



Guidelines for Refereeing Domestic Rugby
Season 2013/14

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INTRODUCTION

It is the intention that these guidelines will inform participants in domestic rugby how the game is to be officiated during the 2013/14 season. It is not intended to change the Laws of the Game which remain the definitive guide to playing the game but it is intended to offer further guidance to areas of law which are open to interpretation.

To reflect recent directives from the International Rugby Board, Scottish Referees will place particular emphasis on the following during season 2013/14:

- Quality Set-piece
- Quick ball from the breakdown
- Space

It is thought that by refereeing the 'Big 5' areas that we have been concentrating on over past seasons that this will allow for a more positive style of rugby to be played at all levels of the game.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct is still the working document for the forthcoming season and is available on the Who's the Ref ([WTR Documents](#)) and Scottish Rugby ([Code of Conduct](#)) websites

The following outlines specific areas to re-emphasise:

- It is paramount that the reputation of game is promoted and not brought into disrepute.
- Referees are accountable and this process is helped when coaches send in referee review forms.
Referee performances will be reviewed by the match officials coaching group. There are set periods in the season where Match Officials will be promoted or demoted by the Match officials Selection Panel.

Problem Areas

- Touchline outbursts
- Press comments on match officials quoting club officials (including on club websites)

What Is Needed

- Continual shouting by club officials during matches referring to Match officials is unacceptable.
- It should be emphasised that public comments by club officials on match officials, must not refer to or infer bias on the part of the match officials against the club.
- The SRU Referee Panel Manager (Colin Brett) is available to discuss refereeing issues with Premiership, National and Championship club coaches. Clubs in National 1 and below should contact their Regional Referee Development Manager in the first instance.



FOUL PLAY

There is no place in Scottish Rugby for foul play. A clear act of foul play must not be ignored. Referees will adjudicate on degree of sanction.

High and Dangerous Tackles

- Use of shoulder leading is unacceptable. Players must grasp an opponent when attempting a tackle.
- Spear tackle: Once a player has been lifted off the ground it is the tackling player's responsibility to ensure that the lifted player is safely returned to ground. If a spear tackle is committed then referees will issue a red card
- High Tackle: Players must not tackle an opponent above the line of the shoulders (this includes tackles that start legally but "ride up").

Dangerous Play

- Law 10.4.J – Players must not charge into a ruck or maul without binding (with a full arm) onto a player in the ruck or maul
- Referees **must** be vigilant to players who clear out opponents not involved in rucks and mauls

Feet on Bodies

- Players must not stamp or trample on an opponent.
- Players must not kick an opponent.
- Law 16.3.F – A player rucking for the ball must not intentionally ruck players on the ground. A player rucking for the ball tries to step over players on the ground and must not intentionally step on them. A player rucking must do so near the ball.
- Feet on heads, limbs and joints – the referee should start thinking red card and move down to yellow card (as well as issuing a penalty).

General

- Sanctions should be taken against foul play. Deliberate, cynical offences should lead to a yellow card regardless of where it occurs on the pitch (i.e. no such thing as a 'red zone')
- Repeat offences can be for infringing in one area or over a number of laws. Warnings and Yellow/Red card decisions should be consistent throughout the entire field.
- If required, referees are to produce yellow cards sooner rather than later in game.
- Accuracy and consistency is paramount.
- Off the ball offences are unacceptable and should lead to a yellow card.
- Tipping in line out to be closely scrutinised.



SCRUM

There is a major change to the engagement procedure for the start of the 2013-14 season and many training sessions will already have taken place, more details are listed in this document. Full details of the changes and a training package by the IRB can be found by following this link

