



GAME MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

FOR COMMUNITY LEVEL RUGBY

IN AUSTRALIA

2023

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GAME MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES 2023

The Game Management Guidelines are an amalgam of outcomes of various conferences and workshops held over the past few years. They have been adapted to reflect the playing, coaching and refereeing of the game at community levels in Australia for 2023.

Comments in red indicate either a Law change or an area of emphasis for 2023.

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that all participants at the community level are aware of the areas of the game that require more specific coaching and/or consistency in refereeing.

SET PIECE- SCRUM

Safety at the scrum is paramount. An explanation of the requirements for players at each stage of the engagement is covered in both the Laws of the Game and in the Rugby AU Smart Rugby program. The scrum engagement sequence is the same at all levels of the game.

The referee must control the engagement process. Each of the following 3 calls should result in an action by the players. STABILITY IS PARAMOUNT AT EACH STEP OF THE PROCESS. If any part of the scrum set-up is not right, the referee should call the front rows up and re-start the process.

Engagement

When both sides are square, stable and stationary, the referee calls “crouch”.

1. The front-rows then adopt a crouched position if they have not already done so. Their heads and shoulders are no lower than their hips, a position that is maintained for the duration of the scrum.
2. The front-rows crouch with their heads to the left of their immediate opponents', so that no player's head is touching the neck or shoulders of an opponent.
3. **Hookers must have a 'brake' foot positioned to help stability and to avoid axial loading.**

Sanction: Free-kick.

When both sides are square, stable and stationary, the referee calls “bind”.

1. Each loose-head prop binds by placing the left arm inside the right arm of the opposing tight-head prop.
2. Each tight-head prop binds by placing the right arm outside the left upper arm of the opposing loose-head prop.
3. Each prop binds by gripping the back or side of their opponent's jersey.
4. All players' binding is maintained for the duration of the scrum.

Sanction: Penalty.

When both sides are square, stable and stationary, with the hooker still applying the brake foot, the referee calls “set”.

1. Only then must the hooker remove the brake foot and the teams engage, completing the formation of the scrum and creating a tunnel into which the ball will be thrown.
2. All players must be in position and ready to push forward.
3. Each front-row player must have both their feet on the ground, with their weight firmly on at least one foot.
4. Each hooker's feet must be in line with, or behind, the foremost foot of that team's props.

Sanction: Free-kick.

Collapsed scrums and illegal wheeling

- Coaches and referees should ensure pre-match that players are aware of the “Mayday” Procedure and its application. Refer to the Rugby AU Smart Rugby online course for clarification.
- A legal wheel goes forward and through the opposition scrum. A wheel that spins around at pace (usually on its axis) is illegal and should be penalised (PK).

Mayday Procedure

The Mayday Safety Procedure has been developed to enable players and referees to take prompt action to relieve the pressure if this situation occurs in a scrum.

The Mayday Safety Procedure follows this sequence:

- Player calls 'mayday'
- All other players repeat 'mayday'
- Referee immediately blows whistle
- All players stop pushing
- Front rowers release binds on opposite front rower
- All players in the scrum immediately drop to their knees
- Front row land on their faces
- Players wait for referee instructions.

SET PIECE - LINEOUT

Touch-line Law

A player who is attempting to bring the ball under control is now deemed to be in possession of the ball.

- When a player jumps from inside the playing area, and before landing in touch, manages to knock (or catch and throw) the ball from across plane of touch back into the playing area, this is now **play on** (previously this was in touch).
- Previously whether the ball was rolling or stopped was relevant, now the question is: did the ball reach the plane?
 - If the ball has reached 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 reached 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 if the ball was in motion or stationary.
- The principle above also applies to the goal-lines, touch-in-goal, 22m and dead-ball lines.
- To make a Mark, a player must catch a ball that has reached the plane of the 22-metre line.

50:22

Definition

- If the team in possession kicks the ball from inside their own half indirectly into touch inside their opponents' 22, they will throw into the resultant lineout. The ball cannot be passed or carried back into the defensive half for the 50:22 to be played. The phase must originate inside the defensive half.

Quick Throw

A quick throw cannot take place if;

- A lineout had already been formed (2 players from each team have reached the line of touch); or
- The ball had been touched after it went into touch by anyone other than the player throwing in or the player who carried the ball into touch; or
- A different ball is used from the one that originally went into touch.

