

Will they give a medal to Corey?

McLeod plunge

ADELAIDE'S Andrew McLeod has been the subject of an Australia-wide Brownlow betting plunge.

Centrebet's Gerard Daffy has slashed McLeod's opening quote of \$41 to \$18, with punters backing him to win \$70,000.

And the Alice Springs-based outlet is already holding more than \$40,000 on the Brownlow, as is TAB Sportsbet.

"We've taken bets of \$200 each way at \$201 and \$250 each way at \$160 and \$1000 straight out at \$26 this week," Daffy said.

Brownlow market: \$10 Chris Judd, \$13 Nick Riewoldt, \$16 Andrew McLeod, \$21 James Hird, \$26 Daniel Wells, Chad Cornes, Warren Tredrea, Nigel Lappin. Odds: TAB Sportsbet.

Jon Anderson

IT IS just a fortnight since Adrian Anderson casually uttered the fateful words: "We don't expect it to be perfect."

The AFL's football operations manager was talking about his brand new tribunal process and its radical system of penalties.

Peter Schwab, head of the new match review panel, echoed Anderson's thoughts when he said: "I'm sure, like any system, there are going to be anomalies."

They were right on the money. Now, it seems, a player could be suspended this year and still win the Brownlow Medal. It is an

Mike Sheahan

COMMENT

anomaly based on equality for players who commit what is classified as the same offence in the same season.

Under the new system, credits for one player could take him under the suspension threshold while the history of the other player would result in suspension.

This is a matter of much weight. You don't bring down 80-year-old traditions on a whim, particularly when it involves the Brownlow.

An anomaly? An oversight, perhaps.

Notwithstanding all the time, energy and imagination invested in the new system in the off-season, it was rushed to be introduced in time for the Wizard Cup.

Now there's a dilemma of huge proportions.

What about all those players denied a spot on the Brownlow honour role for a relatively trivial offence? Corey McKernan's name immediately springs to mind.

Chris Grant, too, although Grant's action was reckless, given Nick Holland suffered concussion in the incident.

This latest twist again raises

the question of whether the Brownlow conditions might be abandoned completely. Whether it should simply be awarded to the best player and not the "fairest and best".

After all, a player can be reported and suspended in a final and remain eligible to win the medal. Theoretically, he could get a six-match suspension for a GF misdemeanour in the year he won the medal.

The idea of a Brownlow minus all conditions grows on me.

Suddenly, there's yet another major issue for those who run the game. They will need to reflect long and hard on this one.

HOW A SUSPENDED PLAYER COULD WIN THE BROWNLOW

The AFL doesn't want a player to be robbed of the 2005 Brownlow because of his past sins.

If, say, Dustin Fletcher is found guilty in Round 1 for a lowest-level striking offence, worth 125 points, he will be suspended because of points added for a poor record.

If Peter Riccardi commits an identical offence, he will not be rubbed out because he gets a discount for previous good behaviour.

With that in mind, the AFL could bring in a simple cut-off mark of 125 points – and not suspension – to decide eligibility.

Fletcher would be suspended, based only on his record, but would be free to take Charlie home because he had accrued less than the threshold of 125 points in the Brownlow year.

A medium-level striking offence is worth 225 points (two matches), but the extra 70 per cent would take it to 382.5 points (three matches).

If Fletcher pleads guilty, he would get a 25 per cent 'discount' of the base total (225).

KEY POINTS OF NEW TRIBUNAL SYSTEM

- There are five levels for offences. Each level carries a number of demerit points – 100 points equals a one-week suspension.

- Whether the offence was reckless or negligent is a key factor in the grading process, which also involves severity of impact and whether the offence took place in play or behind the play.

- Players can plead guilty and take a 25 per cent discount.

- Players can be reported by a field umpire or cited off video.

THE CLEANSKIN

Riccardi has played 260 games and never been suspended.

Under the new system, players receive a 25 per cent 'discount' if they have not been rubbed out in the past five years.

THE BAD BOY

Fletcher will need to be very careful under the new system, which penalises players with poor records in the past three years.

Fletcher has been suspended five times from 2002-04 – a pair of fortnight bans and three one-week suspensions.

That equates to a 70 per cent penalty on top of Fletcher's next suspension.



PETER RICCARDI



DUSTIN FLETCHER

ED/Herald Sun 17/2/2005

AFL looks at Brownlow change

For example, Dustin Fletcher's poor record in the past three years would result in him being suspended for a low-level striking offence under the new system. But Peter Riccardi would get a 25 per cent discount for an identical offence because he has not been suspended in the past five years.

The Geelong veteran would therefore escape suspension and still be eligible for the Brownlow, despite committing the same offence as Fletcher.

As the Brownlow count is within one season, the league believes a player such as Fletcher should not pay the price for past sins.

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The league is considering enforcing a change under which players would remain eligible for offences given a points value of 125 and below (including lowest level striking charges).

Another option is to set the cut-off at 100 points and under, meaning a minor striking offence would rule a player out.

If the benchmark is set at 125, any player who commits a lowest-level striking offence and is found guilty will be eligible for the Brownlow – even if they are rubbed out because of a poor past record.

"We've already discussed a few options. I'll come back to the executive with a final option to see what they think," Anderson said.

Under both cut-off scenarios – 125 and under or 100 and under – Fletcher would be suspended because he would be hit with a 70 per cent increase in penalty because of his poor record.

But Fletcher could still win the Brownlow because his fate is decided on a points-only basis.

The AFL's new graded points system, which is likely to give players more leeway in terms of the Brownlow at the lower end of the scale, was last night applauded by Brownlow medallists

Bob Skilton and Gerard Healy.

Skilton, a three-time winner, said it was too harsh to end a player's medal hopes for one minor indiscretion. "I don't think there's any of us who haven't done the wrong thing at some stage in frustration, temper or retaliation. One indiscretion ... shouldn't cost you the Brownlow."

Healy supports the defined level of offences, saying there had to be some breathing space for the players because every minor offence was now being detected because of saturated TV coverage.

Brownlow medallist Neil Roberts said anybody found guilty of striking should be ineligible.



wizard home loans CUP AFL

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18 - 7.40pm



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Gates open 5.30pm

DOUBLE HEADER SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19 - 2.40pm



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Gates open 1pm

6.10pm



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Gates open 1pm

Please note your match ticket is valid for both games on Saturday

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20 - 5.10pm



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Gates open 3.30pm

Tickets available through Ticketmaster7
www.ticketmaster7.com

Ticket selling windows will be open:
Friday 5pm, Saturday 12.30pm & Sunday 3pm
Additional ticket boxes operate from Car Park Entry 1 and Car Park Entry 5.
Please note that Club memberships are not valid during the Wizard Cup Competition.

P Public parking underneath Telstra Dome via car park entry 2 & 5 - \$15 incl. GST
External car parks are available adjacent to Telstra Dome at Batman's Hill and Victoria Harbour - \$9 incl. GST.

Tabaret is now open Level 2 LiveWire.

For further information call the Met Hotline on 13 16 38.
Or visit www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au
Passengers are encouraged to allow a little extra travel time in their journey due to the Spencer St station redevelopment

- Level 1 - Food Court
- Level 2 - LiveWire.
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