

Guide to the Laws of Rugby Union Football

An adaptation of USA Rugby's "Guidelines on the Application of Law"

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2 TACKLING	2
CHAPTER 3 RUCK, MAUL OR TACKLE?: HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE.....	4
CHAPTER 4 RUCKS	5
CHAPTER 5 MAULS	7
CHAPTER 6 SCRUMS	9
CHAPTER 7 LINEOUT	12
CHAPTER 8 OFF-SIDE AND OBSTRUCTION	14
CHAPTER 9 FOUL PLAY / PENALTY KICK / FREE KICK....	16
CHAPTER 10 ADVANTAGE	18
CHAPTER 11 KICK-OFFS	19
CHAPTER 12 NUMBER OF PLAYERS AND THE REPLACEMENT AND SUBSTITUTION OF PLAYERS.....	20
APPENDIX 1 RECOMMENDED PENALTIES FOR FOUL PLAY INFRINGEMENTS.....	22

Chapter 1 Introduction

The English have generally never been known for keeping things simple. Rugby is no exception. The most challenging obstacle to being a rucker, aside from the intense physical demands of the game, is learning the rules of the game.

And what a challenge that is! Mulling through the Laws of the game is something every player **MUST** do, but it is not a pleasant task. Thankfully, the task has been made easier by the recent adoption of the Laws in Plain English as the official Laws of the Game.

The Laws of the Game, even in its simpler format, is meant to be detailed and comprehensive, covering every conceivable situation in a rugby match, down to the correct air pressure of the ball. But what if you just want to get an idea of the rules of the game that are most relevant to playing? Our Rookier Primer, is a good start, but it is meant to give you the 30,000-foot overview. What if you want a more in-depth idea of what the rules are without having to wade through obscure rules not relevant to you as a player?

That's where this guide comes in. It is meant to tell what you can and can't do in specific situations. This guide is an adaptation of the annual guidelines put out by USA Rugby that state in a very practical manner how the laws apply in situations most ruckers will find themselves in during a game. Study this document and you'll know the finer points and nuances of 90% of the game.

This guide is not meant to be a substitute for reading the Laws. Think of this guide as a the "Cliff's Notes" version of the Laws.

Just like reading the Cliff's Notes is no substitute for reading the real work, this is not meant to replace reading the Laws. Simply put: **READ THE LAWS.**

How to Approach This Guide

This guide is not meant to exist in a vacuum. The best way to approach this guide is read it all the way through first. Next, re-read one section, then watch a game, preferably on video. As you watch the game, concentrate on what you've learned from that section. For example, if you just read the section on tackling, concentrate on seeing examples in the game of items you've read about, such as releasing the ball immediately or being on your feet before you can touch a ball on the ground. Generally, you only need to see a few examples of this in a game before you are ready to move on to the next section

Let's get to it.

Chapter 2 Tackling

When a tackle is made, there are three priorities for the players in the tackle situation:

1. The ball must be made available immediately (for the tackler)
2. The ball must be played (for the tackled player)
3. Arriving players must remain on their feet

Making the ball available

Tacklers have to let the tackled ball carrier play the ball immediately.

The **tackler must move away and let the tackled ball carrier play the ball immediately** (i.e., without delay). The tackler must not execute the tackle in a way that willfully causes the ball to become buried. If the tackler is pinned so that he cannot move away, he is still obliged to allow the tackled player to play the ball immediately. The tackler should not limit options of arriving players or cause a situation that could lead to rucking of players on the ground.

The referee should ensure that the tackler moves away from the tackled player immediately. If you tackle someone in a way that prevents the tackled guy from playing the ball, the ref will say "Roll away", calling out your jersey color and player number, as a preventative measure. This gives you a chance to avoid the penalty. He usually says this as the tackle is going to ground so that you know what to do as soon as the tackle has been made.

For example, this phrase could be used when the tackler has grasped the ball carrier around the upper body and arms, which is likely to result in a smother tackle. This phrase is also recommended when the tackler is lying on the ground in the path of arriving players, which should prevent the elimination of options by arriving players and should avert rucking of bodies on the ground. It is important for the referee to prevent foul play on players who are lying on the ground.

Playing the ball

Tackled ball carriers **MUST** play (pass, release, place, push or roll) the ball so that it is immediately available to all arriving players, both opponents and team mates..

The **tackled ball carrier must play the ball without delay** and without any second effort, and he should take no further action until he is standing. **He should not retain the ball until support players have arrived.** If a player (either an opponent or a team mate) is standing over the tackled ball carrier and waiting to play the ball, the tackled ball carrier must release the ball to the standing player. In this situation, the tackled player has lost his option to pass the ball or to place it. The tackled player must not take any action which limits options of his opponents or encourages rucking of players lying on the ground.

For example, if the ball carrier is tackled so that the ball is placed on his opponent's side of the tackle, the tackled player can't roll over the ball to put it back on his side of the tackle.

The referee should ensure the tackled ball carrier plays the ball immediately. As the tackle is going to ground, the ref may say "Play it," or "Release it" or "Roll away" calling out jersey color and player number so that the ball carrier knows what to do as soon as the tackle has been made.

