

Ian Ramsdale considers the implications of a three year Super League licence



I don't mean to wish the season away, but soon enough thoughts will turn to preparations for next year, especially when the franchises are awarded. I don't think I'd be far wrong to presume both today's teams will get one.

There's already talk about which player might sign, who you'd like to fill this position, who might strengthen that position etc, but the key to the license system is that you don't plan for next year, you plan for the next three. It's a three year ticket.

However you use it, the emphasis is on long-term development.

So, discussions should be about where you want to see your club in three years. It's like a rugby league business plan. I've learned (by watching numerous episodes of Dragons Den) that companies frequently operate a loss in the first year to increase their base and potential for year three – and onwards.

In Super League terms that could read 'finish bottom in year one to romp to the title in 2011'. My only problem is that the 2009 licence applications refer to 'playing strength', and if that criteria stays for 2012 applications then surely that contradicts the freedom awarded in a three year development period?

The idea, supposedly, is that winning isn't everything, but progression is. It might be difficult to see but in three years' time these clubs should be in a stronger position than they are now. And the whole game in this country will benefit from it.

But then we're told 'persistent underperformers' will have their licences withdrawn. What's persistent? Finishing bottom twice in two years? Finishing bottom once? Losing 10 consecutive games...?

I'm not saying either of Harlequins or Leeds will be in that situation, but if it's a three year system then why not judge sides on year three?

Otherwise it means teams will have, roughly, a year or 18 months - without pressure - to get junior players to Super League standard. Is that long enough?

Having said that, there are planned increases for home-grown talent and reductions in overseas players in the law books already, so maybe the development is meant to be holistic.

If Super League is to expand into other areas of the county then long-term

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BBC London continues to exclusively cover every engage Super League match that involves Quins RL across the season. For exclusive commentary, both home and away, through the BBC London website, go to www.bbc.co.uk/london/sport.

licenses are exactly what's needed - a gradual, steady and well thought-out process. Overall it'll only make the national sides stronger. It's where football went wrong and now they're too far down the road to turn back.

But if it's three years, give clubs three years. And I hope neither you nor the RFL will be too hasty to judge.

Rammo



Will supporters be patient enough to judge teams over a three year period?