

# SLUGGED! Brawling Rules players hit by rule book

By Des Haughton

Aussie Rules officials have thrown the book at two star players, suspending them and blaming them for causing the famous Isle of Capri spectator riot.

At a full league meeting on Monday night, Southport backmark man Couche had his six-year permit withdrawn for four weeks. Surfers ruckman player Temple had his permit revoked for six weeks after the meeting was told he had been involved in vicious brawls.

Mr Sutherland said the meeting put the blame for the spectator riot at the feet of the two players

who began brawling when walking from the field after the match.

Mr Sutherland said he and other eye witnesses had absolutely no doubt that Templar and Couche had triggered the riot.

"They exchanged blows after the game had finished. This is the only reason why other players and spectators joined in the brawl," he said.

## Disagreed

"If they hadn't fought there would not have been a riot."

Mr Sutherland admitted the decision by the meeting to withdraw the player permits was not a unanimous one.

The riot occurred after a heated match in which Surfers Paradise defeated last year's premiers, Southport.

Mr Sutherland said there was plenty of "needle" in the game.

Even some high-ranking club officials joined in the sideline war.

Mr Sutherland said club delegates and four league executives met to discuss the incident.

"I didn't get to bed until two the next morning," he said.

"I needed a lot of thrashing out. It was a serious matter and particularly me to be in such a position. It was Couche's first offence in his two years in Gold Coast football. Templar is well known to us."

Mr Sutherland said although there were differences of opinion at Monday night's meeting, it wasn't like council or parliament. It was pretty orderly.

Football observers say it was strange that the committee sat in to the late gates to initiate disciplinary action against Templar and Couche.

Mr Sutherland said Couche was one of Southport's best performing players. He said Templar is a big tough man.

He said Templar was a polite, well mannered person off the field.

# FOOTY VIOLENCE

ABOUT 200 Aussie Rules fans screamed obscenities and began attacking each other after a match on the Isle of Capri on Sunday.

A violent incident on the field flared into a bloody spectator riot after the game which was between bitter rivals Southport and Surfers Paradise.

Some club officials are said to have joined in the brief sideline "war".

League president Mr Frank Sutherland yesterday called on police to send in the troopers to quell sideline violence.

Eye witness said there had been plenty of "needle" all day and that violence erupted as players walked from the field after the full-time hooter sounded.

Southport club president Dr Alan MacKenzie said full back, blanket Ross Couche had his nose broken at the start of a fight on the field.

Mr Sutherland said players and fans quickly joined in as players were walking to the boundary line.

He said about 2000 spectators saw Surfers Paradise down the ongoing premiers.

"A crowd that size deserves to have police in attendance," he said.

"The clash started after the game had finished."

"The players were walking towards the boundary line and everybody got stuck in to it. But it was soon quelled by the wise heads.

"It was an unfortunate incident and will be discussed at League level."

Mr Sutherland said he knew of at least two players who went home with broken noses after Sunday's encounter.

Mr Sutherland said spectators were in rage because the powerful Southport team started unloading against the revitalised Surfers Damians.

He said he felt the crowd deserved an official apology.

"People aren't always normal after a tough game," he said.

"I always leave and go home and try and sort it out the next day when they've calmed down a bit."

A spokesman for the Umpires Association, Mr Len MacKie, said he believed alcohol increased the risk of fights at games.

"Some gaffs have a few beers and all they want to do is hurt somebody," he said.

"It was well and truly over if any kid had fallen under that crowd he could have been beaten to death."

"The law also has to act when it's like that and due for a game."

Dr MacKenzie said he didn't think police supervision would be of any benefit.

"Crowd violence is hard to overcome and I don't think police supervision makes any difference."

"One or two police on show don't stop an outbreak like that one."

Because of previous violence at Rules matches, umpires are escorted from the field by an representative from each club.

Dr MacKenzie said he acted as Southport's representative on Sunday.

"It had started while we were taking the umpires to the dressing rooms," he said.

"The fight was still going on when we came out a good 10 minutes later. They were exchanging insults and punches."

"I don't think anyone was badly hurt."

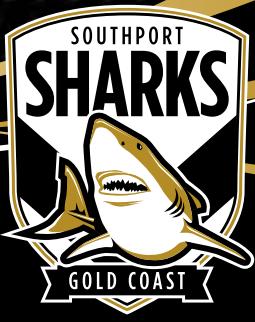
"But it was disgusting. It was completely unnecessary."

• *SFF Bulletin Sport, page 23, for the match report.*

Gold Coast Bulletin: May 23 1978, p1

Gold Coast Bulletin: May 31 1978, p40

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