

Varsity Rugby 2017

The purpose of this document is to clarify some law interpretations as was implemented during 2016. It also serves as point of reference for coaches and referees in the 2017 competition.

Section 1: Lineout and Lineout to maul

1.1 Key priorities for referees

1. The referees have key priorities at Line out time.

- They look to see that there is no interference on the jumper
- They look to see that supporters (back or front) aren't sacked illegally
- They look for the "ripper:" to get in close to the ball catcher, no players joining ahead of the ripper and the ball transferred back "hand to hand"
- The ripper cannot slide backwards.

2. The next phase is to determine whether a maul is formed or not

- If there is a successful sack, then **NO maul** has formed. (remember a sack is just another word for tackle)
- If the ball has been moved to the back, the team **cannot advance** — there are players ahead of the ball carrier so they must clear the ball or they are liable to be penalised for obstruction – the old truck and trailer.
- NOTE: For that pod to advance, the ball must be at the front player.
- More than 1 player can sack the ball carrier but it must happen immediately or else we will rule that a maul has formed and that the sack now collapses a maul and the team is liable to penalty. Note: You may NOT sack the supporter

3 Ripper not in contact with the catcher and players joining ahead of the ripper.

- Mauling Law application.

The ball can be moved backwards hand-to-hand once the maul has formed. A player is not allowed to move/slide backwards in the maul when the player is in possession of the ball and the ripper needs to stay in contact with the jumper until they have transferred the ball.

Sanction: Penalty kick

4. Ending a maul

Defenders cannot end a maul – so if the action to defend is to push the maul to the sides and sheer off the head of the maul, the maul does NOT end – SAME MAUL! Its only when **defenders** sheer off the head of the maul or they choose to leave the maul that it stays the same maul

Attacking players detaching from the maul, ends the maul — players ahead of the ball carrier are liable to penalty as they are obstructing (Truck and trailer). When the attacking team meets with resistance, they like to “roll” the maul to the side and then **detach** from their team mates with the ball at the back.

TRIGGER for REFEREES: if defence stops the momentum of a maul, be wary that the attacking team will try and re generate momentum but detaching away from point of resistance.

This is clear changing lanes and obstruction. The ball must be at the front otherwise it is truck and trailer.

1.2 Clips

The following clips serve as examples:

1.2.1: Maul was sacked legally. A new maul can only start if the ball is in the front

https://youtu.be/76izT_0VmYs

(Please note that sanction by referee was incorrect, should have been PK)

1.2.2: Maul was sacked legally. A new maul can only start if the ball is in the front

<https://youtu.be/pxchA9TK97c>

1.2.3: Maul Ripper not in contact and players joining ahead:

<https://youtu.be/OWBQmU7l8Ek>

1.2.4: Maul Ripper not in contact and players joining ahead

<https://youtu.be/UUlwfrQ-3-0>

1.2.5: Long rip, so not in contact with jumper. Players joining ahead of the ripper

https://youtu.be/UYIrou_8tl

1.2.6 Long place and rip. No contact. Sliding back and players joining in front

<https://youtu.be/tbNR6PJMgTY>

1.2.7 Long place, no contact. Players joining ahead of the ripper who slides behind them

<https://youtu.be/BgE-OW487bY>

<https://youtu.be/L1mXGWtpZ-k>

<https://youtu.be/Jtw0rGJwoH8>

<https://youtu.be/nSGH3d4KUZw>

<https://youtu.be/cSmwiuXUACk>

<https://youtu.be/YS7a6aGwAtQ>

1.2.8 Correct application

<https://youtu.be/nw0lu2pJ1rU>

1.2.11 Sacking of supporters.

Late Sacking:

<https://youtu.be/WrLiKIn8q2Y>

1.2.12 Changing lanes and when it's not?

1.2.12.1: Maul: defence sheering off the head

<https://youtu.be/af7luUjcUD4>

1.2.12.2: Maul: this is Changing lanes

<https://youtu.be/QF5xE3Zyahl>

1.2.12.3: Maul obstruction – Attackers break away and ball not in the front. = obstruction

<https://youtu.be/jCSB1NI0pn0>

1.2.12.4: Maul – attacker detaches and ball at the front (correct picture and what we want)

