

The Rugby Football League

On Field Policy

2019

CONTENTS

1. Philosophy
2. Play the ball
3. Slow play the ball
4. The Surrender Tackle
5. The Dominant tackle
6. Lending weight
7. Marker defence
8. Offside at the Play the Ball
9. Offside in general play
10. Late or dangerous tackles on kickers
11. Obstruction play
12. Escorts
13. Ball played at
14. Advantage
15. Scrums
16. Dead ball restarts
17. Penalty restarts
18. 20 metre optional restarts
19. Grounding the ball in own in goal
20. Sin Bin
21. Bleeding player procedure
22. Dissent
23. Calling time off
24. Reporting foul play
25. Eight point try
26. Concussion
27. Miscellaneous

1. Philosophy

1.1 To ensure the game of Rugby League remains an attractive spectacle and to enable the match officials to best manage the conduct and flow of matches, referees will be encouraged to exercise their judgment where players infringe the rules. Intentional or reckless foul play; and persistent or deliberate technical infringements in order to gain an advantage will not be tolerated, however referees will be asked to assess the impact of these infringements on the conduct and flow of the match and act accordingly.

2. Play the ball

2.1 Slow/untidy presentation of the play the ball is unacceptable. It is up to every referee to enforce this and up to touch judges to give appropriate advice when it is needed.

2.2 The ball carrier must regain their feet with the ball in their possession before playing the ball where they were tackled. The defender will be penalised if he interferes with the play the ball process.

2.3 Players not in possession of the ball should not interfere with opposition players by either preventing them from making/completing a tackle or dragging off tacklers after the tackle is complete. The team in possession is entitled to get on with the game, but it is the role of the referee to act if he believes a player is deliberately interfering in the play the ball area. Other players should not take matters into their own hands and teammates of the ball carrier should not drag tacklers off the tackled player.

3. Slow play the ball

3.1 Teams may try to gain an advantage by slowing the play the ball down. The game is not to be slowed down in this manner. When the tackle is complete the referee will determine if the ball carrier has “won” the tackle and call move immediately. If the tackle is “neutral” then the referee will call the tackle number followed immediately by a ‘descriptive’ action call. When that action is called the tacklers must attempt to clear the tackle simultaneously and allow the ball to be played. No tackler should make an adjustment on the tackle or leave his hands or body in the play the ball area after the tackle is complete. Referees should act on any interference once the tackle has been called.

3.2 In situations where the ball carrier is tackled but can get up and play the ball quickly, tacklers must recognise this and release him immediately.

3.3 Referees should identify the position of the tacklers at the completion of the tackle. Tacklers must move out of the tackle from where they were when the tackle was completed.

3.4 Tacklers who “clamp” the ball and keep their hands/arm on the ball when the ball carrier is standing up should be penalised. Where this occurs on the “blind side” of the referee the Touch Judge should call “hands in” to the referee who should then decide whether the speed of the play the ball has been affected.

3.5 It is important to get a very clear presentation of the play the ball. It requires focus on all areas including but not limited to:

- i. Flopping/pushing the tackled player back down
- ii. Straddling of the tackled player as they attempt to regain their feet
- iii. The pulling of the tackled player's leg as he is rising to play the ball
- iv. Making contact on the ball with the hand causing the play the ball to be delayed
- v. Placing a hand on the head/shoulder of the player playing the ball
- vi. Deliberately bumping/running into the player at the play the ball
- vii. Players lying behind the play the ball
- viii. Players leaving their head in the tackle as they stand up
- ix. Crowding the man attempting to stand up to play the ball
- x. The markers must stand directly opposite the tackled player and the second marker must stand immediately and directly behind the first marker and must take up this position prior to the ball being played.

3.6 The player in possession of the ball has the following obligations:

- i. He must regain his feet with the ball in his possession
- ii. He must have no other part of his body other than his feet in contact with the ground
- iii. He must make an attempt to make contact on the ball with his foot
- iv. He must make no contact with the markers during or after the play the ball
- v. He must play the ball where he is tackled and not move off the mark

3.7 Where players deliberately attempt to hold a player in an upright tackle and the referee sees that the player in possession has no opportunity to offload the ball, he should call "held" followed by "release". The defensive players must release the tackled player immediately and that player should be allowed to play the ball. If the player is not released immediately then a penalty should be awarded. Where the tackle occurs near touch the touch judge should call "held" when they have heard the referee call "held" in order to assist the players.