Staying on your feet

Players arriving to a tackle situation **MUST stay on their feet and enter the tackle area from their side of the tackle.**

Arriving players must enter the tackle area from behind the ball and from behind the tackled player or the tackler closest to the arriving player's goal line. Arriving players who are trying to retrieve the ball must have their weight on their feet.

It is permissible for arriving players to stand over a teammate lying on the ground and touch that player so long as they do not support themselves on that player. Players can't lean on a teammate on the ground, go to ground, or go on top of players on the ground in an effort to "seal off" or "secure" the ball.

Arriving players may end up going to ground because their opponents are not contesting possession. These arriving players must be endeavoring to form a ruck, which means they must be going over the ball in a *driving*, not *diving*, fashion. (See the chapter on rucks.) The intent of the *drive* is to form a ruck; the intent of the *dive* is to seal off the ball. Arriving players should not prevent the tackler(s) or tackled player from getting up or moving away, and if the arriving players are on their feet, they may contest for possession of the ball.

If a player who is on his feet and is attempting to recover the ball falls to the ground through the actions of others, he must move away.

If an arriving player gains possession of the ball he must not go to ground in the tackle area, but he may be tackled by an opponent provided the opponent enters the tackle area from behind the ball and from behind the tackled player or tackler nearest his goal line. **Players may consider that a tackle has finished when the ball has moved well beyond 1 meter from**

the tackle area, such as what occurs when the tackled ball carrier passes the ball.

A simple guideline that refs use to detect proper entry is to ensure the arriving players are advancing with their butts pointed towards their goal line. Once the player on his feet has the ball he must immediately play it or move away. Referees will deal firmly with players who:

- reduce options
- slow down ball delivery
- deliberately infringe.

The referee will award a penalty kick for a first infringement and then sin bin a player for repeated offenses.

Chapter 3

Ruck, Maul or Tackle?: How to Tell the Difference

If a player on his feet is trying to pick up the ball at a tackle situation, the referee needs to know when it is still a tackle and when arriving players create a ruck.

- If the ball is still in the tackled player's possession, the player on his feet has priority and the ball carrier must allow him to pick the ball from his grasp. Failure to do so puts the ball carrier at risk for not releasing the ball (a penalty).
- If the ball is on the ground within one meter of the tackle, a player on his feet is allowed to pick the ball from the ground. Also, this player may be tackled by an opponent provided the opponent enters the tackle area from behind the ball and from behind the tackled player or tackler nearest his goal line.
- If the player on his feet has placed his hands on the ball but has not yet lifted it when an opponent on his feet comes onto contact with him over the ball, then a ruck has formed and the ball must be released. As soon as this situation occurs, the ref should say "Ruck formed, hands off."

The referee can facilitate player awareness by communicating what he sees. If the referee sees a ruck has formed rather than a tackle, he should say "Ruck formed; back foot." If the referee sees a maul has formed, he should say "Maul formed; keep it up."

If two players of the same team roll off a maul with both players holding the ball or with one player bound onto the ball carrier from behind, an opposing player may initiate a tackle and

complete it provided the action is *continuous and without delay* (i.e. in one fell swoop). This will be considered a **tackle**, not a collapsed maul (a penalty). If there is a delay in the completion of the tackle, the referee should indicate a maul has formed and that it should not be taken down by saying "Maul formed; keep it up."

The **ball carrier** in a maul **may convert the maul to a ruck** by going to ground and placing the ball on the ground. If the ball carrier elects to go to ground a ruck is formed if the ball is on the ground with players from each team on their feet contesting for the ball. In this case, play should continue. A **pileup** is formed if the ball is on the ground but players are no longer on their feet. A pileup is also formed if the ball is held by a player lying on the ground with players on top of him. In the case of a pileup, *if the ball is not immediately available*, the referee should award a scrum to the team not in possession at the formation of the maul. The exception is when a maul is formed immediately after the reception of a kick other than a kick off or drop out, in which case the scrum is awarded to the team who received the kick.

Players can't convert a ruck to a maul. This typically occurs when a player at the back of the ruck picks the ball up and binds onto his teammates in front of him.

Chapter 4

Rucks

A **ruck** occurs when at least one player from each team binds over the ball *on the ground*. Both players (both those involved and those not involved) and refs play an active role in keeping rucks safe and within the confines of the Law.

Players' Role

Players are expected to conform to the following requirements in rucks:

- Players must **join the ruck from behind the hindmost foot of the last player on their side of the ruck**.
- **All players joining the ruck must be bound with at least one arm around the body of a teammate in the ruck.** Players achieved a "thrust advantage" by binding on to players in the ruck with the shoulder and driving with the shoulder. Proper binding results in increased stability of the ruck (because players will be more prone to join the ruck with their shoulders above their hips) and enhanced power of the drive (through unified effort of individual players).
- Tackles frequently result in quick dynamic rucks and arriving players of both teams can "drive through" this formation phase of the ruck. Opponents on the entering team's side of the ball who are within 2 meters of the ball and who are in the path of arriving players may be driven off the ball. Opponents who are within 2 meters beyond the ball may be driven into provided the action is intended to win the ruck rather than to clean out defenders who are tactically trying to get into a position to the side and at the back edge of a ruck in order to defend against subsequent attacking moves close to the ruck.

