

**INTERPRETATIONS/VARIATIONS FOR ALL WHO PLAY AND  
MANAGE (I.E. COACHES, REFEREES, ETC.) PLAYERS AGED UNDER 19  
ON 1ST SEPTEMBER  
DOMESTIC MATCHES IN ENGLAND ONLY**

In September 1983, the RFU first issued a number of Law Interpretations, which were for all who played under the age of nineteen years on 1st September. (These were designed to improve safety and help prevent injury).

From November 2001, these have been reviewed and revised and should be read in conjunction with The LAWS OF THE GAME OF RUGBY UNION, written by the International Rugby Board (IRB)

'Junior' rugby is now regarded as for all who play in teams identified as aged between under 13 and under 19.

**SQUEEZE BALL**

No player involved in a match at any age level from under 18 downwards shall use in training or in a match the technique known or referred to as Squeezeball.

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.

**Penalty:** Penalty Kick

Any player at any stage in the scrum, ruck or maul who has or causes an opponent to have, his shoulders lower than his hip joint must immediately be penalised by awarding a Free Kick. The object of this interpretation is to try to prevent a collapse of scrum, ruck or maul. It is to help the coach to coach 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.

**Law 14 Ball on the ground - no tackle and Law 15 Tackle: Ball carrier brought to the ground.**

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

**Penalty:** Penalty kick at the place of infringement.

Additional Notes to help interpret Laws 14 and 15.

(a) No advantage shall be played under this Law

(b) A player is assumed to have fallen voluntarily unless the referee is absolutely certain the fall was accidental.

(c) In the very rare instances when the fall is accidental, play must be stopped and a scrum awarded. The object of this change in interpretation in Law 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 defined as "players from each team on their feet" (Law 16, Ruck; Law 17, Maul). Should the correctly formed ruck or maul then collapse, the referee must immediately act to prevent a pile-up from developing. Play the game for the right reason - first learn how to play skilfully, and then apply that skill in order to win. Seminars, internal courses and working to a regular syllabus are essential steps to proficiency. Players must be adequately prepared for any match.

Mismatches can be avoided by talking to the Coach in charge of the opposition before the game.

Attention must be paid to pre-season preparation. Players need to be fit to play rugby rather than hope to become fit by playing it. Adequate fitness training, including special exercises for the front row, is vital - necks and shoulders need to be strong. The fatigue factor needs careful watching - see RFU publication, 'Fitness Training for Rugby'.

Tackling is a skill that needs to be taught. See appropriate RFU publications and videos, the RFU Continuum and Player Safety Pamphlets 1-9. For up to date products contact

www.rfu.com or email refereeinfo@rfu.com.

No player should be asked to play outside his or her age group (see RFU Continuum).

**NO PLAYER AGED 16 AND BELOW SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO PLAY AGAINST ANY TEAM IN WHICH THERE ARE ADULT PLAYERS, i.e. THOSE AGED 19 YEARS OR OVER.**

Clubs must exercise great care and close supervision over the playing of those who, although 17, are eligible to play in adult teams.

Violence has no place in the game. Any player using their boot against another player, or committing other obvious acts of violence, should be removed from the game by their school or club for a very significant length of time. Disciplinary results should be forwarded to the local RFU Constituent Body.

Injuries from pile-ups are often caused by a player refusing to part with the ball.

Getting rid of the ball early rather than late makes for a faster and more enjoyable game.

### **UNDER 13 AND 14**

13.1 Playing time not to exceed 25 minutes each way with a size 4 ball. After 50 minutes of playing time, the referee **must not** allow extra time to be played in the case of a drawn match in a knock-out competition.

13.2 Teams will be made up of fifteen players, eight of whom will be forwards, with the remaining seven forming the backs.

13.3 The hand off/fend off is now permitted.

13.4 Kicking the ball on the ground (often called fly hacking) is now permitted.

### **LAW 20 - SCRUM**

In an eight-person scrum the formation must be 3-4-1, with the single player (normally the number 8) bound on the 2 locks. The locks are now permitted to bind between the legs of the props with their outside arms.

Exception: A team may have fewer than eight players in its scrum when either the team cannot field a complete team, or a player is sent off for foul play, or a player has to leave the field because of injury. Even allowing for this exception, each team must always have at least five players in a

scrum and both scrums must always be equal in numbers.

If a team is incomplete, the scrum formation must be as follows:

If a team is without one player, then both teams must use a 3-4 formation (i.e. no No.8).

If a team is without two players, then both teams must use a 3-2-1 formation (i.e. no flankers).

If a team is without three players, then both teams must use a 3-2 formation (i.e. only front rows and locks).

