



**RUGBY
FOOTBALL
LEAGUE**

**2026
LAW
INTERPRETATIONS**

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Philosophy

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. Foul play and persistent or deliberate technical infringements 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.

NOTE – IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE INTERNATIONAL LAWS OF THE GAME AND TIMEKEEPING PROTOCOLS 2026 ARE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS DOCUMENT

Play the ball

Where an infringement is committed by the defending team, the referee will firstly assess the impact of the infringement before restarting the tackle count by verbally and physically signalling “six again”, except for the following instances:

- Professional fouls
- Repeated infringements
- Where play has broken down (e.g. The infringement by the defending team results in a lost ball or an unacceptable PTB necessitating a stoppage)
- Where the tackle is affected within the 40-metre zone from the goal line and the Referee detects an infringement

2.1 A full penalty will be awarded in the above instances.

- Where the Referee awards a full penalty for a professional foul or repeated infringements, the offending player will be sent to the sin bin.
- A repeated infringement scenario may arise where multiple “six again” restarts have been awarded or there is a theme to the type of “six again” infringement being conceded and, in the opinion of the referee, harsher action is required.

The process

- The Referee will primarily control the 10 metres with the assistance of the open side touch judge.
- The touch judge closest to the ruck will assist the referee to control the ruck and may step on the field of play to do so.
- Touch judges will be encouraged to use their voice and to enter the field of play to assist with their roles.

a. “Six again” will be ruled for any defensive ruck infringement except as set out in section 2.1.

- b. A full penalty will continue to be awarded for foul play.
- c. If, in the opinion of the Referee, the attacking team deliberately breaks down play in an attempt to convert “six again” to a full penalty, the Referee will order a handover of possession resulting in a Play the Ball.
- d. Teams do not have to be warned about repeated infringements before the Referee awards a full penalty and uses the sin bin as a stronger deterrent.
- 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 they interfere with the play the ball process.
 - Players not in possession of the ball should not interfere with opposition players by either preventing them from making/completing a tackle or pushing or pulling tacklers after the tackle is complete. It is the role of the referee to act if they believe a player is deliberately interfering in the play the ball area.
 - Ball carriers that prevent defending players from leaving the tackle i.e. deliberately trapping or holding, may be penalised.
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Slow play the ball

Teams may try to gain an advantage by slowing the play the ball down. 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 a ‘descriptive’ action to the tacklers in the ruck area. 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 their 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.

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

- They must regain their feet with the ball in their possession as soon as the tacklers have removed themselves from the tackle.
- They must have no other part of their body other than their feet in contact with the ground.
- They must maintain balance and control at the point the ball is played and make an attempt to make contact on the ball with their foot.
- 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 controlled play the ball will follow in this circumstance.

- Passing into an opposing player – Any ball deliberately passed into an opposing player in and around the ruck, in any direction, will be deemed to be acting against the spirit of the game. **OUTCOME - The passer will be immediately penalised**
- Referees should call held and then release in an upright tackle when they deem the tackle to be complete.
- Tackles near touch / in goal area - If in the opinion of the referee a tackle would inevitably result in the player being taken into touch or their own in goal area the referee will not call held in these instances.

The Surrender Tackle

- 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.
- Actions where ball carrying players dive at the legs of the tacklers or immediately drop to the floor after initial contact are classed as surrender tackles.
- Where a referee identifies a “surrender” tackle they 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.

The Dominant Tackle

- 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 and the tackle is complete, 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. When the referee has decided that enough extra time has been allowed in the tackle they should call “stand” at which time the tacklers should take up their position in the defensive line or at marker.

Mid-air tackle

It is illegal to tackle an opposing player attempting to field a kick whilst the player is in mid-air (please note this only applies to kicks being taken on the full, not after a ball has bounced unless the tackle is deemed to endanger the opponent).