- Players are allowed to ruck players on the ground, but they are not allowed to kick or trample players on the ground. A proper rucking action is a push with the foot (not a kick) both horizontally and backwards with the head of the player on the ground to be considered a "no go" area.
- **Players who do not join the ruck must remain behind the hindmost foot of their teammate in the ruck.** Players must be more responsible about staying onside. Offside defenders reduce space and playing options; offside attackers obstruct defenders. Repeated offenses will result in temporary suspensions (sin bin).
- In general, players need to be more responsible in staying on-side. This includes non-participants (fringers and backs) and participants who must join properly.

Referee's Roles

Referees are expected to manage rucks. Because of their dynamic nature, rucks can only be properly managed by the referee through early arrival and identification of potential problems.

- Referees should penalize any player who willfully falls to the ground in a ruck, and they should ensure that an indiscriminate pile-up is stopped before it develops. The ref should say "Stay on your feet". Most pileups are created by illegal actions and the referee should strive to sort out the cause of the pileup and penalize the infringer. If the pileup occurs through actions that are not illegal, a scrum should be awarded according to Law. The scrum should be awarded to the team moving forward prior to the ruck or to the attacking team if neither team was moving forward.
- When necessary, referees are encouraged to ensure participants are properly bound (the whole arm from hand to shoulder) by prompting the players by saying "Binding" with possible addition of jersey color and player number.

- Referees should not allow opponents of the ball-winning scrumhalf to interfere with his playing of the ball. This constitutes tackling a player without the ball.
- With regard to the clearance of ball from the base of the ruck, the referee will, in the interests of continuity, allow the scrum half (or other player performing this role) to handle the ball while the ruck is taking place in order to clear the ball. The player should not delay in clearing the ball once he has picked it up. The ball is not considered to be out of the ruck until it has cleared the feet/legs of players in the ruck.
- Referees need to ensure their positioning at rucks does not reduce the options or progress of either team.
- When necessary, referees are encouraged to ensure non-participants of the ruck stay behind the hindmost foot of the last foot of a teammate in the ruck by saying "Back foot."
- Referees are to monitor closely offside at the fringes of rucks and offside by the non-participants in the back line.
- Referees will deal firmly with "loiterers" who:
 - reduce options
 - slow down ball delivery
 - deliberately infringe.

The referee will award a penalty kick for a first infringement and then sin bin a player for repeated offenses.

Chapter 5

Mauls

A **maul** occurs when at least one player from each team binds around a *player standing with the ball* in his possession. Both players (both those involved and those not involved) and refs play an active role in keeping mauls safe and within the confines of the Law.

Players' Role

Players are expected to conform to the following requirements in mauls:

- **Players must join the maul with shoulders above hips and from behind the hindmost foot of a teammate in the maul.**
- **They must be bound with at least one arm (from hand to shoulder) on the body of a teammate.**
- Players may detach from and roll off the maul with the ball, in which case the maul is over and the ball carrier may be tackled. In this rolling move after detachment, the ball carrier's teammates may also detach and move ahead provided they remain behind the ball carrier (i.e., they cannot act as a shield by advancing ahead of the ball carrier).
- If two players of the same team roll off a maul with both players holding the ball or with one player bound onto the ball carrier from behind, an opposing player may initiate a tackle and complete it provided the action is continuous and without delay. This will be considered a tackle, not a collapsed maul. If there is a delay in the completion of the tackle, the referee should indicate a maul has formed and that it should not be taken down by saying "Maul formed; keep it up."

- Players of the team not in possession of the ball in a maul can't interfere with the ball-winning scrumhalf. Note that a player who becomes caught in his opponent's side of the maul while it is forming is not offside, but USA Rugby believes any attempt to interfere with the ball-winning scrumhalf is disruptive and should be penalized.
- **Players not participating in the maul must remain behind the hindmost foot of a teammate who is in the maul.** Players must be more responsible about staying onside. Offside defenders reduce space and playing options; offside attackers obstruct defenders.

Referee's role

Referees are expected to actively manage mauls. The referee must be aware when a maul has formed.

- When necessary, the referee may ensure the maul is not collapsed by using the standard preventive phrase, "maul formed; keep it up."
- If the maul stalls the team with the ball must "use it or lose it." The referee should indicate the maul has stalled by using the standard phrase, "use it" with possible addition of jersey color.
- When necessary, the referee may ensure players join correctly and non-participants remain onside by using the standard phrase, "back foot" with possible addition of jersey color and player number.
- If a participant is no longer correctly bound into the maul, the referee may indicate corrective action by telling the player to "get back" with possible addition of jersey color and player number.
- For a maul which becomes unplayable, the referee will blow the whistle and immediately put his arm out toward the team awarded the scrum put in according with the Law. The referee will utilize the "turnover signal" by putting out his

other arm as if playing advantage and then move it so that swings across the body and the hand ends up on the upper chest. This should be repeated.