<https://youtu.be/PHXZSuSB3Fk>

1.2.12.5: A tip for referees - Please note that when teams cannot get forward movement at a maul, they will try to generate this by moving point of attack to the sides — this invariably ends up being obstruction for changing lanes

<https://youtu.be/Q1BsW4hMZyg>

1.3 Maul vs Tackle:

A modern day trend in defense, is to hold the ball carrier up off the ground thus forming a maul or wanting to form a maul. The ball carrier, in return will try and get a knee to the ground to ensure a tackle has occurred. The referee must therefore accurately rule on what phase is transpiring and communicate as such.

Therefore:

- If a tackle (ball carrier being held and has one knee on the ground) is completed the tacklers/Tackle assist must release.
- If the maul is successfully formed (ball carrier and one player from either team bound and on their feet) the referee should apply maul law where players are not deemed to be tacklers and therefore do not have to release or roll away at a collapsed maul.
- Referees should call “MAUL” once this phase is clearly identified in real time (not slow motion or freeze frame)

TRIGGER for referees/players:

It would be expected that the referee reads the situation based on the dominance of the defence as well as the speed at which it occurs.

That is to say:

- A dominant defensive effort is more likely to end up with the defensive player being in a position to effectively hold the ball carrier up to form a maul than in a strong offensive carry which inevitably ends up being a tackle.
- There must be sufficient time for the referee to call “maul” and for there to still be a reasonable time for all stakeholders to understand the call of maul and for the players to understand the consequence of the “maul” call (i.e. this takes out the risk of prematurely calling a very technical mini maul – the defensive team has to be good enough to quite obviously hold the ball carrier up and keep him up as his support arrives to earn the reward of a maul call and the subsequent benefits to the defensive team)

1.3.1 Clips

Examples of a formed maul:

<https://youtu.be/v-gDMDn0b00>

<https://youtu.be/DMzn83F9y-E>

Examples of a tackle:

https://youtu.be/SD7vVw_EvnU

<https://youtu.be/B00jfwFE0po>

1.4 Other maul tactics to be policed

- Teams are delaying formation and walking in at last minute. The lineout must be set before the ball is thrown into the lineout
- Players in the line out are now dummy jumping (FK), running into the gap (FK) and obstructing opponents (PK) before the ball is even thrown in.

<https://youtu.be/oUPAatXw3u0>

1.5 When is the lineout over?

If the defenders hold off (don't contest), and the attacking team keep the ball with the Jumper (still on line of touch), then the line out is NOT over (ball is not yet outside the line out). Therefore, defending players CANNOT run around to the back of the attacking team set up. The ball remains their offside line.

If the defenders do not engage, & the jumper passes the ball back & the ball is at the back (line out over, as no maul formed), the defender can run around & attempt to tackle the player with the ball...OR the defenders can join the maul and claim the obstruction (as mentioned above)

Attacking teams are getting better at holding the ball at the front & we need to recognize "where is the ball" and then recognize "when is the line out over."

*Tip: If you don't see the jumper/receiver's hands on top of the maul, 99% of the time he has **not** transferred the ball and is still in possession and defenders can't run around and tackle the last player.*

(WATCH THE RECEIVER'S HANDS)

<https://youtu.be/NryS3bbKbms>

1.6 OFFSIDE at Lineouts

Could we please try and create some space for attacking teams to play in? The offside is so blatant and yet we simply ignore and play on.

1.6.1 Tail gunners (players over the 15m before the lineout ends)

<https://youtu.be/T3DdjZeRlFQ>

<https://youtu.be/znyK3fuZ48E>

1.6.2 Back line Players not 10m before line out ends.

<https://youtu.be/5ZjMIVfM668>

Section 2: “Grass cutter” tackles:

This tackle technique has crept back into our game. This is a safety aspect around dangerous tackling and needs dealing with. A player that dives into the legs of an opponent without using any arms must be penalised and even the use of a Yellow Card could be employed to try and rid the game of this dangerous act. It is completely different to a player that attempts a tackle and actually lifts and uses his arms.

