



Whistle Talk

News from the British Columbia Rugby Referees' Society

Volume 2 ed 1

New Season Begins

There will be a lot of “new” in the upcoming season of BC Rugby: new Rules of Competition, new league structures, new experimental Laws, some new interpretations of existing Laws and new focus by referees on some phases of the game. It will take a while to get used to all of the changes but hopefully we will have even better rugby in BC.

The IRB controls the Laws of the Game and how they are administered in several ways. They use actual Law changes, Law clarifications (interpretations), Law Amendment Trials (or Experimental Law Variations) and directives to referees on how to apply current Law.

This season all of these will affect the way the game is played. All of the following are available on line (along with example video) at <http://www.irblaws.com/>. (On this site you can also take a test on the Laws... you'll get a certificate... suitable for framing !) [The bits in blue are my comments on the Law.](#)

The Big Five

From an IRBs meeting with the International Referees Panel in 2009 (and reaffirmed in 2012), the focus for referees was laid out, as the “Big Five”. These are NOT new Law but rather a call to referees to police the existing Law. All are designed to allow the game to be more open and played at speed.

1 All areas of the tackle law to be strictly applied.

- Tackler to release tackled player immediately
- Tackled player to release or pass ball immediately
- Assist tacklers to release tackled player immediately
- Arriving players from both sides to enter through the gate
- Ball winning team should not prevent a contest by “sealing off”
- Arriving players should not be obstructed

Reason: Quick ball at breakdown for teams wishing to play the game at pace and to allow a contest.

[This has been a focus for referees the last few seasons and continues to be an area for improvement. Players are beginning to understand what is expected and are complying faster. It's all about the speed of the game; referees being at the breakdown and players being faster at releasing and moving away.](#)

2 **Offsides at breakdown to be strictly policed.**

- *Non participants at the breakdown must be behind the hindmost foot of the last player in their side of the breakdown. This is to apply to both teams and applies both on the open side and short side of the breakdown.*

Reason: To give the ball winning team all the space and options they are entitled to, to use the ball.

Referees have been pretty firm with defending players who are fringing around the rucks.

They have now been told to also be vigilant with offensive players who set up as blockers or “hang out” beside the ruck. All must retreat to their off-side line (the last feet)

3 **Zero tolerance to offsides from kicks to be strictly policed.**

- *Players in front of the kicker of their side must not advance until onside and offside players within 10metres of the ball alighting must retire and continue to retire until outside the 10metres or put onside.*

Reason: To give the ball receiving team as much legal space as they are entitled to under Law.

A player catching an opponent’s kick must have time and space to play the ball. Players in front of a teammate who kicked the ball must stand still or move toward their goal line.

Remember if a player (on the kicking team) is within 10m of where the ball comes down, they must move toward their goal line AND they are not put on-side when their opponent runs with the ball, kicks it, etc. NOTE. The 10m is not a circle around the spot where the ball comes down, it’s a line all the way across the field.

4 **Scrum.**

- *Four calls and four actions: crouch means crouch, touch means touch, etc. (see below)*
- *Binding of props on body, not arm, of opponent.*
- *Hit straight and stay straight*

Reason: Referee to take control of the engagement procedure, not the players

Everyone has an opinion on how to make scrums better and who is to blame when they go bad. For referees the goal is simple... a fair, safe, contest for the ball. The rest is just props having fun.

5 **Maul.**

- *The ball carrier at the commencement of the maul must be available to be defended by his opponents.*
- *A player bound in the maul is allowed to be there.*
- *A player may not unbind or use a sliding bind to go around a maul.*

Reasons: To ensure that the commencement of the Maul is a contest and to allow the maul to be legally defended.

It takes 3 players to form a maul... ball carrier, a teammate and a defending player.

This focus is about the 1st defender being able to defend (ie get at) the ball carrier...

members of the attacking team cannot be in front and block out the defenders. AS the maul forms, if the 1st defender reacts fast enough, they can tackle the ball carrier. If they wait too long and the maul is well formed, tackling the ball carrier will be collapsing the maul.