IRB Scrum Training Package

Engagement

- Referee to make a mark and both Hookers must place themselves to the left hand side of this to align the front rows correctly.
- Ensure players in a crouch position either side of mark are able to bind on their opposition player correctly. A loose head prop must bind on the opposing tight head prop by placing the left arm inside the right arm of the tight head and gripping the tight head prop's jersey on the back or side. A tight head prop must bind on the opposing loose head prop by placing the right arm outside the left upper arm of the opposing loose head prop and gripping the loose head prop's jersey with the right hand only on the back or side. The props must not grip the opponent's chest, arm, sleeve or collar.
- Both teams should be "flat" i.e. semi crouch is not acceptable
- Essential that both teams are at the same height before engage
- Teams that refuse to go immediately into the crouch are liable to be free kicked, unless for safety reasons they are not ready
- A clear call by the referee is imperative when calling "crouch, bind, set" and referees will ensure that the cadence is controlled, insisting on one element is complete before moving to the next.
 - These are instructions that players must react to when the referee calls them – not when they feel like doing it
 - Referees will not move on to the next instruction until the previous action has been completed
- Players not to engage until referee calls "set"
- Players who stand up or try to engage prematurely are liable to sanction
- Players who fail to engage once the call has been made render themselves liable to sanction
- Number 8 to be bound correctly on "crouch" and remain bound until scrum ends
- To allow the ball to be entered into the scrum it must firstly become stationary. The referee may communicate to both sets of forwards to try and manage this and allow them to come to a stationary position.



Offside Lines at Scrums – Scrum Half

- Referees should be particularly vigilant of the following offside lines for a scrum half:
 - Law 20.12.D – The scrum half whose team does not win possession of the ball must not move to the opposite side of the scrum and overstep the offside line. For that scrum half, that runs through the hindmost foot of that player’s team in the scrum
 - Law 20.12.E – The scrum half whose team does not win possession of the ball must not move away from the scrum and then remain in front of the of the offside line. For that scrum half, that runs through the hindmost foot of that player’s team in the scrum

Binding and Throw In

- All front rows must bind correctly for duration of scrum – no hands are permitted on the ground for additional support
- If incorrect binding occurs, the player is liable to sanction. Material effect will be the decider as to the referee’s action. Advantage should not be played for an offence of illegal binding by a front row player
- Scrum to be steady and parallel to touch line prior to throw in.
- Only once the scrum has become stationary will the referee allow the scrum half to throw the ball into the scrum. This should be done verbally “OK 9 or OK Scrum half”
- A scrum half that throws the ball in before the referee’s instruction is liable to sanction.
- The referee may position himself in such a way so the scrum half is unable to input the ball. Once the referee moves from this position this is the signal to the player that he/she may throw the ball in.
- Scrum half should be reminded to ensure the throw in to the scrum is both straight and in the middle of the tunnel.. This should be done prior to the scrum engagement procedure commencing. Referees will adopt a ZERO tolerance policy on squint feeds.
- Referees are requested to back away from the scrum after the engagement.
- Referees to penalise if the scrum is steady and parallel and the No.9 delays the feed.
- All players in a scrum other than the front rows must bind on second row with at least one arm for duration of the scrum.
- Extra vigilance should be given to back row players binding at the scrum

Collapsed and Popped Scrum

- Safety is paramount.
- The referee is more liable to reset a scrum that goes up on the mark as opposed to the retreating scrum, which is liable to sanction.
- Referees should not guess as to the cause of a collapse, reset if not sure. If sure be consistent and penalise appropriately.

Wheeled Scrum

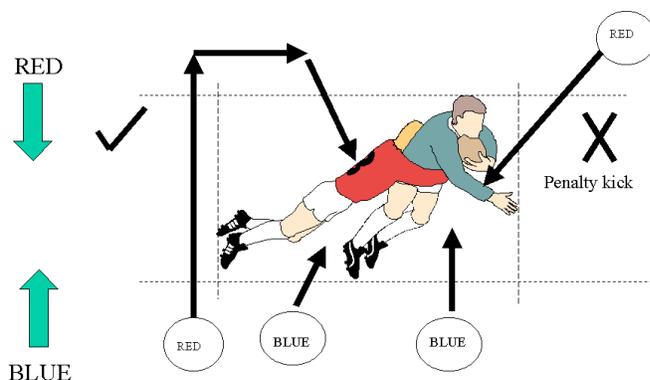
- Referees to be aware of wheeling prior to throw in.
- If a scrum wheels on its fulcrum, then it is likely a whip wheel is involved.
- Beware of tight heads pulling back.