3.8 The referee should also call held if the ball carrier is lifted so that one or both feet are off the ground. Referees should look to call held quickly in an upright tackle as soon as they see that any momentum has stopped or the ball carrier has succumbed to the tackle. Should the ball be passed as held is called then the player should be given the ball back and told to play the ball. Similarly, should a player continue to run after the referee has

deemed that the tackle is complete the referee will send the player back to the original point of the tackle to play the ball. A quick play the ball will not be allowed in these instances.

3.9 Where opponents (more than one) do not make a tackle effective in the quickest possible manner but then attempt to drag an opponent towards touch or back towards his own in goal area then the referee should call held immediately. If the players continue to drag they should be penalised. However if in the opinion of the referee the player would have inevitably been dragged into touch or his own in goal area the referee will not call held in these instances.

4. The Surrender Tackle

4.1 Players in possession of the ball who surrender their tackle to the opposition will not be allowed any advantage that this practice may offer them.

4.2 Actions where ball carrying players dive at the legs of the tacklers or drop their knees to the floor in an upright tackle are classed as surrender tackles.

4.3 Where a referee identifies a “surrender” tackle he should call “surrender” when the tackle is completed and then allow the defenders an extra amount of time to stabilise the tackle before calling “stand”. When the referee calls stand, the tacklers should immediately take up their position in the defensive line or at marker.

5. The Dominant Tackle

5.1 Where a player in possession is tackled by one or more of the opposition and the impact of the tackle forces the player in possession immediately backwards the referee should call “dominant”. This will allow the tackling players the opportunity to stabilise the tackle and get into an advantageous position to get into marker. Anyone who is not involved in the initial tackle must not join in the tackle once “dominant” has been called. When the referee has decided that enough extra time has been allowed in the tackle he should call “stand” at which time the tacklers should take up their position in the defensive line or at marker.

6. Lending Weight

6.1 Where a player comes in to support his team mate who is in possession and is being pushed back he will only be deemed as lending weight if he is in a pushing position and the ball carrier is losing ground. A player merely “joining in” will not be deemed to be lending weight and held will not be called if the ball carrier is about to enter touch or the in goal area. If the tackle is near the touch line then the touch judge should repeat the referee’s call of held.

7. Marker Defence

7.1 The team not in possession may have a maximum of 2 players stand directly ‘opposite the tackled player’ (Marker). At the completion of the tackle the defender must take up a position as a Marker or retire the 10 metres. The second Marker ‘must stand immediately and directly behind’ the first marker.

7.2 Once the ball is played, any player who is not a Marker shall not be involved in play unless he has retired 10m toward his own goal line from where the ball was played.

8. Offside at the Play the Ball

8.1 Defending players should not loiter around the play the ball area.

8.2 Touch judges will inform the referee when players are offside. To assist the touch judges in deciding when the player is offside, referees should call “go” with “go” indicating that the ball has been played. All information regarding players who are not making the ten metres should be communicated to the referee. Where players who do not interfere but are being regularly observed not making the ten metres then the referee should take action against the player.

8.3 All defending players are required to be level with or behind the front foot of the referee with the exception being in the final 10 metres when the following apply:

i. Defenders must be touching the goal line with the back foot; and ii.

Defenders cannot place their front foot past the centre of the ruck; and

iii. Defenders cannot slap at the arm or ball of the dummy half as the ball is being picked up

8.4 Referees need to pay attention to the defensive line when the ball is being played within the final 10 metres of the field. All defensive players must have one foot on the goal line when the ball is played by the foot, or where players are retreating from an offside position must subsequent to the ball being played get one foot on the goal line. If they are not the referee will play the advantage before awarding a penalty for offside.

8.5 Touch judges should also identify where players are ahead of the play the ball when the ball is played and stay ahead of the play the ball by calling the player “downtown”.

9. Offside in General Play

9.1 At least one touch judge will be in position to judge offside players. Input is given to the referee verbally.

10. Late or Dangerous Tackles on Kickers

10.1 Any late or dangerous challenge on the kicker should be dealt with by the officials. The referee has the power to place on report, penalise, sin bin or dismiss the player depending on the officials’ opinion as to the severity of the tackle.

11. Obstruction Play

11.1 **Main consideration:** ‘Is the defensive team materially disadvantaged?’

11.2 The following indicators will be considered, in the opinion of the referee/video referee, for an obstruction to include:

11.3 Offensive consideration:

- i. Lead runner(s) (who does not receive the ball) must not stop in the middle of the defensive line.
- ii. Lead runner(s) (who does not receive the ball) must not run at (chest or outside shoulder of) defender(s) and initiate contact.
- iii. The sweep runner must receive the ball beyond the inside shoulder of the lead runner.
- iv. If the sweep runner catches the ball on the inside shoulder of the lead runner and there is sufficient depth to the defensive line and the defenders are not impeded, play should be allowed to continue.
- v. If the sweep runner catches the ball on the inside shoulder of the lead runner and there is insufficient depth to the defensive line, then play should only be allowed to proceed if the defenders are not impeded.