- When necessary, referees are encouraged to ensure non-participants of the maul stay behind the hindmost foot of the last foot of a teammate in the maul by saying "back foot."
- Referees are to monitor closely offside at the fringes of mauls and offside by the non-participants in the back line.
- Referees will deal firmly with "loiterers" who:
 - reduce options
 - slow down ball delivery
 - deliberately infringe.

The referee will award a penalty kick for a first infringement and then sin bin a player for repeated offenses.

Chapter 6 Scrum

Scrum require special attention from players to be executed safely, correctly, and within the confines of the Law. The packs from each team must follow the engagement sequence described below. Once both packs are ready to engage referee will say "Engage," and the packs should engage quickly with the team putting the ball in initiating the first movement for the tunnel.

Attention Props!

Once the engagement has been initiated, front row players should not "bail out" or stand up. After the engagement the props must be pushing straight and binding correctly according to Law (note: the loosehead prop may no longer place his left arm on his thigh for support. He must bind onto the opposing tighthead prop's back or side). No prop is allowed to bind onto his opponent's arm or sleeve.

If the loosehead prop is at risk of losing his balance, he may stabilize himself momentarily by placing the hand of his outer arm on the ground, but the hand must not remain on the ground nor may the action be used to generate leverage against the opponent.

Attention Scrumhalf!

After the engagement the scrum half must put the ball in straight, without delay and along a middle band between the two front rows so there is a fair contest for the ball. When the scrumhalf puts the ball into the scrum, he must stand away from the scrum so that the ball is released outside the tunnel and outer arms of the props.

Attention All Other Players!

Throughout the scrum, front row players must not collapse the scrum, lift an opponent or "pop up."

The No. 8 may lift his head provided that one arm up to the shoulder is completely bound round a lock.

Before the scrum wheels through ninety degrees, the team with the ball must "use it or lose it."

Players not participating in the scrum must remain behind the hindmost foot of a teammate who is in the scrum.

The Engagement Sequence

Referees are expected to manage scrums as follows:

- Prior to the opening kickoff the referee will meet with the front rows (including substitutes) and scrumhalves of each team to explain the scrum management process. The referee's verbal calls and engagement at scrum time must be consistent throughout the match, and they must be consistent with the pre-game instructions. The sequence and standard phrase for the scrum engagement procedure will be:
 1. Manage the scrumhalf to be ready early
 2. Hold the scrum until the ball is immediately available to be put-in
 3. Manage the spacing and crouch sequence prior to engagement. If difficulties occur, the referee should sort them out prior to saying "Hold."
 4. Once the players are crouched and ready to engage, the referee will say "Hold" and check for readiness to engage. If he sees a problem, he should blow his whistle rather than say "hold" again. After blowing the whistle,

the referee will sort out the problem and repeat the preparation sequence up to "Hold" command.

5. When the referee is satisfied with the readiness to engage, he will say "Engage." The word "engage" should not be given in cadence with the word "hold." The players should engage quickly after the referee says "engage." If a player does not engage properly after the referee says "engage," he is liable to penalty.

- The referee must not physically interfere with the engagement procedure e.g. body or hand in the line of sight of any front row player.
- The referee must award an immediate free kick (penalty kick for charging) if the engagement is not acceptable unless it cannot be determined who was responsible in which case the scrum will be reset. A guideline for determining responsibility for infringement is that after the engagement call, the team putting the ball in should initiate the first movement for the tunnel, not their opponents.
- The first priority of the referee is to manage the scrum engagement. Then he should manage other illegalities such as illegal binding, boring in, twisting, pulling down or foot movement indicating an effort to collapse.
- The referee must ensure that props are "square", pushing straight, and binding correctly according to Law (note: the loosehead prop may no longer place his left arm on his left thigh for support. He must bind onto the opposing tighthead prop's back or side.) No prop is allowed to bind on his opponent's arm or sleeve. The standard phrases will be "push straight", "no boring", "bind on the body", and "arm up" with possible addition of jersey color and player number.
- The referee must ensure that no front row player puts his outside hand on the ground to use as leverage against his opponent. The sanction is a penalty kick. The standard

phrase will be "bind on the body" with possible addition of jersey color and player number.

- The referee must, after scrum engagement, first ensure that the scrum is stationary prior to allowing the scrum-half to put in the ball.
- The referee will ensure that the ball is put in straight, without delay, along a middle line band between the two front rows so that there is a fairness of contest for the ball. The standard phrases will be "in straight" and "no delay". The referee may indicate, with a mark away from the scrum, where the scrumhalf should stand for the put in.

Wheeling the Scrum

The referee must enforce the Law relating to wheeling i.e. once the scrum has gone through ninety degrees the team with the ball must "use it or lose it" As the scrum approaches ninety degrees, the referee should alert the players to play the ball with the standard phrase "Use it." If the ball is not played once the scrum has gone through ninety degrees the referee must blow the whistle, reset the scrum and award the put in to the team not in possession of the ball in the wheeled scrum. If neither team won possession of the ball prior to the scrum wheeling ninety degrees, then the team that previously put the ball into the scrum will be awarded the scrum. The new scrum will be formed at the place where the previous scrum ended.

