

## **Full Non-contact Rugby: Rules of Play**

January 15, 2009

Players and match officials must endeavor to ensure the IRB Laws of the Game, modified by the following playing rules, are observed when playing Full Non-contact Rugby. It is likely that players come to Full Non-contact Rugby at about age 13 years, though players may be younger or older. The aggregate level of previous experience of the players and the quality of the support for them are also determinants for the timing of the introduction. Ideally, players involved in Full Non-contact Rugby have had some exposure to Rookie Rugby or Intermediate Non-contact Rugby, though that exposure is not a requirement.

### **5.1 Object:**

The object of the game is to score tries (five points), conversions (two points). If posts are properly positioned in the playing area then drop goals and penalty kicks (three points) may also be scored. A penalty try will be awarded if a try would probably have been scored but for foul play by the defending team.

### **5.2 Teams**

The game is played between teams having a maximum of seven players, three of whom will be forwards and form the scrum, with the remaining players forming the back line. Each team can have an agreed number of substitutes that can be used at the beginning of each period. Substituted players can be re-used at the beginning of each period or to replace an injured player if no other replacements are available. Substitutions may only take place when the ball is dead or at the break between periods and always with the referee's knowledge.

Injuries are rarely significant in non-contact rugby, and in the event of a minor injury a player is allowed to leave the playing area for attention, and eventually return to the match, though not until the subsequent period. Coaches have a responsibility to ensure that players with significant injuries do not return.

### **5.3 Starts**

- (a) A drop-kick from the center of the half-way line is used to start the game, the second half, and for all restarts after a score. The kicker's team must be behind the ball and the receiving team must be at least ten meters back from the ball until it has been kicked.
- (b) After a score the team that scored kicks off.
- (c) If, from the kick-off, the ball is kicked directly into touch, the opposition has the choice of:
  - the kick-off being taken again; or
  - the throw-in to a scrum at the center of the half-way line; or
  - accepting the kick and contesting a line-out at the half-way line.

(d) If from the kick-off the ball is not kicked ten meters, and the ball is not first touched by an opponent of the kicker, the opposition has the choice of:

- the kick-off being taken again; or
- their throw-in to a scrum at the center of the half-way line.

(a) If from the kick-off the ball is kicked into in-goal, without having touched or been touched by a player, the ball goes directly into in-goal and is then immediately touched down or made dead, or the ball goes into touch-in-goal, the opposition has the choice of:

- the kick-off being taken again; or
- their throw-in to a scrum at the center of the half-way line.

(b) Following an infringement for:

- off-side; or
- twisting, grabbing, pushing or pulling the ball-carrier while in the act of tagging or during a ruck or maul; or
- forcing or attempting to force the ball from the ball-carrier's hands; or
- pulling, pushing or obstructing an opponent who is not carrying the ball; or
- attempting a tag by diving or leaving the feet; or
- voluntarily causing a collision with an opponent, or
- handing-off/fending-off ; (A hand-off being the placing of an open palmed hand by the ball carrier against an opponent's face or body, while a fend-off is an outstretched arm by the ball carrier towards an opponent to discourage that person making a tag. Players should be encouraged to carry the ball in two hands to reduce the temptation to hand-off/fend off with a free hand.)

the match restarts at the place of infringement with a penalty kick to the non-offending team.

(f) After any stoppage not covered elsewhere in this Section (e.g. an injury), the match restarts with a scrum to the team moving forward or, if neither team was moving forward, to the team last in possession of the ball.

#### 5.4 General Play

(a) In general play, the ball can only be passed sideways or backwards, defined as 'towards the player's own dead-ball line'. If the ball is thrown forward or knocked on, a scrum is awarded to the opponents unless the referee plays advantage to the non-offending team.

(b) Off-side in general play is penalized in accordance with the IRB Laws of the Game. A player off-side in general play is to be penalized for being off-side unless that player is making an obvious attempt to return to an on-side position. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.

(c) If a player carrying the ball goes to ground in general play or if a player goes to ground to gather the ball in general play, the player must immediately do one of three things, or be penalized:

- get up with the ball; or
- pass the ball to another player; or
- release the ball for another player to pick up.

**Penalty:** Penalty kick.

(d) If the player on the ground with the ball is touched with both hands on the torso or legs by an opponent who is not on the ground, then the player on the ground now may no longer get up with the ball, but must either pass or release it. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.