11.4 Ball carrier around the back of his team mate:

- i. Must not disadvantage the defensive line
- ii. Players who are tackled immediately- Play on.
- iii. Can concede or succumb to the tackle- Play on.

11.5 Defensive considerations:

- i. Does the defender initiate contact?
- ii. Was the defence obstructed?

12. Escorts

12.1 All officials should be aware of the practice of blocking or escorting players who are chasing a kick up field. A defending player is entitled to run towards the ball or to run back to get into position to support the catcher. Any lateral movement across the pitch and in front of the ball should be seen as an attempt to obstruct and any interference with chasers should be penalised.

12.2 A player who runs back towards one of his team mates who is attempting to catch a ball and ends up in front of the catcher must be in position and stationary before any opposition player challenges for the ball.

13. Ball played at

13.1 When the ball is being passed by the ball carrier:

- i. Is he making an action to play at the ball? If so then the referee will rule that the ball has been played at.

ii. Has the ball left the hands of the ball carrier? If it has then the referee will rule that the ball has been played at.

13.2 In the case of a “ball and all” tackle, where the ball comes loose after rebounding off the defender’s hand or arm, the referee will rule that the defender has not played at the ball.

14. Advantage

14.1 The referee should look to play advantage wherever possible. Following a knock on or forward pass and where the opposition gain possession, the referee will immediately call and signal “zero” to indicate a zero tackle and allow play to continue. The referee is the sole judge of what constitutes an advantage be it tactical or territorial.

15. Scrums

15.1 Once the ball has emerged correctly from the scrum the referee will call “out” as a guide to the players and as an indication for one of the touch judges who will be observing the players in the defensive line.

15.2 Touch judges will indicate that players have not retreated at the scrum by holding their flag out horizontally as well as verbally communicating this to the referee.

15.3 Prop forwards who strike for the ball as it is being fed in the scrum will be penalised.

16. Dead ball restarts

16.1 All players must be in position before the game can be restarted from a kick off, goal line drop kick or 20 metre drop kick.

16.2 Players will be allowed to take a quick 20 metre restart providing the player who collects the ball after the ball has gone/been made dead takes that restart without passing the ball to anyone else and the referee has blown his whistle to allow this to take place. The referee will blow the whistle when he himself has got back to at least the 20 metre line and all attacking players are onside.

16.3 Any deliberate interference by an opposition player when a team is attempting a quick restart will result in that player being “sin binned” and the game restarting with the original 20 metre restart.

17. Penalty restarts

17.1 When a penalty is awarded the referee will nominate the mark and blow his whistle before a kick can be taken. If the kick is taken before the referee has nominated the mark and blown his whistle then the team will re-take the penalty.

17.2 Where a penalty is awarded following a 20 metre restart, the penalty will be awarded where the offence takes place. In the case of tacklers being offside on the ten metres, the penalty will be awarded on the 30 metre line in line with where the offence took place.

18. 20 Metre Optional Kick Restart

18.1 All officials should be aware that teams can opt to kick to touch from this restart and that providing the ball has bounced in the field of play they will get head and feed at the resulting scrum. As it is an optional kick the ball is in play as soon as it is kicked and therefore the ball does not have to travel ten metres before it goes into touch or before it is played by the opposition.

19. Grounding the ball in own in goal

19.1 If in the opinion of the referee a defending player intentionally touches down in their in goal area a goal line drop out will be awarded.

20. Sin bin

20.1 Unsportsmanlike conduct (to include but not limited to):

i. Professional foul, especially in try scoring situations ii.

Delaying a quick 20m

20.2 Dissent;

20.3 Repeated infringements;

20.4 Foul play/Dangerous contact (to include but not limited to)

i. Man to man confrontation ii. Tackles where player(s) are

placed in a dangerous position

iii. Dangerous contact to include, but not limited to, chicken wing type tackles, cannon balls etc.

iv. An altercation between two players where only one player strikes another

v. Foul play which is not deemed severe enough to be a sending off, however is deserving of a sin bin including running in to an incident

20.5 If you decide to sin bin a player, make sure the player has left the field before play restarts. It should also be noted that the timing of the sin bin only starts when the player crosses the touch line on the side of the field where the “dug out” is and consists of actual playing time, i.e. time will be halted when the referee calls time off.

