



# Rugby Refereeing in Practice

a guide for rugby referees

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## PREFACE

This booklet was first produced by and for the Australian Rugby Union (ARU) and is designed to be used in conjunction with its companion publication "Referee Coaching in Practice". It should assist referees at all levels and it should be equally valuable to referee coaches.

Several individuals have contributed to the booklet including Paul Akon who wrote the original "Play the Whistle", David Fryer (the author of the current version), Kim Lees and Bruce Cook and the IRB is grateful to all four together with the ARU and the many others who have contributed in various ways.

I hope you find this booklet useful and helpful.

Geoff Evans

Head of IRB Rugby Development.

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Masculine gender has been used throughout this publication for the sake of simplicity. In reading however, the masculine gender is inclusive of all genders.

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## introduction

Management is now the key word for all levels of referees. This book is designed as a practical guide for new and less experienced referees. However, it is hoped that it may be a useful reminder for all referees, especially at the beginning of a rugby football season. In no way can it replace a sound knowledge of the laws or experience gained through on field involvement. It should be used to assist in the practical application of the laws.

The emphasis in the booklet is focused on assisting the referee to "manage" the game. To do this, the booklet is designed to provide practical hints and advice. Checklists for major components before and during the game provide important key reminders for the referee. It is designed so that over time, and as the referee becomes more experienced, the checklists will be mentally retained. With practice off the paddock, the reaction of the referee to a breakdown in play or for set plays during a game will be instinctive and automatic. When an unexpected incident does occur, the referee will be better able to handle it.

There is a chapter on practical hints to assist the referee in using the whistle to the best advantage. This too will need practice, as it is a very important component of good and effective refereeing. Guidance is also given on the possible characteristics of younger age groups and how the referee may best handle the players at these various levels.

It is hoped this book may be of assistance not only to new referees but of equal interest to anyone involved in the game or keen to achieve the best standard of "referee management" at all levels of rugby football.

## checklist for the referee's bag



- **BOOTS**
- **LACES**
- **SOCKS**
- **GARTERS**
- **SHORTS**
- **2 WHISTLES**
- **WATCH**
- **COIN**
- **JERSEYS & BADGE**
- **PENCILS & NOTEBOOK**
- **RED & YELLOW CARDS**
- **TOUCH JUDGE FLAGS**
- **PERSONAL ITEMS:**
  - **WATER BOTTLE**
  - **SUN TAN LOTION**
  - **CAP**
  - **PLASTIC BAGS**
  - **TOWEL AND TOILETRIES**
  - **LAW BOOK, LOCAL COMPETITION RULES, ETC.**

It is recommended that this checklist of gear be photocopied and laminated and kept permanently in the referee's bag.



**gear**



Whatever your sport, it is important to look after your gear. Personal presentation is very important in the way players will view the referee. "looking the part" will impact on players and spectators alike. Make sure your gear never lets you down. You will have enough to do when refereeing without worrying about a broken bootlace or your socks falling down. Here are some hints:-

**BOOTS** Make sure your boots are of good quality and kept clean. There are two basic types of boots used by referees. Boots with moulded soles or boots with short studs to be used when grounds are hard and boots with long studs for when the grounds are soft or muddy. Use metal screw in studs for the latter so they can be replaced as necessary. Check your boots and studs regularly. If your boots are covered in mud after a game, clean them immediately before the mud hardens. If they require polish, ensure they are polished as soon as possible, in case you are called upon to referee at short notice.

**LACES** Always have a spare pair of clean laces in case one breaks when you are putting on your boots. After tying your laces tuck the loose ends under the tied laces, which helps to stop them coming undone. You can also use tape (preferably black) to secure the laces.

**SOCKS** Don't let socks get the "woolly look" or be at "half mast". Have a second pair of socks available.

**GARTERS** Garters can be elastic, old laces or tape but make sure they are not too tight, stopping the circulation in the legs. A referee must never be seen to have trouble with socks falling down.

**SHORTS** Shorts, which are usually white, should have good pockets to carry your spare whistle, coin, handkerchief, notebook, send-off and sin bin cards and pencils. Many associations provide shorts as part of their issue of uniform/gear.

**JERSEY AND BADGE** Most associations will specify the colour of the referees' jerseys and the badge to be worn, which may vary according to the level of the referee.

Be prepared for the team that has a similar strip to that of the referee. It is good practice to check teams' colours prior to a game to avoid a clash. The referee will be expected to change his jersey. Therefore, one or more different coloured jerseys should be in the referee's bag.

Some associations have the referee's badge woven into the jersey. However, if a separate badge is provided, it is recommended that the badge be secured to the jersey with velcro so that an alternative or the same badge can be worn either on the same jersey or on a different coloured jersey, or the badge can be replaced. Badges should be washed separately from the jersey. Value the badge and be prepared to use it on a new or different jersey.

**WHISTLES** Have at least two whistles. **COIN** For the toss.

**WATCH** A wristwatch with a stop watch facility is recommended.

**PENCILS AND NOTEBOOK** To keep the score and other information such as details of send offs. Don't use a ballpoint pen - they can leak!

**RED AND YELLOW CARDS** For send offs and sin bins.

**TOUCH JUDGE FLAGS** Be prepared for team managers and/or touch judges to ask you for touch judges flags. The referee's association often provides touch judge flags.

**SUN TAN LOTION AND YOUR REFEREE ASSOCIATION CAP** A cap should not be worn while refereeing. However, as a touch judge a cap may be worn.

**YOUR OWN WATER BOTTLE** Be prepared for those extra hot and/or sunny days. Don't be a victim of dehydration.

**PLASTIC BAGS** To put muddy boots and gear in after the game.

**CHECKLIST** It is recommended that a checklist of these items and other items you may require personally e.g. the law book, local association's information handbook with local competition rules, length of matches and conditions of play for different grades etc, be kept in your referee's bag. This should be a strong weatherproof travelling bag dedicated for your rugby gear.

gear








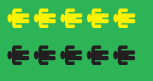

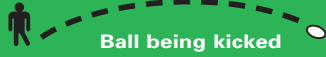
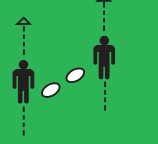
gear



**legend**



**before the game**

	<b>Movement of referee</b>		<b>Scrum</b>
	<b>Referee's vicinity</b>		<b>Tackle</b>
	<b>Direction referee is facing</b>		<b>Ruck &amp; maul</b>
	<b>Players - team 1</b>		<b>Line-out</b>
	<b>Players - team 2</b>		
	<b>Ball being kicked</b>		
	<b>Off-side line</b>		
	<b>A Line</b>		
	<b>Attacking line</b>		
	<b>D Line</b>		
	<b>Defensive Line</b>		

**BE PREPARED; DON'T BE CAUGHT OUT** Start thinking about the game before match day. On match day ensure you have time to consider each aspect of the forthcoming game. Prior Preparation Prevents Poor Performance (5Ps).

**CHECK OF GEAR** Make sure you have a final check of your gear, preferably the day or night before and again prior to leaving for the game. Now is the time to start thinking rugby.

**GETTING TO THE GAME IN PLENTY OF TIME** It is recommended that you plan to arrive at least 40 - 60 minutes prior to your game. Allow for possible traffic jams. On arrival at the ground, relax by walking around the ground to familiarise yourself with the layout and any unusual features e.g. a narrow in-goal area. If possible, walk onto the ground and ensure you know if there are any very muddy areas or potholes. Get the feel of the ground and the spectators. Be visible before a game so that both the teams and coaches know you are there and that you are available to answer questions and clarify points of law.

**WEATHER** Be prepared for different weather conditions and be aware of where the sun will be during the game. This may influence your positioning for different phases of the game e.g. at line-outs and kicks.

