



USARUGBY

J A N U A R Y - J U L Y

2017

GAME MANAGEMENT
GUIDELINES

FIFTEENS ★ HIGH SCHOOL ★ SEVENS



© 2017 USA Rugby

Content by
Richard Every
Ed Todd
Peter Watson

For more information visit www.USARugby.org

INTRODUCTION

USA Rugby Referees' management has established guidelines to refereeing at all levels in USA Rugby. These guidelines enable players and referees to have a clearer approach to the game and to be more aligned in Law application throughout the country. They also reflect directives from World Rugby.

These guidelines are to be distributed and applied nationally to all referees, referee reviewers, referee coaches, players/teams, coaches and administrators for 2017.

Richard Every
High Performance Referee Manager
USA Rugby

Marc Nelson
Referee Manager
USA Rugby

CONTENTS

PAGE

FIFTEENS GUIDELINES & HIGH SCHOOL GUIDELINES in GREEN

The Principles of the Game	2
Referee Abuse	2
The Breakdown	3
Scrum	7
Lineout	10
Maul	12
Advantage	13
General Play	13
Foul Play	14
Restarts & Open Play	17
Ball Out	17
Kick at Goal	18
Penalty Try	18
Penalty Kicks & Free Kicks	18
SEVENS GUIDELINES	19
CONTACTS	31

NOTE: NEW EDITS/ADDITIONS JANUARY, 2017, ARE IN BLUE

PRINCIPLES OF THE GAME

“It is through discipline, control and mutual respect that the spirit of the game flourishes and, in the context of a game as physically challenging as rugby, these are the qualities which forge the fellowship and sense of fair play so essential to the game’s ongoing success and survival.” - World Rugby: Laws of the Game 2015

It is essential that we, as a community, stand together and work together to develop rugby in the United States. It will be through mutual respect and support that we grow the game.

Match officials, players and team administrators should work together and refrain from verbal abuse toward each other, nor make any derogatory public remarks or comments, including on social media, as this behavior is not beneficial to the development and growth of the game.

It is important that officials, players, coaches, etc. share their thoughts and experiences with one another for the betterment of all.

REFEREE NOTES

Be professional and open to discussion with players and coaches, and supportive of colleagues. Promote the game. You are accountable for your actions on and off the field. Refrain from discussing any issues with reviewers or referee coaches during halftime, unless they feel the need to communicate an issue regarding safety. Refrain from discussions with coaches, etc. during the match, at halftime, and immediately after the match if a “cooling off” period would be the better option.

REFEREE ABUSE

Verbal abuse by team coaches, team staff or team substitutes directed at match officials or players should not be tolerated and the following process should be followed:

1. The referee will ask the identified person to refrain from their behavior.
2. On the second occasion the referee will EJECT the person from the grounds.
3. A **low tolerance** approach should be applied and if the person refuses to leave the referee should request that team’s captain to assist.
4. Failing compliance the referee may abandon the match.

NOTE: The referee must restart the game according to the latest stoppage and NOT award a penalty due to the sideline behavior.

THE BREAKDOWN

A. THE TACKLE

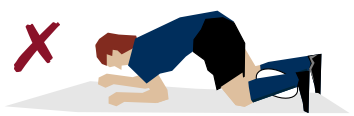
1. Tacklers have to release the tackled player immediately, and move/roll away or get to their feet. **PK**
2. Tackled player must exercise their options immediately. **PK**
3. Players that slow down ball availability illegally, should be penalized immediately. **PK**
4. Referees should allow the contest and may instruct the players, i.e. “release the ball”, “roll away”, etc., as long as these players have not already slowed down ball availability. Referees should be aware that players in national competitions know their rights and it is not necessary for the referee to communicate verbally at the tackle.
5. Verbal communication should be used if there is a possibility that it could accommodate a team scoring from the advantage gained.

Referees are to approach a low tolerance level at the breakdown and should penalize early in the match to establish compliance.

HIGH SCHOOL

1. Tackled players may not use the “squeeze ball” technique (when the player positions their body over the ball and pushes the ball back between their legs) to recycle possession. **PK**
2. If a player falls in a position where they could be potentially injured the referee should stop play immediately and award a scrum to the team in possession.

Squeeze Ball

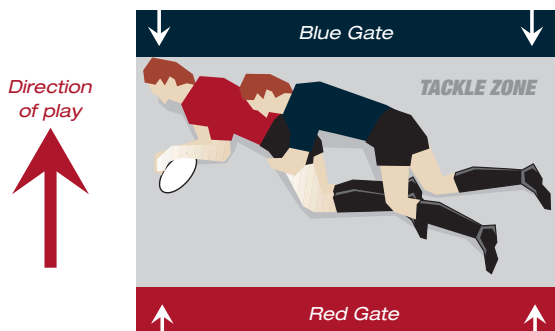


B. TACKLER ASSIST

1. Defending players that remain on their feet, but assist in bringing the ball carrier to the ground (Tackler Assist), must release the tackled player and the ball, and may only then play the ball from their side and through the gate. These players, even if they remain on their feet, must clearly release the tackled player before they may attempt to play the ball.

C. THE GATE

1. All arriving players must enter the tackle zone through their gate. No part of a player's body (including the arms), may enter the tackle through any other area. **PK**



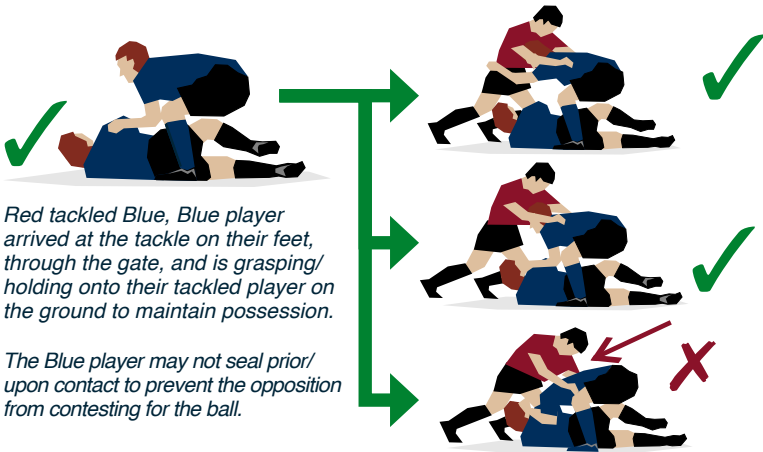
Overhead view, Blue tackled Red. Players are only allowed entry through their gate.

D. ARRIVING PLAYERS

1. Players who enter the tackle area or zone must stay on their feet. **PK**
2. At a tackle, arriving players are allowed to play the ball with their hands after an opposition player binds onto them, if they:
 - a. Arrive at the tackle legally;
 - b. Remain on their feet, and;
 - c. Have possession of the ball prior to the contact occurring (i.e. was grasping/holding the ball - this should be a positive action to gain possession of the ball, not merely putting one's hands/arms on/over the ball).

NOTE: Thus, a ruck has not yet formed.