21. Bleeding player procedure

21.1 If a player is bleeding profusely, he must leave the field and only return when the bleeding has been stopped. In general the following procedure should apply:

i. If the referee, video referee or touch judges notices that a player is bleeding the game should be stopped and the physio should be called. The physio should be asked if they can

treat it immediately. If they can then they should drop behind play for the treatment and the game will carry on. If they can't then the player should go off and the referee will wait for any replacement before the game is restarted. If the team indicates that they are not making a replacement the referee will order that the game is restarted. Where the physio opts to treat the player on the field and the referee notices that this player is still bleeding when he re-joins play then the referee must insist that this player leaves the field for further treatment.

21.2 A player who has blood stained clothing must change the stained clothing.

22. Dissent

22.1 Dissent in any form is to be penalised. The referee can give a penalty, sin-bin the player or dismiss the player. The referee should include the captain in any cautions that are issued to a player.

23. Calling time off

23.1 The referee will only call time for an injured player if, continuing the game will cause a danger to that player, if a stretcher is required or the doctor is treating a player. If following foul play the officials need to consult then time should be called off. The referee should also call time off as soon as he sees a player throwing the ball away and may take action if there is any repetition of this.

23.2 On restarts, the referee will call time off when his touch judges have got into their positions. This should be a consistent process throughout the game and should not vary depending on the tightness of the scores.

23.3 If a team rushes to form a scrum the referee will call time off when the scrum has properly formed and the scrum half is in position. If the team who formed the scrum then breaks up and the opposition forms their scrum then time should be called back on.

23.4 The referee will call time off after 80 seconds when a player opts to kick at goal. The time will start from the point of the try being awarded for a conversion and from when a penalty is awarded following a penalty.

23.5 Rules on "Last 5 minutes" on games where applicable – please see Timekeeping Policy 2019

24. Reporting foul play

24.1 A touch judge should report foul play by use of the onfield communications system. He may on occasion report foul play by entering the field and give his opinion to the referee on the outcome.

24.2 If an incident is placed 'on report' and a player immediately leaves the field as a result of the actions of the player placed on report, sin binned or dismissed, then a free interchange is allowed, irrespective of whether a penalty has been awarded. The same applies when a player has been sin binned or dismissed.

25. Eight Point Try

25.1 If a defending player fouls an opponent who is in the act of “touching down for a try”, and who proceeds to score the try, a penalty kick at goal shall be awarded by the referee after the attempt to convert the try. The penalty shall be awarded on the 10m line in front of the offending team’s goal posts. The non-offending team must kick for goal and, if the attempt for goal is successful, shall be awarded an additional two points. Whether the attempt at goal is successful or unsuccessful, the game shall be restarted, in the usual manner.

25.2 The phrase “touching down for a try” refers to such a period which commences when, in the sole discretion of the referee or video referee, it is evident that a try is going to be scored by the player who is fouled and which ends when the referee awards the try or calls time off to refer the decision to the video referee or to consult with other colleagues.

25.3 For the avoidance of doubt a foul which is committed (i) on any other attacking player other than the player who is “touching down for a try”; (ii) at any time other than when that player is “touching down for a try” or (iii) where a try is not scored as a result of the foul play or otherwise, shall not result in a further penalty being awarded by the referee as described above, but this shall not preclude the referee taking any other action against the offending player as the referee shall in his sole discretion determine.

26. Concussion Role of Match Referee

26.1 Objective – to assist medical staff in ensuring a concussion assessment is carried out.

26.2 Where a player refuses to follow the instructions of the medical staff to leave the field of play the medical staff may ask the match referee to instruct the player to leave the field. In which case the clock shall be stopped until the player leaves the field.

26.3 If a match official has concerns that a player may have suffered a concussion he may stop play and call the medical team onto the field of play to express his concerns and ask them to examine the player.

27. Miscellaneous

27.1 If a pattern of repeated infringements occurs, early action should be taken and the captain of the offending team should be informed. He will be informed by the referee signalling with his arm circling in front of him and his other arm pointing to the team being placed on a caution. If in the opinion of the referee the non-offending team will not be disadvantaged by stopping the game then the referee will also speak to the captain whilst issuing the caution.

27.2 Players who strike an opponent in an ungentlemanly manner, e.g. a player slapping an opponent after he has made an error, will be dealt with by the referee.

27.3 All contact with the head must be penalised and the referee will determine if in his opinion the contact warrants more than a penalty i.e Sin Bin ,dismissal. Factors determined here are Primary/secondary contact, high/late, careless, reckless, deliberate.

27.4 Rules on shot clock for scrums and drop outs please see Timekeeping Policy 2019

27.5 Video referee protocols are published separately each season and work alongside this policy.