

Gameplay Meeting 14.08.22

Attendees:

Kelsey Collins (KC), Matt Blissenden (MBI), Harrison Jones (HJ), Natalie Astalosh (NA), Joshua Lindley (JL), Hannah Walravens (HW), Nic Radoll (NR), Ava McConnell (AM), Simon Spann (SS), **Brandon Frison (BF)**, Mark Kelly (MK)

Apologies:

Logan Davis, **Luke Derrick, Nicola Gertler, Jamie Turbet, Rebecca Robb**

Meeting opened: 6:40pm

Chair: Kelsey Collins

Minutes: Kelsey Collins

SUMMARY AND PROPOSAL:

As a result of the conversations had during the meeting (minutes below), the Gameplay committee officially recommends to Quidditch Australia the following:

- Implement the two arm tackle and behind contact rules for State Shield 2022
- Implement the two arm tackle and behind contact rules for club level 2023 as per the rulebook change
- Implement the 3 max rule for elite level quidditch, including State Shield and Dropbears for 2023
- Develop and provide resources where possible to support the implementation and dissemination of the two armed tackle and behind contact rules
- Include workshops for these skills in the upcoming quid/quadcamp in 2023 and implement these rules at early 2023 fantasy/friendly tournaments with support
- Encourage clubs to start aiming for 3 max during the 2023 season in preparation for the rule to be implemented in 2024, utilising the gender engagement and gameplay committees to support this implementation
- Encourage hosts of fantasy tournaments to implement the 3 max rule ongoing
- Implement the 3 max rule as of 2024 for club level, develop an exemption and/or a gender split rule to support struggling clubs. Announce this intention in advance (during 2023 season)
- Provide support to clubs to help with recruitment of players of the genders of which they are short, so they can safely implement 3 max for their club

Discussion Points:

TWO ARMED TACKLES

- State shield 2022?
- 2023 Dropbears and State Shield?

MBI:

Rulebook starting next year 2023 for Australia.

Two armed tackling rulebook wording to be worked on via IQA tonight.

America has been two arm tackling for some time.

Will be implemented for 2023 world cup.

Whether we do two armed tackling PLUS from behind contact rule together:

NR: they should be developed hand in hand, looking at resources from AFL

MK: behind tackling will have a massive impact on beater game

NA: all of the contact rules implemented together to avoid double handling. Positive -

dropbears have more time. General safety of members - is this the more safe option for our players then we should be implementing sooner rather than later

AM (via chat): I think smaller players will be impacted by behind contact because they tend to turn around away from defensive players

AM: asking for resources from USA rather than starting from scratch

MBI: reached out to USA already, resource development via people with football and particularly football coaching experience.

NR: there are American resources that could be used, but Australian sport is different, we are "more rough". Quidditch is the most concussions they have dealt with across other Australian sport. Changing the mindset of tackling in Quidditch from "stop a player" as "safely stopping players".

HW: need to build the mindset/expectation that if you tackle someone you are responsible for the safety of yourself AND the other player, you need to be using the appropriate level of power etc. More force needs to be generated to get someone on the ground using one arm, two arms makes this less powerful and more controlled, the mechanism of one armed tackling gives your shoulder injury-risks (sling tackle, pressure on the shoulder joint from impact and resistance), look into someone who already teaches tackling - QA should be looking at an external person to adapt this to our sport

HJ: the only safety concern regarding implementing two armed tackles would be locking someone down and using their weight is an issue if using two armed wraps, re-training players - we need to figure out how to shift the mindset from one armed tackling to two armed tackling as they are not interchangeable skills

AM (via chat): curious if people have talked about the two concurrent games and the impact of that on safety - getting state players to switch between tackle types and accidentally doing behind the back on someone at NQL/vic cup etc.?