**REFEREE COACH** If a referee coach has come to see you referee, introduce yourself prior to the game. Don't expect the coach to come and find you. Be ready to let him know any key areas of your refereeing with which you may wish assistance. These could be refereeing areas requiring improvement commented upon by a previous coach that could be improved. If there is another experienced referee available to watch your game, when no coach is available, ask that referee for some feedback in lieu. Don't forget to find that referee or referee coach after the game to thank them and to obtain their comments. Alternatively, telephone them later.

**CHANGING** Start getting changed at least 30 minutes before a game. This will give you time to check your gear, to warm up, meet and brief the teams and inspect their boots. Don't keep the players waiting. It is a fact that players can keep referees waiting but not vice versa. This is the time to concentrate on the game ahead and to complete your mental preparation.

**legend**

**before the game**



**TOUCH JUDGES** Make sure that both sides have touch judges and ascertain if they are qualified. Whether they are qualified or not, remind them that their primary duty is to indicate when the ball is in touch. If they are qualified, remind them of how they can assist you, the referee, in reporting foul play, being especially vigilant around the goal line and assisting the players by marking the offside line at penalty and free kicks and line-outs. Ask one of the touch judges to keep the time as well to check on your timing and as a back up if your watch fails. Act as a team of three.

**TIME** Make sure you know how long each half should be and whether extra time is allowed for injury. Also if there is a drawn game, check if extra time is to be played and the scoring procedure. If another game is due to be played after your game on the same ground and your game starts late, it may be necessary to shorten the halves of your game. Don't forget to restart your stopwatch after a stoppage for injury when injury time is played. In case you forget (it does happen to the best referees!), make a note of the time at the start of each half as well as asking your touch judges to keep the time.

**BRIEFING TEAMS AND INSPECTION OF BOOTS** The boot inspection should be done well before the start of the game to avoid interfering with a team's warm up. If you have not already done so, introduce yourself to the coach and captain. Also check for watches and jewellery. If you have qualified touch judges take them with you so that from the beginning they know they are part of the team of three and the players see them. Dependent on the experience of the players and the expected level of the game, speak to the players and coach so they know what to expect from you. Don't try and brief the players as they line up in the centre of the field. At that time they are waiting to play rugby and will not wish to listen to a speech by the referee. Brief the teams when boots are inspected. Keep the briefing short and simple. Players will not absorb a lot of information when they are trying to focus on their forthcoming game. Possible briefing points could be:-

#### Checklist 1

- Communication through the captains. Emphasise that you (the referee) will communicate through the captain who is responsible for the team.
- Scrum engagement. Remind the teams of the "Engagement" sequence and that the ball won't be allowed into the scrum until the scrum is steady and square, to ensure the safety of the players in the scrum.

- Tackles, rucks and mauls. Remind the teams of the responsibility of both the tackler and the tackled player
- Line-out. If it is intended to use the front players in a line-out to maintain the gap, inform the players at the briefing prior to the game and at the first line-out.
- Laws. Clarification of recent changes to the laws or interpretations of them.
- Swearing (U19s). In some junior or school competitions swearing is an automatic penalty.
- Finally wish the team an enjoyable game and let them know how long before the kick-off.

**THE TOSS** The toss of the coin (remember the coin is provided by the referee) is usually done prior to the game at a time convenient to the two captains. It is usually done immediately after both teams have been briefed. However, sometimes teams prefer to toss after they run onto the ground and line up opposite each other. Generally the home team will toss the coin and the captain of the visiting team will call. Remember the winner of the toss can only choose on which side his team will play or take the kick off. Some inexperienced captains sometimes ask to "Receive" which is not an option. This is also a good time to inform both captains of any possible problem areas on the ground such as very wet areas, or small in-goal areas.

**RUNNING ONTO THE PLAYING ENCLOSURE** It is the referee's responsibility to get the teams onto the field. Blowing the whistle outside the changing rooms may help. DON'T stand in the centre of the field waiting for the teams. Always try to run on last but don't keep the players waiting. Prior to the kick-off:-

#### Checklist 2

- Check the 10-metre line (a good reminder of the distance needed at off side incidents),
- Check the touch judges are in position.
- Note the actual time.
- Mark down in notebook which side is kicking off.
- Check the captains are ready.
- If there is a timekeeper raise your arm as you blow your whistle for the start of the game.

**THEN ENJOY THE GAME**



**KICK-OFF**

**START YOUR WATCH** before you blow your whistle to start the game.

**TYPE OF KICK** All kick offs are taken by a drop kick from the centre of the half way line.

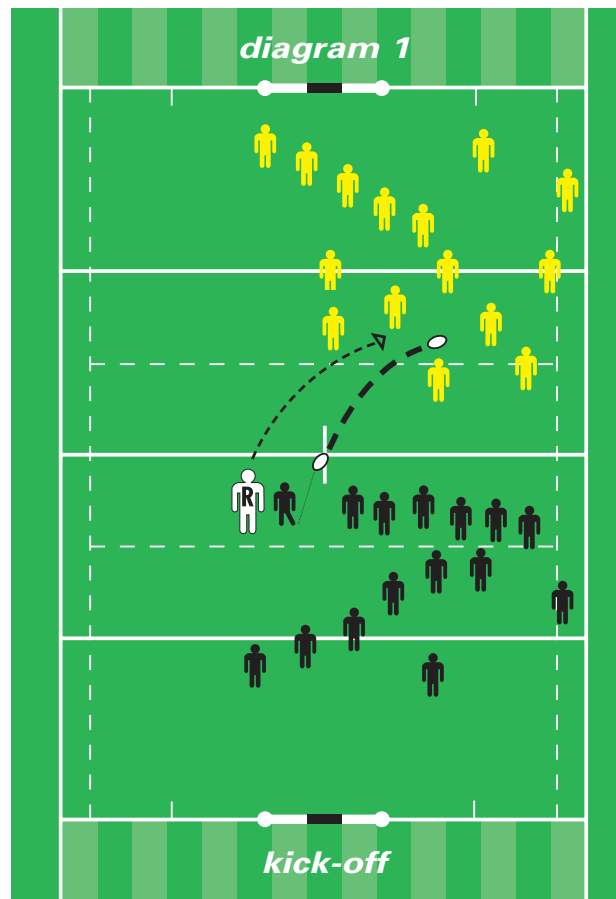
**REFEREE'S POSITION** It is suggested the referee should start at a position a few metres from the ball, behind the halfway line in line with the kicker, with the ball between the referee and the kicking team. The referee should begin to move with the kicker and as soon as the ball is kicked then accelerate to be in line with where the ball pitches to be as close as practicable to where the next phase of play will develop (See Diagram 1.)

**BE PREPARED** The referee should instinctively be prepared for the following incidents from a kick-off or drop kick from the half way line:-

**Checklist 3**

- a. Wrong type of kick.
- b. Kicker's team is not behind the kicker and/or crosses the line early. Remember, for a drop kick from the half way line it is the ball not the half way line that determines the off side line. Don't forget to glance behind you too!
- c. The cross kick.
- d. The ball not travelling 10 metres. Don't forget advantage.
- e. The ball going straight into touch. Don't forget it is all right if the ball travels 10 metres and then bounces into touch.
- f. The receiving team coming inside the 10-metre line before the ball is kicked.
- g. The ball being kicked over the goal-line without being touched. Watch the receiver who is closest to where the ball lands. His actions may determine your next decision.
- h. Obstruction on players waiting to receive the ball.
- i. Players jumping for the ball, being tackled while still off the ground.

Watch the ensuing ruck or maul very closely for any obstruction or off-side, especially the receiving players entering from the wrong side. Remember don't blow the whistle to restart the game after a try or goal.