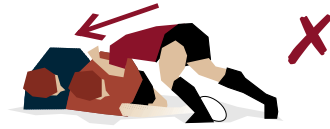
3. At a tackle, arriving players that put themselves over the ball with their weight supported by their hands, and then sweep their arms back to play the ball, should be penalized for going to ground. **PK**
4. Players may grasp or hold onto their tackled player who is on the ground, as long as they have their weight firmly on their feet and are not using the player on the ground to support their weight. **PK**
5. If the player grasps onto their teammate, the tackled player is still required to place the ball away from their body to ensure its availability. **PK**
6. Players that have grasped/are holding onto their player on the ground may not lower their shoulders below their hips or lean with their weight on their player that is on the ground to prevent the contest when an opponent makes contact with them. They may continue to hold onto their player on the ground after contact. **PK**



Red tackled Blue, Blue player arrived at the tackle on their feet, through the gate, and is grasping/holding onto their tackled player on the ground to maintain possession.

The Blue player may not seal prior/upon contact to prevent the opposition from contesting for the ball.

7. Players who are SEALING, secure the ball without their weight fully on their feet (i.e. leaning on the tackler/tackled player on the ground) OR who go to ground head first, OR dive over players on the ground, OR dive over players on the ground with the ball between them should not be tolerated and penalized as they are preventing a contest. **PK**



Blue tackled Red, Red player has secured possession by SEALING.

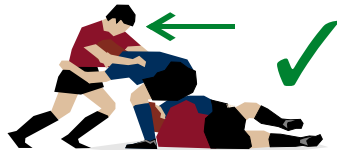


Being too far ahead of the ball, 'flooding', and taking away space in front of the ball.

8. Players may position themselves at the tackle to prepare for contact with opposition players, however they have to be near/over the ball. They may not be too far ahead of the ball, i.e. "flooding" and taking away space in front of the ball. **PK**

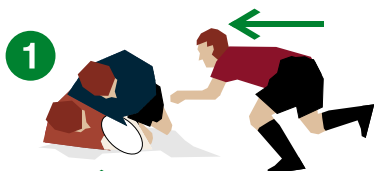


Red tackled Blue, Blue player arrived at the tackle on their feet, through the gate, is NOT binding on players on the ground, remaining on their feet and preparing for contact at the tackle area.



Red tackled Blue, both players that arrived at the tackle are on their feet, arrived through the gate, and are contesting for possession. A ruck has formed.

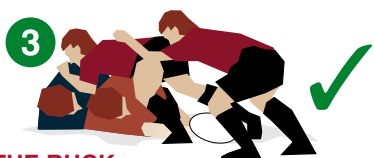
9. If players enter the tackle in conformance with the required criteria and subsequently go to ground during the process of removing a tackler or because the opposition was unable to retain its position at contact, these players should not be penalized because they did not willfully go to ground. The ball should be available to be played. However, if these players then obstruct the ball from being available to be played, they should be penalized. **PK**
10. If players enter the tackle in conformance with the required criteria and make contact with the tackler or tackled player and subsequently go to ground during the process AND HAS MADE THE BALL AVAILABLE TO BE IMMEDIATELY PLAYED it will be allowed. Arriving players of the team who have secured the ball may either play the ball or bind onto their players, even if their players are on the ground, to maintain possession.



[1] Blue tackled Red. The RED player arrives, makes contact with the Blue tackler, and;



[2] subsequently goes to ground, AND HAS MADE THE BALL AVAILABLE TO BE PLAYED. Red players who arrive thereafter may;



[3] bind onto their players (that are on the ground) to maintain possession already secured.

E. THE RUCK

1. The referee may use the term “Ruck” to indicate a ruck has formed. If a ruck has formed and players are still contesting for possession, the referee may also use the term “No Hands, Ruck” to indicate to players that they should no longer use their hands. NOTE: Referees should allow the contest to develop at the breakdown, and should be aware not to call “Ruck” until a ruck has clearly been formed. If the ball is immediately won and a ruck is formed, the referee need not communicate “Ruck”.
2. Players are not allowed to dangerously charge into the ruck by not binding correctly upon contact. **PK**
3. Once a ruck is formed, it continues even if all defenders leave or fall to ground, as long as the ball is still contained within the ruck.

4. Referees are to strictly apply the offside law to the fringes and the backlines.
5. Unsuccessful end to a ruck: Once the ball is clearly won and available to be played, the referee will call “use it”, once, after which the ball must be played within five seconds. If not, it is a turnover – scrum to the other team.

REFEREE NOTES

Get to the tackle as quickly as possible. Know where the ball is at all times - create a presence at the breakdown. The approach to the game should be to facilitate contest for possession. Set your standard from the outset, and maintain consistency to enable quick ball availability. It is important to maintain a high work rate throughout the match. There is a place for unplayables to be used as a management tool to communicate and re-establish your expectations to the players. To play penalty advantage for an infringement at the tackle, the ball should be quickly available OR a score probable.

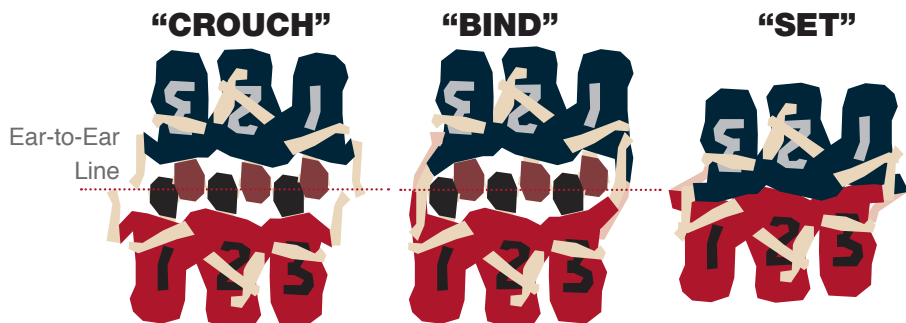
SCRUM

A. ENGAGEMENT

1. The scrum must be formed without delay, within 30 seconds. **FK**
2. Engagement process is three separate instructions, “Crouch, Bind, Set”, and they require three separate actions from players. **FK**
3. The referee may be in front of the scrumhalves, but would preferably be either behind the scrumhalves or on the opposite side to the scrum.
4. Players may crouch when they are ready or they may be in a position ready to crouch. The referee will then call “Crouch”.
5. Ensure that all players are square (with feet facing forward) and all shoulders are in a straight line (loosehead’s shoulder not tucked under their hooker). Both front rows should have shoulders no lower than their hips. Ensure that they are interlocked, ear to ear, and there is no head to head contact. **FK**
6. The referee will then call “Bind”. The props should bind with the hand of their outside arm on the opposing prop’s body (not on the arm, not on the shorts).
7. When the referee is satisfied that the front rows appear ready to engage, ARE STABLE AND SQUARE, the referee says “Set”. The front rows may then come together. This is not a command. It is permission to engage. The front rows must “set and hold”, and not “hit and chase”, so that the scrum is stationary. **FK**
8. Early engagement, failure to engage, and standing up should not be tolerated and be penalized, by Free Kick, or a Penalty Kick if the referee deems it to be deliberate, dangerous and/or a repeated infringement. **FK / PK**
9. Props are allowed to change the bind on their opponents after engagement as long as it remains legal. **PK**
10. All backrow players are to bind on the locks’ body with at least one arm up to the shoulder prior to engagement - this is to prevent the “slingshot”.

