



GAME MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

FOR COMMUNITY LEVEL RUGBY

IN AUSTRALIA

2015

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GAME MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES 2015

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 2015.

Comments in red indicate either a Law change or an area of emphasis for 2015.

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.

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 ARU SmartRugby program. The scrum engagement sequence is the same for all players and referees 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. 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 sequence

- **CROUCH:** Front rowers should adopt a crouch position with their head and shoulders at or above the level of the hips, feet square, and knees bent sufficiently to make a simple forward movement into engagement. Players should keep their head straight, in order to maintain the normal and safe alignment of the cervical spine.
- Once all front-rowers are crouched, there **must** be a non-verbal pause, during which time the referee should be checking that:
 - the distance between opposing front rows should be close enough that players' heads are interlinked (approximately ear to ear, but there must be a clear gap until 'set')
 - the height of the two packs is the same
 - all players are balanced, and are set up straight (not at an angle)
- **BIND:** The bind call requires each prop to bind on the side or back of their opposing prop (not on the arm or shoulder). Props should grab onto the jersey, not just rest their hand in place.
- Once all front-rowers are bound, there **must** be a non-verbal pause, during which time the referee should check that:
 - there still remains a clear gap, i.e. there is no pre-engagement (FK)
 - all players are balanced and stationary
- **SET:** On the SET call, and not before, the front rows should engage the opposition firmly with a short horizontal movement and the props should draw with their outside binds. In this position, all players must be able to maintain body shape and pressure on the opposition scrum.

Feed by scrum-half

- Referees will indicate to the scrum-half when to feed the ball in all games U10+ (contested scrums).
- The scrum must be stationary and stable before the feed - no hit and chase off the mark allowed (FK).
- The referee should allow a brief time for the front rows to 'settle' as needed. A call of "steady" may, on occasion, assist in steadying the scrum.
- Only when the scrum is steady, will the referee give a non-verbal indication to the scrum-half, and the ball should then be fed without delay.
- The indication to feed **must** be non-verbal.
- If the referee is on the opposite side to scrum-half, the referee should give a visual signal. If the referee is on same side as scrum-half, tap the shoulder, or back, or side of the scrum-half.

Scrum infringements

- Zero tolerance applies on early engagements (FK). Referees should escalate quickly to penalties if the team repeats this tactic (2xFK then PK, team specific)
- Double crutch binding by locks, and crutch binding on props by flankers is illegal (PK).
- No.8 must be bound to the shoulder on "Bind" and not 'slingshot' the scrum engagement (PK).
- Front rowers must engage with their shoulders no lower than hips and hit straight (PK).
- Flankers must remain bound to locks and must not ride up onto their props (PK).

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 SmartRugby documentation for clarification.
- A legal wheel goes forward and through the opposition scrum. A wheel that goes back and around at pace is illegal and should be penalised. This is known as a 'whip wheel' and will usually involve a tight head pulling back (PK).
- **No wheeling by a team until the LH and TH have both shown clear intent to move forward.**

TACKLE

TACKLE PRIORITIES:

1. **Tackler** – Maintain tough standards
2. **Assist Tackler** – Emphasise the need for a clear release, ie. 'daylight made obvious'
3. **Sealing Off** – Arriving players must demonstrate positive intent to stay on their feet

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

Tackler

- A tackler is defined as a player who makes a tackle and in the action of making that tackle goes to ground. 'Going to ground' means a minimum of one knee on the ground.
- Referees must ensure the tackler first **clearly** releases the tackled player and then either rolls away or gets to his feet **before** attempting to play the ball. The tackler must not hold onto the tackled player as he gets to his feet.
- **When off feet on the attacking side of the ball, the tackler should roll sideways, and not toward the #9 wherever possible.**
- If the tackler is 'caught' he must show clear intention to open up such that he is lying flat to the ground, and not interfere with either team's drive-out of opponents or ball distribution.
- Referees should be strict on the tackler and unplayables should be rare. Zero tolerance on tacklers who slow up the ball and stop the attacking team gaining quick possession.
- A tackler who regains his feet may play the ball from any direction at the tackle and does not need to worry about a gate until a ruck is formed.