General

- The scrum has to be a contest.
- Providing no safety issues are involved, a referee must not attempt to "de-power" a dominant scrum.

TACKLE

Law 15 7 (b) Tackle



Players who play the ball after a tackle must do so from the direction indicated in the diagram above i.e. from the direction of their own goal line and directly behind the tackled player or tackler nearest to their goal line.

The Tackle

- The referee will ensure the tackle is a fair contest.
- Preventative statements should not be used repeatedly by referee. If players do not respond immediately they are liable to sanction.
- Accuracy of referees and players decision making is paramount.
- Advantage will be played only if ball is quickly available.
- It is recommended that the ball should be available to play within 3 seconds

Tackler

- This is the first priority for the referee once a tackle is complete.
- Tackler must immediately release the ball and the ball carrier.
- Tackler must immediately get up or move away from tackled player and ball.
- Tackler must get to his feet before playing ball and then may play the ball from any direction – prior to a ruck being formed.
- Referee to recognise importance of quick ball and strike a balance between quick and slow ball in relation to the contest.

Tackler Assist

- The tackler assist must clearly release the tackled player before he plays the ball.

- The tackler assist must play the ball from an on-side position

Tackled Player

- Tackled player must attempt to make ball available immediately.
- Once tackled, the player must immediately pass or release ball and get back on his feet before becoming involved in play.
- **If opposition players who are on their feet attempt to play the ball the tackled player must release the ball.**
- Players are not allowed to crawl along ground in possession of ball.
- Players who adopt the squeeze ball position must recycle the ball immediately or become liable to penalty.
- A player lying on the ground must not prevent an opponent (who is on his feet) from gaining possession of the ball.

Arriving Players

- Players **must** enter from behind the ball and directly behind the tackled player (i.e.: through the gate).
- Arriving players must stay on their feet, where possible, **and under no circumstances**, must players 'seal' the ball off i.e. prevent a fair contest for the ball.
- **Attackers to be dealt with in same way as defenders.**
- Players positively clearing out a player in the act of making a new tackle and/ or forming a Ruck is acceptable if arms and hands are used and not a shoulder only.

General

- Accuracy and consistency by referee paramount.
- Unplayables have a place but can't be a cop out for the referees not refereeing the tackle.
- Balance consequences of quick ball, slow ball, penalty or scrum.
- Yellow cards can be given if a professional foul is committed even if team have not been warned. Referees are to be encouraged to give a technical yellow card earlier in game rather than allow slow ball from tackle and then card as a last resort.



RUCK

Forming and Entering a Ruck

- A ruck is a phase of play where one or more players from each team, who are on their feet, in physical contact, close around the ball on the ground. Open play has ended.
- Referees will endeavour to call “ruck” or “ruck, hands off” on those occasions where it is necessary/possible
- Joining players **must** do so from behind the hindmost foot of team-mate and through the “gate” and referees to be particularly vigilant on side entry.
- Players must bind with a whole arm around body of a team-mate

The Ruck

- Players in the ruck **must** endeavour to stay on their feet
- Providing a player from either side on their feet after a tackle comply with all aspects of the Law 15 (Tackle) and have the ball in their hands prior to contact with an opposition player on his feet those players may continue with possession of the ball even if a player from the opposition makes contact with those players in possession of the ball (i.e. hands on the ball **before** a ruck is formed)
- Any players joining the two players contesting the ball must not handle the ball in accordance with Law 16.4.B. If the ball is not in possession of any player after a tackle and a ruck is formed, players may not use their hands in accordance with Law 16.4.B.
- Provided he comes from an on side position and through the “gate”, a player may drive through middle of a ruck. This is permissible as long as players observe correct binding and entry and stay on their feet
- If the scrum half / receiver has no hands on the ball he cannot be touched
- If the scrum half / receiver has hands on the ball he can be touched as long as the tackler was correctly bound, on side and on his feet when beginning the tackle. He must not kick the ball if it is in the scrum half’s hands. He must not deliberately knock the ball forward out of the scrum half’s hands.
- **Offensive and defensive pillars must respect offside lines – the last player’s feet are the offside lines.**
- If the ball is under a foot/ feet of a player bound and on his feet when the half back puts his hands on the ball then the ball is out.
- If the ball is clear of the bodies then it is out.