### **DROP OUT**

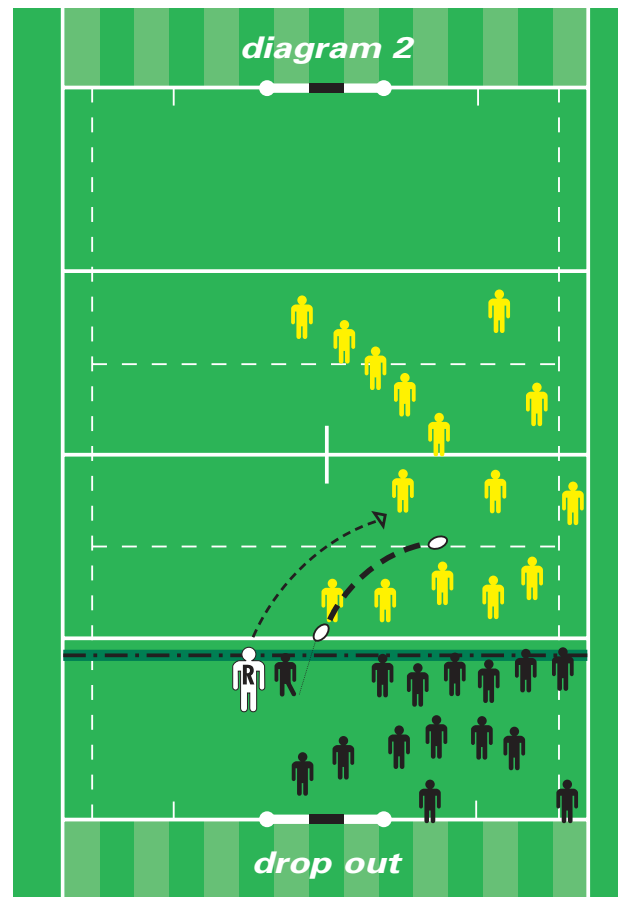
**Referee's Position.** As soon as a drop-out is awarded keep your eye on the ball in case there is a quick drop out. Get to the 22-metre line as quickly as possible remembering this type of kick can be taken anywhere from behind the 22-metre line. Try and stay just in line with the kicker.

As soon as the ball is kicked the referee should move as for a kick-off. Accelerate to be in line and as near as possible to the next phase of play. (See Diagram 2). Be prepared for the following situations:-

#### **Checklist 4**

- a. Obstruction by the attacking team when the ball is being brought back to the 22-metre line.
- b. The kicker's team not staying behind the kicker. Look both ways.
- c. The ball is charged down after crossing the 22-metre line.
- d. The ball not crossing the 22-metre line. Remember the drop out kick can be taken anywhere from behind the 22-metre line.
- e. The ball goes straight into touch on the full. Remember it is all right if the ball bounces into touch.
- f. After the ball is kicked over the 22-metre line it blows back again. If this occurs then play should continue.

Remember it is not necessary to blow your whistle to restart the game at a drop out.





### PENALTY KICKS

**Referee's Position.** Make the mark and move away quickly to a position generally 5-10 metres infield, so that the kicker is between you and the kicker's team. (See Diagram 3). **Watch for:-**

#### Checklist 5

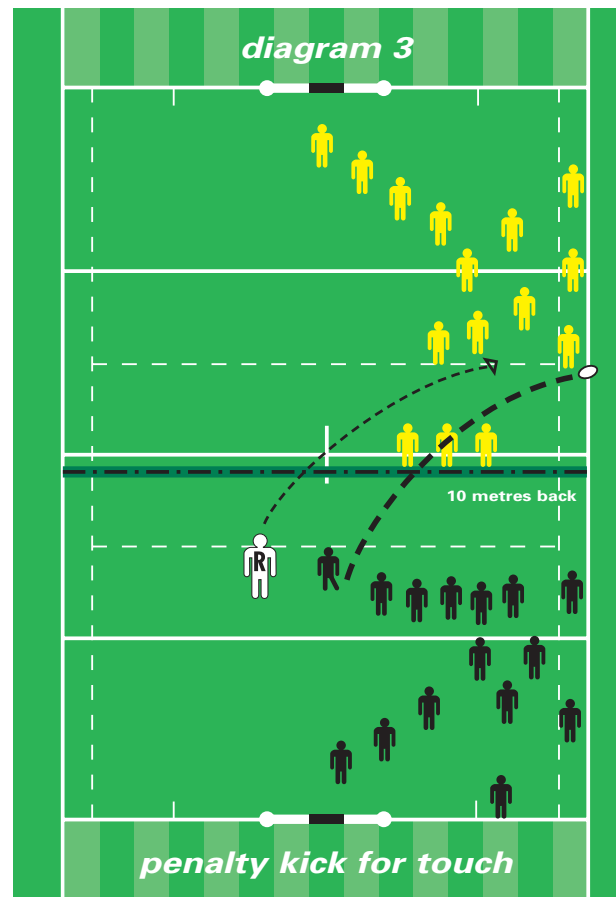
- The same ball being used.
- The quick tap kick.
- Obstruction or delaying tactics by the offending team e.g. kicking or throwing the ball away.
- The offending team moving back 10 metres or being in the process of doing so.
- The kicker kicks from behind or at the marked position and the ball goes through the marked position.
- The kicker's team is not in front of the kicker.
- The kicking team gets the throw in for the line-out.

### "UP AND UNDER"

**Referee's Position.** Make the mark and move away quickly to a position generally 5-10 metres infield, so that the kicker is between you and the kicker's team. **Watch the players NOT the ball.** It will come down! Move quickly up the field to be level with the place where the ball is expected to land. (See Diagram 5 - Kicking Duel). **Watch for:-**

#### Checklist 6

- An early tackle on the player receiving the ball.
- A player being tackled if he is "off his feet" when jumping to receive the ball. This is dangerous play.
- Players not attempting to retire 10 metres immediately.
- The receiving player being pushed by the opposition.
- Obstruction by either team to protect the catcher.
- Players in front of the kicker who are not put outside.



### TAP KICK

Watch for:-

#### Checklist 7

- As above for the other penalty kicks.
- Make sure the ball is kicked correctly.

**Be Alert**, especially if the penalty kick is awarded near the goal-line. **Be prepared to move very quickly.**

### PENALTY KICK AT GOAL

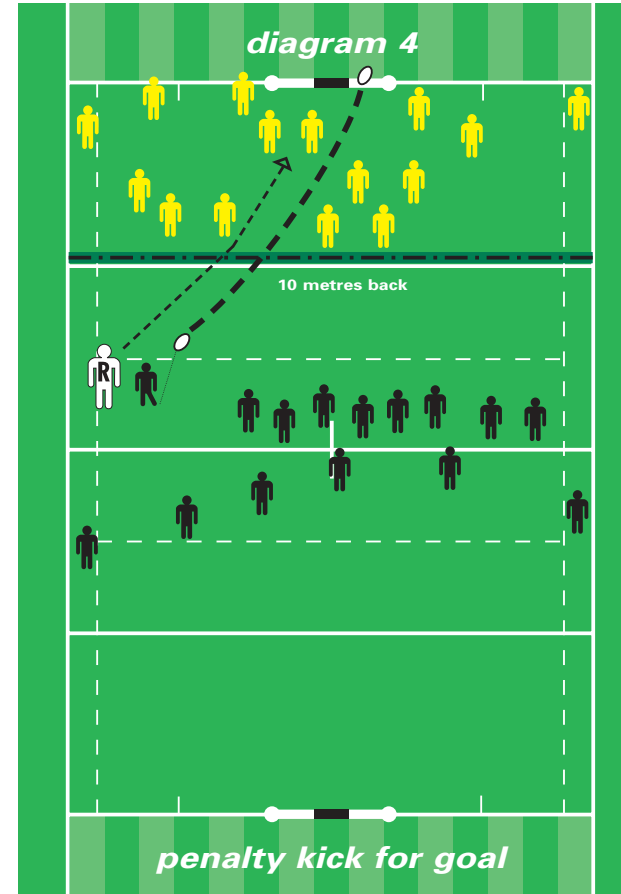
**Referee's Position.** Take up a position a few metres away level with the kicker, with the ball between you and the kicker's team. Ensure your shadow is clear of the ball and does not cross the kicker's path. Try not to be looking into the sun. Move with the kicker and run towards the trajectory of the ball. (See Diagram 4).

