



Whistle Talk

News from the British Columbia Rugby Referees' Society

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Eye Protection Trial

In the past few years there have been a few requests from people... mostly parents of young players... wanting to wear some form of protective covering over their eyes as they play Rugby. The players have a medical condition that makes playing without the protection perilous. The Laws of the Game prohibit any form of protective material that is not a soft material. As the sports goggles available are usually of a hard plastic material the answer to the layers and their parents has been a regrettable “no”.

The IRB is currently conducting a trial of a specific brand of goggles. Rugby Canada has joined in the trial.

Here is part of the memo from Myles Spencer (CEO of Rugby Canada)

It is important to note that the Rugby Goggles are not meant to be purchased as eye protection for participants. Instead, those who do apply through the IRB for a set will have to demonstrate their need for Rugby Goggles through a letter from the ophthalmologist stating that there is a medical need for them. Only those Rugby Goggles with the official IRB Trial Approval logo will be permitted on the field.

Though Rugby Canada is a participant in the trial, the IRB will oversee the entire application and distribution process to individual players. For more information on, or to apply for, Rugby Goggles please visit www.irbplayerwelfare.com/goggles.

For any further enquiries please contact Nathan Abdelnour at Rugby Canada via email (nabdelnour@rugbycanada.ca) or phone (250 418 8998 ext. 302).

For anyone who wishes to wear the goggles, go to the irb player welfare web site and apply. If you show that there is a medical need for them, you will get a “voucher” which will allow you to purchase the specific brand of goggles on-line.

NOTE: you must have the specific approved brand. Referees will be looking for the IRB logo on them... without the IRB logo, players will not be allowed to wear the goggles.

Fending off

“Handing off” an opponent is allowed in Law 7. The act is more often called “fending off”... at least in Canada.

In the definitions section of the Laws fending off is described as “an action taken by a ball carrier to fend off an opponent by using the palm of the hand”.

An important issue about fending off is where the ball carrier's palm makes contact with the would-be tackling opponent. Pushing with the palm of their hand on the shoulder or chest of an opponent is both effective and legal. However, if the ball carrier makes contact with the opponent's head, the play **could** be considered as dangerous play (Law 10.4 (a)... striking an opponent).

The decision whether a play is dangerous or not, has many factors and therefore it is difficult to create a clear definition. For example, a broad statement like " any fending to the head is dangerous play" is impractical because there are many situations where simple contact with the head is not dangerous: ie. if the tackler is coming in low and the ball carrier uses a fending motion to the back of their head.

However, if the ball carrier contacts the tackler's head with a fist or a striking motion or strongly contacts the tackler's face with a fending motion, referees easily **might** consider these as dangerous play and the player **could** be liable to sanction (ie. admonishment, penalty, yellow card or red card)

Some Misc.

Rugby Canada has passed on some Law clarifications from the IRB:

Ball out of ruck:

As was previously mentioned in Whistle Talk, the ball is out of a ruck (and the defensive players are allowed to move forward across the off-side line) when the number 9 (or the player playing at the back of the ruck) picks up the ball to pass it.

Off-side at a ruck:

To be on-side at a ruck (when not actually part of the ruck... ie. bound in) a player must have both feet on their side of the off-side line. This applies mostly to defenders.

The Law does not mention the player's hands... so a player crouched in a "football defensive tackle" stance would not be off-side as long as their feet were behind the off-side line. The same Law would apply to mauls.

In the Laws of the Game, the lines that are mentioned (touch lines, goal lines) are all in the area they are describing. Step on the touchline and you're in touch, put the ball down on the goal line and you've scored in-goal, etc. The same applies to the off-side line... IF it were painted on the pitch, stepping on the off-side line would make you off-side.

SO a hint to players: The difference between having your feet 1mm behind the off-side line and having them 20cm behind, makes little or no difference in your ability to make a play on your opponents once the ball is out. BUT the 20cm does make it much easier for the referee to see that you are on-side... thus avoiding a penalty. Take a half step back from the hindmost foot in the ruck and don't give the referee any thought that you're off-side.