Successful End to a Ruck

- When the ball is totally exposed, over the goal line or when the acting scrum half clearly has possession of the ball and the ball is clear of the last feet of the ruck

Unsuccessful End to a Ruck

- When the ball has been clearly won by a team at a ruck and the ball is available to be played the referee will call "use it" after which the ball must be played within five seconds.
- If the ball is not played within the five seconds the referee will award a scrum and the team not in possession of the ball at the ruck is awarded the throw-in.
- The ball has been clearly won when it is available to be played immediately from the hindmost foot of the ruck.
- If there is a delay in the receiver player this ball then a warning of "use it" should be given and the five-second countdown should start from then

MAUL

Forming a Maul

- A maul occurs when a player carrying ball is held by one or more opponents and one or more of his team mates bind on to the ball carrier. The referee will call "maul" to ensure all players are fully aware a maul has been formed
- Side entry to be closely monitored.
- A ruck cannot be changed into a maul.
- Players must bind with a whole arm around body of a team-mate

The Maul

- The ball carrier must be available to the opposition
- Players must not jump on top of a maul.
- Ball carrier may go to ground without penalty.
- A player must not take any action to make the opposition believe the ball is out of the maul when it is still in.
- Players can get on the "wrong" side of a maul legally.
- Offensive and defensive pillars must respect off-side lines.



- Only one player can sack a player who comes to ground with the ball in a lineout.
- Referees should be vigilant to obstruction by the team in possession of the ball when forming a maul
- Attacking players creating a rolling maul must ensure that they do not block off the ball carrier; when breaking off the opposition must once again have access to the ball carrier.

Successful End to a Maul

- Maul ends successfully when the ball, or a player with the ball, leaves the maul.
- Maul ends successfully when ball is on the ground or over goal line.
- Referees to call ‘use it’ when maul becomes stationary for the second time.
- Maul moving sideways is considered stationary.
- Players must not intentionally collapse a maul. This is dangerous play.

LINE OUT

Formation

- Referees encouraged to allow quick throw when law observed. Assistant Referees to remain vigilant to quick throws as well.
- If players fail to form a line out when opposition are at line of touch they render themselves liable to a free kick.
- If a team form a line away from line of touch and then move toward line of touch, the referee will ask them to stop until the metre gap is set and observed.
- Teams arriving late must not cross line of touch as they jump.
- Referees will have to monitor the number of participants in the lineout.

The Lineout

- Referees should not slow the game down by trying to set every line out. Set the initial line-outs, set out your stall re gaps and if players don’t respond thereafter – free kick
- Only one player can sack a player who comes to ground with the ball in a lineout
- Participating players in the lineout may change places before the ball is thrown



Receiver Options

- Teams are not required to have a receiver at the lineout
- If a receiver exists, said player must be **2 metres** from the lineout and remain between the 5m and 15m lines.
- Once the lineout has started (i.e. when the ball leaves the throwing in player's hands) this player may join the lineout as normal

After the Ball is thrown

- Players not to peel until ball leaves hooker's hands.
- Lineout participants should not peel down the middle of the lineout.
- Non participants must not encroach 10m until line out ends.
- Players on peel must remain within 5, 15 and 10 area.
- Referee to control backs onside and signal end of line out.
- If players drift infield beyond 15m and the ball does not travel beyond 15m line, they render themselves liable to a penalty.
- Referees to be vigilant of jumpers being tackled in the air and support lifters being tackled illegally.

Maul formation from lineouts

- Teams are entitled to defend a maul so the ball carrier must be bound by opponent at the start of a maul otherwise it is obstruction
- Referees must penalise clear and obvious offences
- Both the ball winning team and the defending team must be refereed equally at the maul

Managing the non-throwing in player

- The defending team **must** have a player in immediate opposition to the player who is throwing in and that player must stay 2 metres away from the 5 metre line **and** 2 metres from the lineout (i.e. 2m x 2m)
- Once the lineout has started (i.e. when the ball leaves the throwing in player's hands) this player may join the lineout as normal.