2.1 Clips

<https://youtu.be/xfjpdXTVdFc>

<https://youtu.be/OXg6IAluRJc>

Section 3: The Breakdown:

This is the one area that either speeds the game up or slow the game down. Correct policing of this area creates a faster game and space. It is critical that we all work together in this area to create a spectacle.

3.1 Tackler and Tackler assist:

Tackler and Tackle assist are required to release and show clear daylight.

Trigger: If we have to check on replay, then the release was NOT clear enough:

PLEASE NOTE:

We are trying to ensure quick ball at the breakdown - and the ball carrier can only release the ball once the Tackler and Tackler Assist have complied to law.

3.2 Clips

3.2.1 Tackler no clear release – we need a replay therefor daylight is not good enough

<https://youtu.be/-yHwzbqJXi8>

3.2.2 Tackle Assist no clear release

<https://youtu.be/vShcu4KvIEo>

3.3 Tackle

The priority of the tackler is to either:

- **Immediately** get up and PLAY the ball from any side OR
- **Immediately** get up and move away from the tackled player”.

I want to clarify the “new” interpretation of the tackler playing from the “wrong” side when NO ruck has formed.

There is a new tactic employed by some teams whereby the tackler, who has fallen on the wrong side, stays on the ground until the team mates of the ball carrier, arrive over the ball. The tackler then jumps up and plays the ball between the legs of those arriving players. The tacklers team deliberately do not set up the ruck, to allow the tackler to play from the “wrong side”

In terms of law stated above, the tackler has to act **immediately**, which in the above scenario he has clearly NOT!!

The “new” interpretation is that if an arriving player gets to the tackle BEFORE the tackler gets up to play the ball, the tackler has been “Too Slow” and will be regarded as not acting immediately. His rights to play the ball from the “wrong” side, even if no ruck has formed, are eliminated.

So to summarize:

If the tackler releases the tackled player and gets up onto his feet before the supporters arrive, we will allow the tackler to play the ball from any side. If he is beaten by the arriving players, he has to roll away and contest through the gate from his own side.

3.4 Clips

See clips where the tackler was beaten by arriving players:

https://youtu.be/lqZ-KU_n0tg

https://youtu.be/oCvmgHGw_Gc

3.5 Contesting players “stapling” over the ball carrier at a tackle

Another trend rearing its head is around arriving players who contest for possession at a tackle. By “stapling” over the ball carrier they:

- Are NOT supporting their body weight
- Are NOT in a position of strength
- CANNOT LIFT the ball

These players are going for:

- First prize - to win a PK for the ball carrier holding on
- Second prize - to slow the ball down

Referees are required to be less tolerant of the “staple” technique by ensuring:

- Contesting players are on their feet (Supporting body weight)
- Contesting players are in a position of strength and
- Must be of such BODY SHAPE that they can LIFT the ball

Trigger for referees: The contesting player should be able to show some form of “jerking action” to convince you that he is trying to lift the ball and not simply hold on and staple there (pushing or pulling the ball against the body of the ball carrier player should be not considered as holding on by the ball carrier)

3.6 Clips

3.6.1 Player not supporting his body weight, no attempt to lift the ball

<https://youtu.be/vL-WcAOGvCY>

3.6.2 Player not NSBW. Not lifting the ball. Pushing ball against tackled player to milk a penalty

https://youtu.be/ADCH_G-bBvg

3.6.3 Player not in position of strength, not supporting bodyweight, not lifting ball

<https://youtu.be/tjgWHX4XSN4>

Section 4: Space

One notable issue creeping back is offside of pillars and backlines. We need to create space around the breakdown to improve the attacking platforms of teams.

Referees are required to judge the “timing” of the rush defence as it is impossible at times for the AR to decide whether the ball is out at a ruck. The AR should advise the referee if players never got onside but the referee must take ownership of timing issues

4.1 Clips

https://youtu.be/uOJ_6iXQj30

<https://youtu.be/WbWIFvwrQE4>

Section 5: Foul Play

5.1 Players charging into mauls and rucks.

Once a ruck or maul has formed, players joining must do so by binding on the hindmost player of that ruck or maul– and you must attempt to grasp and bind!!

