

2000-01 New Rugby Laws Summary

The following is a **summary only** of **some** of the more significant changes to the Laws announced so far this year by the IRB. All those interested should consult the actual text, which can be found in the recently issued USA Rugby Handbook (see more later). Any questions should be addressed first to the Local Area Union Referee Societies and thence to Dick Podmore (rpodmor@attglobal.net), Chair of the USA Rugby Referees Association Laws Sub-committee.

Laws of the Game Made Easier

Over the past year or so the IRB undertook a comprehensive rewrite of the Laws of the Game of Rugby. The process of rewording, reorganizing, and renumbering was completed last year, and a new version of the Laws was issued in the form of the Laws of the Game Made Easier. The IRB did not intend to change the substance of the Laws, but did intend to make the new version more easily understood than the arcane English version that has been with us for so long. It is the same game, with players able to play their positions as they played them before. Last year the old version was retained as the official version and the new version ran parallel with it.

This year the IRB has made the new version the official standard. USA Rugby has acted accordingly. All citations of Law hereafter will refer to the new version contained in the USA Rugby Handbook.

In addition to formalizing the new language for the 2000-01 seasons the IRB has introduced two sets of changes to the Laws: some Experimental Law Variations, and some non-experimental Law changes.

Experimental Law Variations

Several experimental changes in Laws were adopted by the IRB in January, 2000 for the Six Nations competition, and were subsequently applied by other rugby organizations, such as the Epson Cup, in the first part of the year. The USA Rugby Board decided that the changes should not be applied in the USA until the 2000-01 season. The changes are now in effect, but remain experimental, and thus subject to alteration or elimination by the IRB at any time. All of the Experimental Law Variations (ELV) are contained in a separate section starting on page 185 of the USA Rugby Handbook. Brief descriptions of the more significant changes are as follows.

Tackled Player Releasing the Ball. If opposition players who are on their feet attempt to play the ball, the tackled player must release the ball. (ELV Law 15.5.e)

Note: Player who is on-side at a tackle can take the ball out of the tackled player's hands even before that player fully releases it.

Penalty: Penalty Kick

Entering the Tackle from the Correct Position. At or near a tackle, arriving players must come from their side of the ball and the tackle. (ELV Law 15.7.b)

Note: Player who did not tackle opponent who is in the tackle zone CANNOT straddle ball and must come around from their team's side of the ball.

Penalty: Penalty Kick

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Playing the Ball at a Tackle. A player who gains possession of the ball at a tackle must play it immediately. Either move away, pass, or kick. Don't just stand there with the ball.

(ELV Law 15.7.c)

Penalty: Free Kick

Staying on the Feet at a Tackle. A player who gains possession of the ball at a tackle must not go to ground at or near to the tackle. (ELV Law 15.7.d)

Penalty: Penalty Kick

Pre-grip at Line-out. Players may not pre-grip team-mates below the waist. (ELV Law 19.9.j)

Note: The shorts are considered the waist.

Penalty: Free Kick

Supporting at Line-out. Players must not support jumpers below the shorts from behind, or below the thighs from the front. (ELV Law 19.9.k)

Penalty: Penalty Kick

Line-out Peeling. Peeling players no longer need to remain parallel and close to the line-of touch, but they must remain within 10 meters of the line-of-touch. (ELV Law 19.11.b)

Penalty: Free Kick, 15 meters in, along the line-of-touch.

Scrum Binding. The loose-head prop **must** bind on to the tight head. No resting the hand on the knee. All props must grip their opponent's jersey on the back or side, and must not grip the chest, arm, sleeve, or collar of the opposition. (ELV Law 20.3.c)

Penalty: Penalty Kick

Scrum Throw-in. "Use it or lose it." If a scrum remains stationary, and the ball does not come out immediately, or if a scrum become stationary and does not start moving again immediately and the ball does not come out immediately, the scrum will be whistled to a stop, a new scrum set, and the ball put in by the team **not** in possession at the time of the stoppage. (ELV Law 20.4.e and f)

Scrum Wheel. "Use it or lose it." If the scrum wheels more than 90 degrees, the scrum shall be whistled to a stop, a new scrum set, and the ball put in by the team **not** in possession at the time of the stoppage. (ELV Law 20.11b)

New Laws

The following are non-experimental alterations to the Laws, effective August 1, 2000. In the USA Rugby Handbook the changes are woven into the relevant Laws.

Substituted players re-entering the match. A substituted (but not a sent off) player may return to replace a front row player who has been injured, sin binned, or sent off.

Front row sent off. If a front row player is sent off or sin binned, he must be replaced by a player on the field who is suitably trained as a front row player. However, if there is no such suitable replacement on the field, the captain can now choose any other player, not just any other forward, to leave the field to be

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replaced by a suitably trained front row player from the sidelines. (Law 3.14.a)

Instant replay. The match organizer may appoint an official to use “technological devices”, to be consulted if the referee is unsure about a decision in in-goal regarding a score or touch-down, or the success of kicks at goal. (Law 6.A.8.b)

Yellow and red cards. At a caution the referee will show a yellow card, and at a send-off the referee will show a red card. (Laws 6.A.10 and 10.5)

Foul Play-Obstruction. A player must not stand or move into a position with the intent of preventing an opponent from tackling the ball carrier or from playing the ball. It is now clearly illegal for a player behind the ball or ball carrier to obstruct. (Law 10.1)

Penalty: Penalty Kick

Off side in general play. When the ball is kicked ahead, an offside player must retire to or behind an imaginary line across the field which is 10 meters from the opponent waiting to play the ball. Essentially, the old “10 meter circle” around the player is replaced by a “10 meter line” from the player all the way across the field. (Law 11.4)

Penalty: Penalty Kick.

Tackle. At a tackle, the tackled player may not place or push the ball into touch. (Law 15.5.g)

Penalty: Penalty Kick.

Line-out near Goal Line. The line-of-touch at a line-out shall not be within 5 meters of the goal line. (Law 19.7.1)

Scrum Near Goal Line. No scrum is to be formed with the middle line of the scrum within 5 meters of the goal line. (Law 20.1.b)

Scoring from a free kick. A maul has been removed from the conditions that would allow a drop-goal to be scored after a free kick (or after a scrum taken instead of the free kick). For a drop-goal to be allowed the ball must have become dead, or the ball must have been played or touched by an opponent, or a tackle must have occurred. (Law 21.6.b)

Goal Post Padding and Tries. Since the goal post padding is part of the goal post, if an attacking player simultaneously touches the ball to the ground and the padding surrounding the post, a try is scored. (Law 22.4.b)

Seven-A-Side Law Variations

Seven-a Side Sin Bin. 2 minutes. (Seven-a-side Variations: Law 10)

Seven-a Side Kick off. If the ball does not reach the 10 meter line without being played by an opponent, a free kick is awarded to the non-offending team at the center of the half-way line. (Seven-a-side Variations: Law 13.8)

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The above brief summaries are intended to draw attention to the significant changes in Law that are now in effect. They are not the definitive texts. All those interested should refer to the actual Laws to gain a full understanding. The complete Laws of the Game, together with the Under 19 Variations, the Experimental Law Variations and the Seven-a Side Variations are contained in the USA Rugby Handbook. Copies of the Handbook are available from the following rugby equipment supply houses.

American Rugby Outfitters
1510 Midway Court, Suite E6
Elk Grove, IL 60007
800-467-8429
americanrugby@sprynet.com

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