Throwers Foot in the field of play

- Referees will manage this by asking for compliance before penalising.
- No specific players are required for line-outs. If injured players are far enough away, play should continue



General

- Referee to ensure correct formation before ball is thrown.
- Referees to warn transgressors early before resorting to sanction.
- Delayed throw liable to sanction.
- Hookers and scrum halves to comply with law.
- One metre gap to be obtained and maintained.
- Referees to ensure defenders do not disrupt timing of throw by closing gap or early lifting.

ADVANTAGE

Playing advantage should have a reason, to help the non offending side. It is recognised that playing advantage is an acquired referee skill but it is important to be consistent within the game.

Quick Whistle

- When a scrum collapses or pops up.
- When a player kills a ball on the ground the referee should stop the game immediately and award a penalty unless in his judgement an obvious advantage is likely. Players who intentionally kill or slow down the ball must either be admonished or cautioned.

Delay Whistle

- For a technical offence, possession without being under pressure is sufficient advantage (the gain line is not important).
- If no real gain in territory or clear tactical advantage, then referee should return for the full penalty
- Referee to recognise importance of a kickable position and the tactical advantage gained from a kick to the corner and a possible try.
- Non- offending teams will not be allowed to take a quick tap if the ball is deliberately thrown away.
- If a team do not want to use the advantage (in order to take a quick tap), they should be encouraged to ask the referee for the penalty or free kick rather than deliberately throwing the ball away.
- It is imperative referees are allowed to exercise their judgement.
- The referee will immediately signal when he is playing advantage and continue to signal while he is walking/ slow jogging. Once he begins to run, he will drop his arm even if advantage is continuing. He will verbally indicate advantage over.



KICK OFF, KICKS IN OPEN PLAY AND RESTARTS

Kick Offs

- **Receiver being taken in the air and defending team blocking to be penalised.**
- Kick from behind the line and players behind the kicker both need to be picked up by referees.
- Referees need to be aware of clear and obvious obstruction when forming a maul at kick offs.

Offside at kicks in open play

- Be diligent to players in front of the kicker
 - Ask advancing players to stop once; if they don't, penalise
 - Players in front of the kicker and within 10m of the receiver must be penalised
- If the ball is kicked for touch, players who are offside must not advance until either they are put onside or when the ball has been confirmed as out by the AR/Touch Judge/Referee
- The only person that can stop a quick throw in is a player who is onside at the time the ball went out.
- Players can't advance before the ball is dead otherwise they will liable to sanction.
- Assistant Referees (where appointed) will assist the referees in this area.

Tap Kicks

- Kick should not be taken in front of the mark- has to be on or behind the mark.
- Quick tap kick must be on the mark or behind. Quick tap - if the players are on the ground and the player takes the kick legally then play on (except from a scrum collapse which requires the tap to be on the mark).
- Referees should be more aware of the ball being thrown away or not releasing and subsequently stopping the quick tap.
- If a player inside the 10 metres interferes in the case of a quick tap, then that player is liable to penalty but beware of player "milking" 10 metres.

THE ROLE OF THE ASSISTANT REFEREE

- Consistency between match officials is vital.
- Consistency between both Assistant Referees is imperative, especially when yellow and red cards are involved.
- Ultimate responsibility rests with referee.
- Referee will not over rule an Assistant Referee without prior consultation.
- Referee may confirm close touch down awards with Assistant Referees
- Remain vigilant to the possibility of a quick throw in occurring.

Primary Responsibilities of an Assistant Referee

- Touch
- Touch in goal
- Kicks at goal except drop kicks.
- Foul play.

Secondary Responsibilities of an Assistant Referee

- Advise referee of trends at stoppages in play.
- Offer any other assistance which does not intrude upon primary duties.
- Assist in preventative management of offside at scrums and lineouts.

Assistant Referees Shall

- Signal any incident of foul play regardless of whether or not this was seen by referee.
- Report player's number, team and offence on request of referee.
- Offer a recommended sanction **if requested** by referee to do so.