If the kick looks like being unsuccessful, run straight for the goal-line or in-goal area as quickly as possible to ensure you are in a good position to determine what happens next. **Watch for:-**

#### Checklist 8

- Exceeding the time limit of 60 seconds (after the kicking tee or sand arrives for the kicker).
- The kick not being successful.
- The ball bouncing back into the field-of-play from the crossbar or the goal posts.
- The ball not reaching the goal-line and being carried over the goal-line by a defender.
- The ball being knocked on by a defender.

**Remember the referee must be there, if any play is near the goal-line.**



other types of kicks



## other types of kicks

other types of kicks

### KICKS IN GENERAL PLAY AND A KICKING DUEL

**Referee's Position.** Move parallel to the kicker. In a kicking duel, move as quickly as possible in field to a position between the two kickers and away from the flight of the ball. This will enable you to have a good view of all players. (See Diagram 5). **Watch the players NOT the ball.** Gravity will bring the ball down. **Watch for:-**

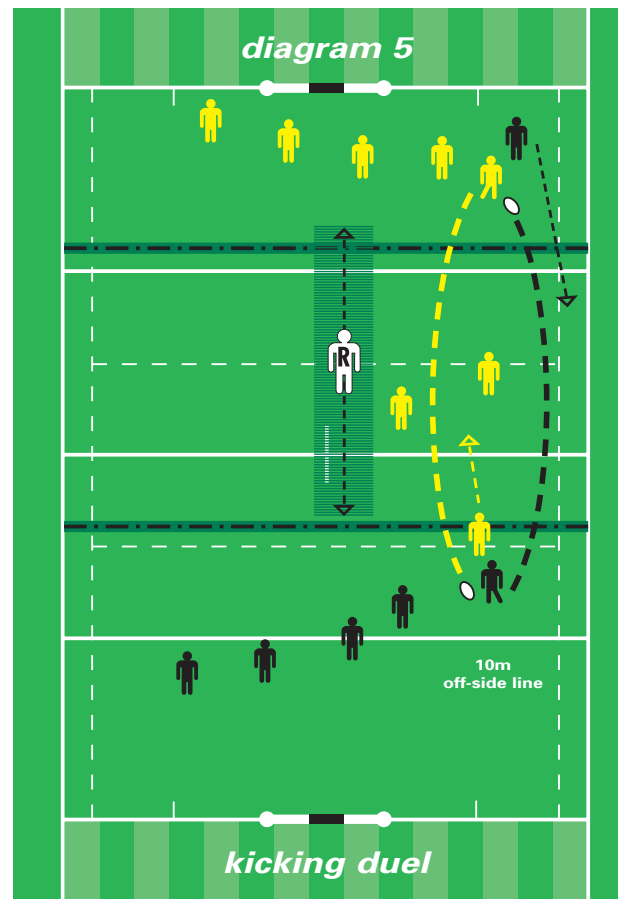
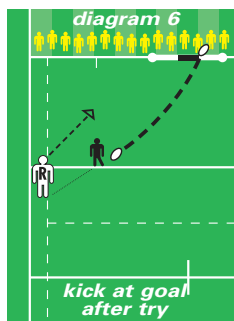
#### Checklist 9

- The kicker is not late tackled or obstructed.
- When the team mate of an offside player has kicked ahead, the offside player is considered to be taking part in the game if the player is in front of an imaginary line across the field which is 10 metres from the opponent waiting to play the ball.
- Attacking players in front of the kicker continuing to move forward.
- The place from where the kick was made and where it will land or be caught - in case players are offside.
- The kicking team players being put outside, especially by a player who is not the kicker. Watch the outside attacking backs, including the one that may be behind you putting his players onside.

**Don't forget the various ways a player can be put onside either by his own team or opponents.**

### KICK AT GOAL AFTER A TRY

**Referee's Position.** Position yourself behind the kicker so that you can see the trajectory of the ball. Watch that your shadow does not distract the kicker. Follow the kicker as he kicks and watch the trajectory of the ball (See Diagram 6.). Don't forget to check your touch judges signals, but remember the referee has to make the final decision. If the ball goes over the top of an upright and you assess that the ball would have hit the upright, remember that it is ruled as **NO GOAL**.



### FREE KICK AND MARK

**Whistle** as soon as a Mark is called to ensure the safety of the player calling the Mark. Both for a Mark and a free kick make the mark clearly and quickly. If the kicker wants to take the kick quickly don't be too pedantic about the Mark.

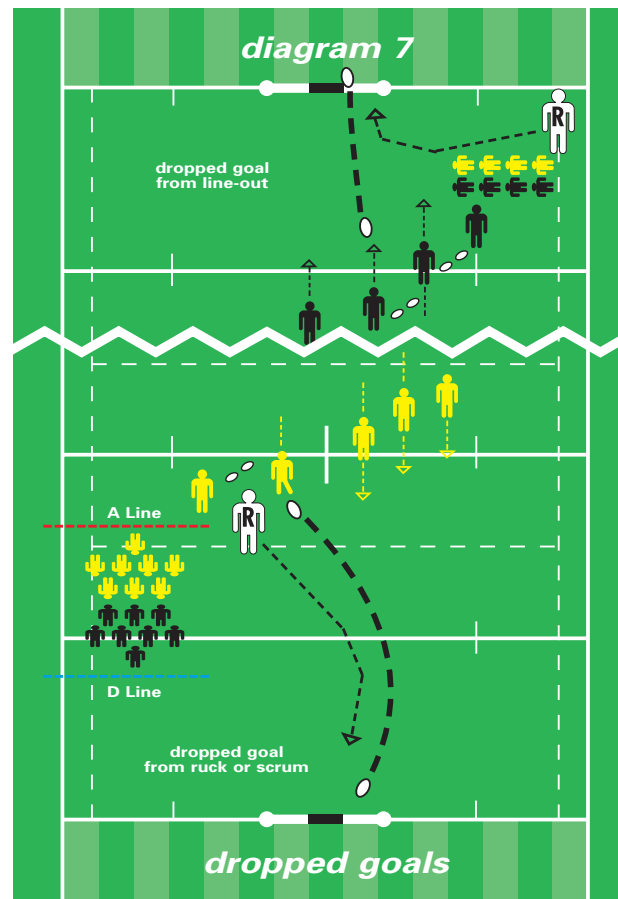
**Referee's Position.** Take up a position level with and outside the kicker, 5-10 metres infield from the Mark. **Watch for:-**

#### Checklist 10

- If the kick is a "tap kick", ensure that the ball is kicked correctly.
- The receiving team moves back 10 metres and does not advance until the ball is kicked or the kicker begins to move for the kick.
- The kicking team moves to return on side before the kick.
- The ball is kicked through the mark.
- The kick which goes directly into touch, when the kick has been made outside the 22-metre line.
- The touch judge gives the throw in for the line-out to the non kicking team. Touch judges sometimes mistake the type of kick that has been awarded - penalty or free kick.

### DROPPED GOAL

**Referee's Position.** Accelerate as fast as you can to be in line with the ball's trajectory and to be as close as possible to the goal posts. As the ball nears the goal posts slow down to assist your vision and concentrate on whether the ball crosses the crossbar and goes between the goal posts (See Diagram 7).





## line-outs

Always aim to be first to the line-out. As the players arrive, the referee can watch the set up of the line-out, the number of players governed by the team throwing the ball in and for any obstruction or interference

**Referee's Position.** There are four basic positions for the referee at the line-out as shown in **Diagram 8**. Generally the referee should be on the side of the line-out of the team throwing the ball.

For the first few line-outs it is recommended that the referee use one of the positions at the front of the line-out. This will enable the referee to see all the players and to manage the setting up of the line-out as well as identifying and dealing with any infringements early in the game. If a line-out is between the 22-metre line and the goal-line it is recommended that the referee go to the front of the line-out on the side nearest to the goal-line. If play moves quickly over the goal-line the referee then has a good view from which to make the correct decision. If there seems to be trouble in a line-out, walk down the side of the line-out when it is forming and speak to the players concerned. DO NOT walk down between the two teams.