NA: people do illegal contact anyway, adding this additional strain/training for these elite players (state level) will not be a massive burden as they should be a high enough level player to look after themselves and other players at club level. The two armed tackle is arguably safer, so if a high level player was to use a two armed tackle they would be penalised via rulebook but the players involved would not be less safe than if they were to use one arm tackle

MBr: if MLQ can do it, so can AUS State teams

NR: how many training sessions would there be between state shield and now, recommending a minimum 3

SS: 2 days for QLD. this is fine, should there be a standard practice where this is implemented for state shield and players know to be aware this is a new tackling technique and to take care "not to hurt each other"

NR: concern regarding turn around of proposal/approval if QA don't move quickly

JL: watched MLQ footage, does not appear to be more intense with two armed tackles. No "sling tackles". Speed is less of a factor when using two arms as you are no longer holding your broom with your hand so you have less freedom to move as your legs are squeezing the broom. You can't keep pace, just wrapping and pulling them to the ground. Time frame is tight. Dropbears will have exposure regardless via the training camps. Implementing it at state shield will give players an opportunity to get exposure to this rule earlier, making the community safer in the long run. Restriction of the broom changes the contact with two armed tackles. ONE two armed tackle happened on one of the highest level games in USA on ESPN so may not be happening as often as we think and may not affect the games all that much.

SS: State shield will be live streamed, this may be a good trial and with footage to look at to gauge any issues and/or concerns.

AM: concern over regulating this rule, must consider standardised definition of what is ok for the reffing squad for state shield, as the different states may commit to a certain style of tackling and be penalised for this.

SS: bringing refs in line, and figuring out who will be reffing - give them what is to be expected and share this with states.

MB: meeting with rules team tonight - official wording will be available for states and referees before state shield.

NA: uniformity will be more likely if we have a competition together to test it rather than if we (states) all individually work on it over the next few months for implementation 2023.

NR: people are going to be worried/scared, publicising this needs to be considered, medical professionals and elite athletes in this room agree that this is the safer option. Consider briefs/workshops prior to adding it to club quidditch.

NA: dissuade the fear by being clear about why these decisions have been made, that it is a safer form of tackling, that we are implementing it at the higher level of quidditch to ensure resources and implementation is working before we disseminate it to the wider community and implement at club level etc.

MK: consider two armed tackling for QUAFL?

MBI: state team is made up of players from many of the clubs across their respective states, so once they are competent at two arm tackling, this can be taught more easily across clubs. QUAFL is too soon for lower level players.

NR: club teams need more time to roll out than higher level teams due to the core ability of players both mentally and physically. Exhibition match for QUAFL - friendly of state shield players to display these new rules, bring in captains and coaches of club teams to discuss after the match, to alleviate stress over the rule change and also show "exemplar" play/strategy.

AM: state level players/coaches have a safer place and more time/resources to deal with it, think about it, and train it prior to clubs accessing, this is valuable

JL: USA brought their two armed tackling in during fantasy tournaments to introduce slowly and showcase/practice

NA: club people can't necessarily tackle properly anyway

3-MAX RULE

- 2022 State?
- State teams?
- Dropbears?
- Clubs? - club exemptions

MBI: while the IQA rules team did not make 3 max a rule for the next rulebook, QA are looking at doing a policy for the 2023 WC Dropbears and 2023 SS be 3 max. This would most likely be a one year only policy, as 3 max will 98% be put into the RB for the next year. Idea would be to announce the policy and to give clubs warning that 3 max will be coming in in 2024.

MBr: Dropbears and state next year 100%

SS: all in for the 3 max rule. Teams for 2022 state have already been selected, and as such the 3 max rule was not considered in terms of line up etc so it should not be implemented this year. Dropbears campaign and from then on for elite level.

JL: QLD would not be fielding two teams if 3 max was implemented for state this year. State shield this year is a good growth opportunity for the QLD state teams as the second team was created to expose these players to higher level quidditch without the strain of travelling.

HJ: doing 3 max this year would be a distinct advantage to NSW who selected aiming for this to begin with

AM: "we selected you for this team but you can't go on because the rules have changed since selection" - does not foster good relationships at state level. Have club exemptions been considered?

KC: club exemptions either through states or QA has been discussed as possible options, but keep the rule for elite level with no exemptions (state and dropbears)

MK: could explore an opt in for clubs for 3 max rule (aim to do it but with leeway).

NR: aiming to do two arm tackles PLUS 3 max is not ideal in terms of safety and strategy, less subs potentially for certain genders and positions. 2024 hard rule - integration of this rule via gender engagement and/or gameplay over a period of time.

MBI: it is an assumption that 3 max will come into effect 2024, the recruitment of players will be supported by QA over coming seasons and this will be taken into consideration

KC: QA will need to decide on a stand either way, either do it or don't. The culture will not shift by itself, if we want it to change, we need to take the first step and implement the rule, at least at the elite level. Exemptions/amendments can be made where necessary as the process goes on.