Assistant Referees Shall Not

- Shout, signal or gesture to players at tackle, ruck and maul. **This is the referee's duty only.** The AR can tell the referee that a player is offside but will not tell the players directly.
- Communicate to referee off side, knock on, or forward pass when referee is in position to make such a decision but can advise if the referee is clearly unsighted.



GENERAL

- There will be a zero tolerance as regards players questioning the referee (including the captain).
- Captains will not be allowed to approach the referee at penalties or free kicks to “discuss” decisions. Clarification can be given, if necessary, at “downtime”.
- Questioning of a referee’s decision at a penalty/free kick – could result in a team being marched back 10metres.
- Referees must not give lengthy explanations when giving decisions.
- Referees should only stop for injuries when it is deemed unsafe to play on.
- If referee requires to leave the field then No1 Assistant Referee (if appointed) should take over immediately (Premiership only). If referee can return within 15 minutes then he may do so.

GAME COACHING

(Those predominantly operating at P7 and below in mini rugby)

Game Coaches should read the previous pages in this booklet and also apply the following to Mini Rugby and Tag Rugby.

The aim of the Game Coach is to create a game with as few stoppages as possible so the children can learn and use the primary skills of rugby, running, handling and tackling. This requires the player to be allowed to pass the ball without the opposition grabbing or blocking it and tackles to be below the waist.

The role of the Game Coach:

- Know the laws (the full laws of the game and the Age Grade Law Variation for your age group).
- Apply the laws.
- Appreciate and apply advantage.
- Referee in the spirit of the game.
- Be sympathetic not domineering.
- To develop every player.
- Referee in accordance with the players' levels of experience.
- To ensure that all players enjoy the game.

Use of the Voice:

- The voice should be used to prevent offences taking place and to coach players through the game. Phrases such as “keep two hands on the ball”; “tackle below the waist” and “stay outside” are helpful.
- Game coaches should also praise and qualify good practice such as “well done – good pass – because you followed through to your target”, or “good tackle, now roll away”.
- The game coach shouldn't be afraid to stop the game and coach both teams about an aspect of play that could be improved.

Advantage

- If the game coach sees an offence, their first thought should always be, “Can I play advantage and keep the game flowing?”
- Let the players know you are playing advantage by calling “playing advantage” and by using the advantage signal.
- Once the game coach has decided there has been enough advantage played, he/she should indicate this by saying “advantage is over”.

Open Play

- Two hands on the ball



- No hand-offs

Contact Area

- Tackles should be below the waist i.e. below the arms and the ball so that a pass can be made.
- Be hard on any tackles that pin an arm or target the ball.
- Encourage the tackled player to pass the ball or place it away from body and release when on the ground.
- Be hard on players on the wrong side blocking the pass.
- Rucking is allowed but do not allow players to be over aggressive or put feet on bodies.
- There should be no mauls in open play if the tackle variations are applied correctly.

Tap and Pass

- The game coach shows where the tap should be taken from by creating a mark in the grass with his / her boot.
- The defending team must be 5m back from the mark. The game coach can help by standing 5m from the mark on the defensive line.
- Ball must move a visible distance with the foot on either the ground or from the hand. Retake if this does not happen.
- Encourage different players to take the tap (thus developing all players).
- Both teams should not move until the ball has left the tap taker's hands but both teams should be encouraged to move forwards following the pass.
- The first receiver (person catching the ball from the tap and pass) does not need to take the ball standing still. Can move onto ball once it leaves the hands of the tap taker. Must pass straight away.
- The defending team can advance once the ball has left the tap takers (first players) hands.

Scrum

- P6 the nearest three players from each team to form the scrum, two props and a hooker.
- P7 set positions with two props and a hooker, as well as a second row of two.
- Stand on the side of the scrum where the ball is being put in.
- Check all players are bound and ready. Backs back 5m from scrum.
- Follow engagement procedure "Crouch", "bind", "Set".
- Both hookers should strike.
- Defending scrum half must stay at mid-line until ball is passed.
- Backs must stay 5m back until ball is passed.