Numbers and Lineout Players

- The minimum number of players to form a lineout is two from each team (i.e., 4 total minimum).
- **A receiver at the lineout must be exactly 2 metres back away from the lineout when formed (they can't set up further than 2 metres away). In U13s and above, it is optional for a team to have a receiver.**
- **It is mandatory for a team to have a player in opposition to the player throwing in the ball. This player must be positioned two metres away from the 5m line and two metres away from the line-of-touch.**
- Receivers must not join until after the ball has left the thrower's hands (FK), unless another lineout player simultaneously takes the receiver position (i.e., they switch) before the throw.
- In U16s and above, the front support player at the lineout may lift on the thighs, as in senior Law. In U13s-U15s, all support players may still only lift on the shorts.

Lineout Management

- **The throwing team must not delay the formation of a lineout by forming a line or huddle away from the line-of-touch. They must set their numbers clearly when forming the lineout, hence giving the defending team a reasonable opportunity to match (FK).**

- The lineout is a static phase and players cannot walk in and jump in one dynamic movement. There must be moments pause.

MAUL

Ball Transfer

- The ball can only be moved backwards hand-to-hand once the maul has formed. A player is not allowed to move/slide to the back of the maul when they are in possession of the ball (PK).
- The ball can be moved backwards hand-to-hand once the maul has formed.
- The 'ripper' needs to stay in contact with the jumper until the ball is fully transferred and cannot immediately shift lanes. No 'long transfer' of the ball to the back of the maul from the lineout jumper.

Other Maul Issues – Attack

- When a maul is formed at a lineout or after a kick, defenders must have access to the ball carrier at the formation of the maul. It is obstruction if blockers move in front of the ball carrier before the maul is formed.
- Players detaching from a maul with the ball being carried by a player behind a leading player and who engage the opposition are liable to penalty for obstruction (commonly referred to as 'Truck and Trailer' or 'Changing Lanes').

SPEED- TACKLE

Flying Wedge

Definition

- An illegal type of attack, which usually happens near the goal line, either from a penalty or free-kick or in open play. Team-mates are latched on each side of the ball-carrier in a wedge formation before engaging the opposition. Often one or more of these team-mates is in front of the ball-carrier.

Sanction

- Penalty Kick.

Player Pre-latched

Definition

- To recognise the potential for 1-player pre-latching prior to contact, but this player must observe all of the requirements for a first arriving player, particularly the need to stay on their feet. Latched is defined by- being bound to the ball carrier prior to contact.

Sanction

- Penalty- if the player denies a contest or it is a repeat action.

Tackle protocol for referees

- The order of priority at a tackle situation is almost always:
1. Tackler / Assist Tackler 2. Tackled Player 3. Arriving Players

Tackled Player

- The tackled player must not either crawl or re-position their body (e.g., 'extra roll' and 'squeeze ball') to delay the release of the ball when isolated or under pressure. The ball must be available immediately for play (PK). (Note: 'squeeze ball' is illegal entirely in Kids Pathway U6-U12).

Post-Tackle Contest

- An offside line is created at a tackle when at least one player is on their feet and over the ball. Each team's offside line runs through the hindmost point of any player in the tackle or on their feet.
- A player who arrives and picks the ball up at a tackle does not form an offside line.
- Any player on their feet who has their hands on the ball immediately after a tackle and before a ruck forms ('jackal') may keep contesting for the ball even if a ruck forms around them.
- To earn a PK for 'holding on', arriving 'jackal' players must:
 - Be in a position of strength (on feet, with no hands or elbows past the ball on the ground), **and**
 - Attempt to lift ball up needs to be seen, and
 - **NO HANDS-ON GROUND past the ball.**
 - If the 'jackal' player shows the above, the player is not required to survive the clean.

SPEED- RUCK

“Use it!” at ruck

- When the ball has been clearly won by a team at the ruck, and the ball is available to be played immediately by the scrum-half or another player, the referee should call “Use it!”
- The “Use it!” call does not mean the ball is out.
- The team in possession then has 5 seconds (the countdown is not verbalised) to use the ball. If the ball is not used, a scrum should be awarded to the team not in possession.
- If a team decides to use the tactic of the train while performing a box kick. ‘Use it’ should be verbalized when the ball is clearly won, not when it has made its way to the back of the train.