Lending Weight

- Where a player comes in to support their teammate who is in possession and is being pushed back, they will only be deemed as lending weight if they are in a pushing position, the ball carrier is losing ground and there is a clear pause in momentum. 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.
 - An attacking player may lend weight to the ball carrier with the objective of not losing ground.
 - It is not permissible for an attacking player/s to impede any defender from making a tackle. An attacking player is permitted to push a teammate over the goal line if he does not impede a defender who is trying to make a tackle on the ball carrier.
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Marker Defence

- 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.
 - Once the ball is played, any player who is not a Marker shall not be involved in play unless they have retired 10m toward their own goal line from where the ball was played.
 - Where the referee decides action is required for marker infringements and the play the ball is on or beyond their opponents 40 metre line, the referee will restart the tackle count by signalling “six again”.
 - A full penalty will be awarded for marker infringements if the ball carrier places the ball on the ground to begin the play the ball process within 40 metres of their own goal line.
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Tackle Count

- The touch judges and video referee must keep the tackle count and assist the referee if necessary.
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Offside at the Play the Ball

- Defending players should not loiter around the play the ball area.
- 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” indicating that the ball has been played (when the ball clears the foot). 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.

- 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:
 - Defenders must be touching the goal line with the back foot; and
 - Defenders cannot place their front foot past the centre of the ruck; and
 - Defenders cannot make contact with the ball or dummy half until the dummy half has had the opportunity to clear the ball from the ruck

Offside in General Play / Kicks

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

Players who are ahead of the play the ball when the ball is played and stay ahead of the play the ball will be classed as downtown.

Offside at Kicks (Active / Passive)

Are the chaser(s) inside 10 metres of a defender waiting or moving towards the ball and are they active or passive?

Waiting for the ball / moving towards the ball – Definition - For a player to be classed as waiting for the ball / moving towards the ball they must be in a position with a realistic opportunity to receive the ball.

Active or passive:

- Active: an offside player who takes part in and/or influences the course of the game.
- Passive: an offside player who does not influence the course of the game.

Active / Passive Considerations

Challenging the player waiting for the ball – active

Level of impact / influence on the player waiting for the ball:

- Distance from player waiting for ball
- In the eyeline of player waiting for ball
- Advancing with speed towards player waiting for the ball
- Contact with player waiting for the ball
- Number of players in the vicinity of the catcher

- Distracting the catcher

Offside players who are within 10m, must not play an active part in any subsequent play up to the next PTB / stoppage, unless they place themselves back onside by retiring behind the point of the kick.

Video Referee Process Following Kicks in General Play

- The video referee should, as a matter of course, always go back to the kick when a try is scored from a kick regardless of the field position of the kick.

Process

Freeze ball on the point of the kick – wide camera. Kick - Making an intentional motion to kick the ball with any part of the leg (except the heel) from knee to toe inclusive. An indicator is a change to the normal running gait.

- Sign off on onside and offside players. (Chaser/s must have both feet behind the ball)
- If chaser/s are offside, check they do not put themselves onside by stepping back after the kick (both feet behind point) or the kicker runs in front of them.
- If a player/s is offside, run it through to the possible try and check involvement. Follow kicker and offside player/s.
- Are they inside 10 metres of a defender waiting or moving towards the ball and are they active or passive?

Escorts

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 that causes disadvantage to chasers should be penalised.

Ball Played At

When the ball is being passed by the ball carrier the ball will be ruled as played at if it has left the hands of the ball carrier and been touched by the defender with the finger, hand or arm.

Charge Down

Indicators of charge down are players:

- Being outside their normal running motion
 - Jumping in the air even when not facing the ball
 - Raising hands or arms to block the path of the ball
 - Deliberately running through the path of the ball
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40-20 / 20-40 Kicks

- The referee will make a 'live decision' on the 40-20 / 20-40. The referee can ask the video referee to check the 'live decision'. The video referee will view replays to check where the ball has been kicked from and assess if there is 'sufficient evidence' to overturn the 'live decision'. This will be indicated to the referee who will signal appropriately.
 - Contact with the 40m (40/20) or 20m (20/40) line at the point of the kick means the kick is from outside the 40m / 20m area whichever is applicable.
 - A live decision will be made on where the ball enters touch. The video referee will check if there is sufficient evidence to overturn the live decision.
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Obstruction

Main considerations:

Consider the significance and level of disadvantage any obstruction has had on the defender.

- It is the responsibility of the lead runner to find space, pull up short or get through the defensive line.
- The following indicators will also be considered, in the opinion of the referee/video referee, for an obstruction to include:

Other considerations (offence)

- Lead runner(s) (who does not receive the ball) should not run a chest or outside shoulder line of a defender(s) and initiate contact or cause a defender to have to make a significant adjustment to their movement.
- Lead runner(s) (who does not receive the ball) running an inside shoulder line of a defender(s) should not initiate significant contact.
- The sweep runner must receive the ball beyond the inside shoulder of the lead runner.

