his previous injury. Moriarty asked him if he could “dig in” and stay on the field as long as possible. He realised at that point that Ryan would have to be replaced when he felt he could no longer carry on because of his injured back. The two props left on the bench were Hall and Brooks. Hall is still pretty inexperienced and Brooks is the better tight head. He realised that if Ryan did come off the pitch with an injury, then he would probably ask Brooks to return to the pitch. He correctly understood that to be allowed by Law.

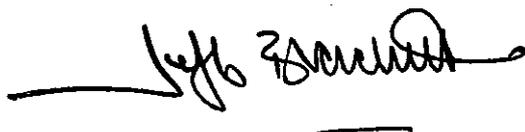
With that in his mind he went out of the dressing room and was asked to give an interview to ESPN about how the match was going. He said there was no intention to cheat or play the system, but he realised that if Ryan was injured then Brooks would return to the pitch. The language he used was not chosen with particular care.

Decision

An inference could be drawn from Moriarty's statement to the media that Newcastle had planned to give Brookes a break and then fabricate an injury to Ryan so that he could return to the game after a rest. Were that to be the case it would have been cheating.¹

However, I am satisfied that there was no intention to cheat. Ryan had been injured during the week and although passed fit to play it was clear at half time that he would not last the rest of the match. There is no requirement in the Regulations for a medical examination of a player removed for injury, so it is impossible to gainsay Newcastle's evidence that Ryan was injured. It is also clear that when Brookes was replaced he understood that he would not return – this is supported by the evidence that he was given a post-match recovery drink and did not warm up with other unused replacements. Newcastle only decided that he might have to go back on when it became apparent that Ryan was injured and could not continue. I am also satisfied that Moriarty's comments, although injudicious and poorly thought through, did not amount to an admission of cheating. A cheat would not have declared that he was about to cheat.

In the circumstances I intend to take no further action.



HHJ Jeff Blackett
RFU Disciplinary Officer

10 November 2010

¹ Defined in RFU Regulations as: "a premeditated act or omission involving an element of planning which unfairly seeks to gain an advantage or benefit by deception."