NOTE 1: The engagement process has been implemented to maintain safety. If at any point, the process is not followed by players the referee should blow the whistle, and restart the engagement from the beginning OR penalize players if they repeatedly do not comply.

NOTE 2: FK's: On the second occasion that a team repeats the same infringement, the referee should escalate the FK to a PK, and on the third occasions a PK and Yellow Card, if appropriate. If there has been a significant period between the infringements the referee may choose not to escalate.



REFEREE NOTES

Set your standard early at the scrum. Minimize resets. Free kick early engagement immediately. Safety is paramount and an immediate whistle at a collapsed or popped scrum is essential. Differentiate between a popped scrum on the mark and deliberately standing up in a retreating scrum. Players standing up are to be penalized for not binding correctly. Manage one player at a time - a collective reprimand has less effect. If you notice an issue at the scrum, but it has no immediate material affect, ensure to address it at the following scrum. If you are unsure as to the responsible party that is creating problems, slow down the engagement - inform players of this action before implementing. Do not allow an early shove, nor early wheel - the scrum should be stationary and square until the put in. Ensure the back rows remain bound. Flankers cannot unbind and move away to receive the ball before the ball is out of the scrum. In all circumstances safety is your number one priority.

B. SET AND PUT-IN

1. Scrum is to remain square and stationary. **FK**
2. When the referee is happy that the scrum is square and stationary, they will apply the non-verbal instruction for the scrumhalf to put the ball into the scrum. These include a tap on the shoulder/back, or if the referee is on the opposite side of the scrum then the instruction will be pointing and nodding at the scrumhalf.
3. Scrum put-in must be straight and credible along the center line of the front rows. **FK**

C. WHEEL

1. A scrum has only wheeled through 90° if the line between the front rows has gone through 90°. This is a reset with the same team throwing in.
2. Whip-wheel (when the scrum turns/spins on its axis) or walking the scrum around are not allowed. Before a scrum can be wheeled legally there must be a clear forward movement by the combined front row of the team that is driving their opponents backwards. **PK**

D. SCRUMHALVES

1. Scrumhalves are not to touch/push one another. **PK**
2. Defending scrumhalves are not to position themselves in the 'pocket' area between the flanker and #8. Manage first before penalizing. **PK**
3. Defending scrumhalves who decide to take up a defensive position on the last line of feet of their side of the scrum have to start next to their opponent at the put-in, and then move to the last line of feet once the scrum has commenced. Once behind the last foot, they may move laterally across the field and do not have to remain close to the scrum. If they choose not to be next to their opponent at the put-in, their offside line is the same as for players not participating in the scrum which is 5m behind the last line of feet of their scrum. **PK**
4. The scrumhalf whose team has possession of the ball after the scrum has commenced, must also remain outside. They may have one foot in front of the ball but not both. If they deliberately remain in front of the ball to obstruct the opposing scrumhalf, often to allow their #8 to play the ball, they should be penalized. **PK**
5. The offside line for the defending scrumhalf that follows the ball is on their side of the ball. **PK**

E. GENERAL

1. If player safety is not compromised, the referee may play advantage for offenses causing a collapse.
2. If the scrum is stationary (for 3-5 seconds), the referee will instruct the scrumhalf to "use it". If they fail to do so, a turnover scrum is awarded.
3. **Safety is paramount and an immediate whistle is required in any situation that could be dangerous, especially at a collapsed or popped scrum.**
4. **Dangerous play, i.e. collapse, pop, bore in, etc. should not be tolerated.**
PK and admonishment
5. **Teams may not push the other team back more than 1.5m. FK**
6. **If the referee deems that the scrum is potentially dangerous/unsafe due to lack of players' skills, ability, size or injury, the referee will continue with uncontested scrums for the remainder of the game.**

LINEOUT

A. FORMATION

1. The defending team must have a player in the 5m area - if they do not, the referee will instruct them to do so before continuing - this player may not support a jumper in the lineout, and must be 2m from the line-of-touch and 2m from the five-meter line until the lineout commences. **FK**
2. If a team elects to have a player in the receiver (scrumhalf) position, the receiver must be 2m from the lineout at the moment of the throw. If this player decides to move into the lineout prior to the throw they have to be replaced by another player from the lineout before the ball is thrown in. **FK**
3. The team that is to throw the ball into the lineout determines the maximum number of players in the lineout. Referees should manage this rather than penalize, unless it continues to be an issue. **FK**

NOTE: Many aspects of lineout infringements, i.e. formation, closing the gap, ball not traveling 5m, early jump, etc. can be managed by referees by resetting rather than penalizing, unless the infringement substantially benefits the offending team, or is continually repeated. **FK**

B. QUICK THROW-IN

1. Referees are to be more aware of quick throw-ins, within law, and that the throw does not have to be straight, but may not be forward, and has to travel 5m. The quick throw-in can be taken between the line-of-touch and the player's goal line.
 - a. Ball not thrown 5m = opponents' option scrum or lineout.
 - b. Ball prevented from traveling 5m or played before going 5m. **FK**
2. Players who hold onto the ball, or throw the ball away, when in touch, to prevent a quick throw-in should be penalized, on the line of touch, 15m line. This should not be tolerated. **PK**

C. LINEOUT START & END

1. Once the lineout has started, referees may raise one arm to indicate that the lineout is still in progress, and players who are not part of the lineout need to remain 10m from the line of touch.
2. Players that are in the lineout have to remain between the line-of-touch and the 10m backline offside line, and between the 5m and 15m lines until the lineout is over. Players that cross the 15m line prior to the lineout being over, attackers to receive the ball or defenders, should be penalized. If it is not material the referee should manage it rather than penalizing. **PK**

D. SUPPORT & OBSTRUCTION

1. The immediate players supporting the jumper may NOT position themselves in front of the jumper, obstructing the opposition. **PK**

E. NO MAUL / MAUL

1. If defenders decide not to engage to form a maul at the lineout, referees should communicate to the team in possession to get the ball out, rather than penalize for obstruction unless they do not comply. Defenders' offside line is a line through the ball until the lineout ends. **PK**
2. If a maul forms those players who opt not to join the maul must retire to the maul offside line (last line of feet) and remain there. They are allowed to move laterally in the space between 5m and 15m from touch, however, they are not allowed to drop back away from the offside line. Referees are encouraged to manage this rather than just penalize. **PK**

F. SACKING

1. If the ball carrier in the lineout has both feet on the ground, an opposition player may pull the ball carrier to the ground.
2. If they attempt this after a maul is formed it should be judged as collapsing the maul and be penalized. **PK**

G. KNOCK-ON OR THROW FORWARD THAT GOES INTO TOUCH

1. If the ball is knocked-on or thrown forward into touch, the non-offending team may choose the lineout (where it crossed the touch line) or a scrum (where the throw-forward/knock-on occurred). If they take a quick throw-in, they have made their choice. NOTE This change is not applicable to a knock-on or throw-forward that goes into touch-in-goal (or across the dead ball line).