- 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.
 - **Ball carrier running behind their teammate:**
 - Must not disadvantage the defensive line.
 - Must surrender to the tackle or be tackled immediately.
 - **Other consideration (defence)**
 - Does the defender initiate contact?
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Advantage

- 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.
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Scrum

- 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.
- 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.
- The team with the loose head and feed may elect to the referee verbally to move the scrum to:
 - 10m in from touch
 - 20m in from touch
 - Centre field
- The default position will be the 20-metre mark.
- Where players break early or are offside before the referee has called “out”, the referee will award a full penalty. The team receiving the penalty will have the option of re-forming the scrum.

- If the scrum is re-formed and players again break early or are offside, a further penalty will be awarded and one of the offending players will be sent to the sin bin.

Handovers

- All handovers will be taken on the mark, the exception being when the ball enters touch. In this situation the play the ball restart will be 10 or 20 metres from touch or midfield. The default position will be the 20-metre mark.
- A defensive team can select how many markers they employ at all handovers (maximum 2).

Restarts

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

Contested Goal Line Dropouts

- If a team kicks a drop out on the full over the touchline or kicks a drop out so that it fails to travel at least 10 metres forward in the field of play, play will restart with a play the ball 10 metres out from the centre of the goal line rather than a penalty kick from the centre of the 10 metre line.

Contested 20m Dropouts

- If a team takes a 20 metre drop out and it travels on the full over the touchline or kicks a 20m drop out so that it fails to travel at least 10 metres forward in the field of play, play will restart with a play the ball from the centre of the 20 metre line, rather than a penalty kick from the centre of the 20 metre line.

Note 1

- For the avoidance of doubt and the purposes of contested restarts described above (goal line, 20 metre drop out) the intention of the kicker must be that the kick can be contested by both the kicking and receiving team, otherwise will result in a penalty. This judgement will be in the opinion of the referee.
- Typically, these are either high cross-field kicks or bouncing cross-field kicks towards chasers from the kicking team.

Note 2

- The contested restarts described above apply only to breaches by the kicking team where the kick either does not travel 10 metres forward or goes into touch on the full.
- If players from either team make contact with the ball before it has the opportunity to travel 10 metres a full penalty will still apply.

Note 3

- If the contested restart as described above does not travel 10 metres forward or is kicked into touch on the full, and the half time or full time hooter sounds prior to the play the ball taking place, time will be extended until the next tackle or stoppage after the ball has been played.
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Restarts of Play

- Players will be allowed to take a quick 20 metre restart providing the player who collects the ball after the ball has gone or been made dead takes that restart without passing the ball to anyone else and the referee has blown their whistle to allow this to take place.
 - The referee will blow the whistle when they are in a position to officiate and all attacking players are onside.
 - 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.
 - Should the video referee be called to assist on deciding the way the game should be restarted after the ball is no longer in play, the referee should nominate their ‘live decision’ then the video referee should inform the TV Director immediately by calling “video referee”.
 - The video referee will assess if there is ‘sufficient evidence’ to overturn the ‘live decision’. This will be indicated to the referee who will signal appropriately.
 - The only exception to checking a restart after the ball is no longer in play is where there is doubt as to whether the ball is dead before being run out by a player who gets tackled in the field of play. In this instance the referee may stop play at tackle 1 to check the restart.
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Penalty Restarts

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

- A ball that is tipped on in a forward direction (player does not take possession of the ball) is classified as a knock on, not a forward pass.
 - When determining whether a ball is knocked on, its path in relation to the ground is the essential element and not the direction in relation to the player touching the ball.
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Ball Steal

- If there are two or more defenders effecting the tackle (holding the ball carrier) and the ball is stolen a penalty should be awarded. In the case of defenders intentionally dropping off the tackle leaving one defender effecting the tackle, a penalty should still be awarded.
 - If the ball comes loose, follow the path of the ball until it is touched down, made dead or picked up by an opposition player. Advantage can be played following a ball steal providing the referee has not blown his whistle.
 - If the ball is stolen whilst a player is attempting to score a try and there is more than one tackler involved in the tackle a penalty will be awarded ten metres out opposite where the offence took place. A penalty try will not be awarded and players will not be sin binned.
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Live Review