It is illegal for a scrum under pressure to

- deliberately disengage front row
- deliberately disintegrate

These offenses are dangerous play and should be penalized. Advantage should not be played.

Scrum Collapses

Scrum collapses are potentially dangerous, and referees should be very strict in penalizing unsafe play. Under no circumstances in any match may advantage be applied

If one of the front row of the scrum collapses, "pops up", or forces and opponent to "pop up," or stands up, the referee should blow his whistle and:

- award a penalty kick against the offending player(s); or
- award a penalty try if but for the action by the offending side a try would probably have been scored; or
- reset the scrum only if there is doubt as to who the offender(s) is/are or the collapse, "pop up", or stand up is deemed not to be deliberate.

Under no circumstances can advantage be applied.

Other Scrum Issues

Binding. The referee must ensure that all Laws are applied with regard to binding for front, middle, and back row for both sides. The binding requirements for loose forwards will be insisted upon. The standard phrase will be "back rows stay bound" with possible addition of jersey color and player number.

Player Cooperation. Where player cooperation is absent, referees should apply the appropriate free kick/penalty kick sanctions. If necessary, the referee has the option to go to uncontested scrums.

Clearance of the Ball. With regard to the clearance of ball from the base of the scrum, the referee will, in the interests of continuity, allow the scrum half (or other player performing this role) to handle the ball while the scrum is taking place in order to clear the ball, as long as the ball is cleared without delay. The ball is out of the scrum when it is clear of the feet/legs, or when

a player who has the ball at his feet, unbinds and picks up the ball.

Offsides. Referees are to monitor scrum offside lines closely. The standard warning phrase will be "Back foot" with possible addition of jersey color and player number.

Free Kicks. Following the award of a free kick/penalty kick for a scrum offense, the referee will "slow down" the taking of the kick to allow players, including the front row, to stand up and begin retiring.

Use of Touch Judges. Referees will utilize Qualified Touch Judges on the non-referee side of the scrum to assist in deciding collapsed scrums, boring, improper binding, and Law 26 Foul Play etc.

Chapter 7

Lineout

Players' Roles

Players are expected to conform to the following requirements in lineouts:

- Players can arrive at their own pace but there is to be no delay. A "Team/Forwards Huddle" before lineout formation is permitted. If the huddle is within 10 meters of the line of touch, all the forwards in the huddle must join the lineout.
- The player throwing the ball into the lineout must do so without delay, from on or behind the touch line, and straight along a middle-line band between the inside shoulders of the players in the lineout so that it is initially played on that line with a fair contest for the ball. In practical terms the line-of-touch represents the 1 meter gap between the inside shoulders of the teams in a formed lineout when they are facing the touchline.
- Pre-gripping of the jumper's shorts is permitted.
- A player supporting a jumper from in front of the jumper may support the jumper anywhere on or above the thighs.
- A player supporting a jumper from behind the jumper may support the jumper on or above the shorts.
- Players must not jump early (prior to the throw in) for the ball and they can't be supported in air awaiting the throw in.
- Players in the lineout must remain onside (behind the line of touch and no further than 15 meters from the touch line) until the lineout is over.
- In a peeling movement, players no longer need to remain close to the lineout nor do they need to move parallel to the lineout; however, they must remain within the area between

the line-of-touch and 10 meters behind the line-of-touch until the lineout has ended.

- A player entering the lineout from the scrumhalf position may either take the ball or support a player jumping for the ball.
- After the throw, the thrower and his opposite number may join the lineout from within 5 meters of touch to support a jumper.
- Non-participants in the lineout must remain onside (10 meters behind the line-of-touch).

Referee's Role

Referees are expected to manage lineouts as follows:

- Referees must ensure that the throw-in is taken properly to ensure fair competition for the ball. The standard phrases will be "in straight" and "gap".
- If the non-throwing team jump early with their lineout jumper being supported and suspended in the air, referees will ensure that the thrower did not "balk" the throw and then:
 1. remind the players at the first lineout that early jumping and remaining supported is not permitted
 2. if on the first occasion the non-throwing team wins the ball by the illegal method outlined, a free kick will be awarded to the non-offending team
 3. if the lineout is not lost by the team throwing in, the referee will play advantage and talk to the offending team at the next lineout
 4. if the offence continues, free kicks and sanctions under persistent infringement should be applied.
- Referees must ensure that lineout participants and non-participants remain on-side. The standard phrases will be "stay on side" for participants and "10 meters" for non-participants.

- Referees will deal strictly and harshly with dangerous acts committed on jumpers in the air.
- Referees should watch for deliberate fouling of jumper's inside arm.
- Referees will utilize Qualified Touch Judges on the near side of the lineout to assist at quick throw-ins and Law 26 Foul Play etc.