H. PENALTY KICK OR FREE KICK AWARDED AT A LINEOUT

1. If a team is awarded a penalty/free kick at a lineout, they may choose to have a lineout instead of the kick. They may also choose a scrum.

I. GENERAL

1. **Playing the opponent in the air, obstructing, barging, or interfering with the jumper's support players should be immediately penalized.**
PK and admonishment

REFEREE NOTES

Always be aware of a quick throw-in - know your law. Communicate and manage early what is expected at the lineout - start at the front: numbers, gap, non-throwing hooker in position, backlines 10m, no early jumping, receiver 2m from the lineout, immediate formation with no delay, no dummy throw - keep the player that is throwing ball in, in your vision. There is no need to continuously talk to prevent disorder at the lineout as it can become white noise - players want to play rugby, not listen to the referee talk all day. Keep the backlines and players in the lineout onside for the duration of the lineout.

MAUL

A. PULLING THE MAUL DOWN / COLLAPSED MAUL

1. Pulling down the maul and/or collapsing the maul is NOT allowed. Referees should increase their work-rate and communication at driving mauls to prevent players from collapsing the maul. **PK**

B. FORMING/JOINING/LEAVING/ENDING THE MAUL

1. When forming the maul players may not be in front of a player of their team that is in possession of the ball. This is obstruction. **PK**
2. The ball in a maul may be moved backwards hand-to-hand. A player is not allowed to move/slide to the back of the maul when that player is in possession of the ball. **PK**
3. A maul is not over when all the defenders leave the maul voluntarily. Defenders who then join the maul, should do so from the last line of feet.
4. If defenders leave the maul involuntarily or are unable to remain bound, and there are no more defenders attached to the maul, the maul is over and the team in possession should not continue to move forward with their players bound around the ball, as this may constitute obstruction. Referees are to communicate that the maul is over.

NOTE 1: If the team in possession does not comply with the referee's request that the maul is over they should be penalized. **PK**

NOTE 2: If a maul is moving towards the goal line, and the defenders drop off the maul, prior to the maul reaching the goal line, and the maul then immediately enters the in-goal area due to the momentum gained from the drive and the attacking team grounds the ball, award the try.

5. If a maul becomes stationary OR is moving parallel to the goal lines OR is moving backwards, referees will instruct players to "USE IT ONCE", and give that team ample opportunity to comply within Law. If the maul again becomes stationary, the referee will instruct the team in possession to "USE IT".
6. If the defenders collapse a static maul to force the turnover scrum decision they should be penalized. **PK**

7. Players are not allowed to dangerously charge into the maul by not binding correctly upon contact. **PK and admonishment**

REFEREE NOTES

Work both sides of the maul to prevent players joining from the side and collapsing the maul.

ADVANTAGE

A. COMMUNICATION & SIGNALS

1. Referees should only play advantage when there is the possibility that advantage may accrue.
2. When an infringement occurs, referees will indicate that they have seen it, and verbalize, i.e. "Knock-on + team color". Then they will either blow the whistle for the infringement, or play advantage, signal and verbalize: **"Scrum Advantage + team color"; OR "Penalty Advantage + team color"**
The team mentioned is the team you are playing advantage for. It is not required to indicate a secondary signal or a Penalty Kick signal.
3. When advantage is gained, the referee will call "Advantage Over" - there is no signal for advantage over. Advantage over can only be called during play and not after the ball is dead.

B. NO ADVANTAGE

1. If players are lifted off their feet at a scrum, an immediate whistle is required to prevent injury, whether for penalty or reset.
2. If a player deliberately kills the ball on the ground, no advantage should be applied, unless a clear scoring opportunity or an obvious advantage is likely.
3. **If a scrum collapses the referee should immediately blow the whistle to prevent further pushing or injury** - unless players are not endangered, then the referee may play on by instructing the team to "use it" and may play advantage if appropriate.

REFEREE NOTES

When you have blown for an infringement, always indicate the primary signal first, then secondary.

GENERAL PLAY

A. OFFSIDE AT KICKS

1. Players in front of the kicker from their team are to remain stationary until they are put onside, or must retreat toward their goal line if they are within ten meters between where the ball lands and their goal line. Referees are responsible to create space and should place little value to the materiality of offside at kicks and demand higher compliance. **PK or SCRUM OPTION**

2. No attempt to retreat must be penalized. Offside players advancing at a kick ahead should be instructed “STOP + COLOR (+ NUMBER, if possible)”. Players who continue to move forward must be penalized. **PK or SCRUM OPTION**
3. Players that are offside but not within 10m of where the ball lands may move laterally across the field.
4. Players that are offside when a kick goes into touch continue to be offside and must not advance if a quick throw-in is an option UNLESS they are put onside by players of their own team. Manage rather than over-reacting.

PK or SCRUM OPTION

FOUL PLAY

FOUL PLAY IS NOT WITHIN THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME AND HAS NO PLACE IN RUGBY. IT SHOULD NOT BE TOLERATED.

A. TACKLING

The following are not acceptable practices:

1. Leading with the shoulder (making deliberate contact with the shoulder first), and then wrapping with the arm(s) or swinging the arm(s) into contact.
PK and admonishment and/or suspension
2. Aiming a shoulder first, no-wrap tackle at the knees (e.g. football style). **PK and suspension**
3. Failing to wrap while tackling. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**
4. Spear tackle or tip tackle. Lifting a player from the ground, turning the body horizontal or beyond, and either driving the player into the ground or dropping the player without regard for the player’s safety. **PK and Red Card.**
 - When a player is lifted, there is an obligation on the tackler to get the player to the ground safely.
 - If the tackler lowers the player such that the lower body contacts the ground first there is no offense.
 - If the tackler attempts to lower the player safely, but is unsuccessful.
PK and admonishment and/or suspension
5. Reckless Tackle: A player is deemed to have made reckless contact during a tackle or attempted tackle or during other phases of the game if in making contact, the player knew or should have known that there was a risk of making contact with the head of an opponent, but did so anyway. This sanction applies even if the tackle starts below the line of the shoulders. This type of contact also applies to grabbing and rolling or twisting around the

head/neck area even if the contact starts below the line of the shoulders.

PK & Yellow card / PK & Red card

GUIDANCE: It is a deliberate action from tackler. The onus is on the tackler to ensure the tackle is safe with regards to above the shoulder and contact in the head and neck area. It will be up to the referee to differentiate the severity of the tackle and what sanction is appropriate – a good process would be to combine the level of recklessness with the outcome and affect on the tackled player.

6. **Accidental Tackle:** When making contact with another player during a tackle or attempted tackle or during other phases of the game, if a player makes accidental contact with an opponent’s head, either directly or where the contact starts below the line of the shoulders, the player may still be sanctioned. This includes situations where the ball-carrier slips into the tackle.

PK

GUIDANCE: It is an accidental action from tackler. Contact above the shoulder in the head and neck area was not due to a deliberate or reckless action from the tackler.

