



*USARUGBY*

**2014 • 2015**  
**GAME MANAGEMENT**  
**GUIDELINES**



**USA RUGBY**

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## INTRODUCTION

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

These guidelines are to be distributed and applied nationally to all referees, referee performance reviewers, referee coaches, players/teams, coaches and administrators for 2014 and 2015.

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*Appropriate U19 Law Variations are in green italicized text.*

## PRINCIPLES OF THE GAME

“It is through discipline, control and mutual respect that the spirit of the game flourishes and, in the context of a game as physically challenging as rugby, these are the qualities which forge the fellowship and sense of fair play so essential to the game’s ongoing success and survival.” - iRB Laws of the Game 2012

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

We urge that players and team administrators do not verbally abuse officials, and vice versa, nor make any derogatory public remarks or comments, as this behavior is not beneficial to the development and growth of the game.

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

### REFEREE NOTES

Be professional and open to discussion with players and coaches, and supportive of colleagues. Promote the reputation of the game. You are accountable for your actions on and off the field. Do not discuss any issues with referee evaluators/performance reviewers during halftime, unless the evaluator feels the need to communicate an issue regarding safety. If you want to communicate with your referee coach, that is acceptable - referee coaches are to be aware that their advice should not completely alter the standard that the referee has set in the first half. Refrain from discussions with coaches, etc. during the match, at halftime, and immediately after the match if a “cooling off” period would be the better option.

## TACKLE / RUCK

### A. THE TACKLE

1. Tacklers have to release the tackled player immediately, and move/roll away or get to their feet. **PK**
2. Tackled player must exercise their options immediately. **PK**
3. Players that slow the ball down should be penalized immediately. **PK**
4. Referees should allow the contest and may instruct the players, i.e. “release the ball”, “roll away”, etc., as long as these players have not already slowed down ball availability. Referees should be aware that players in National Competitions know their rights and it is not necessary for the referee to communicate verbally at the tackle.

5. Verbal communication should be used if there is a possibility that it could accommodate a team scoring from the advantage gained.

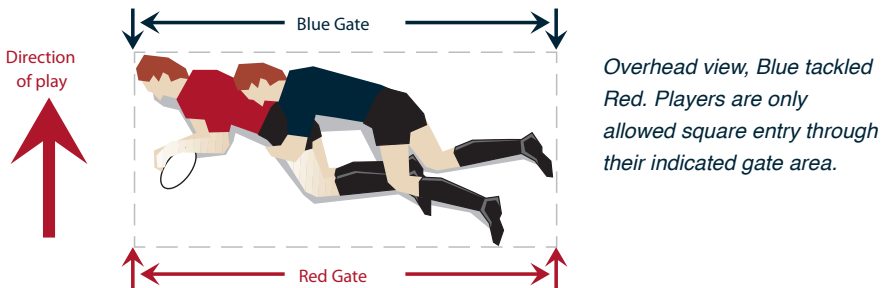
Referees are to approach a low tolerance level at the breakdown and should penalize early in the match to establish compliance.

### B. TACKLER ASSIST

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

### C. THE GATE

1. All players must enter the tackle zone through the gate. No part of a player's body (including the arms), may enter the tackle through any other area. **PK**
2. Failure to enter through the gate should not be tolerated. **PK**

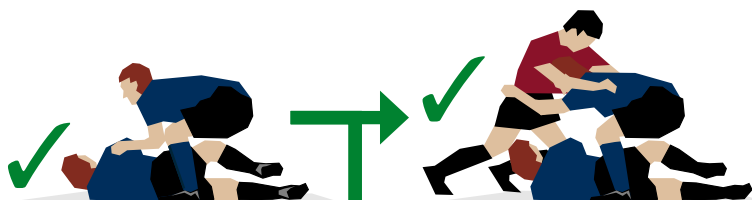


### D. ARRIVING PLAYERS

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

NOTE: Thus, a ruck has not yet formed.

