



GAME MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

FOR COMMUNITY LEVEL RUGBY

IN AUSTRALIA

2019

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16th February, 2019

GAME MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES 2019

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 2019.

Comments in red indicate either a Law change or an area of emphasis for 2019.

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 Rugby AU Smart Rugby program. The scrum engagement sequence is the same at all levels of the game.

The referee must control the engagement process. Each of the following 3 calls should result in an action by the players. 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 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, to maintain the normal and safe alignment of the cervical spine.
- Crutch-binding by locks is illegal in age groups U15 and below (previously U19 and below).
- 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 should 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. (#8 shoulders on.)
- 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, feet too far back), are balanced and stationary
 - **there is no pre-engagement shoulder to shoulder**
- **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.

Scrum feed

- The scrum must be stationary and stable before the feed – no hit and chase off the mark allowed (FK).
- There will be no signal from the referee to the scrum-half to feed the ball.
- There must be no delay of feed from the scrum-half once the ball has been presented (FK).
- The scrum-half must throw the ball in straight, but is allowed to align their shoulder on the middle line of the scrum, therefore allowing them to stand a shoulder width towards their side of the middle line.
- **The hooker of the team who put the ball in must strike for the ball (FK).**

Other World Rugby Law changes from 2016-2018

- 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.

- 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.

Post-Tackle Contest

- An offside line is created at a tackle when at least one player is on their feet and over the ball. Each team's offside line runs through the hindmost point of any player in the tackle or on their feet.
- A player who arrives and picks the ball up at a tackle does not form an offside line.
- Any player on their feet who has their hands on the ball immediately after a tackle and before a ruck forms ('jackal') may keep contesting for the ball even if a ruck forms around them.
- No other arriving player at this point may play the ball with their hands, until the ball clearly leaves ruck (i.e. there is no body part over the top of it).
- '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.
- '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.

RUCK

Ruck Definition

- A ruck is formed when at least one player from each team are in contact, on their feet and over the ball which is on the ground.
- Each team has an offside line that runs parallel to the goal line through the hindmost point of any ruck participant. (In previous years, this was written as 'hindmost foot'.)

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.
- Zero tolerance on defending players at the ruck who target the scrum-half before they have the ball, even if the ball is out of the ruck. Any onside player must play the ball and not 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.
- A player must not kick the ball out of a ruck. The player can only hook it in a backwards motion (PK).
- At a tackle, a player can pick up the ball as long as one foot is level with or behind the ball. At a ruck, a player can pick up the ball as long as both feet are level with or behind the ball. If a player is still bound with an opponent, then they cannot pick up the ball.

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 from within the 22m area when the mark of touch is actually outside the 22m**

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

Lineout Management

- **The throwing team must not delay the formation of a lineout by forming a line or huddle away from the line-of-touch. They must set their numbers clearly when forming the lineout, hence giving the defending team a reasonable opportunity to match (FK).**
- Sacking is the act of bringing the jumper/ball carrier to the ground by the upper body. Sacking is legal but can only be done after the jumper/ball carrier has returned to the ground and must be done immediately. No sacking of lifters (PK).
- **Referees should penalise a defending lineout that drives in on the jumper and/or support players while the jumper is off the ground. (Referees should manage teams holding jumpers in the air trying to contrive this PK.)**

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).

MAUL

World Rugby Law changes / clarifications

- The ball can only be moved backwards hand-to-hand once the maul has formed. A player is not allowed to move/slide to the back of the maul when they are in possession of the ball (PK).
- The ball can be moved backwards hand-to-hand once the maul has formed.
- **The 'ripper' needs to stay in contact with the jumper until the ball is fully transferred, and cannot immediately shift lanes. No 'long transfer' of the ball to the back of the maul from the lineout jumper. This is particularly obvious when players join in front of 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 a leading player and who engage the opposition are liable to penalty for obstruction (commonly referred to as 'Truck and Trailer' or 'Changing Lanes').

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, and opposing 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.

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 (i.e. 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, they must put the ball on the ground where they are standing or give the ball to an opponent who tries to take it from them.
- Beware of players contriving an extra 10 metres by intentionally running into offside players who are retreating 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 referee plays 2 or more advantages, the captain can be asked which location is preferable.

FOUL PLAY

World Rugby High Tackle Guidance

- 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. **This includes a fend from ball carrier with forearm/elbow.**
- **To decide an appropriate sanction (PK, YC or RC), referees should be considering:**
 - **Contact point** – where did the tackle start/finish, was contact with 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, e.g. around the neck?
- Referees should use common sense – but player safety is paramount.

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 Foul 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).
- If a player makes a deliberate action in order to 'milk' a penalty, where possible play will continue.
- Players should not appeal for decisions, wave arms, or shout at match officials (e.g. "That's a card!")
- **In open play, lifters must lower that player to the ground safely as soon as the ball is won by either team which brings this in line with lineout (FK).**

OTHER

Blue Card Implementation

- When a player leaves the field due to signs and symptoms of suspected concussion, the referee will show them a Blue Card. This triggers an off-field process. (*Blue Card applies in U13s and older.*)
- A tactically replaced player may return to play to replace a player who has been shown a Blue Card.

Touch-line Law

- A player who is attempting to bring the ball under control is now deemed to be in possession of the ball.
- When a player jumps from inside the playing area, and before landing in touch, manages to knock (or catch and throw) the ball from across plane of touch back into the playing area, this is now **play on** (previously this was in touch).
- The process used to decide **who** has taken the ball into touch changed in 2018. Previously whether the ball was rolling or stopped was relevant, now the question is: did the ball reach the plane?
 - If the ball has reached the plane of touch when it is caught, then the catcher is not deemed to have taken the ball into touch.
 - If the ball has not reached the plane of touch when it is caught or picked up, then the catcher is deemed to have taken the ball into touch, regardless of if the ball was in motion or stationary.
- The principle above also applies to the goal-lines, touch-in-goal, 22m and dead-ball lines.
- To make a Mark, a player must catch a ball that has reached the plane of the 22-metre line.

Other World Rugby Law changes / clarifications from 2016-2018

- A tactically replaced 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 replaced, then the team doesn't gain any advantage from this Law change. In many Australian competitions with Rolling Replacements this will have no effect.
- 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 scrum, lineout or restart kick following a try or touch down, awarded before time expires, must be completed and the ball returned to open play. This includes when the scrum, lineout or restart kick is taken incorrectly.
- 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 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, that is 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 **reasonable expectation** the player could 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.

Conversion attempt within 90 seconds

- Conversion kicks following a try must be taken within 90 seconds from the time the try was scored. The time taken to retrieve a 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 an 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 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.