Don't get a regular pattern in positioning for a line-out - the players will soon spot it. Vary your position to ensure that you see the line-out from all angles. If it is decided to go to one of the back positions of the line-out then the referee should angle the body so that the opposing backs as well as the line-out can be seen. The referee may need to take into account the position of the sun when taking up a position at a line-out. **Be on the balls of the feet and moving as the ball is thrown in.** This will enable you to get into a position for the next phase or move with the play if the ball is passed quickly from the line-out. **First line-out.** Be positive in ensuring the line-out is formed correctly:-

### Checklist 11

- Ensure the correct team throws in the ball.
- The player at the front of each line can assist in getting the correct gap.
- All players not in the line-out are back on the 10-metre line.
- The player throwing in is on the line-of-touch - no deviation to one side to advantage his team.
- The defending hooker does not interfere with the player throwing the ball in.
- The ball is not thrown in until the referee is satisfied with the formation of the line-out.

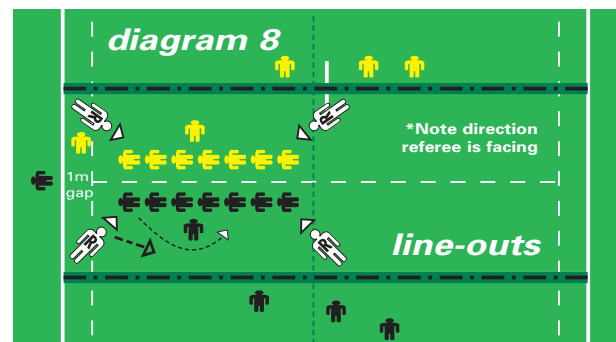
### Checklist 12 Watch for:-

- Correct support in the line-out - a player not being abandoned in mid air.
- Players jumping early across the line-of-touch - offside.
- Ball is thrown in 5 metres.
- Last feet of a ruck or maul crossing the line-of-touch before the backs advance across the 10-metre line.
- Forwards in the line-out join an ensuing ruck or maul from the back.
- Forwards from the line-out not joining the ruck or maul do not become offside.

**Know when a line-out ends and when players not in the line-out can advance. Quick throw in.** Be prepared for the quick throw in.

### Checklist 13 Watch for:-

- The same ball is used.
- The player throwing in the ball collects it.
- A spectator does not handle the ball.
- The ball is thrown in straight.
- The ball is thrown in 5 metres.
- The line-out being formed where the ball went into touch - 2 players from each team - so a quick throw in is no longer allowed.





## tackle, ruck & maul

### Referee's Position. Get the tackle, ruck or maul as quickly as possible.

Good running lines from the previous phase of play will assist in being there early. Glance behind you occasionally or stand sideways to watch the backs, especially the defending side, creeping up offside.

#### TACKLE

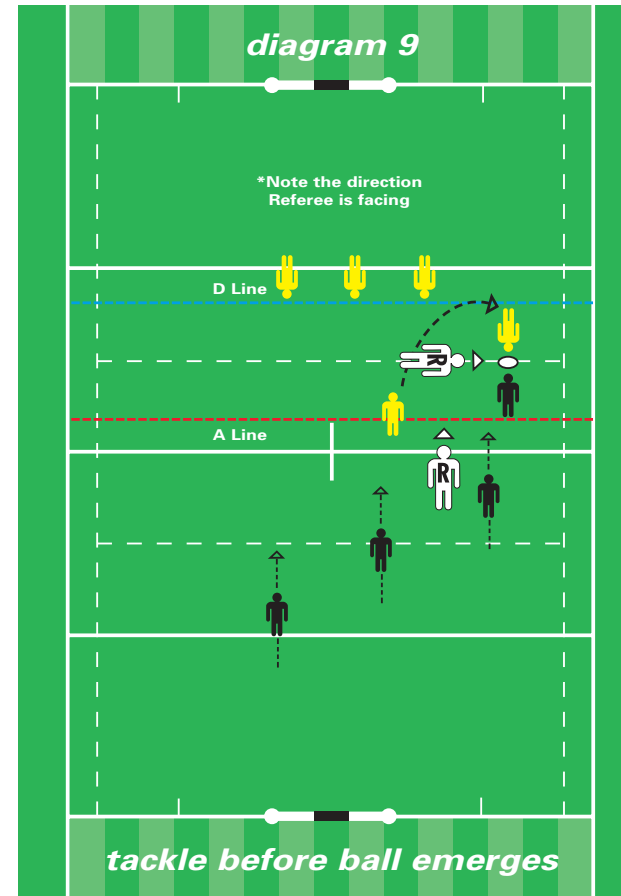
Ascertain the situation and step back a few paces to the **attacking line (A Line)**, whilst avoiding the players arriving. However, if near the goal-line it may be better to go to the **defending line (D Line)**. Glance behind you occasionally or stand sideways to watch the backs, especially the defending side, creeping up offside. (See Diagram 9).

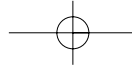
#### RUCK or MAUL

The preferred position for the referee now becomes the **A Line** facing the **D Line** about 2 metres to the side of the ruck or maul. This enables play to move between the referee and the ruck or maul. As the ball emerges the referee should move towards the **D Line**. Turn so that the ruck or maul and the ball leaving the ruck or maul can be seen. Always know where the ball is. Sometimes, it may be an advantage to move quickly round to the blind side of a ruck or maul, especially if close to the touchline, to ascertain the whereabouts of the ball. This enables the referee to see a majority of the players and should eliminate having to look behind for players creeping up offside. (See Diagram 10). In managing tackles, rucks and mauls it can help both the players and the referee to say when a situation is no longer a tackle or when it is a maul or ruck. This can assist the referee to mentally adapt to the newly developed situation and the associated consequences of the laws.

#### Checklist 14 Tackle - Watch for:-

- Player brought to ground/ball touches ground.
- Player held by opponent when brought to ground.
- Tackler releases the tackled player immediately.
- The tackled player passes, places or releases the ball immediately.
- Both players move away and endeavour to get to their feet before playing the ball again.
- Neither the tackler nor the tackled player interferes with the ball on the ground.
- Players joining or the next player handling the ball, are on their feet.
- Players joining the tackle come from behind that part of the body of a player from their own team, which is closest to their own goal-line.





**Ruck - Watch for:-**

**Checklist 15**

- Ball on the ground
- Players on their feet.
- Players joining the ruck from behind the rear feet.
- Players coming in over the top.
- Correct binding on players especially when holding the ball in the back row of the ruck.
- Rucking of the player and not the ball.
- Hands in the ruck.

**Maul - Watch for:-**

**Checklist 16**

- Ball being in possession of a player.
- The correct formation (ball carrier and one from each team).
- The person or team responsible for taking the ball into the maul.
- The maul becoming stationary and not moving forward again within 5 seconds.
- The ball being grounded and the maul becoming a ruck.
- Players joining the maul from behind the rear feet.