3. Players may grasp or hold onto their tackled player who is on the ground, as long as they have their weight firmly on their feet and are not using the player on the ground to support their weight. **PK**
4. If the player grasps onto their teammate, the tackled player is still required to place the ball away from their body to ensure its availability. **PK**
5. Players that have grasped/are holding onto their player on the ground may not lower their shoulders below their hips or lean with their weight on their player that is on the ground to prevent the contest when an opponent makes contact with them. They may continue to hold onto their player on the ground after contact. **PK**



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



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

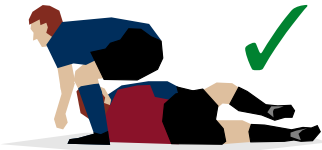


6. Players who are SEALING, secure the ball without their weight fully on their feet (i.e. leaning on the tackler/tackled player on the ground) OR who go to ground head first, or dive over players on the ground, OR dive over players on the ground with the ball between them should not be tolerated and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

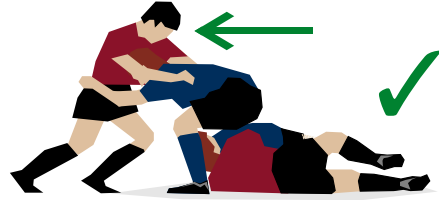


*Blue tackled Red, Red player has secured possession by SEALING. This is NOT allowed.*

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

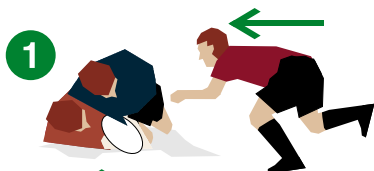


✓ Red tackled Blue, Blue player arrived at the tackle on their feet, through the gate, is NOT binding on players on the ground, remaining on their feet and preparing for contact at the tackle area. The player is also not too far ahead of the ball to obstruct opponents.



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

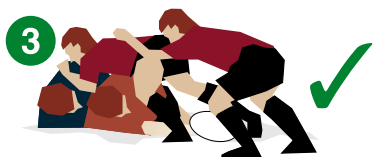
8. If players enter the tackle in conformance with the required criteria and subsequently go to ground during the process of removing a tackler or because the opposition was unable to retain its position at contact, these players should not be penalized because they did not willfully go to ground. The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



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



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



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

## E. THE RUCK

1. The referee may use the term “Ruck” to indicate a ruck has formed. If a ruck has formed and players are still contesting for possession, the referee may use the term “No Hands, Ruck” to indicate to players that they should no longer use their hands. NOTE: Referees should allow the contest to develop at the breakdown, and should be aware not to call “Ruck” until a ruck has clearly been formed. If the ball is immediately won and a ruck is formed, the referee need not communicate “Ruck”.
2. Once a ruck is formed, it continues even if all defenders leave or fall to ground, as long as the ball is still contained within the ruck.
3. Referees are to strictly apply the offside law on the fringes and the backlines.
4. Unsuccessful End to a Ruck: Once the ball is clearly won and available to be played, the referee will call “use it”, once, after which the ball must be played within five seconds. If not, it is a turnover – scrum to the other team.