(e) It is illegal for any player to voluntarily fall on or over a player lying on the ground with the ball or to voluntarily fall on or over players lying on the ground with the ball between them, or near them. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.

**Note:** No advantage shall be played. A player is assumed to have fallen voluntarily unless the referee is absolutely certain the fall was accidental. In the very rare instances when the fall is accidental, play must be stopped and a scrum awarded to the team previously in possession. The objective is to remove a dangerous area of play by keeping players on their feet and preventing them from falling to the ground.

## 5.5 Tag

(a) A tag occurs when an opponent simultaneously touches the ball-carrier with both hands anywhere from the waist to the knees, and the referee declares "Tag".

(b) If both teams agree, players may, as an alternative, use devices such as belts with detachable tapes or flags that a tagger may remove from the ball-carrier to indicate that a tag has occurred. No Rules are made concerning the form of the devices. However, in practice their use should maintain the important principles of the tag. If the teams cannot agree on the use of the devices then the match shall be played without them.

(c) A tag can only take place in the playing area. If a ruck or maul has been declared, then a tag cannot occur.

(d) Opponents must be on their feet, to tag the ball-carrier. The ball-carrier shall not fall to the ground to avoid a tag. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.

(e) When the ball-carrier is tagged in the field of play, then the ball-carrier must play the ball immediately. To play the ball, the ball-carrier must pass the ball or release the ball. The ball-carrier may continue running

while playing the ball, but the ball must be played within two steps or one second. **Penalty:** Scrum with opponents to throw in the ball.

- (f) After playing the ball because of a tag the tagged player may not intentionally touch the ball again until either the ball has been made dead, touched intentionally by an opponent or touched intentionally by at least two team-mates. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (g) The tagger must not interfere with play, and must move away from the ball-carrier and assume a neutral position. The tagger may not move towards a support player to whom the ball-carrier could pass the ball. However, as soon as the ball leaves the hands of the ball-carrier the tagger may leave the neutral position. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (h) After a tag, the opponents must allow the ball-carrier to play the ball. The opponents may not be any closer than one meter from the ball-carrier. No part of an opponent's arms or legs may be extended within the one meter zone. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (i) Opponents other than the tagger may position themselves between the ball-carrier and other members of the ball-carrier's team. These players may intercept the ball after it has been played.
- (j) Upon being tagged, the ball-carrier may place the ball on the ground instantly. Instantly is different from immediately. Playing the ball immediately means at or before the 'ly' at the end of pronouncing the word im-med-i-ate-ly. Placing the ball instantly means at the 'in' at the beginning of pronouncing the word instantly, without taking further forward steps. When this is done, a tag zone is created. It's a circle with a one meter radius with the center where the ball is placed.
- (k) Once this zone is created any of the players, other than the ball-carrier and tagger, may enter it from the direction of their own goal line, and play the ball. Think of the zone as a house with the front door facing the opponents' goal line. Players must enter through the back door. Players may not use the side or the front doors. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (l) While the ball is in the zone the tagger of the original ball-carrier and the original ball-carrier must both take neutral positions. They may not re-enter the tag zone until players other than themselves have taken possession of the ball or the ball has left the tag zone. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (m) Any player, including the tagger and ball-carrier, may be located anywhere outside the zone. There are no off-side lines established.
- (n) If the ball-carrier is in the field-of-play and is approaching the goal line and starting to reach out to touch the ball down in in-goal as the tag occurs, then the ball carrier should be allowed to complete the movement and, if successful, be awarded a try or a touch down accordingly.

