

RL: Pappas hoping for compromise, but Piggins gives no ground

By Brent Read

SYDNEY, April 6 AAP - South Sydney lawyer Nick Pappas is still hopeful a compromise can be reached with Rabbitohs chairman George Piggins ahead of this week's football club elections.

But that hope appeared misplaced, with Piggins refusing to relent on his demands that his existing board dominate any new line-up.

Piggins also threw another potential spanner in the works when he said he would not work with Andrew Denton and Mike Whitney - two high-profile members of the Pappas ticket and keen to be involved in the club's future.

On another day of acrimony ahead of the Redfern rugby league club's board elections on Friday:

- Pappas and his team unveiled their manifesto for the club's future;
- Pappas revealed he had a long conversation with Piggins' wife Nolene last night;
- Pappas said he would be able to work with Piggins if he was football club chairman and Piggins remained as leagues club president;
- Piggins said his performance should not be judged on the team's results after they lost against the New Zealand Warriors in Auckland today - their fourth successive premiership defeat to open the season and 11th in a row including last season;
- Denton apologised for his heated altercation with Piggins on Sydney radio yesterday and said he would be happy to shake hands with him in future; and
- television personality Ray Martin, another high-profile member of the Pappas team, claimed Souths was the "laughing stock" of the competition.

Even with all the bad blood between the camps, Pappas today said he was still "hopeful" of a compromise being reached between the warring factions.

"I am always hopeful of compromise when there's a dispute and when there's a dispute about something you love in common," Pappas said.

"I would like to think George would be in touch with me. If he's not and he's waiting for me to get in touch with him, I would hope it gets to me."

But Piggins tonight all but ended any hope of a pact with his refusal to be involved with Denton and Whitney, both steadfast members of the Pappas camp.

"If Nicholas wants pick three of them and himself, and hand pick five from our group... and he can be the chairman, that's the compromise," Pappas said.

"But there's two things I couldn't cop, I couldn't cop Denton or Whitney ... it's as simple as that.

"I think we can be successful in a ballot. If he thinks he's in the driver's seat he won't accept it."

When asked whether he had relayed the offer to Pappas, Piggins said: "No, I don't think I'm coming from a position of weakness. Unfortunately things like this make me grow stronger.

"If he think s he's prepared to talk to me about something that's in the best interests of the club, I'll talk to him.

"It's not much different to the compromise he offered me the other day. The only thing is he's got no workers on his side of the fence, I've got all workers."

Piggins refusal to work with Denton followed a public spat between the pair yesterday which prompted Denton to post an apology on the South Sydney website.

Denton today said he would be happy to shake hands with Piggins in the future, describing him as a man of "good character".

But he said he had no choice but to defend himself against "lies" after Piggins yesterday claimed Denton was in favour of a merger when the pair were working together to get the club reinstated to the NRL.

"It was like getting dumped in the guts," Denton said.

"I was defending myself as I was surprised that lies were being spread about me.

"When I see him (Piggins) I'll offer my hand and see if he takes it. I think he will. He's a man of good character."

Piggins today defended his part in the public spat, saying he had nothing to be ashamed of and nothing to apologise for.

"I'm not sorry for being myself," Piggins said.

"I think people have more respect that I stood up for myself and did not panic. It was a couple of grown men having an argument.

"People say it reflects badly on the club, I have put the last 13 years of my life on hold to try and save this club."