In the case of a 'TRY'

- Where the referee believes a 'try' has been scored, the referee will award the try.
- The VR will review the decision prior to the conversion taking place without stopping the game.
- The conversion attempt will not be permitted until the VR is satisfied that the on-field decision of 'try' should not be overturned, based on sufficient evidence.
- This confirmation will be communicated to the referee from the VR.
- If the conversion attempt is declined, the game will not be restarted until the VR is satisfied that the on-field decision of 'try' should not be overturned, based on sufficient evidence.
- On any occasion where the VR has not finalised their review of the decision with 1 min 20 secs of the try being awarded or before the kicker attempts the conversion, the referee will call time-off.
- If the VR finds the on-field decision of 'try' as incorrect, the VR will advise the referee to call time-off and overturn the decision.

- Prior to restarting play, the referee will confirm with the timekeeper that the game clock has been reset to the point in time where the referee blew their whistle to award the try.

In the case of a 'NO TRY'

If the on-field officials indicate 'no try' and require a decision to be reviewed, the following procedure will occur:

1. The referee will call time off and physically signal for a referral to the VR.
2. The VR will then assess the play and assess if there is sufficient evidence to overturn the live call.
3. If the decision is incorrect, the correct decision will be indicated to the Referee, players and spectators via the screen.
4. The referee will communicate briefly to the players the reason for the decision after it has appeared on the screen.

Drop Goal (Video Review)

The VR may review any potential point-scoring play. In relation to a drop goal, the VR may review the following:

- That the ball has gone between the uprights and over the cross bar
- Any aspect of foul play
- If a player(s) from the attacking team obstructs a defender(s); or
- If a defender(s) is not square at marker

Note:

If both of the last two points occur and the drop goal is successful, the offside marker will be deemed out of play and the drop goal will stand.

Boring Through the Play the Ball to Score

- If an attacking player, attempting to score a try, dives through or into a teammate in front of them, including the player playing the ball then this should be deemed as obstruction, if the defensive team is materially disadvantaged.
- If the player playing the ball obstructs a defender this will be penalised.

Double Movement

- Did the ball carrier promote the ball from the original position when the tackle was made?
 - If a player is tackled short of the goal line and makes a second movement to place the ball on or over the try line, a try may be awarded provided that the momentum of the tackle takes the player on or over the goal line and a try would have been scored irrespective of that second movement.
 - Double movement decisions should be viewed at both full speed and slow motion.
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Grounding the Ball

Process

- If the ball is stationary, then check for downward pressure and control.
- If the ball is moving, then check that the ball changes shape or rotation as it is touched/grounded.

In the process of grounding the ball (in possession):

- Hand(s) / finger(s) – If the ball is carried by the hand(s) / finger(s) and there is separation from the hand(s) / finger(s), the player must catch, hold or regrip the ball before it is grounded.
- Arm(s) – If the ball is carried by the arm(s) and there is separation, the player must catch, hold or regrip the ball before it is grounded.
- Downward pressure is still required.

In the process of grounding the ball (not in possession):

- Ball NOT on the ground – The player can only bring the ball to the ground with hand/hands.
 - Ball itself on the ground – Dropping on the ball and covering it with the torso (the front of the body above the waist and below the neck) or arm (shoulder to wrist) or hand.
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Penalty Try

- The on-field referee will make a live decision, the video referee will view replays to decide if there is sufficient evidence to overturn the live decision.
 - The decision is based on the video referee opinion as whether a try would have been scored but for the unfair play of an opponent.
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Eight Point Try

- If a defending player is sin binned or sent off for a foul on a player who is in the act of “touching down for a try”, who then 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.
 - 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 player is in the act of scoring 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.
 - 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 their sole discretion determine.
 - The referee after consultation with the other on field officials will make a ‘Live Decision’.
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Grounding the Ball in Own In Goal

- If in the opinion of the referee a defending player intentionally **touches down** in their own in goal area a goal line drop out will be awarded.
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Reporting Foul Play

- A touch judge should report foul play by use of the on-field communications system.
- They may on occasion report foul play by entering the field and give their opinion to the referee on the outcome.

- If an incident is placed ‘on report’ and a player immediately leaves the field because 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.

