

RUGBY CONTINUUM RULES OF PLAY 2008/09

(B) MINI RUGBY (UNDER 9 AND UNDER 10)

Players and match officials must endeavour to ensure the iRB Laws of the Game, modified by the following playing rules, are observed when playing rugby at Under 9 and Under 10:-

1. Object:

The object of the game is to score a try (5 points). A penalty try will be awarded if a try would probably have been scored but for foul play by the defending team.

2. Teams:

The game is played between teams having a maximum of nine players, three of whom will be forwards and form the scrum, with the remaining players forming the back line. Positions should be interchangeable and coaches are encouraged to rotate players around the positions so they all get experience in different roles. Each side can have an agreed number of substitutes. Substituted players can be re-used at any time. Substitutions may only take place when the ball is "dead" or at half time and always with the referee's knowledge.

3. Starts:

(a) The match is started or restarted from the centre of the field or after a penalty with a free pass. The starter's team must be behind the ball (ie nearer their own try line than the starter). Before the pass is taken, the opposing team must be 7 metres away, nearer their own goal-line. On penalty restarts, a quickly taken free pass whilst the opponents are retiring is not permitted. If the place for the free pass is given within 7 metres of the goal line, the free pass is to be taken at or behind the mark on a line through the mark at least 7 metres from the goal-line.

(b) At the free pass, the ball is held in two hands, off the ground and is passed through the air to a team member. The referee is to ensure that the opposition are 7 metres back before indicating that play is to commence. The receiver of the free pass must start from a line which is no more than 2 metres behind the passer. No player may run until the free pass is made. The passer must not run with the ball or dummy pass. Normal play resumes as the ball leaves the hand of the passer.

(c) Following an infringement for:-

(1) offside;

(2) high or late tackle;

(3) hand off/fend off (a hand off being the placing of an open palmed hand by the ball carrier against an opponent's face or body while a fend off is an outstretched arm by the ball carrier towards an opponent to discourage that person making a tackle);

(4) kicking (including fly-hacking ie kicking a loose ball on the ground); or

(5) obstruction;

the game is restarted at the point at which the infringement occurred with a free pass to the non-offending team. Note that players should be encouraged to carry the ball in two hands to reduce the temptation to hand-off/fend off with a free hand.

(d) After any stoppage not covered elsewhere in this Section (eg following an injury), the match restarts with a scrum to the team moving forward or, if neither team was moving forward, to the team last in possession of the ball.

4. General Play:

(a) In general play, the ball can only be passed sideways or backwards – defined as “towards the player’s own try line”. If the ball is passed forward or knocked on, a scrum is awarded to the opposition unless the referee plays advantage to the non-offending team.

(b) Offside in general play is penalised in accordance with the iRB Laws of the Game. A player offside in general play is to be penalised for being offside unless that player is making an obvious attempt to return to an onside position.

Penalty: A free pass restart to the non-offending side.

(c) If a player carrying the ball goes to ground in general play or if a player goes to ground to gather the ball in general play, the player must immediately do one of three things (or he will be penalised);

- (1) get up with the ball;
- (2) pass the ball to another player; or
- (3) release the ball for another player to pick up.

Note: however, if a player releases the ball by placing it on the ground and his team mates drive over the ball to prevent the opposition gaining possession, a ruck will generally be formed and in this case the ball may not be picked up by hand until the ball has left the ruck, as described in Section 7.

Penalty: Free pass.

5. Tackling:

(a) Any player who has the ball and is on their feet (except in a maul) can be tackled.

Following a tackle:

- (1) The tackler must immediately release the tackled player and get up or move away from the tackled player and the ball. The tackler must get up before playing the ball.

Note 1: Any tackle level with or above the armpit is to be considered a high tackle.

Note 2: The scrag-type tackle (e.g. swinging the player round by the shirt) must be considered dangerous play and must be penalised.

- (2) The tackled player must immediately pass or release the ball and must get up or move away from the ball. The tackled player may put the ball on the ground in any direction, or may push the ball along the ground in any direction except forward (towards the opposition), providing this is done immediately.

- (3) At a tackle, or near to a tackle, players other than the tackler(s) or tackled player who play the ball must do so from behind the ball and from behind the tackled player, or the tackler closest to those players’ goal-line.

(4) Any player who first gains possession of the ball at the tackle or near to it may be tackled by an opposition player, providing that player does so from behind the ball and from behind the tackled player or tackler nearest that player's goal-line.