7. Tackling a player in the air, should be dealt with severely. Merely having your “eyes on the ball” is not sufficient.
 - If a player’s timing is sufficient to have a clear opportunity to contest for the ball, play on.
 - If a player’s timing is not sufficient to have a clear opportunity to contest for the ball and makes contact with a player in the air, it is illegal.
 - If a player takes deliberate action that interferes with a player in the air, it is illegal.

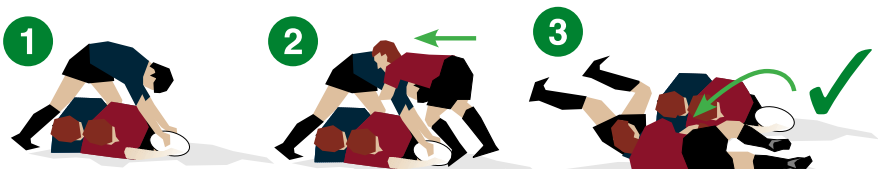
If the player’s feet makes contact with the ground first: PK

If the player lands on their lower back area or side: PK and suspension

If the receiver lands on their upper back/head/neck PK and Red Card

8. At a tackle, if a player is on their feet with their hands on the ball, an opposition player (if they enter through the gate) may legally bind onto them and roll the player to expose the ball and/or tackle the player. They may not lift the player off the ground and they may not grab the player above the shoulders and/or around the neck.

PK and admonishment and/or suspension



9. **Tackling above the armpits.**

PK and admonishment and/or suspension

10. **Fending off or pushing a player in the face.**

PK and admonishment and/or suspension

B. FEET ON BODIES

1. Players may not stamp, trample, or kick opponents.

PK and admonishment and/or suspension/RED CARD

C. GENERAL

1. Deliberate offenses should result in a suspension. This can be a first offense without prior warning, a player that re-offends or a team that re-offends. **PK and suspension**
2. A player injured by foul play may be replaced by a player who was previously substituted.
3. Repeated offenses can be team and/or individual, and should be addressed sooner rather than later. Repeat infringement patterns, i.e. offenses close to the goal line, AND repeated infringements by an individual player are both without time limit. Repeat team infringements in particular aspects (e.g. tackle), may warrant another admonishment rather than moving up to a suspension if sufficient time has passed without infringement.
PK and admonishment and/or suspension
4. 'Cheap shots'/off the ball offenses are unacceptable and should result in a suspension. **PK and suspension**
5. Holding/obstructing players off the ball.
PK and admonishment and/or suspension
6. Perpetrators and retaliators are responsible and are to be dealt with - the last offence penalized will be the restart of play.
PK and admonishment and/or suspension
7. Players disputing the referees decision should not be tolerated. Awarding a PK or advancing an already awarded PK/FK 10m is appropriate.
PK and admonishment
8. Players that deliberately prevent a quick tap penalty/free kick from being taken, especially close to their goal line, should be considered deliberate and penalized. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**

RESTARTS & OPEN PLAY

1. Players are expected to remain behind the ball at all kick-offs and drop-outs (except quick drop-outs as the Law allows). Referees are to manage this phase, however, players are aware that they need to comply.
2. Players who obstruct the opposition from getting to the ball carrier or the receiver should be penalized. **PK**
3. Players who bind onto their own player (that has possession of the ball), and so position themselves between their player and the opposition, are obstructing and should be penalized. **PK**

REFEREE NOTES

At all restarts, signal with your arm, and communicate verbally to players to remain behind the ball. Be reasonable, and manage these phases.

BALL OUT

A. RUCK

1. The ball is out when it is totally exposed and clear of bodies (of players in the ruck).
2. While the competition for the ball in a ruck is ongoing, hands by players in the ruck, are NOT allowed. **PK**
3. Once the ball has been clearly won, pushing the ball back by using the hand, by a player of the team that have won possession of the ball is permissible,
4. Digging for the ball, by the player of the team who has won possession of the ball, who is in the scrumhalf position and not part of the ruck, is permissible and the BALL IS NOT OUT.
5. If a player in the scrum half position is not retrieving (digging for) the ball, but holding the ball, with one or two hands, the BALL IS NOT OUT, picking up the ball is OUT.
6. Players in the ruck may under no circumstance slap the ball out of the scrumhalf's hands or interfere with the scrumhalf. **PK**

B. MAUL

1. Players in the maul may under no circumstance slap the ball out of the scrumhalf's hands or interfere with the scrumhalf. **PK**

C. SCRUM

1. The ball is out when it is totally exposed and clear of bodies (of players in the scrum).
2. If the hindmost player detaches from the scrum (both shoulders) with the ball at the feet, and attempts to pick up the ball, the BALL IS OUT.

REFEREE NOTES

When in doubt if the ball is out, then it is not out.

KICK AT GOAL

1. When a try is scored, the scoring team has one and a half minutes (90 seconds) FROM THE TIME THE TRY IS SCORED to take the conversion kick.
2. If a player indicates a kick at goal at a penalty kick, they have one minute (60 seconds) to take the kick from when the kicking tee/sand arrives or when the player makes a mark on the ground.

NOTE: On both occasions, it is playing time, so if there is an injured player who has to be treated or removed before the kick, time should be stopped.

PENALTY TRY

1. A penalty try should be accompanied by either a severe admonishment, a yellow card or a red card to the offender. A penalty try should only be awarded if foul play by a defender prevents a try from being scored or prevents a try from being scored in a better position.
2. If the offense that prevented the try is a deliberate offense, a yellow card should be issued to the offender.

PENALTY KICK & FREE KICK

1. Must be taken with a clear kick. The kicker must kick the ball a visible distance. If the kicker is holding the ball, it must clearly leave the hands. If the ball is on the ground, it must clearly leave the mark. Dropping the ball onto the foot does not constitute a correctly taken Penalty or free kick.

2017 SEVENS

GAME MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

SEVENS LAW VARIATIONS OVERVIEW

A. NUMBER OF PLAYERS, SUBSTITUTIONS AND TEMPORARY SUSPENSIONS

1. Each team must have no more than seven players on the playing area.
2. Each team can nominate and use 5 substitutes/replacements - each team can make 5 substitutions (movements), and a player may return, as long as you don't exceed 5 movements.
3. Temporary suspension is 2 minutes.

B. TIME

1. Matches are 7 minutes each half, and Finals may be 10 minutes each half and no longer than 20 minutes total. Half time is 2 minutes and teams change ends.
2. Extra time: When there is a drawn match and extra time is required, after a break of one minute the extra time is played in periods of five minutes. After each period, the teams change ends without an interval. The team that scores first in extra time is declared the winner.

C. CONVERSION KICKS

1. The conversion must be a drop kick, and taken within 30 seconds from when the try is scored otherwise it should be disallowed.
2. The opposition players must assemble near their 10m line and not behind the goal line. They should not be close to the kicker or interfere with the kicker.

D. KICK OFFS AND RESTARTS

1. All players of the team that is kicking off have to be behind the kicker.
FK in the centre the halfway line
2. After a score, the team that scored kicks off with a drop kick.
3. If the ball does not travel 10m (and is not played by an opponent), OR is kicked directly into touch, OR is kicked into in-goal where it is made dead or has crossed the dead ball line or touch-in-goal line a free kick is awarded.
FK in the centre the halfway line
4. If a defender opts to ground the ball or make it dead, they must do so without delay. Any other action with the ball by a defending player means the player has elected to play on.