### REFEREE NOTES

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



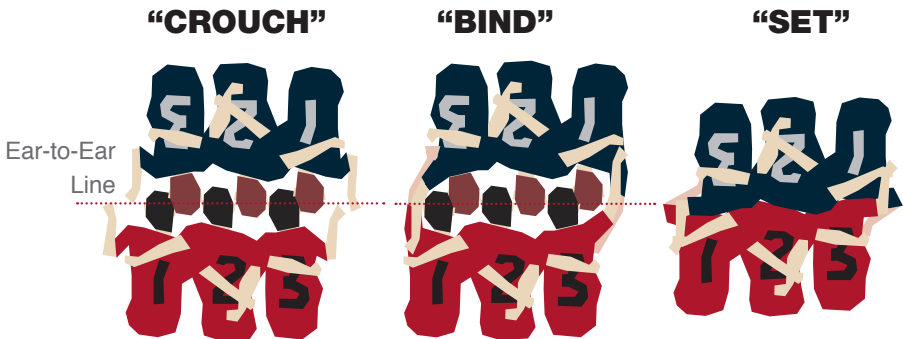
**SCRUM**

**A. ENGAGEMENT**

1. Engagement process is three separate instructions, “Crouch, Bind, Set”.
2. The referee should not be in front of the scrumhalves, and either be behind the scrumhalves or on the opposite side to the scrum.
3. Players may crouch when they are ready or they may be in a position ready to crouch. The referee will then call “Crouch”.
4. Ensure that all players are square (with feet facing forward) and all shoulders are in a straight line (loosehead’s shoulder not tucked under their hooker) Both front rows should be at the same height (level) to each other.
5. The referee will then call “Bind”. The props should bind with the hand of their outside arm on the opposing prop’s body (not on the arm, not on the shorts).
6. When the referee is satisfied that the front rows appear ready to engage, ARE STABLE AND SQUARE, the referee says “set”. The front rows may then come together. This is not a command. It is permission to engage.
7. Early engagement, failure to engage, and standing up should not be tolerated and be penalized, by Free Kick, or a Penalty Kick if the referee deems it to be deliberate, dangerous and/or a repeated infringement. **FK / PK**
8. Props are allowed to change the bind on their opponents after engagement as long as it remains legal. **PK**
9. #8 is to bind on the locks’ body with at least one arm up to the shoulder prior to engagement - this is to prevent the “slingshot”.

*U19: #8 is required to bind between the two locks.*

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



## REFEREE NOTES

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

### B. SET AND PUT-IN

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

### C. WHEEL

1. A scrum has only wheeled through 90° if the line between the front rows has gone through 90°. *U19: Intentional wheel is not allowed. PK / Unintentional wheel through 45° to be reset (original team to throw-in).*
2. A whip-wheel is not allowed - this is when the scrum turns/spins on its axis. Before a scrum can be wheeled legally there must be a clear forward movement by the combined front row of the team that is driving their opponents backwards. **PK**

### D. SCRUMHALVES

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

remain in front of the ball to obstruct the opposing scrumhalf, to allow their #8 to play the ball, they should be penalized. **PK**

*U19: A player must not intentionally keep the ball in the scrum once the player's team has heeled the ball and has control of the ball at the base of the scrum. **FK***

## E. GENERAL

*U19: A team may not push the opposition back more than 1.5m. **FK***

## LINEOUT

### A. FORMATION

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

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

### B. SUPPORT & OBSTRUCTION

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

### C. QUICK THROW-IN

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

## LINEOUT

### D. LINEOUT START & END

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

### E. NO MAUL

1. If defenders decide not to engage to form a maul at the lineout, referees should communicate to the team in possession to get the ball out, rather than penalize for obstruction.

### F. SACKING

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

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

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

### H. PENALTY KICK OR FREE KICK AWARDED AT A LINEOUT

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

### REFEREE NOTES

Always be aware of a quick throw-in - know your law. Communicate and manage early what is expected at the lineout - start at the front: numbers, gap, non-throwing hooker in position, backlines 10m, no early jumping, receiver 2m from the lineout, immediate formation with no delay, no dummy throw - keep the player throwing in, in your vision. There is no need to continuously talk to prevent disorder at the lineout, throughout the game. Keep the backlines and players in the lineout onside for the duration of the lineout.

## KICK AT GOAL

1. When a try is scored, the scoring team has one and a half minutes (90 seconds) FROM THE TIME THE TRY IS SCORED to take the conversion kick. This is playing time, so if there is an injured player who has to be treated or removed before the kick, time should be stopped.