Chapter 8 Off-side and Obstruction

Players' Role

On restarts and in open play, players are expected to conform to the following requirements:

- **On penalty or free kicks, members of the infringing team must retreat 10 meters before entering play unless they are in the act of retiring and are put onside by an advancing onside teammate.** These offside players are not put onside by any action of the kicking team.
- On kick offs, members of the receiving team must be behind their 10-meters line, and members of the kicking team must be behind the kicker.
- On dropouts, the members of the kicking team must be behind the ball and members of the receiving team must not charge over the 22-meters line.
- On kicks in open play, teammates of the kicker who are ahead of the kicker must not advance until put on-side. Teammates of the kicker who are within 10 meters of where the ball pitches or a receiver of the kick must retire beyond 10 meters.
- There have been observations in open play of recent matches where there is clear evidence that players are running in front of ball carriers and the ball is passed behind "decoy" runners. Often, the effect on the defenders is that they are prevented from gaining access to the ball or the ball carrier even when contact has not been made with the opposition. USA Rugby does not mean to say that all "decoy" plays are illegal. **It is appropriate for the decoy play to cause a defender to pause, but it is illegal for decoy actions to obstruct defending players' running angles or approach to the ball carrier.**

- There are no circumstances in which a ball carrier can be penalized for obstruction. In that regard, the following two comments are pertinent:
- It is permissible for the ball carrier to cause an opponent to commit to the tackle immediately prior to the ball carrier's passing the ball (for example, a screen pass).
- It is not permissible for the ball carrier to voluntarily prevent an opponent from getting to him by using a teammate standing in front of him as a "pick" or obstacle. This is considered unfair play by the ball carrier rather than obstruction by the player who did not willfully try to obstruct the opponent.
- There have been other observations in recent matches in which players without the ball have been observed to be voluntarily moving or standing in a position that prevents an opponent from tackling a ball carrier. These observations apply to offside players and to onside players, and in both cases the act is obstruction.
- An example of an offside player committing obstruction is discussed in section 7.1.5.
- Additionally, players of the attacking team at a tackle/ruck/maul have been observed standing off the side and in front of the last foot (offside line) in order to deflect or otherwise change the running lines of the defenders: this is obstruction.
- An example of an onside player committing obstruction is where a teammate of the ball carrier trails the ball carrier and voluntarily runs in a manner that prevents opponents from getting to the ball carrier.

Referee's Role

On restarts and in open play, referees are expected to satisfy the following:

- Referees will ensure players are onside on restart kicks. Preventive refereeing may be applied by having the kicker delay his kick until players are onside. If quick tap kicks are taken, the referee must be diligent in observing non-kicking team players who are not back 10 meters. Where appropriate, the standard preventive phrase will be "back 10" with possible addition of jersey color and player number.
- Referees will ensure players are onside in open play kicks. If teammates of the kicker are advancing in front of the kicker, the standard preventive phrase that applies is "freeze." If teammates of the kicker are within 10 meters of the receiver (or where the ball pitches), the standard warning phrase will be "Back 10" with possible addition of jersey color and player number.
- USA Rugby has instructed referees to be stricter in dealing with obstruction. Persistent offending may be caused by inexperienced players at lower levels of play, but the referee must remain strict in his enforcement of the Law.
- Referees will utilize Qualified Touch Judges to assist in preventing and deciding offside at ruck and maul, scrum, lineout, and at free kicks and penalty kicks. Similarly, referees may utilize Qualified Touch Judges to report obstruction in open play.

Chapter 9

Foul Play / Penalty Kick / Free Kick

Players will not take any action which is contrary to the letter and the spirit of the Game related to Foul Play, which includes obstruction, unfair play, misconduct, dangerous play, unsporting behavior, retaliation and repeated infringements.

Referees are expected to deal strictly with incidents of foul play. In particular, they are expected to manage specific incidents of foul play as follows:

1. If a player commits foul play, the referee will penalize that player and:
 - Admonish the player, which does not include a formal warning.
 - Caution the player, which includes a formal warning. (The Laws of the Game require all cautions to include the sin bin, but USA Rugby feels it is important to allow the referee some flexibility in his management of the game). Referees will signify that a player has been cautioned by showing a yellow card, but they must still issue a verbal caution rather than rely exclusively on showing the card.
 - Caution and temporarily suspend ("sin bin") the player. The Laws of the Game requires the duration of each sin bin to be 10 minutes. The temporarily suspended player must report to the appointed reserve Qualified Touch Judge. If there is not an appointed reserve Qualified Touch Judge, the sin binned player must remain at the center of his opponent's dead ball line, and he must remain away from members of his own team. The period of 10 minutes does not include half time. If half time arrives while a player is in the sin bin, he can't

communicate with his team during half time, and he must serve the remainder of the 10 minutes in the second half. Referees will signify that a player has been cautioned by showing a yellow card, but they must still issue a verbal caution rather than rely exclusively on showing the card.