5. E. SCRUM

1. A scrum is formed by 3 players from each team
2. Kicking-out: A front-row player must not intentionally kick the ball out of the tunnel or out of the scrum in the direction of the opponent's goal line. **PK**

F. PENALTY KICKS AND FREE KICKS

1. Any player may take a penalty/free kick but may not take a place kick.
2. If a player's intention is to take a penalty kick at goal (drop kick) they have 30 seconds to take the kick or a scrum is awarded to the opposition team.

THE BREAKDOWN

A. THE TACKLE

The tackle is one of the most important aspects of Sevens. When refereed accurately it generates quick ball and elevates the game. Get to the tackle as quickly as possible. Know where the ball is at all times - create a presence at the breakdown. Set your standard from the outset and maintain consistency to enable quick ball availability. It is important to maintain a high work rate throughout the match. To play penalty advantage for an infringement at the tackle, the ball must be immediately available OR an immediate score probable. Often in Sevens there are tackles only that do not develop into rucks. The referee may communicate "Tackle Only" if no ruck has formed.

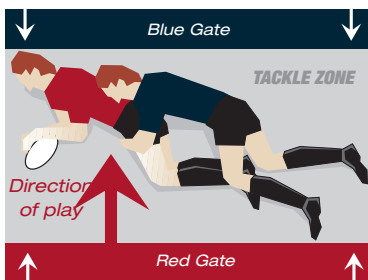
1. Tacklers have to release the tackled player immediately, and move/roll away or get to their feet. **PK**
2. Tackled player must exercise their options immediately. **PK**
3. Players that slow down ball availability should be penalized immediately. **PK**
4. Players that are isolated may attempt to "buy time" for their support and use the squeeze ball and keep the ball under their bodies, or they add an extra roll while holding onto the ball. Referee should be alert to these actions and penalize when the opposition is denied access to the ball. **PK**

B. TACKLER ASSIST

1. Defending players that remain on their feet, but assist in bringing the ball carrier to the ground (Tackler Assist), must release the tackled player and the ball, and may only then play the ball from their side and through the gate. These players, even if they remain on their feet, must clearly release the tackled player before they may attempt to play the ball.

C. THE GATE

1. All arriving players must enter the tackle zone through their gate. No part of a player's body (including the arms), may enter the tackle through any other area. **PK**



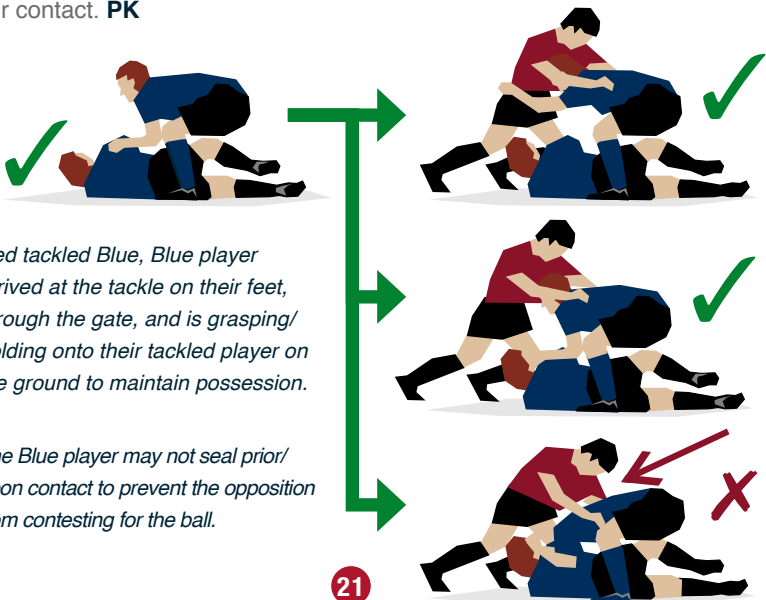
Overhead view, Blue tackled Red. Players are only allowed entry through their gate.

D. ARRIVING PLAYERS

1. Players who enter the tackle area or zone must stay on their feet. **PK**
2. At a tackle, arriving players are allowed to play the ball with their hands after an opposition player binds onto them, if they:
 - a. Arrive at the tackle legally,
 - b. Remain on their feet, and
 - c. Have possession of the ball prior to the contact occurring (i.e. was grasping/holding the ball - this should be a positive action to gain possession of the ball, not merely putting one's hands/arms on/over the ball).

NOTE: Thus, a ruck has not yet formed.

3. At a tackle, arriving players that put themselves over the ball with their weight supported by their hands, and then sweep their arms back to play the ball, should be penalized for going to ground. **PK**
4. Players may grasp or hold onto their tackled player who is on the ground, as long as they have their weight firmly on their feet and are not using the player on the ground to support their weight. **PK**
5. If the player grasps onto their teammate, the tackled player is still required to place the ball away from their body to ensure its availability. **PK**
6. Players that have grasped/are holding onto their player on the ground may not lower their shoulders below their hips or lean with their weight on their player that is on the ground to prevent the contest when an opponent makes contact with them. They may continue to hold onto their player on the ground after contact. **PK**



Red tackled Blue, Blue player arrived at the tackle on their feet, through the gate, and is grasping/holding onto their tackled player on the ground to maintain possession.

The Blue player may not seal prior/upon contact to prevent the opposition from contesting for the ball.

7. Players who are SEALING, secure the ball without their weight fully on their feet (i.e. leaning on the tackler/tackled player on the ground) OR who go to ground head first, or dive over players on the ground, OR dive over players on the ground with the ball between them should not be tolerated and penalized as they are preventing a contest. **PK**

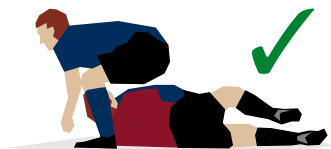


Blue tackled Red, Red player has secured possession by SEALING. This is NOT allowed.

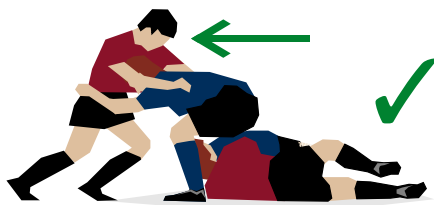
8. Players may position themselves at the tackle to prepare for contact with opposition players, however they have to be near/over the ball. They may not be too far ahead of the ball, i.e. “flooding” and taking away space in front of the ball. **PK**



Being too far ahead of the ball, ‘flooding’, and taking away space in front of the ball.

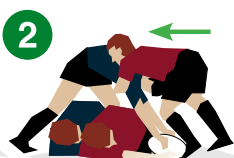
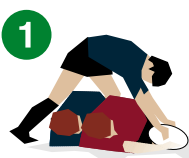


Red tackled Blue, Blue player arrived at the tackle on their feet, through the gate, is NOT binding on players on the ground, remaining on their feet and preparing for contact at the tackle area.



Red tackled Blue, both players that arrived at the tackle are on their feet, arrived through the gate, and are contesting for possession. A ruck has formed.