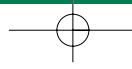
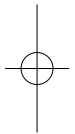
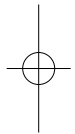
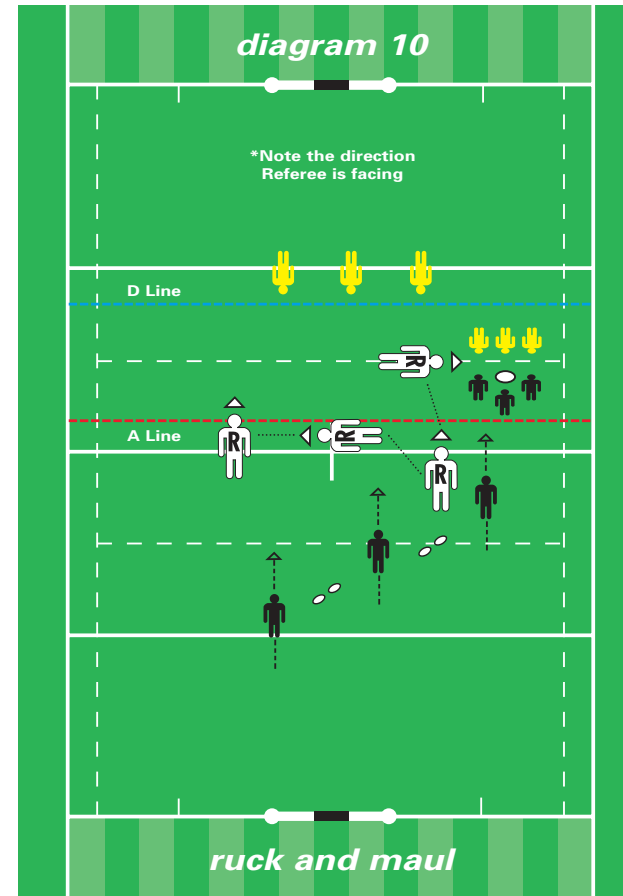
**Remember**

- Only a ruck can develop from a tackle situation.
- The line-out does not finish until the hindmost feet of a ruck or maul cross the line-of-touch.
- As for a scrum, the ruck and maul finishes once the ball has crossed the goal line.

**Don't worry if you whistle and the ball pops out - it happens to every referee!** Apologise to the players, especially to the halfback with the ball and get on with the game.

**If the ball does not come out of a ruck quickly or the maul becomes stationary and does not begin to move again within 5 seconds don't let it become a wrestling match. Tell the teams to get the ball out and if they don't do so quickly whistle decisively. SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT.**

Remember who should get the put in to the scrum after an indecisive ruck or maul.





## scrums



**Referee's Position - Pre engagement.** When awarding a scrum, stand side-ways facing towards the touchline and the scrum and put the RIGHT arm out horizontally to indicate the side the ball is to be put in. This also, places the referee on the loose-head side where the ball is to be put into the scrum by the scrum-half.

If there are problems in the scrum it may pay for the referee to stand on the tight head side of the scrum.

Initially, stand close up to the scrum with the scrum-half behind you. Stay with the scrum while you take the front rows through the engagement process.

Don't let the scrum-half force their way in front of you until you are ready for the ball to be thrown in, and only then, when the scrum is steady.

When you are ready, step about two metres back on the centre line of the scrum to observe the ball being thrown in and start to turn sideways so that both the scrum and defending backs can be seen.

As instructed at the briefing by the referee prior to the game, ensure both sets of forwards know exactly the CALLS that will be made by the referee to bring the sides together in the scrum. This is especially important for the different levels of games.

**NO shoving at "ENGAGE".**

**ONLY** when the scrum is **STEADY** should the ball to be put in by the scrum-half and the scrum to be contested.

**Scrum pre-engagement - Watch for:-**

### Checklist 17

- a. The scrum is put down at the correct place e.g. 5 metres in from the touch line.
- b. 8 players from each team form the scrum if both teams have 15 players.
- c. Numbers in the scrum are the same for each side - for U19s.
- d. All players are bound on fully.
- e. Front rows with the hooker are bound correctly.
- f. Distance between front rows.
- g. Heads and shoulders above hips.
- h. No crutch binding by U19s.

**Referee's Position at the scrum post engagement.** In a majority of cases when the ball is won the referee should move in line with the ball. Keep clear of the scrum-half's or breakaway forwards' next phase of play.

As soon as the scrum-half clears the ball the referee should run quickly around the base of the scrum to get in line with the ball. Then "drift across" the field in line with the ball on the "A Line" as the attacking team moves forward. (See Diagram 11).

Occasionally, look over the top of the scrum to check on the binding and to ensure the defending breakaway forwards are not gaining an advantage by unbinding early and trying to creep up offside unnoticed.

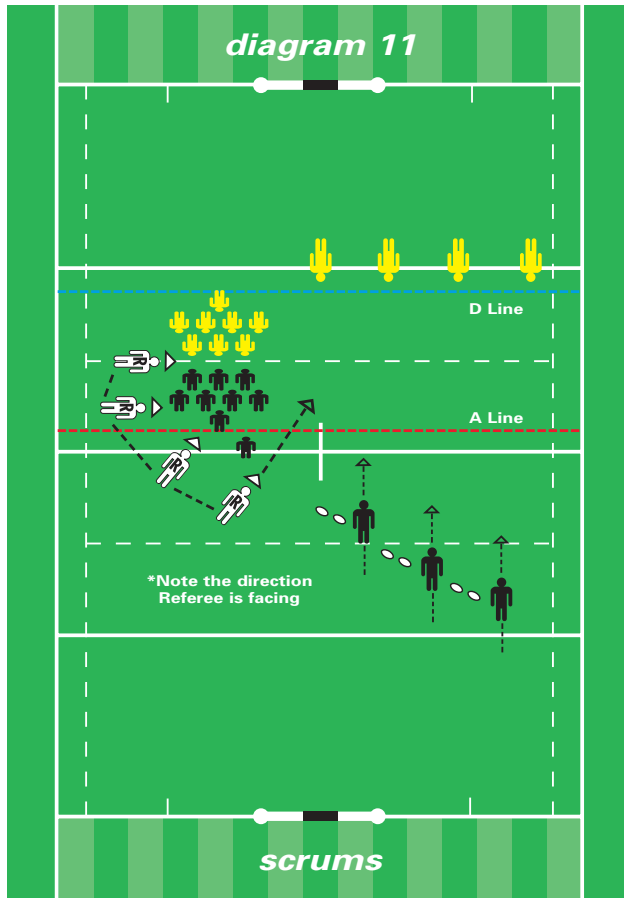
- **Keep moving as the ball moves through the scrum.**
- **Keep on the balls of the feet and be ready to move quickly in any direction.**
- **Don't get caught flat-footed!**

**Scrum at post engagement - Watch for:-**

### Checklist 18

- a. Ball thrown in straight down the centre line
- b. The ball being thrown in is not twisted towards attacking side.
- c. The ball lands beyond the width of the nearest prop's shoulders.
- d. The scrum-half stands 1 metre back to put the ball in.
- e. The attacking side breakaway does not move out to obstruct the opposing scrum-half following the ball through the scrum.
- f. Back row forwards without the ball breaking from the scrum before it has ended.
- g. All forwards remain bound correctly until the scrum has ended.
- h. The defending backs creeping up offside.
- i. Excessive wheeling (90 degrees for seniors, 45 degrees for u19s)
- j. Not more than 1.5 metres shove for U19s.





## the whistle



The **whistle** is the most important communicating tool for a referee. The whistle must be made to “talk” to signal the different infringements etc.

### USEFUL HINTS

- **Always** carry a spare whistle, particularly in wet weather or muddy conditions. Sometimes after a fall, the referee can blow the whistle to no avail; only to find it clogged with mud.
- A large type of metal whistle, such as the Acme Thunderer, is recommended.
- Attach the whistle to the wrist by a small piece of chord so if the referee falls or is bumped, the whistle does not become blocked or lost.
- The type of whistle that attaches to a finger is not recommended as it can cause injury to a finger.
- Keep the whistle clean. Some referees boil their whistles and then put them in the freezer. Don't let the pea dry out.
- The whistle should be tried out before the commencement of each game.

### MAKE THE WHISTLE 'TALK'

The angle of the whistle in the mouth gives different tones as follows:

- Up for a higher note. Down for a lower note.
- A quick circular movement gives a resonating tone.
- Moving the thumb over the edge of the whistle will also change the tone. (A combination of both these techniques incorporated with a long hard blast is very effective but it does need practice).
- The tone can be shortened or lengthened by quickly withdrawing the whistle from the mouth or equally effective is putting the tongue to the front of the mouth to block the whistle's opening.
- With practice, or if you play the trumpet, tongue tipping can be used. This is the technique of moving the tongue rapidly back and forth to the mouthpiece of the whistle. To practice this technique, try saying the letter “T” rapidly.

the whistle

## game management by the referee



### WHISTLE SIGNALS

#### A loud long blast for:-

- Penalty.
- Commencement or resumption of the game.
- Mark for a fair catch.
- Foul play/fracas/dangerous play or a player or players' safety is in jeopardy.