NA: we do not need to wait for the rulebook to change to adopt this, we could implement it sooner

MK: support for this 3 max rule - we can just do it. It is also more likely to happen as a culture shift internationally if more national bodies implement and support it. Max 3 has huge benefits for individual players, at the national level, we have issues with retention, particularly non-male players, looking at the membership levels. Having max 3 will dramatically improve engagement for non-male players. More game time, more development which helps with retention. As players come and go, we can hold onto more non-male players. Even if we do not legislate this and force exemption applications. Let's make it a culture change - aim for max 3, make it an expectation at club level from those clubs who are able to. my team has decided to do max 3 where possible anyway.

AM (via chat): sounds like the gist is: at a club level it's unfeasible now and difficult but workable in the future; at a rep level it's a no brainer, starting from 2023 and applying to the 2023 dropbears?

KC: confirmed above

NA: making subs seems more complicated due to "having to sub for your own gender" but this is not insurmountable and definitely manageable at elite level. Concern regarding sex-based discrimination (particularly for NB players). QA needs to consider this issue and solidify that it is a gender rule, not a sex rule. "Non-binary players are not the enemies to women" (re: a AMAB NB taking a female players positions on teams and on field).

MBr: Are clubs ever going to implement 3 max if they are only given this as an option - they have always had this option and have not implemented it as they see that 4 of one gender is more "valuable on field". Could consider a complicated legislation where teams with a certain gender mix have to abide by 3 max

NR: member protection policy being worked on currently which will be trying to counteract these issues amongst genders.

HW: I never put my hand up to keep because traditionally I have not seen other females in those roles. To lead a change - we need to enforce it so that teams/clubs are forced to look at putting non-male players into "non-traditional" positions such as keeper/point chaser/seeker.

NA: if you leave things for people to opt-in, then established powers smother potential changes. Example: dropbears 2022 - best point chasers: smugs, gary, ed - because they have had the opportunity to play these positions at all levels, no female player has had this opportunity and therefore is not the best candidate for selection for this role on dropbears. It is a negative feedback loop, it will not get better without forced change in the rules and a culture shift

Meeting closed: 8pm

Additional thoughts shared prior to meeting:

Logan Davis (via Slack):

3 max gender rule: I would vote to implement the three-max gender rule at State Shield, run the Dropbears as though the rule existed (whether it is a rule at WC or not), and possibly enforce the rule at fantasy tournaments. I don't think the three max rule should be implemented at a club level. This is very similar to a previous discussion we had around this issue (I think we talked about it when seekers started being included in the gender rule?). The issue is that there are a lot of clubs who don't have a good split of different genders. You can easily say "well then they should recruit more [insert gender here] players" but it's clearly not that easy. We're currently at a point where multiple clubs are struggling to field teams at tournaments. Adding further restrictions on team composition makes it even harder to get a team together.

As an example: ANU currently has about five non-female members. If we try and put together a team, it is entirely plausible that we will only get 2 or 3 non-female players. Imagine that only two men sign up to play. We can't field a valid team, despite possibly having ~10-12 players. If 3 non-female players sign up, they have to play non-stop in every game. It might be a small difference, but relaxing these rules slightly can be super beneficial to small teams and we currently have lots of small teams playing in Australia. In situations where teams can be chosen from a large number of people (e.g. rep teams and fantasy tournaments), I think it's perfectly reasonable to enforce the 3 max rule (maybe with some caveat to allow teams to temporarily break the gender rule while making multiple subs?)

Two armed tackles

I don't really care when it comes into effect so long as clubs are given sufficient time to train their players and make sure that everyone can implement things safely. I would propose having some resources prepared and publicised for at least 1 month (preferably longer) before the rule would come into effect. I think the resources should be targeted at coaches and teach them safe techniques, but also how to teach those techniques. The resources can be open to everyone so that anyone interested can access them, but I think it should be specifically sent to clubs with a schedule/plan on how to get their club ready for the rule change.

Having QA run workshops and the like is not a sustainable model. We need to be empowering clubs to teach their members and run effective trainings.

Happy for two armed tackles to be run at State in the meantime as we can presumably rely on state coaches to have the skills to teach things effectively (and for state players to learn how to be safe doing it as well).

The readiness of the dropbears for WC shouldn't factor in to this discussion. Giving 25 players a chance to practice something new is way less important than properly teaching all of our members how to be safe while playing.