Foul Play

- If a penalty has been awarded, the video referee will assist in identification of players and give clarification to the referee once a replay has been seen. The final decision will lie with the on-field referee.
- If a penalty has not been awarded then the video referee will only advise on foul play if, in their opinion, it is of a serious enough nature for a player to be placed on report, sin binned or sent off. The final decision will lie with the on-field referee.
- If after the play the ball a video referee views a missed incident of foul play, which in their opinion warrants a sin bin or dismissal, the video referee can inform the on-field referee that there has been an incident that should be placed on report.
- A penalty will not be awarded, and play will resume at the point where the referee stopped the game to place it on report.
- If a player immediately leaves the field of play, then the interchange is a ‘free’ interchange.

Sin Bin

- A player who is sin-binned must leave 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.

Concussion – Role of Match Referee (to be read in conjunction with iMG protocols)

- Objective – to assist medical staff in ensuring a concussion assessment is carried out.
- 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 this case the clock shall be stopped until the player leaves the field.
- If a match official has concerns that a player may have suffered a concussion they may stop play and call the medical team onto the field of play to express their concerns and ask them to examine the player.

Unnecessary Endangerment

- A defending player endangers the safety of an opponent by making contact to the lower limb(s) of the opponent in an uncontrolled manner in a situation where there is no genuine attempt to make a tackle and which involves an unacceptable risk of injury to the opponent.
 - This will only be relevant where the tackler has made contact with the lower leg of the ball carrier. For the avoidance of doubt, first contact with the ball carrier could have been above the knee joint but in this situation the direction of the force from the tackler must have been towards the floor.
 - Indicators for this offence are the tackler:
 - Is off their feet at the point of contact with the ball carrier.
 - Failed to attempt to wrap their arms around the ball carrier as the tackle was made.
 - Made contact with the legs of the ball carrier on or below the knee.
 - Put their own head in front of the ball carrier.
 - In the opinion of the referee the player is not looking at the ball carrier when going into or on contact and approach to contact is out of control (e.g. eyes to floor).
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Captains Challenge

1. Initiation of Challenges

1. Challenges may only be initiated by the captain or a nominated replacement player in their absence.

Process

- a. Only the captain can initiate a challenge. If the captain is off the field, an additional player may be nominated to the referee, or to the touch judge by the head trainer during the match.
- b. The captain (or nominated replacement player) must inform the referee of which element of the decision they are challenging. If the video referee determines that an infringement occurs prior to the element of the incident that is being challenged, the first identified infringement will supersede the challenge.
- c. The captain can challenge decisions by the referee from the point of the stoppage, back to the previous play the ball (or restart of play).
- d. The captain can only challenge decisions by the referee which cause play to stop (i.e. Any decision by the referee to 'play on' cannot be challenged).
- e. Teams with multiple captains, must advise the referee at the coin toss which captain will be communicating with the referee during the game. (B)

f. The captain can only challenge decisions resulting in point(s) being scored when the on-field referee awards the point(s) without a referral to the video referee. A video referee try / no try decision cannot be challenged.

2. Permissible Challenge Situations

2. The challenge is only permissible in instances where the referee blows the whistle to stop play (except for stoppages for injury or suspected injury).

Process

a. For clarity, as detailed on point 2 above, a challenge cannot be requested during general play if a whistle has not already been blown to stop play. E.g. A defending captain / player who suspects that the referee has missed a knock on from an attacking player may not stop general play by requesting a challenge.

b. Decisions that cannot be challenged are set out below:

- Forward Pass
- Roll Ball

The following discretionary penalties:

- 10m/marker offside
- Ruck Infringements relating to the speed of the play the ball.
- Tackled into touch or in goal after the held call.
- The mark of a penalty
- Time wasting
- Dissent
- Deliberate forward pass
- Scrum penalties

c. If a captain is in any doubt about whether a particular decision can be challenged, they may ask the referee if the decision is challengeable.

d. A challenge can be made following the final play in each half provided the referee has not already called half time or full time.

e. If a player commits a deliberate act in an attempt to create an opportunity for a Captains Challenge, the referee has the option to deem this a Professional Foul which could result in a sin bin.

f. If the referee penalises a player for dissent, no challenge, including prior incidents, will be permissible by the offending player's team.

