

# USA Rugby Guidelines on the Application of Law

September 2002

## Preamble

The following USA Rugby Guidelines on the Application of Law (Guidelines) are intended for all USA coaches, players, referees and touch judges for use in the 2002-2003 season. The Guidelines were first developed in 2000 by a panel that included coaches (selected by the USA Rugby National Technical Panel) and referees (selected by the USA Rugby Referees Association (USARRA)). Responsibility for the 2002 update was assigned to the Laws Committee of the USARRA, the membership of which is essentially the same as the joint group of referees and coaches that developed the 2000 and 2001 Guidelines. The Guidelines have been modified to reflect:

- Directives from the IRB with respect to some aspects of play.
- Amendments to the Laws of the Game approved by the IRB at its April 2002 Council meeting.
- Experience with application of the Guidelines during the past year.

Adjustments for circumstances unique to rugby in America were made where appropriate and will be made in the future on an annual basis.

## Responsibilities

The Guidelines are intended primarily for application on the field-of-play. However, coaches, players, club officials, referees and touch judges all have responsibilities before and during any match in which they participate. It is important that players play the game in accordance with the Laws of the Game and be mindful of their own safety and the safety of others. It is the responsibility of those who coach or teach the game to ensure that players are prepared in a manner which ensures compliance with the Laws of the Game and in accordance with safe practices. Rugby is a vigorous, contact sport that requires of all participants a degree of physical and mental fitness that is commensurate with the level of match in which they are involved. All players from time to time play with minor injuries. However, playing with a serious injury brings with it significant and some times unacceptable risks. This applies in particular to concussions, the handling of which may be found in Section 11.0, Team Support.

The Guidelines on the Application of Law are worded in terms of what both players and referees are expected to do to ensure compliance with the Laws of the Game. **Although coaches' directives are not specifically addressed in this document, it is implicit that coaches have a responsibility to coach players in a manner consistent with this document.** Players are expected to know what the Laws of the Game require them to do. If they infringe, or if they are perceived to be at risk of infringing, the referee is encouraged to use preventive language. The Guidelines offer standard preventive phrases to be used by the referee so that all players will know what the referee requires with only a few spoken words. The preventive phrases should be offered when needed; they should be directed at the appropriate players; they should be specific with regard to the desired action; and they should be pertinent to the situation. Players should heed the preventive remarks of the referee as soon as they are spoken; the referee should not have to repeat the command. If a preventive phrase needs to be repeated, it means an offense has been committed. Moreover, players should not depend on the referee to tell them what they must do in a given situation; they should initiate the action on their own volition.

The primary focus of these Guidelines is on the responsibilities of players and referees, but other aspects are covered as well:

- Section 11 covers team support.
- Section 12 discusses players' clothing.
- Section 13 discusses the responsibilities of touch judges.
- Section 14 discusses requirements for the ground.
- Section 15 provides a Code of Conduct for all members of USA Rugby.
- Section 16 provides a table of penalties for foul play infringements.

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**1.0 Tackles**

- 1.1** There are three priorities for players in the tackle situation:
- The tacklers must release the tackled player.
  - The tackled player must play or release the ball.
  - Arriving players must remain on their feet.
- 1.2** The first priority at a tackle situation is for tacklers to let the tackled player play the ball immediately.
- 1.2.1** If tacklers do not get up on their feet they must immediately move away and let the tackled player play the ball. If tacklers on the ground are pinned and cannot move away, they still must let the tackled player play the ball immediately. Tacklers on the ground should not take any action that delays availability of the ball to players on their feet.
- 1.2.2** The referee will encourage any tackler that remains on the ground to release and move away from the tackled player immediately and not reduce the options of the team in possession of the ball. When it is necessary to use preventive talk, the standard preventive phrase will be “Roll away”, with the possible addition of jersey color and player number. In order for this phrase to be preventive it should be used as the tackle is going to ground so the tackler knows what is expected after 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 on the ground in the path of arriving players.
- 1.3** The second priority at a tackle situation is for the tackled player to play (pass, release, place, push, or roll) the ball so that it is immediately available to arriving players and to tacklers who are on their feet.
- 1.3.1** The tackled player must play the ball without delay and without any second effort. The player should take no further part in the action until standing again. The player should not hold the ball until support players arrive. If a player (either an opponent or a teammate) is standing over the tackled player and is waiting to play the ball, then the tackled player must release the ball to the standing player. In this situation, the tackled player has lost the options to pass the ball, or to place, push, or roll it. A tackled player on the ground must not take any action which delays the availability of the ball, thereby limiting the options of the opponents and encouraging the rucking of players on the ground. For example, if the ball carrier is tackled so that the ball is placed on the opponent's side of the tackle, the tackled player must not roll over the ball to put it back on that player's side of the tackle
- 1.3.2** The referee will encourage the tackled player to play the ball immediately. When it is necessary to use preventive talk, the standard preventive phrase will be “**Play it**”, with the possible addition of jersey color and player number. In order for this phrase to be preventive it should be used as the tackle is going to ground so that the ball carrier knows what is expected 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 lower body or legs, which allows the tackled ball carrier to play the ball immediately. The referee will encourage the tackled player to release the ball to a player who is standing and competing for the ball. When it is necessary to use preventive talk in this situation, the standard preventive phrase will be “**Release it**”, with the possible addition of jersey color and player number. If the tackled player is curled around the ball after placing it, or is so close to the ball after placing it that the options of arriving opponents are limited, the referee will use the phrase “**Roll away**”, with the possible addition of jersey color and player number. If the tackled player is kneeling on the ground and over the ball, the player may play the ball provided it is played immediately. When it is necessary to use preventive talk in this situation, the standard preventive phrase will be “**Play it**”, with the possible addition of jersey color and player number.
- 1.4** The third priority at a tackle situation is for arriving players to stay on their feet and enter the tackle area from the side of the tackle nearest their goal line.