Infringement of any of the above will result in a free pass being awarded to the non-infringing team.

(b) If, after a tackle, the ball becomes unplayable, a scrum is awarded. The scrum is awarded to the team that was moving forward immediately prior to the tackle or, if no team was moving forward, to the attacking team (the team in the opponents' half of the pitch).

(c) No player shall use the technique known or referred to as "Squeezeball" and no person involved in the teaching or coaching of Mini Rugby may teach or coach or encourage Under 9 or Under 10 players to use the "Squeezeball" technique.

Penalty: Free pass.

Note: "Squeezeball" is a technique where the ball carrier goes to ground, head forward (touching or close to the ground), irrespective of immediate contact with opponents, usually keeping parallel to the touchline, holding and protecting the ball close to the chest and, when on the ground, pushes the ball back between the legs.

(d) It is illegal for any player to voluntarily fall on or over a player lying on the ground with the ball in his possession or to voluntarily fall on or over players lying on the ground with the ball between them or near them.

Penalty: Free pass.

Note:

(1) no advantage shall be played;

(2) a player is assumed to have fallen voluntarily unless the referee is absolutely certain the fall was accidental;

(3) in the very rare instances when the fall is accidental, play must be stopped and a scrum awarded to the side previously in possession.

The object is to keep players on their feet and to prevent them from falling to the ground, thus removing a dangerous area of play. This will create proper rucks and mauls through encouraging players from each team to remain on their feet.

6. Mauls:

(a) A maul occurs when a player carrying the ball is held by one or more opponents and one or more of the ball-carrier's team-mates bind on to the ball-carrier. It is helpful if the referee calls "maul formed". All the players involved are on their feet.

(b) Once a maul is formed, other players may only join the maul from behind the foot of their hindmost team-mate in the maul. Players joining the maul from in front of this eg from the side are offside and should be penalised. Penalty: Free pass.

(c) A maul ends successfully when either the ball or a player with the ball leaves the maul or the ball is on the ground or the maul is on or over the goal line (when the ball may be grounded for a try or touch down as the case may be).

(d) A maul ends unsuccessful if the ball becomes unplayable or the maul collapsed (not as a result of foul play) and a scrum is awarded. Should a maul collapse, the referee must immediately blow the whistle to stop play, to prevent a pile up from developing).

(e) When a maul remains stationary or has stopped moving forwards for more than 5 seconds, but the ball is being moved and the referee can see it, a reasonable time is allowed for the ball to emerge. If it does not emerge within a reasonable time, a scrum is ordered. It is helpful in all maul situations if the referee calls “use it or lose it” prior to awarding the scrum.

(f) When a maul has stopped moving forward it may start moving forward again providing it does so within 5 seconds. If the maul stops moving forward for a second time, and if the ball is being moved and the referee can see it, a reasonable time is allowed for the ball to emerge. A scrum is awarded if it does not emerge within a reasonable time.

(g) In the case of a scrum following a maul, the team not in possession of the ball when the maul began will throw the ball in at the subsequent scrum. If the referee cannot decide which team had possession, the team moving forward before the maul stopped throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward, the attacking team throws in the ball.

(h) Any player at any stage in the maul who has or causes an opponent to have his shoulders lower than his hip joint must immediately be penalised by awarding a free pass. The object of this rule is to prevent the collapse of a maul. It is to help the coach to teach good technique and the referee to penalise bad technique. Any player who has his shoulders lower than his hip joint can only move downwards unless he has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forwards and upwards; all players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile up and possible injury.

7. Rucks:

(a) A ruck occurs where one or more players from each team who are on their feet, in physical contact, close over the ball on the ground. It is helpful if the referee calls “ruck formed”. Players are rucking when they are in a ruck and using their feet to try to win or keep possession of the ball, without being guilty of foul play.

Players must not stand on any part of another player’s body in a ruck –

Penalty: Free pass.

(b) Once a ruck is formed, other players may only join the ruck from behind the foot of their hindmost team mate in the ruck. A player may join alongside this hindmost player. Players joining the ruck from in front of this eg from the side are offside and should be penalised. Penalty: Free pass.

(c) Players must not use their hands to pick up the ball while it is still in the ruck.

Penalty: Free pass.

(d) A ruck ends successfully when the ball leaves the ruck, or when the ball is on or over the goal line (when the ball may be grounded for a try or a touch down as the case may be).