Nat Astalosh (via email):

I am writing in order to espouse my opinion regarding the upcoming implementation of two-arm tackle rules and the timeline and other considerations you may wish to have. Is this audacious? Yes. However I feel my position as a current State coach, (former) Dropbear coach, former QA Gameplay member, former IQA Rule Committee member, woman, beater, and general person who has been around a while gives me some motivation to write to you, even if you have no obligation to listen :D

I spoke with Brandon, Matt, Kelsey and Luke in various depths about this across NQL on August 6th but hopefully this is a little more comprehensive, and is a mix of opinion and things you should think about. I'm focussing on two-arm tackling only here, and honestly I haven't read through all the actual other changes under consideration. Someone told me the actual wording of the new rules doesn't exist yet which we'd need to be careful of but we should have enough info on what to expect from USQ anyway we can start now.

Firstly, regardless of what implementation timeline you do agree to follow, I think you should immediately begin planning resources and development opportunities for teaching players at all levels in two-arm technique. I'm not sure how the IQA believe this is a small change (sorry Matt) but I think it fundamentally changes the way players engage with one another in all positions. QA should seek out people to sit on a committee to speak with USQ and MLQ and watch their footage, engage with Aussie Rules or Rugby football coaches or clubs and possibly pay for coaches to either write drills or run development sessions to teach our players how to tackle and fall safely in a two-arm regime. My immediate thought on this was to ask Obel as the main AFL player in NSW I'm aware of, and her recommendation was her partner Christien Specha who I believe coaches a high division of women's AFL here in Sydney. I'm sure the Victorians may have even more contacts for people to reach out to, but my point is we don't have to do this alone, and it very may well be worth an investment of a professional's time for a few hours to start us on the right foot. I am certain other people in the community would absolutely be interested in assisting, for example Damo, Nic Radoll, and others who come from contact sports who have helped with tackle workshops in the past. There needs to be robust education at all levels of the game, club state and national, and in particular of coaches at each of these levels to ensure that the correct techniques are being taught to all players under our care. Speaking only for myself, my first exposure to contact sports was quidditch and though I now play AFL I actively sought advice on how to coach tackling knowing it is not my strength. QA needs to actively educate coaches at all levels on this change (and as an aside, should also introduce a coaching certification or course in general covering things like concussion management, injury prevention, how to run a cool-down etc but that's for another time).

My personal opinion originally on the change was to not allow it, as I don't trust other players to put me down gently—however, since this is a change I assume QA will adopt at *some* point, this is now a moot point and it becomes a question of the best and safest way to incorporate into our country. Furthermore, if the change to two-arm means less force is required to complete a tackle (which from speaking to Damo is his strong opinion on the matter), my concern should be somewhat alleviated.

If QA (or their expert panel) believe that two-arm tackles are a safer option, then there should be no hesitation in adopting the rule change immediately. QA also needs to push they believe it is safer and support the change in full. Anecdotally, most injuries in the sport come from incorrect tackle or fall technique, and I don't think there is value in continuing to teach or practise or compete in one-arm tackling if these are not transferrable skills to two-arm. There is a consideration to be made regarding the distinctions between club, state and national level players, however I think at each level there is a benefit to switching to two-arm.

For club players, they already don't tackle at a great standard. They may have been exposed to some tackle or fall training, but it isn't comprehensive and generally they are not confident in the skill. They will support the change if they see the state and national players at their club and the governing bodies supporting it, especially if they are given the message that it is safer, more controlled and allows players of smaller size and women better agency and ability meaningfully engage opponents. It will take them the longest to learn, but, they don't have a lot to "unlearn" either, and if the end goal will be two-arm, we should give them the most time to learn and start teaching them asap. The question then of when they need to start *playing* two-arm can then be read either way—give them time to learn and bring it in for club comps next year, or get them learning and practising in games as soon as possible? Again I refer to the bold point above—if it is safer, do it as quickly as safely possible. Traditionally we haven't brought in new rules until the beginning of a calendar year to preserve the integrity of each state's competition. I can't speak for Queensland but my understanding of NSW and Victoria is that this year has been a bit haphazard, disrupted and very much about rebuilding and so has low competition integrity in the first place, and so making this shift is not significantly undermining that.