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- 1.4.1** 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 be on their feet. In staying on their feet, arriving players must have no part of their body supported by the ground or by players lying on the ground. It is acceptable for arriving players to place a hand on a body on the ground (or the ground) provided it is only for balance. Arriving players must be endeavoring to form a ruck, which means they must be going over the ball in a driving, not diving, fashion. The intent of the drive is to form a ruck; the intent of the dive is to seal off the ball, or to interfere with opponents who enter the tackle area from the correct side. Arriving players must not deliberately fall on the tackle in order to seal the ball. Arriving players must not prevent the tackler(s) or tackled player from getting up or moving away. If the arriving players are on their feet, they may contest for possession of the ball. Players on the ground may not. If an arriving player gains possession of the ball, that player should not go to ground within one meter of the tackle, unless tackled by an opponent.
- 1.4.2** Referees will encourage arriving players to stay on their feet. When it is necessary to use preventive talk, the standard preventive phrase will be **"Stay on your feet"**. If a ruck is formed and, because of inadequate opposition, the ruck is driven a meter or so beyond the ball and the players then go to ground involuntarily the referee should not penalize them. The referee should allow players on their feet to contest for possession of the ball, including taking the ball from the tackled player's hands. Referees will deal firmly with players who:
- Slow down ball delivery.
  - Deliberately infringe.

**2.0 Transitions between Tackles, Rucks and Mauls**

- 2.1** If players on their feet try to pick up the ball at a tackle situation, the referee must decide whether or not the tackle is still in effect, and at what point arriving players cause it to become a ruck.
- 2.1.1** If the ball is still in the tackled player's possession, players on their feet have priority and the tackled player must allow these players to take the ball.
- 2.1.2** Players involved in the tackle, who remain on their feet, may play the ball. They are not required to go behind the ball, the tackled player, or the tackler closest to their goal line before doing so.
- 2.1.3** Tacklers or tackled players that stand up may re-enter play as soon as they are on their feet.
- 2.1.4** Arriving players who have entered the tackle area correctly, are allowed to play the ball.
- 2.1.5** If a player who is standing places a hand on the ball on the ground but has not yet gained possession of it when an opponent who is standing comes into contact with that player over the ball, then a ruck has formed and the ball must be released. As soon as this situation occurs, the standard preventive phrase is **"Ruck formed. Hands off."**
- 2.1.6** If a player who has gained possession of the ball on the ground by placing two hands on it, and if an opponent who is standing comes into contact with that player over the ball, no ruck is formed, but the player must immediately play the ball.
- 2.2** The referee can help players by letting them know what is happening. If the referee sees a ruck has formed rather than a tackle, the standard preventive phrase is **"Ruck formed."** If the referee sees a maul has formed, the standard preventive phrase is **"Maul formed."** Further instructions may include **"Back foot"**, **"Stay on your feet"**, or **"Keep it up."**
- 2.3** 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 also is 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 without delay award a scrum to the team not in possession at the formation of the

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maul. An exception is when a maul is formed immediately after a player catches the ball direct from an opponent's kick other than a kick-off or drop-out, in which case the scrum is awarded to the team who received the kick.

- 2.4 A player at the back of a ruck may not pick the ball up and bind onto team-mate in front of that player.

### 3.0 Rucks

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

- 3.1.1 Players must join the ruck from behind the hindmost foot of their side in the ruck.
- 3.1.2 All players joining the ruck must bind with at least one arm around the body of any team-mate in the ruck. From a coaching point of view, it is noted that productive forward play in a ruck is best accomplished by binding on to players in the ruck and achieving a shoulder drive. 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 the unified effort of individual players.
- 3.1.3 Tackles frequently result in quick dynamic rucks and arriving players of both teams can "drive through" the formation phase of the ruck. Opponents on the arriving team's side of the ball who are within one meter of the ball, and who are in the path of arriving players may be driven off the ball. Opponents who are within one meter 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 position to defend against subsequent attacking moves close to the ruck.
- 3.1.4 Players are allowed to ruck players on the ground, but they are not allowed to kick, stamp or trample players on the ground. A proper rucking action is attempting to make the ball available with a backwards push of the foot, not a kick. The head of the player on the ground is a "No Go" area.
- 3.1.5 Players who do not join the ruck must remain behind the hindmost foot. Players must be responsible about staying on-side. Off-side defenders reduce space and playing options; off-side attackers obstruct defenders. Repeated offenses will result in players being temporarily suspended.
- 3.1.6 The scrum-half (or other player performing this role at the ruck) is allowed, in pursuit of making the ball available, to place one hand on the ball while it is in the ruck. Once the scrum-half places two hands on the ball, the ball is considered to be out of the ruck and the ruck has ended. Opponents of the scrum-half in the ruck may not interfere with the scrum-half's clearance of the ball.