<https://youtu.be/zZHkNg46q40>

<https://youtu.be/375XxATtmbg>

5.2 Protecting the head

World rugby has come out strongly with the message that the head of players must be protected. The instruction is to **Eliminate** any dangerous or reckless contact with **players' head**.

This includes the following:

- High Tackles
- Charging – no arms
- Leading elbows
- Striking
- Kicking

Sanctions will be **yellow or red card** depending on the degree of severity

The player in the clip below was yellow carded, but according to new WR guidelines should have received a RED card

<https://youtu.be/N91sBa8 PE8>

5.3 Red Card Application 2017

If a red card is given to a team:

- That team will play for 20 minutes with one less player;
- After 20 minutes another player may go back on to the pitch, but not the player who was awarded the red card.

The main intention of this suggested change is that the contest stays alive amidst an early game red card.

Section 6: Scrums

We have managed to reduce the number of scrum penalties significantly from 2015 to 2016. In 2015 referees gave 121 penalties in Varsity Cup compared to 62 in 2016. That is almost halved. The teams tried to comply and it made life easier for the referees, subsequently leading to less guesswork.

The scrum is a platform for teams to attack, but it should be done within the laws of the game.

6.1 Scrum sequence

The scrum sequence remains unchanged from 2016:

1. **Crouch**
2. **Bind**
3. **Slide**

6.1.1 “Crouch”

The following is required:

- EAR to EAR on ‘Crouch’.
- On ‘CROUCH’ the FRONT ROW shoulders not lower than hips & NOBODY touches the opposite prop OR pre-bind. (Law 20.2 b).
- Proper/Original Bindings from TH & LH.
- On ‘BIND’ LH gets a firm/solid bind on the side/back of the body of TH with his elbow up so the referee can be accurate when LH are Dipping/Hinging or TH Pulling/Cracking on the LH. (Law 20.3 c + 20.8 g).

6.1.2 “Bind”

- On ‘BIND’ the TH has to bind OVER the arm and on the body/back of the LH & is NOT allowed, at any time, to bind on the shoulder, arm, sleeve of the body. (Law 20.3 d)
- Adjust feet is possible, but no steps forwards or sideways.

6.1.3 “Slide”

- Proper ‘HOLD’ and Stability after the Slide. (Straight Feed from # 9)
- No hit and chase allowed
- No change in bind
- Pushing straight forward first – **EARN THE TURN** (Law 20.2 a) If the scrum become stationary and ball is available at # 8 feet the Referee will call “USE IT”.

Instruction to referees: It must be three clearly distinctive calls.

6.2 Clips

The clips below illustrate how good scrum outcomes can be if all parties comply with the instructions above:

https://youtu.be/4_zNkbMbHiM

https://youtu.be/dAvbhx6E_nY

<https://youtu.be/flf8FGhL-gM>

<https://youtu.be/4pn0kUTSbC4>

6.3 General

- The no 8 may not change his position once the ball has been thrown into the scrum. For example, if the No 8 decides to bind between the flanker and the lock when the scrum is set, he must remain there
- The offside line at the scrum for the no 9 is the middle of the scrum (on the side where the ball is thrown in), 1m away from the scrum, OR hindmost foot either side of the scrum, BUT 1m away from the scrum, OR 5m away from the scrum where the rest of the backline players are

Section 7: General:

7.1 Interference

This is just a friendly but firm reminder that team coaches/ technical assistants/ managers etc. are not allowed to make any contact with referees during half time. That includes the AR's and TMO. Your cooperation in this regard is appreciated.

We will also not allow interference by medical assistance on referee and AR decisions.

7.2 Time

If time expires and a mark, free kick or penalty kick is then awarded, the referee allows play to continue. If time expires and a player then kicks to touch from a penalty kick anywhere in the playing area, the referee allows the throw-in to be taken, and play continues until the next time that the ball becomes dead.

If the team receiving the penalty wants to finish the half, they must 'tap' the ball first before kicking into touch

Time limit on kicks at goal reduced to 60sec from time of a try being scored or Penalty being awarded. This will be strictly applied to prevent time wasting

7.3 New law applications

There are new law applications for 2017. See "New Law Applications" presentation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSCC9iHV7cM&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qh2ABCXf1Z8&feature=youtu.be>