## 5.6 Maul

- (a) A maul can only take place in the field-of-play. There shall be no contest for the ball during any part of a maul.
- (b) When a ball-carrier who has not been tagged comes near to an opponent and then turns away from the opponent's goal line and declares "Maul", then a tag cannot take place, and the ball-carrier must set a maul. If the ball-carrier has turned but is tagged before declaring the maul, the referee declares "Tag" and thereby disallows the maul. As soon as a maul is declared any player may take part in that maul, including players of either team that, prior to the maul being declared, were taking neutral positions as a result of a previous tag.
- (c) The nearby opponent, without interfering with the play of the ball, must immediately approach a position behind the ball-carrier and shall properly bind by holding the ball-carrier at the hips with both hands. The ball-carrier must offer, but not throw, the ball to a supporting teammate. **Penalty:** Scrum with the opponents to throw in the ball.
- (d) All other players of both teams must retire, without delay, behind a line drawn parallel to the goal lines through the hind most foot of those players' teammates who are taking part in the maul. Otherwise those players are off-side and liable to penalty. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (e) A supporting player of the ball-carrier's team must immediately approach from behind the hindmost foot of the ball-carrier close enough to take the ball, and shall then turn away from the opponents' goal line, allowing the first ball-carrier to properly bind by holding the supporting player at the hips with both hands. **Penalty:** Scrum with the opponents to throw in the ball.
- (f) A second opponent, without interfering with the play of the ball, **may join** the maul from behind the hindmost foot of the first opponent, and must properly bind by holding the first opponent at the hips with both hands. **Penalty:** Scrum with the opponents to throw in the ball.
- (g) The ball may not be released from the maul before a supporting teammate has taken the ball and has become properly bound by the player that declared the maul. As soon as the supporter becomes properly bound the ball may be released from the maul either by the supporter handing the ball to a team-mate or by the supporter throwing the ball backwards from the maul. **Penalty:** Scrum with the opponents to throw in the ball.
- (h) As soon as the **four players that may** form a maul are in position and properly bound the referee declares "Play the ball" and the supporting player must immediately hand the ball to a team mate or throw the ball backwards from the maul, in which event any on-side player of either team may approach and play the ball. **Penalty:** Scrum with the opponents to throw in the ball.
- (i) If two players from the ball-carrier's team become properly tagged up significantly before the second opponent becomes tagged up then the

referee declares "Advance" and the ball-carrier's team may, while still facing their own goal line, advance at a walking pace towards their opponents' goal line. The opponent must not resist that advance. As soon as the second opponent becomes properly bound up the referee declares "Play the ball".

- (j) If two players from the opponents' team become properly bound significantly before the supporting player of the ball-carrier's team becomes tagged up then the referee declares "Turnover", and awards a scrum with the opponents to throw in the ball.
- (k) If the second players from each team approach and become properly bound at substantially the same time then the referee declares "Play the ball", regardless of which second player is the first to bind.

## 5.7 Rucks

- (a) A ruck can only take place in the field-of-play. There shall be no contest for the ball during any part of a ruck. At least one player from each team must be in close proximity to the ball for a ruck to be declared.
- (b) A ruck may be declared in two circumstances. First, a ball carrier may, before being tagged, place the ball on the ground, crouch over it and declare "Ruck". Second, when the ball is otherwise on the ground any player may crouch over the ball and declare "Ruck". In either event a tag cannot take place and the player must set the ruck. If the player has crouched but is tagged before declaring the ruck, the referee declares "Tag" and thereby disallows the ruck.
- (c) Collisions must be avoided. Priority shall be given to the first player that attempts to crouch over the ball. Only players on their feet may declare a ruck. A player that crouches over the ball and does not declare a ruck, but prevents an opponent from playing the ball is guilty of obstruction. **Penalty:** Penalty Kick.
- (d) If the ball is on the ground because a ball carrier placed it there instantly after the tag, then players approaching the ball with intentions of declaring a ruck must do so from their side of the established tag zone. They must come through the back door. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (e) The player that declares the ruck becomes the "setter". After a ruck is declared, the opponent closest to the setter must immediately approach a position in front of and facing the setter, and also take a crouched position. The setter and opponent shall then bind onto each other by placing a hand on each other's' shoulder. **Penalty:** Scrum with opponents to throw in the ball.
- (f) All other players of both teams must retire, without delay, behind a line drawn parallel to the goal lines through the hind most foot of those players' team-mates who are taking part in the ruck. Otherwise the players are off-side and liable to penalty. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.