- 3.2 Referees are expected to manage rucks as follows:

- 3.2.1 Most pileups are created by illegal actions and the referee should make every effort to identify the cause of the pileup and penalize accordingly.
- 3.2.2 When necessary, referees are encouraged to ensure participants become and remain properly bound (the whole arm from hand to shoulder) by prompting the players with the standard preventive phrase "**Bind on**", with the possible addition of jersey color and player number.
- 3.2.3 Referees can encourage non-participants at the ruck to stay behind the hindmost foot in the ruck by saying "**Back foot**".
- 3.2.4 Referees should deal firmly with "loiterers" who interfere with play.

### 4.0 Mauls

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

- 4.1.1 Players may only join the maul from behind the hindmost foot.
- 4.1.2 Players may "roll" a maul in a bound mass with the ball. In such a rolling move, the ball carrier's team-mates who are in front of the ball are participants in the maul and are not obstructing or shielding.

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- 4.1.3 Players may detach from a maul with the ball, in which case the maul is over and the ball carrier(s) may be tackled. In a rolling move after detachment, the ball carrier's team-mates also may detach and move forward provided they remain behind the ball carrier. They must not act as a shield by advancing ahead of the ball carrier.
- 4.1.4 If two players of the same team detach from 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 the tackle is not completed, the referee should indicate that another maul has formed and that it should not be taken down by saying "**Maul formed. Keep it up**".
- 4.1.5 Opponents participating in a maul must not interfere with the scrum-half of the team winning the ball.
- 4.1.6 A player who becomes caught in the opponent's side of the maul while it is forming is not off-side, and any attempt to drag this player out of the maul is an offense.
- 4.2 Referees are expected to manage mauls as follows:
  - 4.2.1 When necessary, the referee can encourage players not to collapse the maul by using the standard preventive phrase, "**Maul formed. Keep it up**".
  - 4.2.2 Referees can encourage players to join correctly and non-participants to remain on-side by using the standard phrase, "**Back foot**", with the possible addition of jersey color and player number.
  - 4.2.3 If a participant is no longer correctly bound to the maul, the referee can encourage the player to take corrective action by using the standard phrase "**Get back**", with the possible addition of jersey color and player number.
  - 4.2.4 A maul ends successfully when the ball leaves the maul, when the ball is on or over the goal line or when the ball is on the ground.
  - 4.2.5 If a maul is stationary at its formation, the referee may let the team in possession of the ball know that they are in danger of losing the ball, by using the standard phrase "**Five seconds**". In any event, the players in the maul will have five seconds from the formation of the maul to start the maul moving forward. Either team may start the forward movement. If the maul does not move forward within the five seconds, and the referee can see that the ball is being moved, the referee will use the standard phrase "**Use it**" and then allow a reasonable time for the ball to emerge.
  - 4.2.6 If a maul is moving forward at its formation, and then stops doing so, the referee will use the standard phrase "**Five seconds**". The players in the maul will then have five seconds to start the maul moving again in the same direction. If the maul does not move again in the same direction within the five seconds, but the referee can see that the ball is being moved the referee will use the standard phrase "**Use it**" and then allow a reasonable time for the ball to emerge.
  - 4.2.7 If the maul moves forward and then reverses direction, and the referee can see that the ball is being moved the referee will use the standard phrase "**Use it**" and then allow a reasonable time for the ball to emerge.
  - 4.2.8 The referee is encouraged to move around the maul to locate the position of the ball.
  - 4.2.9 Once the referee has used the phrase "**Use it**", the maul should not be allowed to move again.
  - 4.2.10 If the ball does not emerge, or the ball becomes otherwise unplayable, the referee will award a scrum, and award the put-in according to Law.
  - 4.2.11 Referees will deal firmly with "loiterers" who interfere with play

## 5.0 Scrum

- 5.1 Players are expected to conform to the following requirements in scrums:
  - 5.1.1 During pre-match preparation activities, the referee will meet with the front row players and scrum-halves of each team, as well as their replacements and substitutes, to explain the scrum management process. The referee's verbal calls and engagement at

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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 is:

- Direct the scrum-half to be ready early.
- Keep the scrum apart until the ball is available for the put-in.
- Manage the spacing and crouch sequence prior to engagement. If difficulties occur, the referee should sort them out prior to saying “**Hold**”.
- Once the players are crouched and ready to engage, the referee will say “**Hold**” and check for readiness to engage. If there is a problem, the referee should blow the whistle rather than say “**Hold**” again. After blowing the whistle, the referee will attend to the problem and repeat the preparation sequence up to the “**Hold**” command.
- When the referee is satisfied with the readiness to engage, the referee will say “**Engage**” The word “**Engage**” should not be given in a predictable cadence with the word “**Hold**” The players are expected to engage promptly after the referee says “**Engage**”. If a player does not engage promptly or properly (including “bailing out” or standing up) after the referee says “**Engage**”, that player may be subject to penalty. It should be emphasized that when the referee calls “**Engage**” this is not a command, but allows the front rows to engage when ready.

**Note: There is a different scrum engagement procedure for Under-19 Rugby.**

- 5.1.2** After the engagement the props must be pushing straight with spines parallel to the ground, heads above hips, and binding correctly according to the Law. The loose-head prop’s left arm may no longer be placed on the thigh for support. The loose-head prop must bind onto the opposing tight-head prop’s back or side. No prop may bind onto an opponent’s arm, sleeve, chest, or collar. No prop may exert any downward pressure.
  - 5.1.3** If the loose-head prop is at risk of losing balance, the prop may, in the interests of safety, place the left hand on the ground to regain balance, but the hand must not remain on the ground, nor may the action be used to generate leverage against the opponent.
  - 5.1.4** After the engagement, the scrum-half must put the ball into the scrum straight, and without delay along the middle line between the two front rows so there can be a fair contest for the ball. When the scrum-halves put the ball into the scrum they must stand at least one meter away from the “mark” on the middle line of the scrum so that their heads do not touch the scrum or go beyond the nearest front row player. The ball must be released by the scrum-half from outside the tunnel and the outer arms of the props.
  - 5.1.5** Throughout the scrum, front row players must stay tightly bound to each other, and the props to their opponents. Front row players must not collapse the scrum, lift an opponent, stand up, or force an opponent up out of the scrum.
  - 5.1.6** The No. 8’s head may be raised provided that one arm up to the shoulder is completely bound around a lock.
  - 5.1.7** Before the scrum wheels through ninety degrees, the team with the ball must “use it or lose it”.
  - 5.1.8** If a scrum becomes stationary and does not start moving immediately the ball must emerge immediately. If it does not another scrum is ordered with the team not in possession at the time of stoppage throwing in the ball.
  - 5.1.9** The ball is considered to be out of the scrum if it is no longer under control of a player in the scrum or as soon as the scrum-half or the hindmost player of the scrum places two hands on the ball. A player that is using a foot to present the ball for clearance has the ball under control.
- 5.2** Referees are expected to manage scrums as follows:
- 5.2.1** The referee must not physically interfere with the engagement procedure by standing or holding a hand in the line of sight of any front row player. If the referee is positioned on

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the put-in side, it is suggested the referee stand just to the side of the tunnel to allow the scrum-half to be on the middle line at engagement.

- 5.2.2 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.
- 5.2.3 The first priority for the referee is to manage the scrum engagement. Then the referee should manage other unlawful actions, such as illegal binding, boring in, twisting, pulling down, or foot movement indicating an effort to collapse the scrum.
- 5.2.4 The referee will check that props are “square”, pushing straight, and binding correctly according to Law. The loose-head prop’s left arm may no longer be placed on the thigh for support. The prop must bind onto the opposing tight-head prop’s back or side. No prop is allowed to bind on an opponent’s arm, sleeve, chest, or collar. The standard phrases will be “**Push straight**”, “**No boring**”, “**Binding**”, and “**Arm up**”, with the possible addition of jersey color and player number.
- 5.2.5 The referee will ensure that no prop player puts an outside hand on the ground to use it as leverage against an opponent. The sanction is a penalty kick. The standard phrase will be “**Binding**” or “**Arm Up**”, with the possible addition of jersey color and player number.
- 5.2.6 The referee will, after the scrum engagement, ensure that the scrum is stationary before allowing the scrum-half to put in the ball.
- 5.2.7 The referee will ensure that the ball is put in straight, without delay, along the middle line between the two front rows so there can be a fair contest for the ball. The standard phrases will be “**In straight**” and “**No delay**”.
- 5.2.8 The referee will enforce the Experimental Law Variation relating to wheeling. Before 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 in possession 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 will 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 put-in. The new scrum will be formed at the place where the previous scrum ended.
- 5.2.9 Scrum collapses are potentially dangerous situations and referees should be very strict in penalizing unsafe play. Under no circumstances in any match in these situations may advantage be applied. At all levels, when the temper of the game permits, referees should work with the players to deal with collapses.
- 5.2.10 The binding requirements for loose forwards, including the No. 8, will be enforced. The standard phrase will be “**Stay bound**”, with the possible addition of jersey color and player number.
- 5.2.11 Where player cooperation is absent, referees will apply the appropriate free kick/penalty kick sanctions. If necessary, the referee has the option to go to uncontested scrums.
- 5.2.12 Referees will monitor scrum off-side lines closely. The standard phrase will be “**Back foot**”, with the possible addition of jersey color and player number.
- 5.2.13 Following the award of a free kick/penalty kick for a scrum offense, the referee will not give a mark for the kick until the front rows have separated. Subject to the referee's ability to stop play for safety or control reasons, a quick tap kick may be taken before the mark is given. The quick tap kick must be taken at the place of the mark, or straight behind that place, and in accordance with paragraph 8.7 of these guidelines.