9. Players that use the saddle roll, must roll the player free and clear of the ball. If the player is rolled or pulled onto the ball, the player who attempted/executed the roll should be penalized. **PK**



E. THE RUCK

1. The referee should use the term “Ruck” to indicate a ruck has formed.
2. Once a ruck is formed, it continues even if all defenders leave or fall to ground, as long as the ball is still contained within the ruck.
3. Referees are to immediately manage the offside line and strictly apply the offside law to the fringes and the backlines. Defenders are to remain behind the offside line until the ball is out. **PK**
4. Players may contest the ruck by pushing on opponents but may not pull an opponent out the ruck or to the ground. **PK**
5. Players that join the ruck have to do so from the hindmost foot of a team mate and are not allowed to charge into the ruck without binding legally onto players in the ruck. **PK**

MAUL

A maul is a defensive benefit in Sevens as often the ball is not available and the defensive team are awarded a turnover scrum. Referees should immediately announce “Maul” when a maul has formed.

A. MANAGING THE MAUL

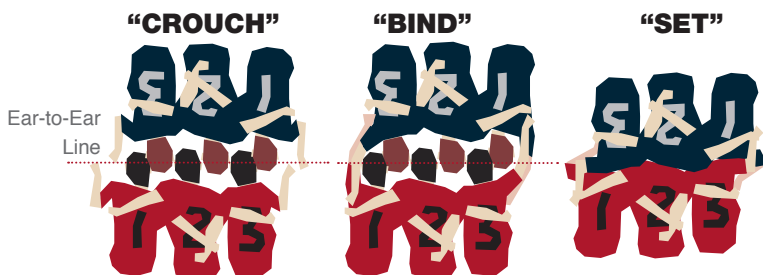
1. If a maul becomes stationary OR is moving parallel to the goal lines OR is moving backwards, referees will instruct players to “USE IT ONCE”, and give that team ample opportunity to comply within Law. If the maul again becomes stationary, the referee will instruct the team in possession to “USE IT”. If the ball does not become available the referee will award a turnover scrum.
2. The referee should not allow prolonged wrestling for the ball at a maul if it is clear that the ball will not emerge.
3. Pulling down the maul and/or collapsing the maul is NOT allowed by either team as often the defensive team may collapse the maul to win turnover possession. **PK**
4. Defensive players should enter from the last foot on their side. Entering around the side of a maul to attempt to hold up the ball carrier to gain a turnover should be penalized. **PK**

SCRUM

The object is to get the ball into play as quickly as possible. Set your standards early, minimize resets, be demanding and precise. If the team that puts the ball in gets clean ball, play on, even if you notice an issue at the scrum that has no immediate material affect. Ensure to address the issue at the following scrum.

A. ENGAGEMENT

1. The hooker has to bind on both their props and the props have to bind on their hooker. **PK**
2. Engagement process should be a consistent cadence, "Crouch, Bind, Set".
3. Props have to bind on their opponents back or side before the referee calls "Set".
4. Props must not bind on the opponent's arm, hip or leg. **PK**
5. Scrum stability is essential. All players are required to ensure the scrum is stable and stationary before the put in. **FK**



B. PUT-IN

1. Promote a fair contest by communicating expectations to the scrum half, and ensure they are square on the scrum and in the centre. The put-in must be straight and credible along the center line of the front rows. **FK**

C. SCRUMHALVES

1. The non-winning scrumhalf must maintain both feet behind the ball or they could move to a position behind the last line of feet of their scrum after the throw-in. **PK**
2. Players must not fall on or over the ball as it is coming out of the scrum. **PK**

D. DURING THE SCRUM

1. Kicking Out:
 - a. A front row player must not intentionally kick the ball out of the tunnel in the direction from which it was thrown in. **FK**
 - b. If the ball is kicked out unintentionally, the same team must throw it in again.
 - c. If the ball is repeatedly kicked out, the referee must treat this as intentional and penalise the offender. **FK**
 - d. A front row player must not intentionally kick the ball out of the scrum in the direction of the opponent's goal line. **PK**

2. Players may not unbind and attempt to leave the scrum early. **PK**
3. Whip-wheel (when the scrum turns/spins on its axis) is not allowed. Before a scrum can be wheeled legally there must be a clear forward movement by the combined scrum of the team that is driving their opponents backwards. **PK**
4. Props may not pull their opponents. **PK**

E. OFFSIDE AT THE SCRUM

1. Players who are not in the scrum and who are not the team's scrum half, are offside if they remain in front of their offside line or overstep the offside line which is a line parallel to the goal lines and 5 metres behind the hindmost player of each team in a scrum. **PK**

LINEOUT

A. FORMATION

1. Each team has to have a minimum of 2 players in the lineout.
2. The defending team must have a player in the 5m area. This player may not support a jumper in the lineout, and must be 2m from the line-of-touch and 2m from the five-meter line until the lineout commences. **FK**
3. If a team elects to have a player in the receiver (scrumhalf) position, the receiver must be 2m from the lineout at the moment of the throw. If this player decides to move into the lineout prior to the throw they have to be replaced by another player from the lineout before the ball is thrown in. **FK**

B. QUICK THROW-IN

1. Requirements are to use the ball that went into touch, the throw must travel 5m, taken from between the line of touch and the player's goal line and the ball must only have been touched by the throwing player since it went into touch.
2. Referees are to be more aware of quick throw-ins, within law, and that the throw does not have to be straight, but may not be forward, and has to travel 5m. The quick throw-in can be taken between the line-of-touch and the player's goal line.
 - a. Ball not thrown 5m = opponents' option scrum or lineout
 - b. Ball prevented from traveling 5m or played before going 5m. **FK**
3. Players who hold onto the ball, or throw the ball away, when in touch, to prevent a quick throw-in should be penalized, on the line of touch, 15m line. This should not be tolerated. **PK and suspension**
4. Players may throw the ball to themselves as long as they meet the requirements.

C. OFFENSES TO BE AWARE OF

1. Early jumping, Closing the gap. **FK**
2. Obstructing jumpers. **PK**
3. Deliberately knocking the ball on. **PK**

D. OFFSIDE AT LINEOUT

1. Ensure backlines are 10m from the line of touch until the lineout is over. **PK**
2. Players in the lineout are not allowed to leave the lineout until it is over, i.e. move beyond the 15m line. **PK**

ADVANTAGE

On most occasions advantage is shorter in Sevens. Recognize that non-offending teams may move backwards with the ball to reset themselves before attacking. Often in Sevens, a penalty kick at the spot of infringement is more advantageous than slow advantage. Only play advantage when it is likely that advantage may accrue.

A. SCRUM ADVANTAGE

1. Possession not under pressure with options is considered advantage gained regardless of position on the field.

B. PENALTY ADVANTAGE

1. Possession not under pressure where the gain line is reached is considered advantage gained.

GENERAL PLAY

A. OFFSIDE AT KICKS

1. Players in front of the kicker from their team are to remain stationary until they are put outside, or must retreat toward their goal line if they are within ten meters between where the ball lands and their goal line. Referees are responsible to create space and should place little value to the materiality of offside at kicks and demand higher compliance. **PK or SCRUM OPTION**
2. No attempt to retreat must be penalized. Offside players advancing at a kick ahead should be instructed "STOP + COLOR (+ NUMBER, if possible)". Players who continue to move forward must be penalized. **PK or SCRUM OPTION**
3. Players that are offside but not within 10m of where the ball lands may move laterally across the field.

