

WORLD RUGBY LAW CHANGES FOR 2017



World Rugby has continued its Law review process in-between World Cups, which has led to some Law changes being implemented for the 2017 season around the world. In addition they have provided some guidelines for Law application in some areas of the game.

Below find the various changes that will apply in 2017. In particular, there are some major changes around maul and touch-line Law that all coaches, players and referees need to be aware of.

MAUL

In 2016, World Rugby decided that the ball can be moved backwards hand-to-hand once the maul has formed. A Player is not allowed to move/slide to the back of the maul when he is in possession of the ball (PK).

In 2017, in addition to this, now the ripper also needs to stay in contact with the jumper until they have transferred the ball. No 'long transfer' of the ball to the back of the maul by the lineout jumper (PK).

HIGH TACKLES

Accidental Tackle

When making contact with another player during a tackle or attempted tackle or during other phases of the game, if a player makes accidental contact with an opponent's head, either directly or where the tackle starts below the line of the shoulders, the player MAY be sanctioned. This includes situations where the ball carrier slips into the tackle.

Reckless Tackle

A player is deemed to have made reckless contact during a tackle or attempted tackle or during other phases of the game if in making contact, the player knew or should have known that there was a risk of making contact with the head of an opponent, but did so anyway. This sanction applies even if the tackle starts below the line of the shoulders. This type of contact also applies to grabbing and rolling/ twisting around the head/ neck area even if the contact starts below the line of the shoulders.

To decide an appropriate sanction (PK, YC or RC), referees should be considering:

- **Contact point** – where did the tackle start/finish, was contact with hand, arm or shoulder?
- **Action** – was the tackling action accidental, reckless or deliberate?
- **Degree of force** – severity of impact, does the tackler 'carry on' through the tackle, e.g. around the neck?

Referees should use common sense – but player safety is paramount.

ADVANTAGE

Law 8.1(a)

When there are multiple penalty infringements by the same team, the referee may allow the captain of the non-offending team to choose the most advantageous of the penalty marks.

TOUCH LINE LAW

Law 19

A player who is attempting to bring the ball under control is now deemed to be in possession of the ball.

When a player jumps from inside the playing area, and before landing in touch, manages to knock (or catch and throw) the ball from across plane of touch back into the playing area, this is now **play on** (previously this was in touch).

The process used to decide **who** has taken the ball into touch changes for 2017. Previously whether the ball was rolling or stopped was relevant, now the question is: did the ball reach the plane? If the ball has reached the plane of touch when it is caught, then the catcher is not deemed to have taken the ball into touch. If the ball has not reached the plane of touch when it is caught or picked up, then the catcher is deemed to have taken the ball into touch, regardless of whether the ball was in motion or stationary.

The principle above also applies to the goal-lines, touch-in-goal and dead-ball lines. (Therefore, Laws 19.5 and 22.9 are now superseded by this Law Trial, even though they still appear in the Law Book.)

TIMING AT THE END OF EITHER HALF

Law 5.7(e)

If a penalty kick is kicked into touch after time has elapsed (without touching another player), the referee allows the throw-in to be taken, and play continues until the next time the ball becomes dead.

PENALTY TRY

Law 9.A.1

If a player would probably have scored a try but for foul play by an opponent, a penalty try is awarded. No conversion is attempted and 7 points are awarded automatically.

SCRUM

Law 3.6 (Uncontested Scrums)

Uncontested scrums as a result of a sending off, temporary suspension or injury must be played with eight players per side.

(Applies in U13s and older. This would not apply if uncontested scrums are caused by a team starting a match short of a trained front row. Competition rules would apply.)

LAW VARIATIONS TO SEVENS

- Finals should last no longer than seven minutes each half.
- The restart kick must be taken within 30 seconds of a penalty kick or dropped goal being attempted where the kick is successful or goes dead.
- Teams must form a lineout within 15 seconds from the time the referee indicates the place where the throw-in will take place.
- Teams must be ready to form a scrum within 15 seconds from the time the referee indicates the mark of the scrum.
- A penalty or free-kick must be taken within 30 seconds of being awarded.