- (g) Once the setter and opponent have bound onto each other the ball may be released from the ruck either by another team-mate of the setter placing two hands on, or picking up, the ball or by the setter or team-mate heeling the ball backwards from the ruck, in which event any on-side player of either team that is not participating in the ruck may approach and play the ball.
- (h) Until the ball is released supporting players, one from each team, may approach from an on-side position and, without interfering with the ball, bind onto and alongside their teammates that are already in the ruck by placing an arm around the team-mates' torsos. The supporting players may bind on either side of their team-mates. All players who participate in the ruck must take a crouched position with knees bent. **Penalty:** Scrum with opponents to throw in the ball.
- (i) While taking place the ruck must stay at the place that it was set, and must not move towards either goal line, or move sideways. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (j) The ball may not be released from the ruck before the setter's team-mate has become properly bound. When the team-mate becomes bound the ball may be released from the ruck either by another team-mate of the setter placing two hands on, or picking up, the ball or by the setter or team-mate heeling the ball backwards from the ruck, in which event any on-side player of either team that is not participating in the ruck may approach and play the ball. **Penalty:** Scrum with opponents to throw in the ball.
- (k) As soon as all four of the players that may form a ruck are in position and properly bound the referee declares "Play the ball" and the ball must be released immediately from the ruck by the setter's team. **Penalty:** Scrum with opponents to throw in the ball.
- (l) If two players from the opponents' team become properly bound significantly before the supporting player of the setter's team becomes bound then the referee declares "Turnover", and awards a scrum, with the opponents to throw in the ball.
- (m) If the second players from each team approach and become properly bound at substantially the same time then the referee declares "Play the ball", regardless of which second player is the first to bind.
- (n) If the ball is on the ground because a ball carrier, upon being tagged, had instantly placed the ball, then neither that tagged ball carrier, nor the tagger may join the ruck or remove the ball from the ruck, nor may they be the first player to touch the ball if it is heeled from the ruck. **Penalty:** Scrum with opponents to throw in the ball.

## 5.8 Scrums

- (a) A scrum can only take place in the field-of-play. There is no contest for the ball at any part of a scrum.

- (b) The scrum will be made up of one row of three players from each team, i.e. a prop on either side of the hooker.
- (c) Before starting the engagement procedure the players from each row will bind together approximately half a meter from their opponents, with the props each binding firmly with one arm around their hooker, and the hooker with arms binding firmly around each prop. In all binds the hands will be at or below the level of the armpit. Each prop will then touch the upper arm of the opposing prop and pause before the engagement. The referee will talk the players through the engagement procedure in the sequence **Crouch, Touch, Pause** and **Engage**. On the grounds of safety, it is important that the referee manages the engagement of every scrum in this way. **Penalty:** Free kick.
- (d) The team awarded the scrum will throw the ball into the scrum and must be allowed to win it without contest. Opponents cannot push or strike for the ball. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (e) The back lines of both teams must remain five meters behind a line through the hindmost foot of their props/hooker until the ball emerges or the scrum-half places both hands on it. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (f) If a scrum is awarded within five meters of the goal line, the scrum is to be taken at a mark such that the middle line of the scrum is five meters from the goal line.
- (a) The scrum-half not throwing the ball into the scrum may follow the ball as it moves in the scrum, but must not overstep a line through the ball while it remains in the scrum. If the scrum-half throwing in the ball places two hands on the ball as it emerges the opponent may tag the scrum-half, but must not prevent the scrum-half from playing the ball. If a scrum-half moves from a position close the scrum, then the scrum-half must retire behind the same offside line as that for the backs. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (b) In the interests of player safety, where a penalty or free kick is awarded for an infringement during a scrum, the kick may not be taken quickly and players must wait until the referee signals that the kick may be taken.

## 5.9 Line-outs

- (a) If the ball or player carrying the ball goes out of play, a contested line-out will take place. If a line-out is awarded within five meters of the goal line, the line-out is to be taken at a mark five meters out from the goal line. If the ball is kicked into touch from a penalty kick the throw-in is taken by the kicker's team, otherwise the throw-in is taken by the opponents of the team that carried or last touched the ball before it went into touch.
- (b) A quick throw-in is not permitted.