3. Number of Challenges

3. Each team will be entitled to one unsuccessful challenge per match (80 mins).

Process

a. Each team will be allowed to make a maximum of one unsuccessful challenge per game (80 mins). Note – Each team will be allowed an additional challenge in golden point (this will be added to any retained challenge at the end of 80 mins).

b. If, based on the available technology:

- The VR determines that the original on-field decision should be changed, the challenge will be successful, and the team will retain their opportunity to challenge.
- The VR determines that the original on-field decision is correct, the decision will remain unchanged, and the challenge will be unsuccessful, and that the team will not have the opportunity to challenge any other decisions for the remainder of the match.
- The VR determines the review is inconclusive, the on-field decision will remain unchanged, and the team will retain their challenge.
- The VR determines a prior breach, and the on-field decision will be altered, the team will retain their challenge. Any prior breach must be for a decision that is challengeable (see 2b).

4. Time Limit

4. Time Limit - A time limit of 10 seconds will apply to indicate a challenge from the point that the referee has signalled and verbalised the decision made.

Process

A captain has until the earlier of the following two events to initiate a challenge:

- When the referee is ready to recommence play, the challenge time frame will lapse. The referee will not unduly delay the restart of play.
 - 10 seconds from the referee communicating the decision (by signal and verbally).
- a. The captain can verbally indicate to the referee that they wish to challenge the decision.
 - b. Once the captain has indicated within the required time frame that they wish to challenge, they are required to advise the referee the specific aspect of the decision to be challenged.
 - c. The referee will then use the existing VR signal and verbally confirm the decision that is being challenged.

5. Restart Procedures Following a Challenge

5. The following restart procedures will apply following a challenge:

Process

- a. If a challenge is successful, the match will recommence with the referee overturning their original decision in the correct manner.
- b. If the challenge is successful and there is no formal restart, it will be treated as a mutual infringement.

c. If the challenge is unsuccessful, the match will re commence as originally determined by the referee.

d. If the challenge has been deemed inconclusive, the match will re commence as originally determined by the referee with the challenge being retained by that team.

Bleeding Player Procedure

- If a player is bleeding profusely, they must leave the field and only return when the bleeding has been stopped. In general, the following procedure should apply:
- If the referee, video referee or touch judge's notice 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 they re-join play then the referee must insist that this player leaves the field for further treatment.
- A player who has blood-stained clothing must change the stained clothing.

Calling Time Off

The referee will be encouraged to keep the game going wherever possible and shall only call time off for an injured or apparently 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, or off field personnel request to do so or a player is lay in the ruck area in possession and refuses to either play the ball or hand it over to a team mate to play the ball. 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 they see a player throwing the ball away and may act if there is any repetition of this.

- Should the referee call time off either themselves or at the request of either a physio, Doctor or head Trainer to allow a player to receive attention then the protocols set out in the Timekeeping protocols will be followed and the player will either leave the field for a concussion assessment, be interchanged, leave the field of play and return immediately once an interchange card is handed over or leave the field for 2 minutes of elapsed playing time before being allowed to re-enter the field by the Reserve Referee in an onside position from the dug-out side of the field. In this event the referee will show a green card confirming this process. For the avoidance of doubt the green card process will only apply in Men's Super League.
- Should the Referee call time off either themselves or at the request of either a physio, Doctor or head trainer for an injury that results from a penalty for foul play, the injured player will not be subject to the green card policy as outlined.

- On restarts, the referee will call time off when the touch judges have got into their positions (except for drop-outs which are subject to shot clock protocol). This should be a consistent process throughout the game and should not vary depending on the scoreline.
- If a team rushes to the mark of 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.
- 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.

Miscellaneous

- If a pattern of repeated infringements occurs the referee has the option to sin bin the player.
- Ungentlemanly conduct - Players who fail to act within the true spirit of the sport. This relates to those players who choose to incite opposition players, often when they have committed an error or conceded a penalty. This type of ungentlemanly conduct will be dealt with an appropriate sanction determined by the match official including penalty / sin bin / dismissal.
- A player can be sent to the sin bin if the referee deems they require a cooling off period.
- Rules on shot clock for scrums, dropouts and goal kicks, please see Timekeeping Policy 2026.

General Protocol

- The video referee must be in position to assist with all warm-up checks, with the on-field officials 30 minutes prior to the scheduled kick off time.