

Eastern Pennsylvania Rugby Referees Society

A PLAYER'S GUIDE TO TOUCH JUDGING

Prepared By Steve Cohen and Reissued February 2002

Touch judges, along with the referee, have a prime responsibility for the efficient administration and regulation of the game to which they are appointed. The safety and enjoyment of the match, by all participants, is - in part - their responsibility. It is therefore essential that the touch judges fully understand and correctly perform their duties. The following guide is intended for the player who touch judges and should be complemented by additional specific directions from a particular referee. Please share this guide with every player on your club and 'ask' them to read it.

APPOINTMENT AND CONDUCT

Normally, it is the responsibility of each team (captain) to provide a competent unbiased touch judge...please do not select an inexperienced player. This person must be available for the entire match...please do not select a replacement player. Please do not wait until 'just before' kick-off to try to find a person to run touch...appoint your touch at your selections meeting and advise him accordingly, so he will be ready to do it. If your club has a certified referee (who has taken Level 1 Referee Certification Program), their appointment would be most beneficial to all.

Each touch judge must carry a flag, or other suitable object, if the referee does not have touch flags. He (or she) should clearly signal their decisions. The touch judge should not wear the same jersey as the players. The touch judges, like the referee, is an official of the game and must do their best to make correct decisions, pay close attention to the game, keep up with play, and minimize sideline distractions (such as conversations with friends).

FIELD OF PLAY

The touch lines are in touch, the goal lines are in in-goal, the dead-ball line is not in in-goal, the touch-in-goal lines and the corner posts (but not the flags) are in touch-in-goal.

ACTION DURING THE GAME

The touch judge should remain in touch at all times except when judging a kick at goal, he should watch play and attempt to stay up with it. At half-time the touch judges may switch sides.

DEFINITION OF TOUCH

- 'Kicked directly into touch' means that the ball was kicked into touch without landing on the playing area, and without touching a player or the referee.
- 'The 22' is the area between the goal line and the 22-metre line, including the 22-metre line but excluding the goal-line.
- The line-of-touch is an imaginary line in the field-of-play at right angles to the touch line through the place where the ball is thrown in.
- The ball is in touch when a player is not carrying it and it touches the touch line or anything or anyone on or beyond the touch line.
- The ball is in touch when a player is carrying it and the ball-carrier (or the ball) touches the touch line or the ground beyond the touch line.
- The ball is in touch if a player catches the ball and that player has a foot on the touch line or the ground beyond the touch line.
- The place where the ball-carrier (or the ball) touched or crossed the touch line is where it went into touch.
- If a player has one foot in the field of play and one foot in touch and holds the ball, the ball is in touch.
- If the ball crosses the touch line or touch-in-goal line, and is caught by a player who has both feet in the playing area, the ball is not in touch or touch-in-goal. Such a player may knock the ball into the playing area. If a player jumps and catches the ball, both feet must land in the playing area otherwise the ball is in touch or touch-in-goal. However, if the ball crosses the touch line and is knocked back into the field-of-play when either of the player's feet are beyond the touch line, then the ball is in touch.
- A player in touch may kick or knock the ball, but not hold it, provided it has not crossed the plane of the touch line. The plane of the touch line is the vertical space rising immediately above the touch line.

USE OF TOUCH FLAG

- As soon as the ball or player carrying it goes into touch (see "Definition of Touch" above) the touch judge must raise his touch flag (vertically above his head). The flag should be raised even before the touch judge reaches the place of touch, so the referee can whistle for play to stop.
- In the event that the referee does not blow his whistle for touch, stay at the mark and get his attention as soon as you can...even if a try is scored, the referee will bring play back to the mark for a lineout. Remember, the referee may overrule your decision, if from his vantage point he observes otherwise. If this happens, don't take it personally.
- Similarly he must signal to the referee (by raising his flag) when the ball has gone into touch-in-goal. If a team is attempting to take a penalty kick into touch towards the goal line, the touch judge is to stand at the corner post; in this way, the touch judge will be best able to differentiate between touch and touch-in-goal.