- (c) The line-out will be made up of two players from each team (who stand between 5 and 15 meters from the touch line) plus the player throwing the ball in and an immediate opponent (who must stand within two meters of the player throwing the ball in) and one player from each team in a position to receive the ball (i.e. scrum-half). Both the thrower and the immediate opponent are able to take an active role in the line-out as soon as the ball has been touched by one of the players in the line-out. Players not taking part in the line-out must stay behind the off-side line until the line-out ends.
- (d) The off-side line for all players not participating in the line-out (all players other than those described under Section 3.9(b)) is ten meters back from the line-of-touch, parallel to the goal line, and the players must remain behind that off-side line until the line-out has ended. If the line-out is closer than ten meters to the goal line, the goal line is the off-side line. **Penalty:** Penalty kick at the offside line.
- (e) The line-out begins when the ball leaves the hands of the player throwing it in. Players of either team may jump to contest for the ball, but there must be no further contest for the ball once possession has been clearly won. The line-out ends when the ball or a player carrying it leaves the line-out. This includes the following:
- when the ball is thrown or knocked out of the line-out;
  - when a line-out player hands the ball to a player who is peeling close to and parallel to the line;
- Note:** "Peeling" occurs when a player leaves the line-out (after the ball has been thrown in) to catch the ball knocked or passed back by a team-mate, or to take the ball from a team-mate who has caught and held it.
- when a maul develops in a line-out, and both feet of all the players in the maul move beyond the line-of-touch;
  - when a ruck develops in a line out and the ruck ends; and
  - the ball has been passed or carried out of the line-out.
- (f) All 'peeling off' movements must be close to and parallel with the line-out. Players must keep moving. Lifting/supporting is prohibited at this level (i.e. a player may not bind to a jumper until they return to the ground). The player designated to receive the ball (i.e. the scrum-half) may not enter the line-out to compete for the ball. **Penalty:** Free kick

## 5.10 Kicking

- (a) All the IRB Laws of the Game pertaining to kicking in open play apply.
- (b) After a player scores a try (or penalty try) the player's team has the right to attempt a conversion kick to score a goal, worth an additional two points. Ideally, a conversion kick should be taken as a place kick or drop kick from a place on a line drawn parallel to the touch lines through the point where the try was scored. It should be made at posts positioned at the center of the goal line. However, in youth non-contact

rugby such conditions not always available or even appropriate. Smaller than standard fields often preclude properly positioned posts, and very young players lack the physical characteristics to be able to kick the ball any great height or distance. The conditions for the conversion kicks should be set with the spirit of the ideal in mind, but in a manner that makes successful kicks challenging but possible.

- (c) If posts are suitably placed within the playing area then players may try for a drop-goal in general play or for a goal by a place kick or a drop kick after a penalty kick has been awarded. If successful each is worth three points.
- (d) When an infringement occurs, a penalty or penalty kick will be awarded in accordance with the IRB Laws of the Game. The referee will make a mark for the kick. The opposition will retire quickly to ten meters from the mark. If the kick is taken so quickly that opponents have no opportunity to retire, they will not be penalized for this. However, they must continue to retire without interfering with the game until they are either ten meters from the mark or a team-mate who was standing ten meters from the mark has run in front of them. The opposing team must not do anything to delay the penalty kick or obstruct the kicker. Any infringement by the opposing team results in a second penalty ten meters in front of the mark for the first kick. On the second occasion the kick will not be taken until all opponents have retired ten meters. No penalty can be taken within five meters of the goal line.

### **5.11 In-goal**

- (a) The in-goal area includes the goal line, but not the touch-in-goal line, the dead-ball line or the corner posts.
- (b) If the attacking team grounds the ball in in-goal without having committed an infringement then a try is awarded. A ball is grounded by applying downward pressure by hand, arm, or chest when the ball in contact with the ground.
- (c) If the attacking team is unable to ground the ball for a try because the ball is not in contact with the ground (e.g. a hand or body is in between) or the attacking player is unable to apply downward pressure, a scrum is awarded to the attacking team on a line five meters out from the goal line.
- (d) If the defending team grounds the ball in in-goal, or the ball becomes dead by going or being carried into touch then:
  - If the attacking team carried the ball into in-goal or last touched the ball before it went into in-goal, a drop-out is awarded to the defending team at the 22-meter line;
  - If the defending team carried the ball into in-goal or last touched the ball before it went into in-goal, a scrum is awarded to the attacking team on a line five meters out from the goal line.

- (e) If a ball-carrier of either team that is not in the act of grounding the ball is tagged in in-goal a scrum is awarded to the attacking team five meters from the goal line.
- (f) Unless otherwise specified, the place for the restart for any infringement in in-goal is five meters out from the goal line.