Ball out and collapsed ruck

- The ball is only out of a ruck (or scrum) when it is totally exposed, or it is clear of bodies.
- If the ball is being dug out (after being won) or is under the feet of players at the back of the ruck, the scrum-half or acting scrum-half **cannot be touched until the ball is clearly out of the ruck**. The benefit of any doubt must go to the scrum-half. **Scrum halves are not to baulk when setting up to box kick. (FK)**
- Players cannot step through or over the middle of a collapsed ruck before the ball is cleared or the ball is completely clear of bodies. These players are unbound and in front of the last feet and are therefore offside.
- At a tackle, a player can pick up the ball if one foot is level with or behind the ball. At a ruck, a player can pick up the ball if both feet are level with or behind the ball. If a player is still bound with an opponent, then they cannot pick up the ball.

SPACE

Rationale for emphasis

- When the ball is kicked in general play, any player of the kicking team in front of the kicker is offside.

Requirements for offside players

- If offside players are within 10m of where an opponent is waiting to play the ball or where the ball may land, they **must immediately retreat outside this 10m zone**. This 10m line stretches across the field (it is not a circle).
- Offside players within the 10m who are retreating can only be put onside when an onside teammate runs them on. No action of the team catching the ball puts such an offside player onside.
- Offside players who are not within 10m **must not move forward or towards the ball**. **These offside players who are standing still can be put onside when an onside teammate runs them on, or when an opponent runs 5m, kicks, passes or touches but does not catch the ball.**
- Offside players **cannot** be run onside unless they are either standing still or retreating out of the 10m zone as applicable.

RESTARTS AND KICKS

Goal line drop-out

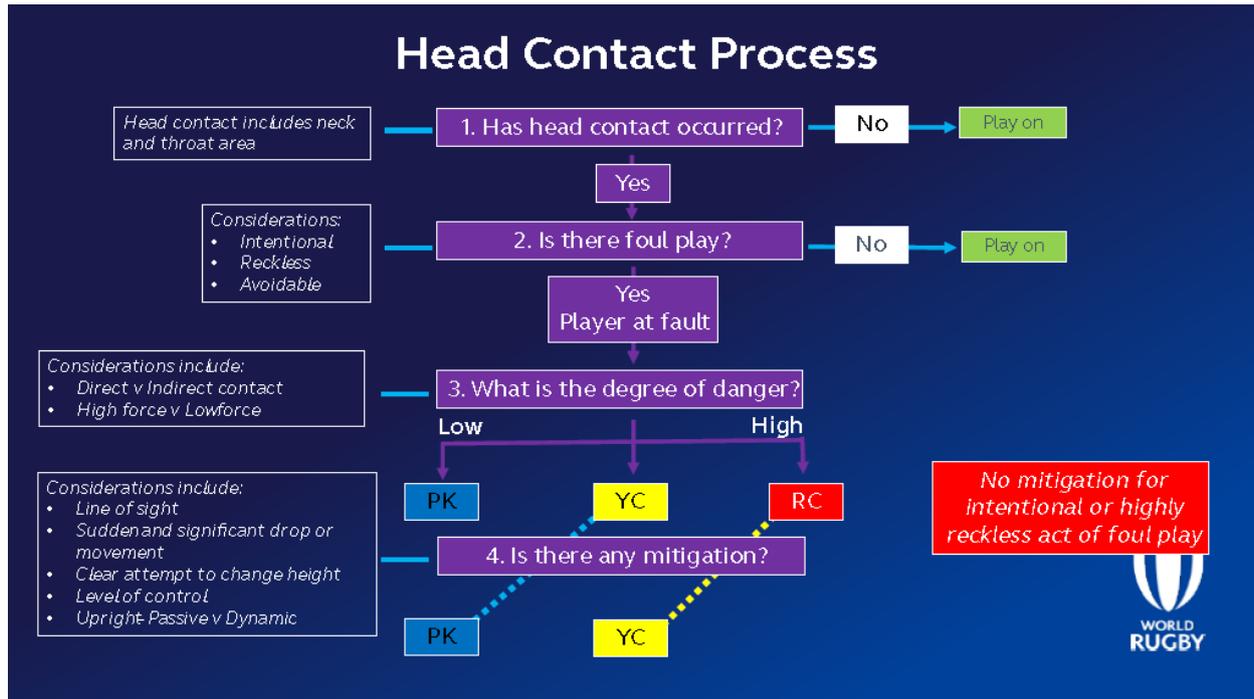
Definition

- If the ball is held up in in-goal, there is a knock-on from an attacking player in in-goal or an attacking kick is made dead by the defenders in their own in-goal, then play restarts with a goal line drop-out anywhere along the goal line.