When a normal scrum takes place, the players in the three front-row positions and the two lock positions must have been suitably trained for those positions.

If a team cannot field such suitably trained players because:

They are not available, **or** a player in one of those five positions is injured or has been sent off for Foul Play and no suitably trained replacement is available, then the referee must order uncontested scrums.

In an uncontested scrum, the teams do not compete for the ball. The team throwing the ball must win it. Neither team is allowed to push the other team away from the mark.

Front rows coming together: In the interest of safety referees should talk the scrum down through the “Crouch, Touch, Pause,(or hold) Engage” sequence. Each prop touches the opponent's upper arm and then pauses before the front rows meet.

Referees should be vigilant to ensure that hookers are in hooking position.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

**No wheeling.** A team must not intentionally wheel a scrum.

**Penalty:** Penalty Kick.

If a wheel reaches 45 degrees, the referee must stop play. If the wheel is unintentional, the referee orders another scrum at the place where the scrum is stopped. There is no 'turnover' law at U18. If scrums are reset for wheeling beyond 45 degrees the throw-in is to the side in possession at the time it is wheeled beyond 45 degrees.

**Maximum 1.5 metres push.** A team in a contested scrum must not push the scrum more than 1.5 metres towards their opponents' goal line.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

The scrum-half not throwing the ball into the scrum must not move beyond the middle line of the scrum until the ball has emerged from the scrum or an opponent has placed his hands on the ball. In the event of a strike against the head, the scrum-half who has thrown the ball into the scrum is similarly restricted in not following the ball.

**Penalty:** Penalty Kick

**Ball must be released from scrum.** A player must not intentionally keep the ball in the scrum once the player's team has heeled the ball and controls it at the base of the scrum.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

**Safety:** In the event of one front row being stronger than the other, referees should be mindful to instruct the stronger pack to reduce the power of its shove sufficiently to ensure the opposing front row is able to stay on their feet.

### **THE LINE-OUT LAW 19**

Minimum numbers. At least two from each team.

**Penalty:** Free kick.

Maximum numbers. The team throwing in the ball decides the maximum number of players forming the line-out.

**Penalty** (for the non-throwing in team having too many players): Free Kick.

The line-out extends from 5 metres from touch to 15 metres in-field and parallel with the touchline. Lifting/supporting is prohibited at this age group, i.e. a player may not bind to a jumper until he/she has returned to the ground.

**Penalty:** Penalty Kick.

There is no longer a requirement to peel close to and parallel with the line-out.

### **REPLACEMENTS**

Up to seven replacements. Any number of substitutions or replacements by mutual agreement.

A player who has been substituted may replace an injured player.

### **UNDER 15**

As per under 13 and 14 except:

15.1 Playing time not to exceed 30 minutes each way playing with a size five ball. After 60 minutes of playing time, the referee **must not** allow extra time to be played in the case of a drawn match in a knock-out competition.

### **UNDER 16, 17 AND 18**

16.1 Playing time not to exceed 35 minutes each way playing with a size five ball. After 70 minutes of playing time, the referee must not allow extra time to be played in the case of a drawn match in a knock-out competition.

### **THE SCRUM**

The non-throwing in scrum half is no longer restricted in staying at the middle line after the ball has been thrown in. Whilst remaining on side he may follow the ball round. The offside line for the scrum-halves runs through the line of the ball in the scrum

### **THE LINE-OUT**

Players may now pre-grip a team-mate but not below the waist.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

A player must not support a jumping team-mate below the shorts from behind or below the thighs from the front.

**Penalty:** Penalty Kick.

Players who support a jumping team-mate must lower that player to the ground as soon as a player of either team has won the ball.

**Penalty:** Free Kick.

### **REPLACEMENTS**

Maximum seven.

If a team nominates 22 players, it **must** have at least six players who can play in the front row in order that there is replacement cover for the loose-head prop, hooker and tight-head prop.

A player who has been substituted may replace an injured player.

### **UNDER 19**

The only variation from the Under 16-18 groups is that the technique, which has become known as "Squeezeball", is permissible.

On 8th November 2001 the International Rugby Board (IRB) issued the following Note on Interpretation of Law 15.6(d) - the tackled player:

Law 15.6(d) states: "A tackled player may release the ball by pushing it along the ground in any direction except forward, providing this is done immediately".

In recent times players having been tackled, or who go to ground have done so ensuring that the ball is underneath them, they then push the ball along the ground and through their legs (a practice known as squeeze ball). On most occasions when players attempt to push the ball along the ground under their bodies they are not making the ball available immediately and they are in contravention of Law 14.1 and Law 15.6(d). Players who attempt the action are liable to penalty unless the ball is immediately available".