Mauls can be very fluid. Players can often end up on the “wrong side of the ball”. As long as they entered the maul from the back and are “coming through the middle” they are legal. Once they “pop out” of the maul, they must go back around and re-enter.

In May 2012, three areas of existing Law were identified and referees have been instructed to deal with the situation more closely to the Law.

1 Ball ripped from a ball carrier not to be considered a knock-on.

With the defenders now often grappling for the ball with the ball carrier (rather than taking them to ground... ie. tackling them) the ball can become dislodged and bounce up the field. This has often been considered a knock-on by the ball carrier. It will now be thought of as the ball knocked backwards by the defender. Note: the ball coming loose and going forward during an actual tackle is still a knock-on.

2 Offside when the ball is kicked to touch thereby preventing quick throw-ins

At times, after a kick into touch, members of the kicker's team (who were in front of the kicker) have prevented a quick throw-in by their opposition. Though they were clearly offside, they have been forgiven and ignored because the ball is off the playing field. They will now be liable to penalty for being offside.

3 Squeeze ball and the need to ensure the ball is immediately available

Squeeze ball (aka. turtle ball) is legal in men's and women's rugby (but NOT in U-19 and younger). At times the ball has not been pushed back soon enough. It cannot be held under the ball carrier's body for any length of time.

And finally, there will be some **Law Amendment Trials**, actual changes to the Laws that are being tested. These begin in Canada, when new seasons start after August 1st, 2012. (BC's leagues will be the 1st to use these in Canada) These amendments will be used for the next season and then either be adopted permanently into the Laws or thrown out or modified.

AMENDED LAWS:

Law 3.4 Number of Players - The Team

For international matches a Union may nominate up to eight replacements / substitutes.

Won't affect most of us at all.

Law 3.4 (7's Variations)

A team may nominate up to five replacements/substitutes.

A team may substitute or replace up to five players.

Still maximum of 12 on the roster but now 5 (not 3) can be used as replacements or substitutes

Law 4: Players' Clothing

The dispensation on players wearing GPS units will continue.

Yippee... all the teams in BC that bought GPS units can continue to use them.

Law 4: Players' Clothing

4.2 Special additional items for women

Current Law 4.2 to become 4.2(a)

Add new 4.2(b) Female players may wear cotton blend long tights with single inside leg seam under their shorts and socks.

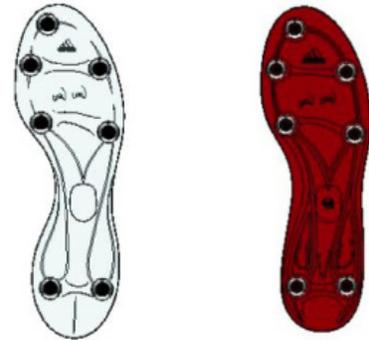
In the past the ban on leggings has often been ignored during the cold months of our season... they're now legal. NOTE: This amendment applies only to women! (It probably has more to do with modesty issues for some countries than for protection against frost bite)

Law 4 : Players' Clothing

4.3 Studs

Specific sole configuration approved for trial

This catches up with the manufacturer who has been selling these for a couple of years and makes the boots legal. Question: Is that a toe stud?



Law 6 : Match Officials

6.A.6 Referee consulting with others

Council approved trials, which will extend the powers of the TMO. The trials will take place in selected competitions and protocols will be circulated at a later date.

Sorry we don't have TMOs. So all we have is the referees' decisions. Remember what the great philosopher Bertuzzi said: "It is what it is !"

Law 9 : Method of Scoring

9.B.1 Taking a conversion kick

(e) The kicker must take the kick within one minute and thirty seconds (ninety seconds) from the time a try has been scored. The player must complete the kick within one minute and thirty seconds even if the ball rolls over and has to be placed again.