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THROW-IN

- **NO GAIN IN GROUND**
 - (a) **Outside a team's 22, a team member kicks directly into touch.** Except for a penalty kick, when a player anywhere in the playing area who is outside the 22 kicks directly into touch, there is no gain in ground. The throw-in is taken either at the place opposite where the player kicked the ball, or at the place where it went into touch, whichever is nearer that player's goal-line.
 - (b) **Player takes ball into that team's 22.** When a defending player gets the ball outside the 22, takes or puts it inside the 22, and then kicks directly into touch, there is no gain in ground.
- **GAIN IN GROUND**
 - (c) **Player inside that team's 22.** When a defending player gets the ball inside the 22, or that player's in-goal and kicks to touch, the throw-in is where the ball went into touch.
 - (d) **Kicks indirectly into touch.** When a player anywhere in the playing area kicks indirectly into touch, so that the ball first bounces in the field-of-play, the throw-in is taken where the ball went into touch.
 - (e) **Penalty kick.** When a player kicks to touch from a penalty kick anywhere in the playing area, the throw-in is taken where the ball went into touch.
- **FREE KICK**
 - (f) **Outside the kicker's 22, no gain in ground.** When a free kick awarded outside the 22 goes directly into touch, the throw-in is in line with where the ball was kicked, or where it went into touch, whichever is nearer the kicker's goal-line.
 - (g) **Inside the kicker's 22 or in-goal, gain in ground.** When a free kick is awarded in the 22 or in-goal and the kick goes directly into touch, the throw-in is where the ball went into touch.

WHO THROWS IN

- When kicked directly into touch from a penalty kick, the team that kicked the ball into touch will throw in the ball. Otherwise, the ball is to be thrown in by an opponent of the player whom it last touched, or by whom it was carried before being in touch; this includes a free kick that pitches into touch. In the event of doubt, as to which team should throw in the ball, the referee shall make the decision. The touch judge must be alert to differentiate between the referee's signal for a free and a penalty kick.

Note: Since a team may opt for a quick throw-in, the touch judge should NOT point in the direction of the team getting the throw-in until either:

- a) the ball is touched by someone other than the player who took it into touch or the player who is going to throw it in, or
- b) a lineout is formed at the line-of-touch

AT THE SPOT FOR THE LINEOUT

- Once the flag is raised, the touch judge should quickly reach the spot for the lineout.
- He should not chase the ball to retrieve it for the person throwing it in, but rather should remain there indicating the spot for the lineout for the players who will be forming the lineout or possibly take a quick throw-in.
- The touch judge must stand along the line-of-touch about 1 meter from the touch line with the flag held vertically, and other arm pointing horizontally in the direction of the team who will throw the ball in; if a touch judge is unsure of who put the ball in touch, he should let the referee know, and the referee will decide.
- The touch judge shall keep the flag raised until the ball is thrown in and stay on the line-of-touch until the line out is over. This is important because during the lineout (after the ball is thrown in), the referee will look at the touch judge's position to know where the line-of-touch is.

Note: If the spot for the lineout is to be within 5 meters of the goal-line, the spot shall be moved to 5m from the goal-line.

KICK AT GOAL

- When a kick at goal from a try or penalty kick is being taken, both touch judges must assist the referee by signaling the result of the kick.
- Each touch judge should stand behind one of the goal posts in a position that allows them to judge the kick correctly.
- Both touch judges should raise their flag if the ball goes over the cross bar, and is completely inside both posts (and the vertical, imaginary extensions of the posts). Therefore, as soon as the ball crosses the goal line/cross bar, the touch judges should look at each other speaking and nodding their heads either 'yes' or 'no'. If both touch judges say yes, then both flags are raised vertically over their heads; however, if one touch judge says no, then that touch judge waives the flag in a horizontal manner at their waist level.

Note: touch judges must be alert to the referees' signal (his arms will point towards the posts) that the kicker is intending to kick at goal, and should quickly come to his post. The referee may overrule the touch judges' call (sometimes from his vantage point he observes otherwise). Remember, it is the referee's decision to award a successful kick at goal or not.

Be alert, keep up with play, be fair and enjoy this important role during a rugby match.