For national players, they have tackle exposure and are the best in the country at the tackle skill. They will each have an opinion already on whether one- or two-arm is better for them personally and the sport at large, and it is important that they ignore this opinion in the face of the inevitable (the change coming in). These players have a lot of sway at state and club level, and it is important they use their power for good, so to speak. In writing this I realise this particular point is probably in my wheelhouse to influence so I'll make a note of that (ha). In any case, they are also the people best able to learn quickly, best able to adapt and help develop new and effective strategy. They will play a big role in teaching their teammates at all other levels and so it is important to get to them quickly and teach them as soon as possible. The Dropbears will be playing two-arm tackle at Richmond in just under 12 months, and I think they need as much time as possible getting used to that—this is however a side point and one that only affects 25-30 people, and the other points I'm outlining here around safety supersede this. (It is a *very* happy side effect though that everyone learning two-arm helps Dropbears compete).

However, there aren't currently any scheduled Dropbear events (that's a different email) and so that is where State comes in. State players fall somewhere in between the two above extremes. Some are Dropbears, and some are pretty new and absolutely thrilled to be picked for their state B team. They have some understanding of the contact component of the game, and will vary on their ability to execute. I taught my Bluebottles falling stuff last camp but we haven't done any specific impact. Training at a State level can proceed faster than at club since most players will have some sort of a base, and have demonstrated enough quidditch skill to get picked for the team, and hence by definition can hold their own. They too play a role in coaching their club teammates, but also will need to learn themselves first.

State Shield is just under two months away, and it is my firm opinion that that competition should be played under the two-arm tackle rules. Two months is not long, but it is long enough that training can proceed and that players at this level have the time to learn and adapt. Seeing the best players in the country compete in two-arm benefits all levels of the game, club players who see and absorb, and national players who start to get experience in high-level matches. I also believe that State Shield should also be the date after which all quidditch played in Australia should be two-arm, or at least within a few weeks to account for exact tournament dates in each state. But that should be the benchmark—giving enough time to start coaching, build confidence and begin that trickle down to club, I think that is achievable. I think QUAFL should be played two-arm, and I don't think that should

be the first exposure to two-arm competition for players, hence bringing it in for earlier club-based match days.

There's an argument in here somewhere about being wary of cross-contamination, that is, players forgetting which regime they're playing under—again, if we believe two arm is safer, then the only adverse outcome to this is a few extra yellow cards for two-arm wraps, which to me is an acceptable cost and everyone goes “oops my bad”. The danger is actually single-arm regime tackle/charges when players aren't expecting them, which, helps illustrate why two-arm should simply just be the norm anyway. The top players will be able to handle the change, and the bottom ones need more time to get used to it, so, introduce it early and everyone will be fine.

I'm running out of steam and want to send this with enough time for you to read it so that'll do. My main points are:

- Introduce a committee as soon as possible to build resources, bring in external coaches, and start preparing drills, strategy and teaching techniques
- If QA believes two-arm is safer, there should be no reason to delay implementing two-arm tackling as soon as is feasible
- Communications regarding the change needs to be clear, unanimous and coming from QA, each state board, and all players of influence (ie Dropbears and upper State players)
- State Shield should be played with two-arm tackle, and this should also be the switch-over point for club competitions.
- There are different considerations for club, state and national level players, but each points to two-arm.

Nic Radoll (via Slack):

"I would focus on rugby over AFL due to the differences in tackle approaches - AFL it's from any direction whereas rugby it's head on.

I think it could be easily implemented as a trial at state shield to demonstrate and work out the bugs.

Perhaps a focus on initiating with one arm into two. But I don't see much of a issue with broom contact.

If the broom does get in the way, it's a two arm tackle which means broom isn't secured and moves easily."

Cristien Specha (via messenger):

It would be good to understand how exactly you guys see it being used etc. In my very limited time seeing the game played I can't imagine it being a "standard" tackle, the one arm tackle would still be far more practical in game situations. The 2nd arm I'd imagine would be ideally used for securing the arm the ball is in but that would be after you have either slowed the person's momentum so you can move with them without your broom falling out.

Cristien Specha (via face to face meeting):

- Train two arm tackling as an extension to current one armed tackling
- Specific drills may not be required/appropriate for high level players as they know how to one arm tackle already, tell them to try two arms out and see how the contact evolves for these players who know how to play quidditch and contact people correctly
- “Project runway” could work as a progression, use as contact practice, then move to one arm tackle, then move to two arm tackle