

Hey chief, is this a case of double standards?

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IN AN era of NRL players being hauled over hot coals for the slightest public misdemeanour, South Sydney chief executive Shane Richardson has avoided sanction or any semblance of remorse for an altercation with a volunteer council worker at Gosford.

The problem for Richardson is the perception of double standards.

Four players were dropped from first grade and David Kidwell stripped of the co-captaincy earlier this season when they reneged on an agreement to have no alcohol on the night immediately following a match.

Then Richardson was quoted as saying: "We want to point out that the players didn't cause any trouble.

"However, as a club we take these standards very seriously and action has been taken to reflect our stance.

"The coaching staff feel very strongly about this as it goes to the heart of what we're trying to do here as a club."

The inference was clear. Souths wanted to stamp out all indiscretions. One of the dropped players, Ben Rogers, said at the time he felt like he was in the army because disciplinary requirements were so strict.

Well, last Saturday the boot was on the other foot. Richardson was involved in a rather ugly incident near Bluetongue Stadium at Gosford before Souths' home match against Melbourne Storm.

It was enough of a scene for witnesses to bombard a Sydney radio station on Friday with protests about Richardson's behaviour.

Shortly before 5pm Richardson was denied entry to a short-cut to the stadium. He screamed at the council worker, who continued to refuse him access. No other cars behind Richardson were permitted access, regardless of any accreditation passes.

Richardson then drove his car forward, attempting to drive around the road block. The worker jumped backwards before placing his hand on the bonnet of Richardson's car. Richardson sped off, still screaming in front of dozens of witnesses, including *The Sun-Herald*.

He says the perception he tried to get around the road block - and went perilously close to hitting the worker with his car - was wrong.

"I was told I couldn't go through and I said, 'OK, fine'," Richardson told *The Sun-Herald* yesterday.

"I was told I had to go out and around the roundabout, which was exactly what I did. I never hit the guy. He put his hand on the front of the car to stop me going through. I never went through, I just went and parked under the grandstand. It was no big deal."

Asked why witnesses called the radio station with a quite different version of events, Richardson replied: "It's everyone's 10 minutes of fame. The bottom line is I took the instructions. I wasn't happy with the instructions but I took them. I just said to



the guy, 'You've got to be kidding. I've got to get through. I've got to get to the ground.'

"But nothing happened. I had no intention of going through. I didn't hit him in any way, shape or form. I went around the other side, honestly.

"He [the council worker] might have thought I was going through, but I wasn't - I was just getting the arc right to do my U-turn. No one has rung me from the ground, no one has called me from the stadium to complain about it. If they did I would have dealt with it."

Senior Constable Dave O'Shea from Gosford police station became aware of the incident at the time it happened and it was discussed at a post-match debriefing involving ground staff.

Stadium owner and multimillionaire businessman John Singleton was also made aware of it but the council worker, who declined to comment when contacted by *The Sun-Herald*, decided against lodging a formal complaint.

Richardson denied a player would be in strife for a similar incident.

"I wasn't drunk, I wasn't out in the middle of the night, no one was hurt and I obeyed instructions," he said.

"I gave him a mouthful but you don't know what I said or didn't say. I don't understand why it's such a big deal. I told him I was in a hurry to get to the ground because I didn't want to miss the start of the under-20s game. Did I run him over? No. Did I make an obstruction? No.

"Everybody has got to be squeaky clean but everybody makes little errors in judgment, too.

"If I was drunk and disorderly and caused an argument - I didn't even know who the guy was. The car before me was allowed through. I said, 'righto' and turned around.

"I didn't race through the barrier. I didn't charge through the barrier. I didn't knock anyone over.

"If there was a real problem from the stadium's point of view, they should have raised it with me.

"I've got a lot more to worry about at Souths than this. The amount of pressure I'm under to get the job done is enormous."

Richardson is undoubtedly under immense pressure. Two days after the Gosford match he was named chief executive as Souths embark on another fight for survival.

Maybe his blow-up was nothing more than a release of pent-up tension. But if a player had created such a scene in full public view, would Richardson be so quick to dismiss it?

Source: The Sun-Herald

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/05/31/1211654373093.html>