

GAME MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR RUGBY IN ONTARIO - 2017



The Game Management Guidelines are to reflect the playing, coaching and refereeing of the game in Ontario. The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that all participants are aware of the areas of the game that require more specific coaching and/or consistency in refereeing.

Comments in red indicate either a Law change or an Area of Emphasis for 2017.

With thanks to the Australian Rugby Union on which these guidelines are based with Ontario specific alterations.

SCRUM

Safety at the scrum is paramount. An explanation of the requirements for players at each stage of the engagement is covered in the Laws of the Game. 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. If any part of the scrum set-up is not right, the referee should call the front rows up and re-start the process. Focus for referees should be:

Crouch – Stable with Heads Temple To Temple.

Bind – Stable with No Pre-Engagement.

Set – Stable with No Hit And Chase.

Engagement sequence in detail

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 temple to temple, 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:

- Front Rowers support their own weight (not using the other front row for support by leaning in and over extending, with feet too far back)
- There is no advantage gained from pre-engagement
- 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
- The scrum must be stationary and stable before the feed - no hit and chase off the mark (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.

World Rugby Law changes / clarifications 2016

- When a scrum is legally wheeled through 90 degrees, this no longer results in a turnover. The scrum is reset with the same team feeding the ball, regardless of who had possession at the time the scrum went through the 90 degrees.
- Advantage may now be played (if it is safe to do so) when a scrum collapses, or when a player stands up in a scrum and their feet are on the ground. Advantage still cannot be played if a player in the scrum is forced upwards **and** has no support on the ground. Safety should always be the priority when a scrum collapses.
- When a team has the ball at the #8's feet but the scrum is not moving forward, the referee will call "Use it!" The team must use the ball immediately >5sec (turnover scrum).
- The scrum-half of the team that doesn't win the ball in the scrum may not move into the space between the flanker and No. 8 when following the ball through the scrum (PK).
- A team must be ready for the referee to call "crouch" within 30 seconds from the time the referee makes the mark for the scrum (FK).
- **Uncontested scrums as a result of a sending off, temporary suspension or injury must be played with 8 players per side (applies to U14s and older. This would not apply if the uncontested scrums are caused by a team starting a match short of the suitably trained front row. League competition rules would apply.)**

Collapsed scrums and illegal wheeling

- 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).
- No wheeling by a team until the LH and TH have both displayed clear intent to move forward.

TACKLE

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.
- A tackler who regains his feet must get up and on the ball **before** attacking support players arrive. If not and they interfere, this is a PK against the tackler. The tackler must play the ball "immediately" in Law – this is now defined as **before** attacking support players arrive. **(Note: Does not apply to 7's matches)**

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 may only play the ball through their gate.
- 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’.

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). *This technique may be dangerous at junior levels and should not be allowed (unplayable or advised against) and penalized if persistently used as a tactic in the game.*

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’).
- *Referees should decide tackle entry based on how the arriving players enter, not how they exit. A player who comes from depth and cleans on a slight angle is acceptable. Whereas a player with no depth who removes a “threat” from the side is unacceptable*
- Arriving players must demonstrate positive intent to stay on their feet. ‘Plane taking off’ is acceptable. ‘Plane landing’ is not acceptable. (to seal possession or deny a contest is not acceptable)
- A player who is supporting the ball carrier, or who then goes to ground with the ball carrier in or following a tackle must roll away, or get to their feet and be supporting their weight on their feet.
- Such players cannot stay on top of the ball (often with hands on the ground) to deny a contest for possession.

Post-Tackle

- ‘Driving out’ at the tackle must be near the ball – i.e. 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 (‘jackal’) 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 ‘jackal’ players have one shot at the ball. If such a player is driven off the ball by the opposition then their opportunity to play the ball with their hands has ceased.
- *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, **and***
 - *Survive the cleanout.*

RUCK

Offside (pillars)

- Pillars must not have hands on ground ahead of the offside line.
- Pillars must not form an offside “wall” when setting up a box kick. Players may set up together behind the last feet, but can’t obstruct tacklers coming through to tackle the kicker or charge down the kick
- Pillars 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.

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 on-side when an onside teammate runs them on. No action of the team catching the ball puts such an offside player on-side.
- 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 on-side 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 on-side 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. In U14s 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). 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).

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.

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 downfield (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).

MAUL

- 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 he is in possession of the ball (PK). (2016)
- 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 transferred. No “Long Transfer” of the ball to the back of the maul from the lineout jumper. This is particularly obvious when players join in front of the new ball carrier.

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.
- Attacking players must join from behind or alongside the hind-most teammate in the maul – they must not join in front of the player in the maul with the ball.
- 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 - Defence

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 then 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.

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).