## 6.0 Line-out

- 6.1 Players are expected to conform to the following requirements in the line-out:

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- 6.1.1** Players can arrive at their own pace but there is to be no delay in forming the line-out. A “team/forward huddle” before forming the line-out is permitted. If the huddle is within 10 meters of the line-of-touch, all the forwards in the huddle must join the line-out.
- 6.1.2** The player throwing the ball in at the line-out must do so without feint or delay, from a position on or behind the touch line straight along the middle line so that it is initially played on that line no closer than five meters from the touch line. In practical terms the middle line is represented by a line that is one meter wide along the line-of-touch. However, if the gap between the shoulders is wider than one meter the ball should still be thrown in within the one-meter-wide line along the line of touch.
- 6.1.3** Supporters may pre-grip the jumper's shorts. The jumper must initiate the jump before active support is given. It is recommended that teams develop the skills necessary for dynamic support as this opens many options in both attack and defense that are not available with static support.
- 6.1.4** A player supporting a jumper from in front of the jumper may support the jumper anywhere on or above the thighs.
- 6.1.5** A player supporting a jumper from behind the jumper may support the jumper on or above the shorts.
- 6.1.6** Players must not jump early (prior to the throw-in) for the ball and they may not be supported in the air to await the throw-in.
- 6.1.7** Players who support a jumping team-mate must lower that player safely to the ground as soon as the ball has been won by a player of either team.
- 6.1.8** Players in the line-out must remain on-side (behind the line-of-touch before the ball is thrown, and behind the ball after it has been thrown-in, and no further than 15 meters from the touch line) until the line-out is ended.
- 6.1.9** In a peeling movement, peeling players no longer need to remain close to the line-out, nor do they need to move parallel to the line-out. However, they must remain within the area between the line-of-touch and ten meters behind the line-of-touch until the line-out is ended.
- 6.1.10** In the event the peeling movement is aborted and either a ruck or a maul is formed at the line-out, the peeling players must either join the ruck or the maul, or move to the off-side line through the hindmost foot of the ruck or the maul, and remain there in compliance with the off-side law until the line-out is ended.
- 6.1.11** A player entering the line-out from the receiver position may take the ball, but may not support a player jumping for the ball.
- 6.1.12** After the throw the thrower and the thrower's opposite number may join the line-out.
- 6.2** Referees are expected to manage line-outs as follows:
- 6.2.1** Referees will ensure that the throw-in is taken properly so that there is a fair contest for the ball. The standard phrases will be “**In straight**” and “**Gap**”.
- 6.2.2** If players of either team jump before the ball has left the hands of the thrower and a line-out jumper is supported and suspended in the air, the referee will determine whether or not the thrower feinted at the throw-in and then:
- Remind players at the next line-out that early jumping and remaining supported is not permitted.
  - Remind the thrower at the next line-out that feinting is not permitted.
  - If on the first occasion either team wins the ball by an illegal method, a free kick will be awarded to the non-offending team.
  - If the line-out is not lost by the non-offending team, the referee will play advantage and talk to the offending team at the next line-out.
  - If the offense continues, free kicks and sanctions for repeated infringement should be applied.
- 6.2.3** Referees will encourage line-out participants and non-participants to remain on-side. The standard phrases will be “**Stay on-side**” for participants and “**Ten meters**” for non-participants.

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- 6.2.4 Referees will deal strictly and harshly with dangerous acts of foul play committed on jumpers in the air.
- 6.2.5 Referees will watch for deliberate acts of foul play by a jumpers' illegal use of their inside arms.
- 6.2.6 Referees will watch for deliberate acts of foul play by a jumper's interference with other jumpers' legitimate use of their inside arms.