Players who remain standing in a tackle (Assist Tackler)

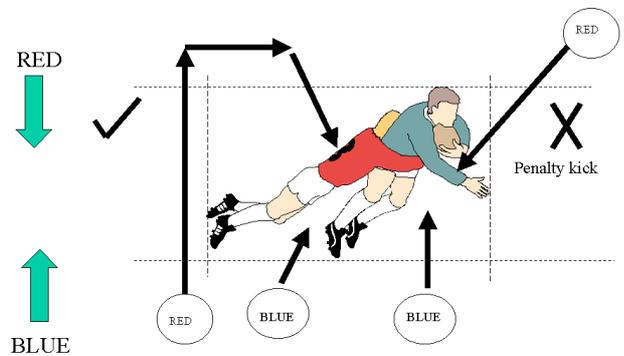
- Players who make a tackle or assist in making a tackle but remain on their feet and do not go to ground are **not "tacklers" under Law**.
- **Such a player must clearly release the tackled player and ball before going back to play the ball. This standing and/or assist tackler must show clear release, ie. 'daylight made obvious'.**
- Such a player may only play the ball through their gate.

Tackled Player

- The tackled player must not position their body (eg. 'squeeze ball') to delay the release of the ball when isolated or under pressure. The ball must be available immediately for play (PK). (Note: this technique is illegal entirely in Pathway U6-U12).

Arriving Players

- Players who play the ball after a tackle must do so from the direction of their own goal line and directly behind the tackled player or tackler nearest to their goal line (ie. 'through the gate').
- Both defensive *and attacking* players must enter 'through the gate' at the tackle.
- Arriving players must demonstrate positive intent to stay on their feet.
- Attacking players must arrive supporting their own body weight and not deliberately go to ground to seal possession or deny a contest.
- A player who is supporting the ball carrier, who then latches on and goes to ground with the ball carrier in a tackle (sometimes called a 'hammer') must then roll away, or get to his feet and be supporting his weight on his feet. He cannot stay on top of the ball to deny a contest for possession.
- The following analogies apply to arriving players:
 - 'Plane taking off' is acceptable.
 - 'Plane landing' is not acceptable.



Post-Tackle

- 'Driving out' at the tackle must be near the ball – ie. 1 metre width either side of the ball. Players must not interfere with players on the fringes or past the ball who are not involved in the tackle/ruck.
- Any player on their feet who has their hands on the ball immediately after a tackle and before a ruck forms is allowed to keep contesting for the ball even if a ruck forms around them. No other arriving player at this point may play the ball with their hands.
- These poaching players have one shot at the ball. If such a player is driven off the ball by the opposition then his opportunity to play the ball with his hands has ceased.

RUCK

Offside (pillars)

- Zero tolerance on players 1 or 2 wide of the ruck who are in front of their offside line.
- Such players may be managed back onside on occasions, but referees should **not** be continually verbally managing them. Players in teams that continue to stand offside should be penalised.

"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.

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 **cannot be touched until the ball is clearly out of the ruck**. The benefit of any doubt must go to the scrum-half.
- 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.
- Zero tolerance on defending players at the ruck who target the scrum-half before he has the ball, even if the ball is out of the ruck. Any onside player must play the ball and not the man.

Safety

- Players must not charge into the side of rucks and mauls without binding (shoulder charge).
- Feet on bodies in a vertical motion (stamping) is not acceptable and should be dealt with severely.

MAUL

Obstruction

- 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 the leading player and who engage the opposition are liable to penalty for obstruction (commonly referred to as 'Truck and Trailer').

Other Maul Issues

- Players who join the maul legally and are either caught up in the maul or have remained bound are legally entitled to be in the maul and contest the ball carrier. The referee should **not** call out such players even though they may appear to be on the 'wrong' side.
- **Players bound on the side of the maul may not 'slide' forward or 'swim' around the maul. These players are not remaining bound and are not caught up in the maul, and are therefore offside.**
- If the defending players choose to unbind and leave the maul, it is still a maul and the maul Laws still apply, i.e. the team in possession may continue to drive forward, it cannot be collapsed and players must join from their side of the maul.