- Order off the player. Referees will signify that a player has been ordered off by showing a red card, but they must still issue a verbal ordering-off rather than rely exclusively on showing the card.
2. Repeated infringements will be dealt with strictly:
 - Referees should use the guideline of a caution on or before the third offence within a short time frame within the game.
 - After three such offences, the sequence of action for the referee is as follows:
 - If, in the opinion of the referee, a player repeatedly infringes any Law of the Game, a penalty is to be awarded and the player is to be cautioned that if he repeats the offense he will be sin binned or ordered off. Also, the captain will be informed.
 - Similarly, if in the opinion of the referee, a team repeatedly infringes any Law of the Game, a penalty is to be awarded, and the captain is to be cautioned that the next team member who repeats the offense will be sin binned or ordered off.
 - In both these circumstances, a penalty try may be awarded. It may even occur that a penalty try is awarded and a player is sin binned or sent from the field.
 - In both these circumstances, the referee may play advantage. If advantage has been gained, the referee may elect to sin bin or order off the offending player at the next stoppage of play.

Referees will need to use their management skills to understand the game and the seriousness of the offense. These skills are important in keeping the game flowing and in preventing foul play. In matches involving inexperienced players, the referee can't consider three offenses to be serious enough to penalize for repeated infringements.

A penalty try should result if, in the opinion of the referee, a try would probably have been scored had it not been for foul play.

With regard to "Professional Fouls" / Persistent Infringements, the penalizing of deliberate infringements will be supported fully. Penalty tries under these circumstances will only be awarded in fully justifiable situations under Law. Referees will be consistent with the awarding of penalty tries.

Dangerous tackles must be dealt with severely, with head-high tackles requiring close scrutiny and firm adjudication.

Referees will deal strictly and harshly with dangerous acts committed on catchers in the air.

At a quick penalty/free kick, the second penalty/free kick must have a mark made by the referee at his pace.

Tap kicks after penalty or free kick awards must be executed properly.

Referees will utilize officially appointed Qualified Touch Judges to assist in deciding Foul Play.

Referees should conform to the Recommended Penalties for Foul Play Infringements, which is provided in section 17.

If a player(s) is sin binned or ordered off, the referee must send, as soon as possible after the match, send a report to the

responsible Union in which he names the player(s) and the circumstances that necessitated the sin bin or ordering off.

Chapter 10 Advantage

Referees will take into account a number of general conditions when assessing advantage including: safety, temper of game, weather, what the resultant restart is, options available or denied to the non-offending team, and the effect of the offense on the game. The fullest possible use of advantage is essential to maintain continuity of play.

- The use of both territorial and tactical advantage is essential.
- Referees must use the advantage signal. The signal should be holding the arm horizontally out to the side.
- Referees are encouraged to say "advantage" with possible addition of jersey color and "advantage over."

Guidelines to Playing Advantage

A guideline to playing advantage is as follows:

- For infringements for which a scrum would be awarded, referees will only allow advantage that accrues quickly. If after two phases of the game a territorial or obvious tactical advantage has not accrued, the referee should award the scrum.
- Consistent with the temper of the game, referees may play the advantage opportunity a little longer for penalty and free kick offenses than for scrum offenses. If after a few phases of the game a territorial or obvious tactical advantage has not accrued, the referee should award the penalty.
- An advantage can occur "during play." "During play" is from the time "play" is "attempted to be started or is started," until "play ends."
- Play starts or is attempted to be started:

- When, at a kick-off or drop-out, the ball is kicked with the apparent intention of re-starting the game. Play starts whether or not the ball has been kicked with the correct type of kick or at the correct place.
- When, at a lineout, the ball leaves the hand of the player throwing it in. Play starts even if the ball is thrown in at the wrong place or by the wrong team or, at an attempted quick throw-in, even if the ball has been handled by other than the thrower.
- When, at the scrum, the ball leaves the hand of the player putting it in. However, if there has been no infringement and the ball emerges from either end of the tunnel not having been played in accord with Law, the ball shall be put into the scrum again.
- When, at a penalty kick, the ball has been kicked.
- When, at a free kick, the kicker begins his run to kick the ball or has offered to kick the ball.
- Play ends:
 - Either: When the referee has blown his whistle to stop play.
 - Or: Before the referee has blown his whistle to stop play, but when he decides that play has ended in accord with the Law that delineates when a referee is empowered to stop play. A penalty for foul play while the ball is out of play should, however, only be awarded for an infringement occurring after the referee has blown his whistle.
- The referee remains the sole judge of whether or not an advantage has been gained.

Chapter 11

Kick-Offs

Players' Roles

Players are expected to conform to the following requirements in kick-offs:

- Kick-offs must be taken at, or behind, the half-way line.
- At a kick-off from half-way the non-kicking team must be 10m away.
- Players of the side kicking off can't gain unfair advantage by crossing the halfway line before the ball is kicked.

Referee's Role

Referees are expected to manage kick-offs as follows:

- It is preferable for the referee to manage kick-offs so that infringements identified in sections 10.1 and 10.2 are prevented. If the infringement is not prevented, the kick-off should be taken again.
- Referees will deal more firmly with players in front of the kicker at the kick-off.
- Referees will deal strictly and harshly with dangerous acts committed on catchers in the air.
- Referees should be aware that if a kickoff goes directly into touch, the kick may be accepted by the non-offending team and a quick throw-in may be taken anywhere between the where the ball went into touch and the receiver's goal line.