#### A "happy" loud blast for:-

- A try.
- A goal.

#### A short blast for:-

- An infringement requiring a scrum.
- Touch.

#### A series of short loud blasts:-

- To emphasise a stoppage of play if the players have not heard the first whistle.
- To gain the attention of the players when they are not responding to your requests. E.g. the scrum engagement, forming the line-out correctly.
- To call for medical assistance.

When the referee has blown the whistle it is important to ensure all players have heard it. Watch the players to see they disengage and come towards the place of the infringement.

#### Remember:-

- **Players don't like excessive whistle blowing.**
- **Be precise and definite in your variations of blowing the whistle.**
- **Be sure not to blow too early for an infringement so advantage can be played to the full.**
- **Practice the sequence:- "Whistle" "Signal" "Talk".**

Both the players and spectators may assess a referee by how the whistle is used.



*Holding the whistle as shown in the diagram is recommended*

In recent years far greater emphasis has been placed on encouraging and training referees to "manage" a game, rather than "control" it. Modern thinking and knowledgeable players and coaches have appreciated this attitude. It has also improved communication between the referee, players and coaches, both on the off the field, leading to a more enjoyable game for all. **Some Considerations:-**

#### Checklist 19

- A referee should be an adjudicator NOT an enforcer. The important consideration for the referee is how that adjudication should be managed.
- An occasional joke often relaxes a pending tense situation but DON'T be a comedian.
- Learn to understand the game better by watching and discussing games at all levels.
- Watch and discuss with your referee coach, videos of your refereeing performance at your games.
- Learn when to manage minor technical infringements by talking to the offender initially, before penalising on the second occasion.
- Be prepared for new tactics by players.
- Get the scrum and line-out right the first time.
- Be firm and decisive, making decisions quickly.
- Give brief and concise explanations of decisions e.g. red knock on, blue scrum; No.8 offside, penalty blue.
- Avoid debating decisions with the captains or other players.
- Use the captains to help manage the game.

#### Anticipate:-

Prevent difficult situations developing by ensuring players know if they are not abiding by the laws of the game.

Use the communication tools:- "Whistle" "Signal" "Talk"

#### SIGNALS

Learn the basic signals initially e.g. scrum, knock-on, free kick, penalty, advantage etc so they become automatic, immediately after the whistle has been blown for an infringement.

Be very positive in indicating a penalty (straight out at 45 degrees) as opposed to a try (straight up vertically). This is especially important near the goal line.

Pictures of the various signals are included at the back of the law book. Remember signals are for the players, as well as for the spectators.

**Clear and concise signals will make the decisions of the referee easier for everyone to understand.**

### ADVANTAGE

**Always consider advantage - tactical and/or territorial.**

Remember the three occasions advantage cannot be played. The awarding of advantage near the goal-line to a defending team in possession can be contentious. **It is recommended that:-**

#### Checklist 20

- a. After foul or dangerous play near the goal-line don't play advantage, especially for U19s games. Consider a penalty try in lieu of a penalty, especially if a try would have been scored.
- b. If dangerous play occurs in general play, DON'T play advantage.
- c. The referee should establish guidelines to decide whether the advantage has been obtained. Should the play return to the original infringement or continue e.g. If an advantage is being played and a further knock-on occurs. This will come with experience. A good practice is to ask "What advantage did the non-infringing team gain?"

As well as playing advantage referees should call "playing advantage" and "advantage over".

### IN GOAL

**BE THERE. Aim to be in-goal before the ball.**

**Make sure you have a clear view of the ball. Make quick and firm decisions.**

This should stop any overzealous play developing. Don't hesitate to consult the touch judges. If you cannot see the ball being grounded "blow it up" quickly and award the 5-metre scrum to the attacking side.

Incorrect decisions around the in-goal can impact markedly on the players' confidence in the referee.

### FOUL PLAY & LAW 10 SANCTIONS

**Dangerous play should not be tolerated.** The referee must determine whether it was deliberate or over enthusiasm and carelessness by the player. This is especially important in the younger age group games. The "Law 10 Sanctions" gives the consequences for the various offences. Nevertheless, it is very important the situation is managed fairly by the referee. There is no excuse for repeated offences.

### CAUTIONS, TEMPORARY SUSPENSION & SEND OFF (Yellow and Red Cards)

**Never give a general caution.** This restricts any future action if there are further foul play incidents during the game.

Practice giving a foul play report and how to caution or send off a player before a game - maybe in the shower in the morning! Never point a finger at a player when giving a caution.

**The foul play report must be short and concise. Write down the details directly after the conclusion of the match. Information is as follows:-**

#### Checklist 21

- a. Identification of the offending player.
  1. The number of the player.
  2. The team the player is in - by colour if that is easier.
  3. The position of the player/description of the player and any other assistance for identification if there is no number on the jersey or it is not seen.
- b. The offence. Remember in a fracas, the third person should be identified.
- c. Where the offence occurred.
- d. A recommendation, if the report is from a touch judge e.g. temporary suspension and penalty.

If a touch judge makes the report, the referee must assess the offence and decide whether to act on the recommendation.

For the written report it will be necessary to note at what stage into the game the incident occurred and the tempo of the game.



#### How to caution/send off a player.

The following procedure is recommended:-

##### Checklist 22

- a. A loud blast on the whistle. Step well back from the incident, out of earshot of the players.
- b. Step well back from the incident, out of earshot of the players.
- c. Listen to the touch judge's report and then send the touch judge back to the touchline.
- d. Call out the offending player/s and the captain/s.
- e. Clearly state the nature of the offence without elaborating or getting into an argument.
- f. Issue the necessary caution, temporary suspension or send off.
- g. Show the red or yellow card, if necessary.
- h. Proceed to the position of the incident and award the necessary penalty.

When a player is cautioned, a yellow card must be shown and the player temporarily suspended. If a player receives a second yellow card in the same match, he must be sent off in which case you should show the player the yellow card for the second offence and then a red card for the send off.

When a player is sent off, obtain the name of the player before he leaves the field. It is vital that as many details of the incident are recorded at the time of the incident, including the name of the player - NOT after the game. Players can all become "Smith" and change jerseys! Don't forget the implications of a sin bin or send off for replacements, especially in U19 games and for front rows at all levels.

#### WRITTEN REPORT

Remember if a player is sent off, then a written report is required. If it is because of a touch judge's report, then a report is required from both the referee and the touch judge. Report should be written up, as soon after a game as possible while the incident is still fresh in the mind. Just state the facts in a report and don't embellish them.

#### SPECTATORS

If serious problems occur with spectators the referee is advised to stop the game, then speak to a senior official or coach to have the person/s removed from the playing enclosure if necessary.

#### CONCENTRATION

Concentration is vital throughout a game for a referee.

A referee may relax physically during a game but a high level of concentration must be maintained throughout. Don't be distracted by spectators who may disagree with a decision. Try to show no reaction at all.

##### If the referee considers concentration is slipping it may assist:-

- a. To focus on the drills in the appropriate checklists for set plays to ensure they are being carried out.
- b. Concentrate on reading the game to try to anticipate future moves.
- c. Concentrate more on positional play
- d. Use key words such as "concentrate" to raise the concentration levels.

#### CONSISTENCY

Nothing annoys players, coaches and spectators more than inconsistency by a referee. It is important to set the pattern of the game from the beginning so the players know the referee's interpretations of the laws and don't "try out" the referee. Once the pattern of the game has been set by the referee's initial decisions then the referee must continue in the same way.

Inconsistency can occur if a referee is seen by the players to be penalising one side and not the other for a similar offence. Beware of half time advice and then penalising because of it. If this occurs, speak to the offending player before penalising, warning him that his offence has been noted and will be penalised next time. Even if a referee incorrectly interprets a law the players will appreciate the referee more if the same decision continues to be made. However the referee should check the law and ensure that it is interpreted correctly at the next game.