## MAUL

### A. PULLING THE MAUL DOWN / COLLAPSED MAUL

1. Pulling down the maul and/or collapsing the maul is NOT allowed. **PK**

### B. FORMING/JOINING/LEAVING/ENDING THE MAUL

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

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

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

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

### REFEREE NOTES

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

## ADVANTAGE

### A. COMMUNICATION & SIGNALS

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

### B. NO ADVANTAGE

1. If the scrum collapses, pops or players are lifted off their feet, an immediate whistle is required to prevent injury, whether for penalty or reset.
2. If a player deliberately kills the ball on the ground, no advantage should be applied, unless a clear scoring opportunity or an obvious advantage is likely.

### REFEREE NOTES

Always indicate the primary signal first, followed by the secondary signal.

## GENERAL PLAY

### A. OFFSIDE AT KICKS

1. Players in front of the kicker from their team are to remain stationary until they are put onside, or must retreat toward their goal line if they are in front of the line ten meters in front of where the ball lands. **PK or SCRUM**
2. No attempt to retreat must be penalized. Offside players advancing at a kick ahead should be instructed “STOP + COLOR (+ NUMBER, if possible)”.  
Players who continue to move forward must be penalized. **PK or SCRUM**
3. Players that are offside but not within 10m of where the ball lands may move laterally across the field.
1. Players that are offside when a kick goes into touch continue to be offside and must not advance until the quick throw-in is no longer an option OR they are put onside by players of their own team. **PK or SCRUM**

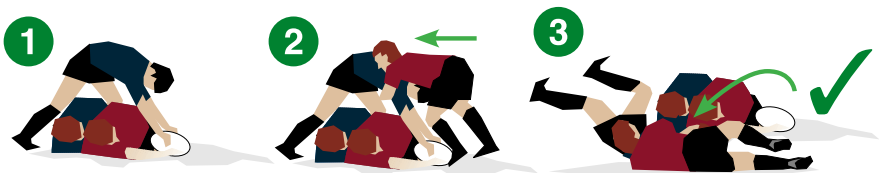
**FOUL PLAY**

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

**A. TACKLE**

The following are not acceptable practices:

1. Leading with the shoulder (making deliberate contact with the shoulder first), and then wrapping with the arm/s or swinging the arm/s into contact. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**
2. Aiming a shoulder first, no-wrap tackle at the knees (e.g. football style). **PK and suspension**
3. Not grasping an opponent. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**
4. Spear tackle. Lifting a player from the ground, turning the body to or beyond horizontal, and either driving the player into the ground or dropping the player without regard for the player’s safety. PK and Red Card.
  - When a player is lifted and turned, there is an obligation on the tackler to get the player to the ground safely.
  - If the tackler lowers the player such that the lower body contacts the ground first there is no offense.
  - If the tackler attempts to lower the player safely, but is unsuccessful, **PK and admonishment or suspension**
5. High tackle (including a chest high tackle where the arm eventually makes contact above the shoulders). **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**  
NOTE: If a player bends forward/down, and is then tackled above the shoulders due to this action, the tackler should be given the benefit of the doubt if their intent was not to tackle high/dangerously.
6. Tackling a player in the air. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**
7. At a tackle, if a player is on their feet with their hands on the ball, an opposition player (if they enter through the gate) may legally bind onto them and roll the player to expose the ball and/or tackle the player. They may not lift the player off the ground and they may not grab the player above the shoulders and/or around the neck. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**



## C. GENERAL

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

## RESTARTS & OPEN PLAY

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

### *REFEREE NOTES*

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



## BALL OUT

### A. RUCK

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

### B. MAUL

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

### C. SCRUM

1. The ball is out when it is totally exposed and clear of bodies (of players in the scrum).
2. If the #8 detaches from the scrum (both shoulders) with the ball at the feet, and attempts to pick up the ball, the BALL IS OUT.

## PENALTY TRY

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



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