**7.0 Off-side and Obstruction at Restarts and in Open Play**

- 7.1 On restarts and in open play, players are expected to conform to the following requirements:
  - 7.1.1 On penalty or free kicks, members of the infringing team must retire ten meters before re-entering play unless they are in the act of retiring and are put on-side by an advancing on-side team-mate. These off-side players are not put on-side by any action of the kicking team.
  - 7.1.2 On kicks in open play, team-mates of the kicker who are ahead of the kicker must not advance until put on-side. Offside team-mates of the kicker who are in front of an imaginary ten meter line of where the ball lands, or may land, or an opponent waiting to receive the kick, must retire behind the imaginary 10-meter line.
  - 7.1.3 In open-play attacking movements players often run in front of ball carriers and the ball is then passed behind these "decoy" runners. The effect is that defenders can be prevented from gaining access to the ball or the ball carrier, even when contact has not been made with the opposition. This 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 runners to obstruct defending players' running angles or their approach to the ball carrier.
    - 7.1.4 It is permissible for the ball carrier to cause an opponent to commit to the tackle immediately prior to the ball carrier passing the ball (for example, a screen pass).
    - 7.1.5 It is not permissible for the ball carrier to use a team-mate as a "pick", shield, or obstruction to avoid being tackled by an opponent.
    - 7.1.6 Players without the ball may not willfully move or stand in a position that prevents an opponent from tackling a ball carrier. This applies to off-side players and to on-side players. In either case the act is obstruction and should be penalized.
      - 7.1.6.1 Players of the team winning the ball at a tackle/ruck/maul may not stand to the side and in front of the last foot (off-side line) in order to alter or otherwise change the running lines of their opponents. This is both an off-side and an obstruction infringement.
      - 7.1.6.2 An on-side team-mate of the ball carrier may not trail the ball carrier in a manner primarily intended to prevent opponents from tackling the ball carrier. This is obstruction. However, an on-side player may take a running line primarily intended to put the player in a position to receive a pass from the ball carrier.
      - 7.1.6.3 Subject to these limitations, moves including screen passes, players undertaking scissors movements, players running in front of ball carriers and players passing behind other players are permitted.
- 7.2 Referees are expected to manage restarts and open play as follows:
  - 7.2.1 Referees will encourage players to be on-side on restart kicks. Preventive refereeing may be applied by having the kicker delay the kick until players are on-side. If quick tap-kicks are taken, the referee must be diligent in identifying players of the non-kicking team who are not back ten meters. Where appropriate, the standard preventive phrase will be "**Back ten**", with the possible addition of jersey color and player number.
  - 7.2.2 Referees will encourage players to remain on-side when following up in open play. If team-mates of the kicker are advancing in front of the kicker, the standard preventive phrase that applies is "**Wait**". If offside team-mates of the kicker are in front of the imaginary ten meter line of where the ball lands, or may land, the standard preventive phrase will be "**Back ten**", with the possible addition of jersey color and player number.

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- 7.2.3 Referees will be strict in dealing with obstruction. The referee will consider whether the act was willful or accidental.
- 7.2.4 Persistent offending may be caused by inexperienced players at lower levels of play, but the referee must remain consistent in enforcing the Law.
- 7.2.5 In representative and senior levels of play, persistent offending will be considered a professional foul and will be dealt with strictly. Referees will use the guideline of a caution and temporary suspension on the second offense within a short time period during the game.
- 7.2.6 A kicking tee of any dimensions may be used.

**8.0 Foul Play / Penalty Kick / Free Kick**

- 8.1 Players must not take any action contrary to the letter and the spirit of the Game, including the commission of Foul Play. The latter includes obstruction, unfair play, misconduct, dangerous play, unsporting behavior, retaliation and repeated infringements.
- 8.2 Referees will deal strictly with incidents of foul play. If a player commits foul play, the referee is expected to manage specific incidents by awarding a penalty kick after doing one of the following:
  - 8.2.1 Admonish the player, which does not include a formal caution.
  - 8.2.2 Caution and temporarily suspend ("Sin Bin") the player. The duration of each temporary suspension is to be ten 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 suspended player without delay must go to and remain at the center of the opponent's dead-ball line. The period of ten minutes does not include half time. Referees will signify that a player has been cautioned and temporarily suspended by showing the player a yellow card. Referees still must issue a verbal caution and should not rely exclusively on showing the card.
  - 8.2.3 Order the player off. Referees will signify that a player has been ordered off by showing the player a red card. Referees still must issue a verbal ordering-off rather than rely exclusively on showing the card
- 8.3 Repeated infringements will be dealt with strictly.
  - 8.3.1 Referees will use the guideline of an admonishment on the second offense within a short time period during the match.
  - 8.3.2 After three similar offenses by the same player, the sequence of action for the referee is as follows:
    - 8.3.2.1 If, in the opinion of the referee, a player has repeatedly infringed any Law, a penalty is to be awarded and the player either is to be cautioned and temporarily suspended or ordered off. Also, the player's captain will be informed.
    - 8.3.2.2 Similarly, if in the opinion of the referee, a team has repeatedly infringed any Law, a penalty is to be awarded, and the captain is to be admonished and told that the next team member who repeats the offense will be cautioned and temporarily suspended, or ordered off.
  - 8.3.3 Referees will need to use their management skills to assess the seriousness of the offenses in the context of the particular match at hand. These skills are important in keeping the game flowing and in preventing foul play. In representative and senior matches when a player commits a similar offense three times the referee must caution and temporarily suspend the player. In junior matches involving inexperienced players, the referee may not consider three offenses to be serious enough to penalize for repeated infringements.
  - 8.3.4 "Professional Fouls/Repeated Infringements". The penalizing of deliberate infringements will be supported fully. However, penalty tries under these circumstances should only be awarded in situations fully justifiable under Law. Referees must be consistent in awarding penalty tries.
- 8.4 Dangerous tackles will be dealt with severely, with head-high tackles requiring close scrutiny and firm adjudication.