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.
- Advantage may now be played when a scrum collapses, or when a player stands up in a scrum (see scrum section for more detail).
- **If the referee plays 2 or more advantages in a sequence of play, the captain can be asked which location is preferable.**

FOUL PLAY

World Rugby High Tackle guidance 2017

- World Rugby has provided new guidance regarding high tackles which are “**RECKLESS**” (minimum YC) and “**Accidental**” (minimum PK.) Stricter enforcement is encouraged: “Contact with the Head” should in most cases result in a PK minimum.
- To decide an appropriate sanction (PK, YC, or RC) referees should be considering:
 - **Contact Point** – where did the tackle start / finish, was contact with the hand, arm or shoulder?
 - **Action** – was the tackling action Accidental, Reckless or Deliberate?
 - **Degree of Force** – severity of impact, does the tackler “carry on” through the tackle, i.e. around the neck?
- Referees should use common sense – but player safety is paramount
- It is now explicitly illegal for a player to “simulate” that they been subject to any infringement at all, including (but not limited to) foul play (PK). (2016)

Repeated and Deliberate Infringements

- 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.

Neck rolls

- World Rugby is working to eliminate the practice of ‘neck grab and rolls’ in the act of cleaning out a player. Guidelines for referees are as follows:
 - **PK** = Neck grab, without twisting, which cleans out a player at the tackle or ruck
 - **YC** = Neck grab & roll (likely bringing the player to the ground)
 - **RC** = Neck grab & roll with a forceful “dumping action” in bringing the player to the ground

Challenge in the air

- World Rugby has provided guidelines for situations where two players contest for a ball in the air and collide:
 - **Play on** = Fair challenge with both players in a realistic position to catch the ball. Even if the player lands dangerously, play on
 - **PK** = Not a fair challenge, wrong timing but no pulling down
 - **YC** = Not a fair challenge, there is no contest and the player is pulled down/interfered with landing on their back or side
 - **RC** = Not a fair challenge, there is no contest and the player is pulled down/interfered with landing on their head, neck or shoulder

Other Dangerous Play

- Players must not charge at speed into the side of rucks and mauls without binding (shoulder charge.)
- 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 their shoulder or head area it should result in a red card.
- In U19 matches, punching and stamping are an automatic send-off (red card).

OTHER

Touch-Line Law Trials 2017

- 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 into touch, manages to knock (or catch and throw) the ball from across the plane of touch into the playing area, this is now **play on** (previously this was in touch).
- The process used to decide **who** has taken the ball changes for 2017. 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 whether the ball was in motion or stationary.
- The principle above also applies to the goal-lines, touch-in-goal and dead ball lines **And 22m.** *(Therefore Laws 19.5 and 22.9 are now superseded by this Law Trial, even though they still appear in the Law Book.)*

Other World Rugby Law changes / clarifications from 2016 or 2017

- A substituted player may come on to replace a player who has been injured as a result of foul play. If the team chooses to replace a player injured from foul play with a fresh reserve, or if the foul play happens before any player is tactically substituted, then the team doesn't gain any advantage from this Law change.
- If a try is scored close to time expiring, so long as the conversion is kicked (boot striking ball) before time expires, there will be a restart. A team may decline to take the conversion so long as they indicate this before time expires. In this case, there will be a restart. The kicking team cannot kick the ball out on the full or not 10 metres etc to end the game. The game will continue with appropriate sanction options given to the non-kicking team.
- If a Penalty is kicked into touch after time has elapsed (either half-time or full-time), without touching another player, the throw-in is taken and play continues until the next time the ball becomes dead.
- Any Penalty Try is now = 7 Points. No conversion attempt will be taken.

Knock-on and Intentional Knock-on

- If a player, in tackling an opponent, makes contact with the ball and the ball goes forward from the ball carrier's hands, it is considered a knock-on. If a player rips the ball or deliberately knocks the ball from an opponent's hands and the ball goes forward from the ball carrier's hands, that is not a knock-on.
- The decision-making process for an intentional knock-on is:
 - Was there a **realistic chance** for the player to regather the ball? If no = PK
 - Was there an opportunity for a clear line break? If yes = YC.
 - Was there an opportunity for a probable try to be scored? If yes = Penalty Try + YC

Mark Placements

- The mark for all FKs and PKs awarded within 5 metres of a goal line is now 5 metres back from the goal line. Previously this was only true for an attacking team's mark within 5 metres of the defending team's goal line. (2016)

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

- 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 player is being attended to, play on.
- If medical staff attending to a player indicates 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 "Recognize and Remove" also known as "If in doubt, sit them out" guideline that is a major part of the Concussion Protocol from World Rugby and also enforced across Canada which can be found at <http://playerwelfare.worldrugby.org/?documentid=module&module=21>
Since there are no baseline tests for amateur players in Ontario, and there are no unbiased match doctors appointed to these games, the team (and physiotherapists) are not equipped to make a decision on whether or not the player is cleared to rejoin a game. Once a player is removed from the game for showing signs of concussion they should not return to play that day and their team representative should be advised that the player should receive advanced medical attention.