Sanction: The kick is disallowed if the kicker does not take the kick within the time allowed.

The timing used to be 1 minute from the arrival of the tee. So no more rummaging through several kit bags to find the tee and the guy carrying it out will have to actually run!

Law 12 : Knock-on or Throw forward

12.1 The outcome of a knock-on or throw forward

Quick throw-in after knock-on or throw forward

Add new 12.1(e) Knock-on or throw forward into touch. When the ball goes into touch from a knock-on or throw forward, the non-offending team will be offered the choice of a lineout at the point the ball crossed the touch line or a scrum at the place of the knock-on or throw forward. The non-offending team may exercise the former option by taking a quick throw-in.

Current Law 12.1(e) becomes 12.1(f)

This rescinds a Law Clarification (from 2009) that said that the knock-on had to be called and a scrum formed, even if the non-offending team wanted to have a quick throw-in. This will give teams more options to use the re-start that is working on the day and if they take the quick throw-in, could speed up the game.

Law 16 : Ruck

16.7 Unsuccessful end to a ruck

Add new 16.7(c): When the ball has been clearly won by a team at a ruck and the ball is available to be played the referee will call "Use it!" after which the ball must be played within five seconds. If the ball is not played within the five seconds the referee will award a scrum and the team not in possession of the ball at the ruck is awarded the throw in.

Again this could speed up the game. This amendment means the #9 no longer can straighten his shorts, check out the crowd, re-position his forwards like chess pieces and then pick up the ball. This may also prevent teams from the (ridiculous {note: sentiment is mine}) practice of creating a daisy chain of players stretching back from the ruck, all so the #9 can be farther away from the defenders.

Law 19 : Touch and Lineout

19.2 Quick throw-in

(b) For a quick throw in, the player may be anywhere outside the field of play between the line of touch and the player's goal line.

Used to be that the quick throw-in had to be taken " between the place where the ball went into touch and the player's goal line". The change will make a difference if a ball is kicked directly into touch from outside the 22m (or when the ball was carried back into the 22m by the licking team)... the player, wanting a quick throw-in, can move up the touch line to a place opposite where the ball was kicked... ie where the full lineout would happen.

Law 20 : Scrum

20.1 Forming a scrum

(g) The referee will call “crouch” then “touch”. The front rows crouch and using their outside arm; each prop touches the point of the opposing prop’s outside shoulder. The props then withdraw their arms. The referee will then call “set” when the front rows are ready. The front rows may then engage. The “set” call is not a command but an indication that the front rows may come together when ready.

So, from a 4 count back to a 3 count... “We’re going old school !!”.. brings back memories of “couch, hold, engage”. The cynics in the group will probably predict that the front rows will change from moving early on the “pause” to moving early on the “touch”.

BUT, note how this amendment links with the big 5 scrum focus talked about above. There will still need to be a Referee’s call and an action by the players... ie “crouch” = crouch, “touch” = touch AND pull the arm back. The referee will only say, “set” once the props comply and if everyone is stationary. The premise is still that the “Referee to take control of the engagement procedure, not the players”. [Insert your opinion here !!]

Law 21 : Penalty and Free Kicks

21.4 Penalty and free kick options and requirements

Add new 21.4(b) Lineout alternative. A team awarded a penalty or a free kick at a lineout may choose a further lineout, they throw-in. This is in addition to the scrum option.

Current 21.4(b) to (k) becomes (c) to (l)

So if an opponent is penalized at a lineout, the non-offending team can take the kick, have a scrum or have a lineout. This gives the Captain another thing to think about; they can choose what is working well on the day.

SO, there are lots of changes to how the Laws function. Please remember that it may take a while for all of this to percolate to all of the referees and teams. Everyone will need to be patient with each other for the first few months of the season.

As always if you have questions about these changes in the Law, don’t hesitate to ask (dpue1@shaw.ca)... If I don’t know, I’ll ask someone who does.