4. Players that are offside when a kick goes into touch continue to be offside and must not advance if a quick throw-in is an option UNLESS they are put onside by players of their own team. Manage rather than over-reacting. **PK or SCRUM OPTION**

FOUL PLAY

FOUL PLAY IS NOT WITHIN THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME AND HAS NO PLACE IN RUGBY. IT SHOULD NOT BE TOLERATED.

A. TACKLING

The following are not acceptable practices:

1. Leading with the shoulder (making deliberate contact with the shoulder first), and then wrapping with the arm(s) or swinging the arm(s) into contact.
PK and admonishment and/or suspension
2. Aiming a shoulder first, no-wrap tackle at the knees (e.g. football style). **PK and suspension**
3. Failing to wrap while tackling. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**
4. Spear tackle or tip tackle. Lifting a player from the ground, turning the body horizontal or beyond, and either driving the player into the ground or dropping the player without regard for the player's safety. **PK and Red Card.**

- When a player is lifted, there is an obligation on the tackler to get the player to the ground safely.
- If the tackler lowers the player such that the lower body contacts the ground first there is no offense.
- If the tackler attempts to lower the player safely, but is unsuccessful,

PK and admonishment and/or suspension

5. **Reckless Tackle:** A player is deemed to have made reckless contact during a tackle or attempted tackle or during other phases of the game if in making contact, the player knew or should have known that there was a risk of making contact with the head of an opponent, but did so anyway. This sanction applies even if the tackle starts below the line of the shoulders. This type of contact also applies to grabbing and rolling or twisting around the head/neck area even if the contact starts below the line of the shoulders.

PK & Yellow card / PK & Red card

GUIDANCE: It is a deliberate action from tackler. The onus is on the tackler to ensure the tackle is safe with regards to above the shoulder and contact in the head and neck area. It will be up to the referee to differentiate the severity of the tackle and what sanction is appropriate – a good process would be to combine the level of recklessness with the outcome and affect on the tackled player.

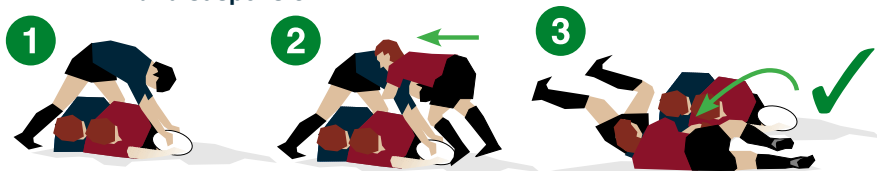
6. **Accidental Tackle:** When making contact with another player during a tackle or attempted tackle or during other phases of the game, if a player makes accidental contact with an opponent's head, either directly or where the contact starts below the line of the shoulders, the player may still be sanctioned. This includes situations where the ball-carrier slips into the tackle.

PK

GUIDANCE: It is an accidental action from tackler. Contact above the shoulder in the head and neck area was not due to a deliberate or reckless action from the tackler.

7. Tackling a player in the air, whether intentional or not should be dealt with severely. Merely having your “eyes on the ball” is not sufficient.
- At a kick ahead where players may jump to catch the ball, the chasing player is responsible for the safety of the receiving player, as in a tackle.
- PK and admonishment and/or suspension**
- If both players jump to the same height with a clear opportunity of playing the ball, play on.
 - If the chasing player jumps in a clear attempt to play the ball and jumps into a stationary player, play on.
8. At a tackle, if a player is on their feet with their hands on the ball, an opposition player (if they enter through the gate) may legally bind onto them and saddle roll the player to expose the ball and/or tackle the player.
- They may not lift the player off of the ground and they may not grab the player above the shoulders and/or around the neck.

PK and suspension



B. FEET ON BODIES

1. Players may not stamp, trample, or kick opponents.

PK and admonishment and/or suspension/RED CARD

C. GENERAL

1. Deliberate offenses should result in a suspension. This can be a first offense without prior warning, or a player that re-offends or a team that re-offends. **PK and suspension**

2. Repeated offenses can be team and/or individual, and should be addressed sooner rather than later. Repeat infringement patterns, i.e. offenses close to the goal line, AND repeated infringements by an individual player are both without time limit. Repeat team infringements in particular aspects (e.g. tackle), may warrant another admonishment rather than moving up to a suspension if sufficient time has passed without infringement.
PK and admonishment and/or suspension
3. 'Cheap shots' and off the ball offenses are unacceptable and should result in a suspension. **PK and suspension**
4. Holding/obstructing players off the ball.
PK and admonishment and/or suspension
5. Perpetrators and retaliators are responsible and are to be dealt with - the last offence penalized will be the restart of play.
PK and admonishment and/or suspension
6. Players disputing the referees decision should not be tolerated. Awarding a PK or advancing an already awarded PK/FK 10m is appropriate.
PK and admonishment and/or suspension
7. Players that deliberately prevent a quick tap penalty/free kick from being taken, should be considered deliberate and penalized. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**
8. Players that deliberately throw/kick the ball away to prevent the opposition from playing the ball, after a stoppage or a penalty/free kick has been awarded against them.
PK and admonishment and/or suspension

PENALTY KICK & FREE KICK

1. Must be taken with a clear kick. The kicker must kick the ball a visible distance. If the kicker is holding the ball, it must clearly leave the hands. If the ball is on the ground, it must clearly leave the mark. Dropping the ball onto the foot does not constitute a correctly taken Penalty or free kick.



USA RUGBY REFEREES HIGH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT GROUP

RICHARD EVERY
HIGH PERFORMANCE REFEREE MANAGER

773-895-6013
revery@usarugby.org

MARC NELSON
REFEREE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

303-519-2062
mnelson@usarugby.org

ED TODD
CONSULTANT & DISCIPLINARY

etodd@usarugby.org

AMANDA COX
ADMINISTRATOR

amandacox@usarugby.org

RIAAN VAN GREUNING
APPOINTMENTS

571-278-5586
rvgreuning@usarugby.org

SELECTORS

MARC NELSON

CHAIR

mnelson@usarugby.org

DAVEY ARDREY

kiwiconstruction@msn.com

AMANDA COX

amandacox@usarugby.org

PETER WATSON

peter.watson@mailgw.com

RIAAN VAN GREUNING

rvgreuning@usarugby.org

REFEREE & LAWS COMMITTEE

JOHN CLAVIN

CHAIR

425-802-0248

jclavin@live.com

PETER WATSON

LAWS

781-405-6932

peter.watson@mailgw.com

RIAAN VAN GREUNING

APPOINTMENTS

571-278-5586

rvgreuning@usarugby.org

CALUM PENDER

EVALUATIONS

417-766-9795

cpender@usarugby.org

STEVE PARRILL

TRAINING

985-974-1134

sparrill@usarugby.org