Chapter 12

Number of Players and the Replacement and Substitution of Players

Referees must ensure that the nomination of players and the replacement and substitution of players is managed correctly.

- A team must include suitably trained/experienced players so that if a team nominates 16, 17 or 18 players, it must have at least four players who can play in front row positions; or if it nominates 19, 20, 21 or 22, it must have at least five players who can play in front row positions.
- Up to two substitutions of front row players and up to five substitutes of the other players may be made.
- Players who have been substituted can't re-enter the match even to replace an injured player except in the case of a player having a bleeding or open wound or for an injured front row player if no other suitably trained replacement is available.
- In the event of a front row forward being sin binned, the referee, in the interests of safety, will confer with captain of his team to determine whether another player is suitably trained/experienced to take his position; if not, the captain shall nominate one other player to leave the playing area and the referee will permit a substitute front row forward to replace him as a "Temporary Replacement." This may take place immediately or after another player has been tried in the position. If there is no other front row forward available due to a sequence of players ordered off or injured or both, then the game will continue with uncontested scrums.
- In the event of a front row forward being ordered off, the referee, in the interests of safety, will confer with captain of

his team to determine whether another player is suitably trained/experienced to take his position; if not, the captain shall nominate one other player to leave the playing area and the referee will permit a substitute front row forward to replace him. This may take place immediately or after another player has been tried in the position. If there is no other front row forward available due to a sequence of players ordered off or injured or both, then the game will continue with uncontested scrums.

- A "Temporary Replacement" is one who must leave the playing area when the player he has replaced is permitted to return to the playing area. Temporary Replacements may be used only for situations involving:
 1. Bleeding or open wounds
 2. Sin binned front rows when there is no suitably trained/experienced replacement playing the game.
- Temporary replacements for non-blood bin injuries (i.e. bruised shoulder, finger in the eye, etc.) are not permitted.
- All seven on the bench can be used for:
 - injury replacement
 - blood bin temporary placement
 - tactical substitution
- All seven on the bench should be:
 - located near or inside the playing enclosure
 - near 10m line
 - able to have easy field access
- The timing of tactical substitutions is the coach's responsibility. He assumes all risks involved in making early substitutions
- If Qualified Touch Judges are available, substitutions will be made through the Qualified Touch Judges who will advise the referee.

- If there are no Qualified Touch Judges, then referee must be notified directly before the substitute enters play.
- In all instances a replacement or a substitution is permitted only at a stoppage in play and only with the referee's permission.

Appendix 1

Recommended Penalties for Foul Play Infringements

Infringement	Law 26	First Offense	Repeat Offense
Obstruction	(1) a - d	1	2
Deliberately playing unfairly or willfully infringing a law	(2) a	1	2 or 3
Willfully throw or knock the ball into touch	(2) b	1	2
Repeat infringements	(2) c		2, 3, or 4
Waste time	(2) d	1	2
Strike (with hand) an opponent as follows:	(3) a		
1. One-on-one punching		1, 2, 3, or 4	4
2. Blind, 3 rd man in		4	NA
3. Continuing on after the whistle		2, 3, or 4	4
4. In retaliation		1 or 2	4
Head butting		4	NA
Grasping genital area		4	NA
Use of elbow		1, 2 or 3	4
Eye Gouging		4	NA
Kicking an opponent	(3) b	4	NA
Trampling an opponent on the ground away from the ball		4	NA
Trampling an opponent (near the ball) as follows:			
1. On the body or legs, which are near the ball		2	4
2. On the body or legs away from the ball		3 or 4	4
3. Head		4	NA
Tripping		1 or 2	3 or 4
Tackling an opponent as follows:	(3) c		
1. Early (including player off the ground)		1 or 2	3 or 4
		1, 2 or 3	3 or 4

Infringement	Law 26	First Offense	Repeat Offense
2. Late		2, 3, or 4	4
3. Dangerously			
Charge or obstruct the kicker	(3) d	1, 2 or 3	3 or 4
Hold, push, charge, obstruct or grasp an opponent	(3) e	1, 2, or 3	3 or 4
At a scrum:			
1. Front row charging	(3) f	1, 2, or 3	3 or 4
2. Front row lifting	(3) g	1, 2, or 3	3 or 4
3. Willfully collapsing a scrum	(3) h	1, 2 or 3	3 or 4
Misconduct while ball is out of play	(3) i	1, 2 or 3	3 or 4
Misconduct prejudicial to good sportsmanship	(3) j	1, 2 or 3	3 or 4

The table above uses the following numerical codes for penalties:

- 1 = Penalty Kick
- 2 = Penalty Kick with caution
- 3 = Penalty Kick with sin bin and caution
- 4 = Penalty Kick and send off
- NA = Not Applicable for a repeat offense because the of the send off on the first offense