

Gehrig discount for 'tummy tap'



Support: Colless

CHAMPION St Kilda forward Fraser Gehrig kicked a significant goal last night, having a two-match suspension halved by the AFL Tribunal.

Gehrig will miss only Saturday's game against Geelong after his partially successful challenge to being charged for what he described as nothing more than "a tummy tap".

The Saints' goalkicking ace is now available for the important trip to Perth to face his former club, unbeaten ladder leader West Coast, a week later.

The tribunal jury — Richard Loveridge, Wayne Schimmelbusch and Stewart Loewe — downgraded the match review panel's finding from intentional to reckless conduct on Collingwood's Jason Cloke.

That reduced the striking charge, originally assessed at 292.50 points and a two-game suspension, to a level one

Bruce Matthews

offence of 125 points, equating to a one-match penalty. And, in a major shift in tribunal protocol, chairman David Jones allowed Gehrig's defence advocate Iain Findlay to screen a videotape of seven recent incidents, one of them assessed by the AFL's review panel on Monday as not worthy of further action.

Gehrig, who has two striking convictions in the past two seasons, said he had given Cloke the "tummy tap" in a scuffle in the last quarter at the MCG on Sunday.

"Cloke was my third opponent. I was trying to bluff him to give away a free kick, to get him to do something stupid. He didn't go to ground and hold his stomach or whatever you do," Gehrig said.

The 2004 Coleman medallist showed the jury how he had used the inside of his right fist.



Embarrassed: Gehrig at the tribunal hearing last night.

"It's something that has gone on for 100 years in football, show who's boss. I certainly give as good as I get," he said.

"I've copped a fair ribbing from mates and going down to the store this morning I had support from people who can't believe why I'm here. I'm



Yesterday's Herald Sun

embarrassed to be here."

Asked by AFL legal counsel Will Houghton, QC, why Cloke had waved his fist at the umpire as if to indicate he had been punched, Gehrig replied: "He was trying to save his own hide for what could be a so-called head-butt."

The selected incidents, shown at the end of Gehrig's evidence, included Saints teammate Justin Koschitzke

swinging back his arm after a mark in what the match review panel described as "minimal contact" to Magpie Rhyce Shaw in the first quarter.

Findlay described Gehrig's action as "nothing more than what's said in footy as a love tap".

"You watched the video of those incidents and I suggest some are a lot more serious. It's not being disrespectful to the match review panel, but they can make mistakes," he said.

"Fraser Gehrig should not even be here tonight. It's one of the most trivial (incidents) to come before this tribunal."

It's not known whether the three-man jury considered "similar fact evidence" from the video in the 20-minute deliberation before its decision.

St Kilda will refer a transcript of the hearing to its legal advisers this morning to decide whether there are grounds to continue the fight at the AFL Appeals Board.

Roos snubs league forum

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"I think human nature is what it is. I really don't know much about it. I knew it was on but I wasn't involved," Colless said.

Tony Peek, the AFL's assistant to Demetriou, said last night the planning weekend merely had been rescheduled.

Asked if the postponement had been prompted by Roos' decision to withdraw, he said: "No, we've rescheduled it. All we've done is reschedule it, and we're expecting the people from the Swans who were going to be involved to be part of it".

Asked why the weekend had been rescheduled, Peek said only: "We've rescheduled it."

Demetriou's criticism of the Swans' style of play came during an interview on Triple M radio at the weekend.

While Roos has refused to engage in a public slanging match, he is known to be disappointed and angry. It is understood telephone conversations between the AFL and Sydney have failed to solve the impasse.

The decision to cancel the planning weekend represents a major loss of faith for the AFL, which was looking forward to familiarising itself with football in Sydney, including trips to Auskick venues.

The AFL contingent was expected to share a barbecue with Swans staff on Friday night.

While time will temper emotions, the stand-off comes at a most inopportune time. It is likely the AFL Commission will be forced to intervene to restore the relationship.

Nikki Tugwell reports from Sydney that Demetriou yesterday conceded he should have left the Swans out of his "ugly football" argument.

"Yeah, probably ... they are not the only ones who from time to time have played that sort of football," Demetriou said.

"I think in hindsight I would prefer I had chosen different words to make the point. I probably should have chosen different words to describe what I was talking about, some of the negative aspects, I understand that."

While Demetriou admitted he had not attended a Swans game this season, Richmond coach Terry Wallace leapt to his defence yesterday.

"He does have a major responsibility to the game. He's the custodian of the game and he's a big player in what needs to be an improving game," Wallace said.

Captaincy dilemma for Maxfield, Page 81

Plough dig at fickle fans

Jim Wilson

RICHMOND coach Terry Wallace yesterday took a swipe at the club's "fair-weather" supporters ahead of the Tigers' blockbuster against Carlton on Saturday.

A big turnout is likely at the MCG after the Tigers' stunning win against Port Adelaide on Sunday, but Wallace fired a broadside at the members of the yellow and black army who failed to front at Telstra Dome for Matthew Richardson's 200th game.

"I was really disappointed with the crowd," Wallace said.

"I would have expected more than 21,000 fans to be there for Richo's big day.

"Because of where we have been at this club, we are inclined to get a few 'fair weatheries' who jump on if it's going all right, and jump off if it isn't going so well."

Wallace said the 21,000 fans who fronted at the Dome on Sunday were fantastic, but a lot more support was needed to ensure the club's success, and that it had to begin on Saturday against an old rival.

"The rivalry between Richmond and Carlton is as big a rivalry as Richmond has, and we have sort of a love-hate relationship with the Blues based on respect," Wallace said.

The Tigers broke a seven-year drought against Port on Sunday and will be out to win their first game against Carlton since the 2001 finals.

Wallace said Richardson was slowly but surely getting the message from the coach's box about strict team rules.

"We call it 'Richo watch' and he knows he simply cannot play on when he's inside 50," he said.



Hyde and seek: Chris Hyde is hoping for good news from neurosurgeons tomorrow. Picture: PAUL TRESIZE

One Tiger whom Wallace would love to have in the team this weekend, Chris Hyde, is at least another week away after he fractured his skull in a collision with St Kilda's Matt Maguire in Round 5.

Hyde spoke for the first time yesterday about the clash that knocked him unconscious.

"I remember trying to take the mark but from then on I sort of can't remember anything until I woke up in the rooms after the game," Hyde said.

Hyde apologised to the Richmond medical staff for abusing them as he was taken off on a

stretcher in a daze, and to his girlfriend, whom he couldn't recognise. "As soon as I knew who everyone was, I knew who she was," he joked.

Hyde will see a neurosurgeon tomorrow and, if given the all-clear, will probably return next week.

Once Hyde is given the green light, he will have to prove to Wallace he is 100 per cent ready for a return to senior footy.

"We need him back, but not half-baked, and we will give him quite a few hitouts to make sure the mental scars aren't there," Wallace said.

TIGER TAUNT TO SPUR PORT

IT WAS the moment that "insulted" Port Adelaide. And it might just help kick-start Port's premiership defence.

When Richmond's Kayne Pettifer waltzed into an open goal in the final quarter of Sunday's Telstra Dome massacre and taunted the Power defenders, the realisation of how far Port had slipped this season hit home.

"It is an insult," Power on-baller Kane Cornes said. "When things like that happen it does tear away at you."

Pettifer ran into an open goal, stopped, looked around at opponent Matthew Bishop, and then kicked the goal.

"It put things back into perspective," Cornes said. "It just showed that last year is gone and the competition is so even anyone can beat anyone."

"And it gives us a chance to show what we're really made of this week (against the Kangaroos). It's going to be a long week waiting to play."

Andrew Capel