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- 8.5 Referees will deal strictly and severely with dangerous acts committed on ball catchers in the air.
- 8.6 At a quick penalty/free kick, the second penalty/free kick must not be taken until a mark has been made by the referee.
- 8.7 Tap-kicks after penalty or free kick awards must be executed properly. Such kicks shall be taken within in the sight of the referee.
- 8.8 Referees should conform to the Table of Recommended Penalties for Foul Play Infringements, which is provided in Section 16.0.
- 8.9 If a player is temporarily suspended or ordered off, the referee must send a report to the responsible Union that includes the name of the player, the Law that was violated, and the circumstances that led to the temporary suspension or ordering off. The report must be filed with the appropriate Disciplinary Chair on a timely basis. For an ordering off, a timely basis is no more than two days after the incident by phone, with a written follow-up report in no more than three days. (See the USA Rugby Disciplinary Regulations and Procedures for more detail.)

### **9.0 Advantage**

- 9.1 Referees will use the advantage signal, where the arm is outstretched to the side, pointing in the direction of the non-infringing team. The referee should not vary the signal in an attempt to indicate whether the infringement merits a penalty kick, a free kick, or a scrum.
- 9.2 Referees are encouraged to call "Advantage", with the possible addition of jersey color, and, as appropriate, "Advantage over".
- 9.3 A guideline to playing advantage is as follows:
  - 9.3.1 For infringements for which a scrum would be awarded, referees will only allow advantage that accrues quickly. If an obvious territorial or tactical advantage has not accrued, or appears unlikely, after a couple of phases of play without another infringement, the referee will award the scrum.
  - 9.3.2 Consistent with the temper of the match at hand, referees may play the advantage opportunity longer for penalty and free kick offenses than for scrum offenses, particularly for an offense committed by a defending team near its own goal line, when the attacking team have a significant prospect of scoring a try.
  - 9.3.3 If attacking players commit penalty kick offenses well inside their opponents' half of the playing area, referees will not play the advantage opportunity as long as they otherwise might, if doing so leaves defending players under significant pressure. The penalty kick, and the associated relief of a kick to touch with the subsequent throw-in at the line-out, will be awarded promptly.

### **10.0 Kick-Off**

- 10.1 If at a kick-off the receiving team plays the ball before it reaches the 10-meter line, play continues.
- 10.2 It is preferable for the referee to manage the kick-off so that infringements are prevented.
- 10.3 Referees will deal firmly with players of the kicker's team in front of the kicker at the kick-off.
- 10.4 Referees will deal strictly and severely with dangerous acts of foul play committed on ball catchers in the air.
- 10.5 Referees should be aware that if a kick-off goes directly into touch, the kick may be accepted by the non-offending team and a quick throw-in may be taken anywhere between where the ball went into touch and the non-offending team's goal line.

### **11.0 Team Support**

- 11.1 Water may be delivered by designated personnel to players in the field-of-play during stoppages in play. The designated personnel may include replacement and substitute players.

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- 11.2** It is a strict directive from USA Rugby, consistent with instruction from the IRB, that a player having suffered a definite concussion should not participate in any match or training session for a period of at least three weeks from the time of the injury, and then only subject to being cleared by a proper neurological examination. The primary responsibility for conforming to this directive must belong with the individual with the concussion. However, the coaches, team-mates, club officials, family, and friends of the individual also bear significant responsibility in preventing any participation in the game of Rugby until the individual has been medically cleared to play or train again.

### 12.0 Players' Clothing

- 12.1** It is the shared responsibility of team management and referees to ensure only approved items are worn.
- 12.2** Team management must identify to the referee those players wearing protective garments. This equipment should be presented to the referee for inspection, as the referee directs, during the pre-match preparation activities.
- 12.3** If there is a jersey clash (referee's decision), it is the home team's responsibility to change.

### 13.0 Touch Judges

- 13.1** Each club (especially the home club) is strongly encouraged to have competent touch judges available for each game. Their primary roles will be to run touch and signal at kicks at goal.
- 13.2** If there are Qualified Touch Judges available, the Qualified Touch Judges' primary roles, in order of priority are:
- Signaling touch/touch-in-goal.
  - Signaling at kicks at goal.
  - Signaling foul play.
- 13.3** The secondary roles of Qualified Touch Judges are to:
- Assist with the keeping of time.
  - Assist with the management of replacements, substitutions, blood bins, injuries.
  - Assist in creating space, i.e., preventing off-side.
  - Assist with critical decision making, e.g. knock-ons, forward passes, in-goal decisions.
- 13.4** The referee may ask Qualified Touch Judges for assistance in other ways if required.
- 13.5** Prior to the match, referees are encouraged to inform both teams of the extent to which touch judges will participate during the match.