Unplayable and Collapsed Mauls

- A maul moving sideways is considered stationary.
- If the ball becomes unplayable at a maul, the referee orders a scrum with the throw-in to the team that was not in possession when the maul began.
- If the ball carrier in a maul goes to ground, and it is possible to make the ball available immediately, the ball carrier must do so (PK). This includes releasing the ball to an opponent on their feet. This opponent does **not** have to release the ball carrier or the ball when the maul goes to ground.
- If the ball carrier in a maul goes to ground, and it is impossible for the ball carrier to make the ball available immediately, the referee should award a scrum with the throw-in to the team that was not in possession when the maul began.

"Use it!" at maul

- If a maul goes to ground legally, and the ball is available to be played immediately by the scrum-half or another player of either team, the referee should call "Use it!"
- 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.

OFFSIDE IN GENERAL PLAY

Rationale for emphasis

- When the ball is kicked in general play, any player of the kicking team in front of the kicker is offside.
- **Offside players who are advancing are cutting down options for counter attack and forcing the receiving team to kick as their first option. Referees must penalise offside players and should no longer rely on continually verbally managing these players because by advancing they have already had an impact on play.**
- With a long kick downfield, referees **may** be able to manage an offside player. The referee should call only **once** for the player to stop. If the player does not stop immediately (not just slow down), they are liable to penalty.
- With a short or high kick, there will be little or no opportunity for the referee to manage and players must immediately act as per Law or they are liable to penalty.
- Offside players must be dealt with **even when the ball looks like it will go into touch** because a quick throw may be an option. Once the ball is in touch, offside no longer applies and offside players may move forward toward a lineout or where a quick throw is being attempted.

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.**

QUICK THROW AND LINEOUT

Put back into own 22m

- When a ball is passed into the 22 metre area and is touched by an opposing player, or a tackle, ruck, scrum, maul or lineout is formed, then that team can now kick directly into touch and gain ground.
- The ball is considered to have been 'taken back' into a team's 22m area in the following situations:
 - When a team wins possession of a ball from a scrum, ruck, maul or lineout where the mark is outside of the 22m area, even though the rear participants may have their feet within the 22m area
 - When a quick throw-in is passed from in front of the 22m line, back across the 22m line and into the 22m area
 - When a quick throw-in is taken within the 22m area after a player gathers it from in touch but in front of the 22 metre line and then takes it behind the 22m line to throw.

Knock on or throw forward into touch

- If a player knocks the ball on, or throws the ball forward, and the ball goes into touch (without touching another player), the non-offending team will be offered the choice of a lineout where the ball went into touch, or a scrum at the place of the knock on or throw forward.
- Without being offered this choice by the referee, a team may choose to immediately take a quick throw in this scenario. The usual restrictions on whether a quick throw may be taken apply.

Quick Throw

- Quick throws may be taken from between the place wherever the subsequent lineout would be formed, and the throwing team's own goal line.
- A quick throw may be thrown in straight or towards the throwing team's own goal line. The ball must travel across the 5m line before it touches another player or the ground.
- Players who end up over the touch line must give up the ball to opposition players and must not throw the ball away such as to prevent a quick throw (PK, 15m in from touch).
- Players standing within 5m of the touch line attempting to block a quick throw-in should be managed away. These players may not block the ball from travelling 5m (FK, 15m in from 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 at least 2 metres back away from the Lineout when formed. 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). A receiver may only join the lineout before the ball is thrown if another lineout player simultaneously takes the receiver position (i.e. they switch).

Australian U19 Law Variation change introduced in 2014

- In U16s and above, the front support player at the lineout may now 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.
- Sacking is legal but can only be done after the jumper/ball carrier has returned to the ground and must be done immediately. Sacking is the act of bringing the jumper/ball carrier to the ground by the upper body.
- Referees should penalise the defending lineout that drives in on the jumper and/or support players while the jumper is off the ground.
- A team awarded a free kick or a penalty kick at a lineout may choose to have a further lineout with their throw (ie without having to kick the ball into touch again).

Teams deciding not to engage the maul at lineout

- If the defenders in the line out choose to not engage the line out drive by leaving the line out as a group, then PK to attacking team.
- If the defenders in the line out choose to not engage the line out drive by simply opening up a gap and creating space, and not leaving the line out, the following process should be followed:
 - The attacking team would need to keep the ball with the front player if they were to drive down-field (therefore play on, general play - defenders could either engage to form a maul, or tackle the ball carrier.)
 - If the attacking team immediately passes the ball back to a player behind the front player or at the rear of the group, the referee would tell them to "Use it" which they must do immediately.
 - If the team drives forward with the ball at the back (and ignores the referee's call to "Use it"), the referee should award a scrum to the defending team for "accidental offside" (rather than PK for obstruction).

