

Refereeing - Key Focus Areas

IRFU - August 2017



Foul Play - Identify & Sanction

The strong focus on foul play remains. There will continue to be strict refereeing of dangerous and illegal collisions in the domestic game with the aim of producing safer contact situations.

Penalty - Minor, low impact foul play.

Yellow / Red Card - Forceful / serious foul play.

TACKLER

- Tackler must grasp when performing a tackle.
 - Shoulder first, shoulder only and stiff arm tackle attempts are illegal.
 - The grasp must be simultaneous with, or prior to shoulder contact.
- Guide: Forceful initial contact without or before a grasp = Red / Yellow Card.

HIGH TACKLES

- Contact above shoulder line is illegal.
- Guide: Forceful contact to head and neck (including "neck rolls") = Red / Yellow Card.

BALL CARRIER

- Hand off must be a push action.
- Dangerous hand offs / strike action by ball carrier to be sanctioned.
- Leading with the arm is illegal.

RUCK / MAUL ENTRY

- Shoulder first / shoulder only entry at the tackle, ruck and maul is illegal.
 - Players must bind on opponents or teammates on entry.
 - The bind must be simultaneous with or prior to shoulder contact.
- Guide: Forceful initial contact without or before a grasp = Red / Yellow Card.

PROTECTING PRONE & VULNERABLE PLAYERS

- No playing players without the ball (e.g. early tackles, late tackles, contact with players not part of a ruck or maul, late contact with try scorer).
 - Players joining a ruck must bind on players already in the ruck, not hit them without attempting to bind.
- Guide: Forceful illegal contact on prone player = Red / Yellow Card.

LIFTING PLAYERS FROM THE GROUND

- Ball carrier cannot lift and force tackler into the ground.
 - Tackler cannot forcefully swing, drive, drop or throw ball carrier to ground.
 - Players cannot lift opponents off their feet and force them into the ground at ruck or maul.
- Guide: If players upper body and / or head make forceful contact with the ground as part of an illegal action = Red / Yellow Card.

Tackle / Ruck

- Supporting Body Weight - Players must not land on players on the ground without removing defenders.
- Takeouts - Players must not tackle players beyond the tackle / ruck.
- Holding - Players must not hold players who are not part of the tackle / ruck.
- Ruck Pillars - Players not part of the tackle / ruck must be clearly behind the hindmost foot and must not bind onto each other.
- Trapping - Players must not prevent tacklers from rolling away.
- Players must not kick the ball out of the ruck.
- Players must not step over a collapsed ruck to kick or play the ball, which is still in the ruck.

Scrum

- Engagement - No pre engagement. There must be at least a gap on "bind".
- Stability - There must be no pushing or pulling on "set" - Scrum must remain steady until throw in.
- Tight Head - Must remain straight pre & post engagement.
- Loose Head - Must stay tight to hooker and not step out.
- Collapsed scrum - Referee must reset or sanction. Referee can not play on and advantage can not be played - Law 20.3 (h).
- No quick taps allowed for scrum sanctions if scrum has collapsed or if front row players are lifted off their feet.

Space

Restarts - Players must not be ahead of the ball and kick must taken on or behind the line.

Lineout / Scrum - Both teams must remain 10m / 5m until they are over.

Lineout

Gap - Player must not step or be lifted across the gap interfering with jumpers or support players.

Throwers - Hooker must stand in the middle of the lineout.

Maul Formation

The ball must be ripped and the ripper must bind to the jumper (no long arm transfers).

Lifters must not block behind the jumper.

Players must not block to the side of the maul (the must be joined to the maul).

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UNCONTESTED SCRUMS

Uncontested scrums as a result of a sending off, temporary suspension or injury must be played with eight players per side.

TIME

If a penalty is kicked into touch after time has elapsed without touching another player, the referee allows the throw-in to be taken and play continues until the next time the ball becomes dead. (To end the half, the ball must be tapped prior to kick to touch).

ADVANTAGE

When there are multiple penalty infringements by the same team, the referee may allow the captain of the non-offending team to choose the most advantageous of the penalty marks.

PENALTY TRY

If a player would probably have scored a try but for foul play by an opponent, a penalty try is awarded. No conversion is attempted. Value: 7 points.

TOUCH

- A player who is attempting to bring the ball under control is deemed to be in possession of the ball.
- If the ball-carrier reaches the plane of touch but returns the ball to the playing area without first landing in touch, play continues.
- If a player jumps and knocks the ball back into the playing area (or if that player catches the ball and throws it back into the playing area) before landing in touch or touch-in-goal, play continues regardless of whether the ball reaches the plane of touch.
- In this case, if the ball has passed the plane of touch when it is caught, then the catcher is not deemed to have taken the ball into touch.
- If the ball has not passed the plane of touch when it is caught or picked up, then the catcher is deemed to have taken the ball into touch, regardless of whether the ball was in motion or stationary.

SCRUM

- Throw In:
 - No signal from Referee.
 - The scrum half must throw the ball in straight, but is allowed to align his shoulder on the middle line of the scrum, therefore allowing him to stand a shoulder width towards his side of the middle line.
- Handling in the scrum - Exception:
 - Number 8 can pick the ball from the feet of the second rows.
- Striking after the throw in:
 - Once the ball touches the ground in the tunnel, any front row player may use either foot to try to win possession of the ball. One player from the team who put the ball in must strike for the ball Sanction: FK

TACKLE / RUCK

- The tackler must get up before playing the ball and then can only play from his side of the tackle gate.
- A ruck commences when at least one player is on their feet and over the ball which is on the ground (tackled player, tackler). At this point the offside line is created.
- A player on his feet may use his hands to pick up the ball as long as this is immediate - As soon as an opposition player arrives no hands can be used.
- A player must not kick the ball out of a ruck - The player can only hook it in a backwards motion - Sanction: PK

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