### 14.0 Ground

- 14.1** The home team is responsible for providing suitable sideline barriers to prevent spectators from approaching within 5 meters of the playing area, [and for providing appropriate goal post pads to a minimum of 2 inches thickness and 5 feet height on all goal posts used in a match](#)
- 14.2** If either team has objections about ground conditions, they must tell the referee before the match starts. The referee and the team management personnel will attempt to resolve the issues, but the referee must not start a match if any part of the ground is considered to be dangerous.
- 14.3** If the match is cancelled as a result of such circumstances, the appropriate union shall be notified.

### 15.0 Code of Conduct

- 15.1** USA Rugby expects all teams and team members to abide by the following code of conduct:

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- 15.1.1** Players, coaches and other team officials who represent their teams are ambassadors of their club, Local Area Union, Territory and USA Rugby, as well as of the game of rugby in general. As such, each player and official is expected to be on good, responsible behavior at all times, both on and off the field.
- 15.1.2** Players, coaches and other team officials should not tolerate obnoxious, impolite, or antisocial behavior of any sort that would adversely affect the image of the game as a serious and disciplined athletic endeavor. This includes verbal abuse of opponents by players or their supporters
- 15.1.3** A member, player, coach or other official of a club must not before, during or after a match under the jurisdiction of an affiliated Union threaten or address a referee or touch judge in insulting terms, or act in a provocative manner towards a referee or touch judge.
- 15.1.4** Referees and touch judges must likewise treat players, coaches and other team officials with equal respect.
- 15.1.5** All players, officials and supporters must respect the ground rules that are in effect at any particular match, such as prohibitions against having alcohol on school grounds and in public parks.
- 15.2** Member Unions of USA Rugby are encouraged to address violations of this code of conduct using Disciplinary Committees or other appropriate mechanisms according to their own procedures, and to administer and enforce sanctions that shall be binding on all affiliated Unions.

**16.0 Recommended Penalties for Foul Play Infringements**

Infringement	Law 10	First Offense	Repeat Offense
Obstruction.	1(a-f)	1	2
Deliberately playing unfairly or voluntarily infringing a Law.	2(a)	1 or 2	2 or 3
Voluntarily throwing or knocking the ball into touch	2(c)	1	2
Repeated infringements.	3(a-c)	2 or 3	3
Wasting time.	2(b)	1	2
Striking an opponent as follows:			
1. One-on-one punching.	4(a)	1,2, or 3	3
2. Blind, third man in.	4(a)	3	NA
3. Continuing on after whistle.	4(l)	2 or 3	3
4. In retaliation.	4(j)	1 or 2	3
5. Head butting.	4(a)	3	NA
6. Grasping or striking the genital area.	4(a)	3	NA
7. Using elbow or knee.	4(a)	1,2, or 3	
8. Eye gouging.	4(a)	3	NA
Trampling an opponent on the ground away from the ball.	4(b)	3	NA
Trampling an opponent near the ball as follows:			
1. On body or legs, near the ball.	4(b)	1 or 2	3
2. On body or legs, not near the ball.	4(b)	2 or 3	3
3. On head.	4(b)	3	NA
Kicking an opponent.	4(c)	3	NA
Tripping	4(d)	1 or 2	2 or 3
Tackling an opponent as follows:			
Early.	4(e)	1, 2, or 3	2 or 3
Late.	4(e)	1, 2, or 3	2 or 3

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Dangerously, including dangerous charging.	4(e or g)	1, 2, or 3	2 or 3
While opponent is jumping for ball in the air, including tapping or pulling jumper's foot in line-out.	4 (e or h)	1, 2, or 3	2 or 3
Playing an opponent without the ball.	4(f)	1, 2, or 3	2 or 3
Playing dangerously in a scrum, ruck or maul:	4(i)		
1. Scrum: front row charging.		1 or 2	
2. Scrum: lifting or forcing opponent upwards out of the scrum.		1 or 2	2 or 3
3. Scrum: front row player standing up.		1 or 2	2 or 3
4. Scrum, ruck or maul: voluntarily collapsing.		1 or 2	2 or 3
5. Ruck or maul: charging into without binding on a team-mate.		1 or 2	2 or 3
Late charging the kicker.	4(m)	1 or 2	2 or 3
Using Flying Wedge or Cavalry Charge.	4(n)	1 or 2	2 or 3
Misconduct while ball is out of play.	4(l)	1 or 2	2 or 3
Acting contrary to good sportsmanship (including, but not limited to, biting, neck holding, hair pulling).	4(k)	1, 2, or 3	2 or 3

The above table uses the following codes for penalties:

1 = Penalty kick with admonishment.

2 = Penalty kick with caution and temporary suspension (yellow card).

3 = Penalty kick and send off (red card).

NA = Not applicable for a repeat offense (player sent off at first offense).