## other points to consider



other points  
to consider

### CONTROL

Control is an integral part of management. A referee must know how to control a game and to what level, to ensure it does not become overheated.

Control can be efficiently administered by:

#### Checklist 23

- a. Reading a game e.g. is it a fast flowing game or a hard rugged game.
  - b. Restraining the over vigorous player.
  - c. Being firm but not authoritarian.
  - d. Being firm with the first foul play e.g. a late tackle. It is better to be over cautious and award the penalty.
  - e. Playing less advantage if there are problems.
  - f. Slowing the game down e.g. taking longer to set up scrums and line-outs.
  - g. Not letting players try to "even up".
  - h. Blowing up rucks and mauls quickly so that players do not have the opportunity to engage in illegal actions.
- **Make sure key definitions are known verbatim.**  
However, don't be a law book basher - very embarrassing if the referee is wrong.
  - **Stay calm and firm in making decisions.**
  - **If speaking to players in a tense situation take time and be very deliberate.**
  - **Use the captains to control individual players.**
  - **THINK before speaking.**

### FITNESS

The following "warm up" and "warm down" programs are suggested for all levels of referees:-

#### PRE GAME

1. Light jog at least 400m.
2. 2 sets of slow skips (high knees)  
- 20 metres each  
2 sets of shallow lunges  
- Alternate with heel to butt
3. Jog at least 200m
4. Hold for 3 sec (10 repeats):-  
- Trunk twists and hold  
- Alternate arm/leg raise  
- Alternate trunk/leg raise
5. Jog at least 200m
6. Trunk stabilisers (repeats of 10)  
- Abdominal curls  
- Crunches  
- Obliques
7. Jog at least 200m
8. Progressive speed (4 repeats)  
20m      50m      100m  
Light      Moderate      Long Stride

**Note:** Only use static stretches if after complete warm up there is still tightness felt. **Take plenty of water throughout warm up.**

#### POST GAME

1. Light jog/walk
2. Static stretches (major muscles)
3. One litre of water in first hour.

**"Ensure you are FIT to REFEREE - NOT Refereeing to get fit".**

### **TOUCH JUDGING**

Make the most of every opportunity to touch judge. It enables a referee to see a game from a different perspective and to learn from it. Liaise with the referee and the other touch judge before and during the game.

It is important that the touch judge is well presented and is prepared to referee if the referee is injured.

Similar to refereeing, there are many and varied situations for which a touch judge has to make a decision, so concentration throughout the game is essential. Refrain from talking to spectators or being distracted by them. It is not a time to relax.

A touch judge must be fully conversant with the laws especially with regard to touch, foul play and kicks at goal. He must be able to assist the referee, if requested, over the decisions to be made in the in-goal area.

Don't let spectators wander over the touch-line in their enthusiasm for the game when there is no rope to keep them back. Speak to them on the first occasion, but if they persist, seek the assistance of the referee at the next line-out to stop the game until they do get back behind the touchline.

If ball boys are available ensure they are properly briefed prior to the game as to the importance of their responsibilities, especially about handling the ball or providing a different ball if a quick throw in is possible.

A touch judge must be aware of the consolidated rulings with regard to touch.

### **AFTER THE GAME**

The referee should try to organise the day whereby other commitments are not arranged elsewhere soon after a game - though it is appreciated that sometimes this is not always possible e.g. refereeing or touch judging for a following game, or a family function.

Don't forget to thank the captains and touch judges.

If a referee coach has been watching, make a point of thanking that person as well and making a time later to meet up or to telephone. Don't be afraid to talk to the referee coach. They are there to assist the referee with improvements in refereeing. Make a point of listening to the coach's comments even if you don't necessarily agree with them. A discussion with a referee coach will give the referee the opportunity to explain why certain decisions were made and allow the referee the opportunity to consider alternative solutions to certain aspects of play.

If the referee has made a wrong decision on a point of law then as soon as possible after a game when back at home the referee should check in the law book and ensure that the law in question is interpreted correctly at the next game. After each game it is good practice for a referee to do a self-analysis of the game to try to overcome any weaknesses or errors prior to the next game.

Try and speak with the coaches, captains and players of both sides after a game, preferably over a drink in the clubhouse. The referee can learn a lot from them. However, don't be afraid of criticism. Listen and check the comments later. If explanations are required they should be given in simple terms.

**Don't sneak off after a game.** The players and coaches will realise referees are human after all and the referee will make many good friends and continue the unique camaraderie of rugby football.



## refereeing under 19 games

refereeing under  
19 games

If a referee has not refereed an U19 game recently, then the U19 laws at the back of the law book should be revised, especially the safety factors for scrums etc. Check with coaches the number of replacements they have, especially for the front row forwards.

Parents and other spectators can be extremely critical at U19 games if a game is not played safely. If a game is refereed safely they can be very appreciative.

Management of U19 games can vary according to age and it is most important referees are fully aware of the variations in the different age groups.

### DO

- Act with calm authority
- Be aware of age characteristics.
- Be consistent.
- Speak calmly.
- Show self-control both in voice and manner.

### DON'T

- Appear confused.
- Make threatening or sarcastic remarks.
- Lose your temper or show anger.
- Imply that the authority of the referee is being threatened.

**Be FAIR, FRIENDLY and FIRM (3Fs) but never too FAMILIAR or SARCASTIC.**

**A useful guide to handling different age groups is as follows:-**

#### 7 to 10 years old

They are very much "small boys or girls".  
They like to be "fathered/mothered".  
They like to be recognised and praised.  
They have short attention span.  
They are open to new simple ideas.

#### 10 to 13 years old

This group are the "little gentlemen" & "young ladies".  
They are self-assured.  
They are keen to show they know the answers.  
They are outgoing and usually easy to deal with.

#### 13 to 15 year old

In this group are the 14 year olds who can develop to maturity differently both mentally and physically.  
They are uncertain of their identity.  
They are unsure of their self-image.  
They react to praise well.  
They resent criticism.  
They can become aggressive if they feel "threatened" by an adult mannerism.  
They are easily influenced by their peers.  
They like to be one of a group or team and therefore hate to be singled out.

#### 15 years and upwards

The approach to this group must be positive.  
They are still influenced by the group mentality.  
They like to be treated as adults  
They resent any treatment that implies they are being treated as a "kid".  
They soon detect an unsure referee who thinks this age group is a threat.

a summary of a  
referee's attributes



## *a summary of a referee's attributes*

notes



### Know the LAWS

- Be up to date with the latest consolidated rulings.
- Read the law book regularly.
- Keep up to date by attending your referees meetings.

**Check your GEAR. Look like a referee with clean gear.**

**Keep FIT both physically and mentally.**

- Run between each breakdown of play.
- Stay on the balls of the feet ready to move quickly in any direction.
- Move with the ball.
- Always aim to be there as a phase of play develops.

**Prepare CHECKLISTS mentally prior to a game.**

**CONCENTRATE throughout a game.**

**Be FIRM and POLITE and keep calm.**

**MANAGE, especially the set pieces.**

Talk to the players during a game. Inform them how you, the referee, are interpreting an incident e.g. "It's a ruck", "playing advantage" and "advantage over". Complement players on good play and set pieces done well. E.g. "much better scrum", "great try", etc.

**WHISTLE, SIGNAL, TALK**

**FOUL PLAY**

- **Do not tolerate any forms of foul play. Remember the Crimes Act.**
- **Be ALERT and prepared for the unexpected play or incident.**

**KEEP SMILING**

- If you make a mistake, **DON'T WORRY.**
- Continue with the game, learn from the mistake for the next game.

**Thank your touch judges and referee coach.**

**ENJOY YOUR REFEREEING**

*a summary of a  
referee's attributes*

notes





*notes*

*enjoy your  
rugby refereeing*



*notes*