

RL: Piggins rejects olive branch held out by Pappas

By Daniel Pace

SYDNEY, April 7 AAP - South Sydney chairman George Piggins tonight rejected any chance of a compromise with the rebel group headed by solicitor Nick Pappas before Sunday's football club elections.

Pappas held out an olive branch to Piggins, saying he would accept four members of his ticket and four current board members under his chairmanship.

But Piggins told AAP tonight he would stand and fight on his terms and canvass votes based on his record as an administrator.

"There's no compromise. It's gone too far for that now," said Piggins, who also revealed he was happy to shake hands with Souths rebel Andrew Denton after the pair became embroiled in a bitter argument on radio on Saturday.

"I see Nick saying in the papers that what I offered him wasn't acceptable, well the ballot box is the only thing that's going to be acceptable now.

"If you're a Souths supporter you should be able to come and help no matter what and get on with it.

"If I say we're going to compromise, the members might say 'I'm going to vote for the other mob'. Well, I don't want that to happen.

"We're standing and we're standing to run the club as we have previously done."

Pappas tonight expressed his disappointment at Piggins' stubborn stance.

"Well it disappoints me because I've always wanted a compromise and George knows that," said the lawyer instrumental in Souths' readmission to the National Rugby League competition following a two-year court battle with News Limited.

"This all started when he offered me the chairmanship last October.

"This is what I find so extraordinary. He effectively wants me to be a stooge chairman with a board that he controls from outside.

"I'm not prepared to be a stooge chairman. If I'm going to be a director of the company I want to be able to carry out my duties, not have it controlled by five people who are appointed by George.

"If that's the alternative - and a split board like that won't work - I'd prefer that George wins the election and carries on."

Meanwhile, Piggins stuck firm to his belief that Denton supported a merger with Cronulla in 1999 as a former board member but, after their public spat, he was prepared to mend fences.

"He rang and apologised," Piggins said of Denton, who is part of the nine-man rebel ticket headed by Pappas.

"I'm quite prepared to shake hands with him and get on with life."

Piggins said he was seeking legal advice on whether former NSW premier Nick Greiner, ex-Test cricketer Mike Whitney and Souths stalwart Mark Carroll could run on the rebel ticket because he believed they weren't members of the football club.

But Pappas said he understood the trio's membership applications were accepted prior to them lodging the required forms to challenge the current board and that they each received a letter welcoming them as new members.

Former Rabbitohs forward Carroll confirmed tonight that he had received such letter.