(e) A ruck ends unsuccessfully when the ball becomes unplayable and a scrum shall be awarded. Should ruck collapse, the referee must immediately blow the whistle to stop play, to prevent a pile up from developing.

(f) Scrum following ruck: The team that was moving forward immediately before the ball became unplayable in the ruck throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward, or if the referee cannot decide which team was moving forward before the ball became unplayable in the ruck, the team that was moving forward before the ruck began throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward,

then the attacking team throws in the ball. Before the referee blows the whistle for a scrum, the referee allows a reasonable amount of time for the ball to emerge. If the ruck stops moving or if the referee decides that the ball will probably not emerge within a reasonable time, the referee must order a scrum.

(g) Any player at any stage in a ruck who has or causes an opponent to have his shoulder lower than his hip joint must immediately be penalised by awarding a free pass. The object of this rule is to prevent the collapse of a ruck. It is to help the coach to teach good technique and the referee to penalise bad technique. Any player who has his shoulders lower than his hip joint can only move downwards unless he has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forward and upwards; all players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile up and possible injury.

8. Scrums:

(a) The scrum will be made up of one row of three players from each team, ie a prop on either side of the hooker.

(b) At Under 9, the scrum is uncontested by both sides: the team awarded the scrum will throw the ball into the scrum and must be allowed to win it without contest. Opponents cannot push or strike for the ball. If they do, a free pass restart is awarded to the team throwing the ball into the scrum.

(c) At Under 10, the scrum is contested by both sides: the team awarded the scrum will throw the ball into the scrum and the players in the scrum may contest the ball. Although scrums are contested at Under 10, under no circumstances is the scrum to be:

(1) pushed or pulled more than 1.5 metres towards either try line. Penalty: a free pass at the original spot against the side that has pushed or pulled the scrum;

(2) wheeled more than 45 degrees. Penalty: If a team intentionally wheels a scrum, a free pass will be awarded against that side. If the scrum is wheeled more than 45 degrees without a free pass award, the scrum will be reset with the same team throwing the ball in.

A non-contested scrum, as described in Section 8(b) above, must replace a contested scrum in any of the following circumstances (on safety grounds):

(1) if a player in a scrum has to be replaced and there is no adequate replacement;

(2) if players involved in a scrum have not been properly trained;

(3) if one side is obviously stronger and more experienced than the other and the referee has been unable to get the stronger side to reduce their push to take this into account.

(d) The players from each team will bind together approximately half a metre apart. Each prop will touch the upper arm of his opponent and then pause before the engagement. The referee will talk the players through the engagement procedure in the sequence Crouch, Touch, Pause and Engage. On the grounds of safety, it is important that the referee manages the engagement of every scrum in this way.

(e) Front rows must not be allowed to charge at each other. If they start to engage too close together and with their necks and backs bent, they must be stopped and the scrum reformed. Props' body positions must be parallel to the touchline (not boring in). There must be no downward pressure exerted by hands or arms. Shoulders must always be above the level of the hips.

(f) If the scrum collapses, the whistle must immediately be blown and the appropriate penalty awarded or the scrum reset. If a player is persistently involved in collapsing or illegal binding they must be replaced. If a player's lack of technique or strength is a danger then they must be replaced. All players involved in scrums, including replacements, should be suitably trained and experienced.

(g) Any player at any stage in a scrum who has or causes an opponent to have his shoulders lower than his hip joint must immediately be penalised by awarding a free pass. The object of this rule is to prevent the collapse of a scrum. It is to help the coach to teach good technique and the referee to penalise bad technique. Any player who has his shoulders lower than his hip joint can only move downwards unless he has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forwards and upwards; all players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile up and possible injury.

(h) The back line of the team NOT putting the ball into the scrum must remain 5 metres behind the scrum until the ball emerges or the opposing scrum half places his hand on it. Until this happens, their scrum half must remain directly behind his scrum, in the pocket edged by the two props.

(i) The back line of the team putting the ball into the scrum must remain behind a line through the rear most foot of their props/hooker until the ball emerges or the scrum half places his hands on it. If the team putting the ball into the scrum loses possession in the scrum, their scrum half must retire directly behind his scrum, in the pocket edged by the two props, until the ball emerges or the opposing scrum half places his hands on it.