RESTARTS AND KICKS

Penalty Kick and Free Kicks

- If a player takes a Penalty Kick or Free Kick quickly, the ball must leave the hands of the player, and the kick must be taken in the right place (ie. at or on a line directly behind the mark)
- Zero tolerance on the ball being thrown away or preventing a Free Kick or Penalty Kick being taken quickly. If a member of the infringing team is in possession, he must put the ball on the ground where he is standing or give the ball to an opponent who tries to take it from him.
- Beware of players 'milking' an extra 10 metres by intentionally running into offside players who are retreating back onside and not taking part in play. Referees should 'play on' in these situations.
- When a Free Kick or Penalty Kick is taken quickly, defending players who are not back 10m are not put onside until they retire 10m or while they are retiring a teammate who was back 10m runs past them. No action of the team taking the penalty kick can put them onside (including running 5m).
- For all PK and FK awarded in in-goal, the mark is 5m from the goal-line.

ADVANTAGE

- For a 'scrum advantage' to accrue, the non-offending team needs to have gained clear and real possession roughly equivalent to that which they would get from a scrum.
- A 'penalty kick advantage' calls for a greater level of reward than for a knock-on or Free Kick. The non-offending team must gain either tactical or territorial advantage roughly equivalent to that of receiving the Penalty Kick in the first instance.
- On the rare occasions that advantage is played after foul play, the very least that should happen is an admonishment. The player involved needs to understand that the referee was playing advantage for their offence.

FOUL PLAY

Repeated and Deliberate Infringements

- A referee **must** warn a team through the captain about repeated infringements prior to taking yellow card action.
- Repeated infringements can be:
 - A number of different offences in a short period of time,
 - A pattern of similar offences without a time limit (e.g. regular offences close to the defending team's goal line), or
 - Repeated infringements by an individual without a time limit.
- Deliberate infringements can result in a Penalty Kick and a caution (yellow card) without any warning, depending on the cynical nature of the infringement.

Dangerous Play

- Dangerous tackles include tackles that are above the line of the arm pits or use the collar of the jersey.
- If contact is made with the neck or head after initial contact below the line of the shoulders then the tackle is still considered a dangerous tackle.
- 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).
- **Lifting tackles that place players in danger of injury must have serious consequences. The onus is on the tackler to complete the tackle safely. Dropping or throwing tackled players once they are in a dangerous position is to be strongly sanctioned.**
- **Any time a tackled player's legs are lifted above horizontal it should result in a yellow card as a minimum.**
- **If the tackled player is lifted and lands on his shoulder or head area it should result in a red card. A tackled player placing a hand down at the last second to stop a 'head or shoulder area landing' should not influence this sanction.**
- In U19 matches, punching and stamping are an automatic send off (red card).

OTHER

Corner Posts

- If the ball hits the corner post and rebounds into the field of play or the in-goal, it is play on. If the ball subsequently bounces into touch then play should restart with a lineout.

Conversion attempt within 90 seconds

- Conversion kicks following a try must be taken within 90 seconds from the time the try was scored.
- If the ball is kicked or thrown away, the time taken to retrieve the ball is included in the 90 seconds if the scoring team kicked or threw the ball away, and is not included if defenders kicked or threw the ball away.

Referee Management

- Player questioning of Referee decisions will not be tolerated and referees should take strong action.
- Swearing directed at a Referee or an Assistant Referee is a red card offence.
- **Referees should manage unnecessary injury stoppages and be pro-active in playing on, e.g. front row players going down with injury at line outs. If the injured player is not in the way of the game and the players is being attended to, play on.**
- **If medical staff attending to a player indicate that an injury is serious, the referee should stop the game.**
- **If play approaches an injured player on the ground, the referee should stop the game immediately.**
- Referees should be pro-active in ensuring players with bleeding wounds leave the field for treatment.
- Referees should be aware of the ARU Concussion guidelines which can be found at www.rugby.com.au/concussion