Intention

- To encourage variety in attacking play close to the goal line and to increase ball in play time by replacing a scrum with a kick that must be taken without delay. An opportunity for counterattack is also created

FOUL PLAY



Trigger words for match officials

Match Officials may wish to use the non -exhaustive list of trigger words below to help them identify whether a player is at fault, the degree of danger involved and whether any mitigation should be applied.

PLAY ON	PK YC	RC
No Fault	Low danger	High danger
Sudden and significant drop in height by the ball carrier Player had no time to readjust Passive action Involuntary collision No leading arm when close to the body	Indirect contact Low force Low speed Passive No leading head/shoulder/forearm	Direct contact Lack of control High speed Upright & dynamic Leading head/shoulder/elbow/forearm Swinging arm No mitigation for intentional or highly reckless act of foul play
	Mitigation Sudden/significant drop in height or change in direction from ball carrier A late change in dynamics due to another player in the contact An effort to wrap/bind and having no time to adjust	

WORLD RUGBY

Please utilise the head contact video for more clarity in the process.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzjjDZarcD4>

Dangerous Clean outs.

- World Rugby is working to eliminate the practice dangerous clear outs at the breakdown.
- To decide an appropriate sanction (PK, YC or RC), referees should be considering:
 - **Has there been foul play?** – has the player committed an act of foul play? Has there been head contact? Is the player in control of the contact? Is it a legal clean out (use of arms). “Drive not dive”
 - **Level of Danger** – Speed? Has the player come from depth? where did the contact take place?
 - **Players are required to arrive in a controlled manner.**

Cleanout – Targeting the lower limbs of the jackler

Definition

- A player may lever the jackler out of the contest at the ruck but must not drop their weight onto them or target the lower limbs.

Sanction

Penalty- referee to judge the severity of the action.

Other Foul Play

- The Law regarding what is commonly called a ‘shoulder charge’ says that a player must not charge or knock down an opponent carrying the ball without trying to grasp that player. This should be the standard for referees to apply. ‘Grasscut’ tackles are illegal (diving at a ball carrier’s legs).
- In U19 matches, punching and stamping are an automatic send off (red card).
- Players should not appeal for decisions, wave arms, or shout at match officials (e.g., “That’s a card!”)

OTHER

Speeding up the game

- Players and match officials are reminded of the following existing laws which need to be strictly adhered to across the game at all levels:
- **Law 8.8d Conversion.** The kicker takes the kick within 90 seconds (playing time) from the time the try was awarded, even if the ball rolls over and has to be placed again. Sanction: Kick is disallowed.
- **Law 8.21: Penalty Goal:** The kick must be taken within 60 seconds (playing time) from the time the team indicated their intention to do so, even if the ball rolls over and has to be placed again. Sanction: Kick is disallowed and a scrum is awarded.
- **Law 9.7d A player must not waste time.** Sanction: Free Kick
- **Law 18.12 Lineout:** Teams form the lineout without delay. Sanction: Free-kick.
- **Law 19.4 Scrum:** Teams must be ready to form the scrum within 30 seconds of the mark being made. Sanction: Free-kick.

Blue Card Implementation

- When a player leaves the field due to signs and symptoms of suspected concussion, the referee will show them a Blue Card. This triggers an off-field process. (*Blue Card applies in U13s and older.*)
- A tactically replaced player may return to play to replace a player who has been shown a Blue Card.
- Replacements due to blood injury, concussion or injury due to foul play do not count in the designated number of movements.

Referee Management

Water carriers

The Global Law Trial on limiting the number of water carriers to two, and reducing the times they enter the field, has successfully reduced unnecessary stoppages and unnecessary influence by water carriers on players and match officials. However, creating set windows for water has created the impression of disrupting the game, even if that water was taken during a natural stoppage (try/injury/TMO review)

After taking feedback from stakeholders, we will be amending the Global Law Trial to allow water carriers onto the field when a try is scored. The timings will match the length of the kick taken. Only in a game with no tries in the first 20 minutes, should another natural stoppage be used. If an injury stoppage is used, the water carriers must leave the field when the medic does so.