(j) If a scrum is awarded within 5 metres of the goal line, the scrum is to be taken at a mark such that the middle line of the scrum is 5 metres from the goal line. In this case the defending backs must stay on or behind the goal line.

(k) Referees should pay particular attention to ensure that the scrum half putting the ball into the scrum is not “feeding” his own players: the scrum half must hold the ball with both hands, with its major axis parallel to the ground/the touchline, midway between his knees and ankles. The scrum half must release the ball from outside the tunnel so that it lands midway between the two front rows and beyond the width of the nearer prop’s shoulders.

9. Line Outs:

(a) If the ball or player carrying the ball goes out of play, a line out will take place at the point at which the ball or player crossed the touchline. If a line out is awarded within 5 metres of the goal line, the line out is to be taken at a mark 5 metres out from the goal line. The opponents of the team who carried or last touched the ball before it went into touch throw the ball in. A quick throw in is not permitted.

(b) The line out will be made up of two players from each team (who stand between 2 and 7 metres from the touchline) plus the player throwing the ball in and an immediate opponent (who must stand within 2 metres of the player throwing the ball in) and one player from either side in a position to receive the ball (ie scrum half). Both the thrower in and his immediate opponent are able to take an active role in the line out as soon as the ball has been touched by one of the players in the line out. Players not taking part in the line out must stay behind the offside line until the line out ends.

(c) The offside line for all players not participating in the line out (all players other than those described under Section 9(b)) is 7 metres back from the line of touch, parallel to the goal line, and they must remain behind that offside line until the line out has ended. If the line out is closer than 7 metres to the touchline, the goal line is the offside line.

(d) At Under 9, the line outs are uncontested by both sides and the team throwing the ball in must be allowed to catch and win the ball without any interference from the opposition. the uncontested phase of the line out continues until the line out has ended and the catcher is therefore protected from contact from the opposition unless he/she decides to instigate it.

(e) At Under 10, the line out is contested by both sides.

(f) In both contested and uncontested line outs, the ball must be thrown into the lineout (ie between 2 and 7 metres) and not beyond it, ie the ball must be played by one of the players within the line out. Should the ball be thrown beyond 7 metres without contact, the opposition will be awarded the throw.

Should the opposition then throw beyond 7 metres without contact, a scrum will be awarded to the side originally throwing in. No advantage is to be played in any of these circumstances.

(g) The line out begins when the ball leaves the hands of the player throwing it in. The line out ends when the ball or player carrying it leaves the line out. This includes the following:

- (1) when the ball is thrown or knocked out of the line out;
- (2) when a line out player hands the ball to a player who is peeling close to and parallel to the line – Note: “peeling” occurs when a player leaves the line out (after the ball has been thrown in) to catch the ball knocked or passed back by a team mate;
- (3) when a ruck or maul develops in a line out and both feet of all the players in the ruck or maul move beyond the line of touch; and
- (4) the ball has been passed or carried out of the line out or if the catcher decides to drive through the line out.

(h) When the ball becomes unplayable in a line out, play restarts with a scrum to the team moving forward or, if neither team was moving forward, to the team last in possession of the ball. The scrum will take place 7 metres in from the touchline opposite the point where the line out took place.

(i) All “peeling off” movements must be close to and parallel with the line out. Players must keep moving. Lifting/supporting is prohibited at this level (ie a player may not bind to a jumper until they return to the ground). The player designated to receive the ball (ie the scrum half) may not enter the line out to compete for the ball.

10. In-Goal:

(a) The in-goal area includes the goal line (ie the try line) but not the touch-in-goal line, the dead ball line or the corner posts.

(b) If the attacking team grounds the ball in the in-goal without having committed an offence then a try is awarded. A ball is grounded by applying downward pressure by hand or chest when the ball is in contact with the ground.

(c) If the attacking team is unable to ground the ball for a try because the ball is not in contact with the ground (eg a hand or body is in between) or the attacking player is unable to apply downward pressure, a scrum is awarded to the attacking team 5 metres out from the goal line.

(d) If the defending team grounds the ball in the in-goal or the ball becomes “dead” by going or being carried into touch then:

(i) If the attacking team carried the ball into the in-goal or last touched the ball before it went into the in-goal, a free pass is awarded to the defending team 7 metres out from the goal line;

(ii) If the defending team carried the ball into the in-goal or last touched the ball before it went into the in-goal, a scrum is awarded to the attacking team 5 metres out from the goal line.