

Law Rulings 2002

RULING 9: 2002

Lineouts - ratified by Council

15 NOVEMBER 2002

The Dutch Rugby Union has requested a ruling with regard to the following:

We have a question connected with your recent rulings of 23rd July and 5th September related to the "receiver in the Line-out".

Our question concerns the timing of the receiver's action of stepping into the Line-Out.

1. "Is it correct to assume that the receiver of the team throwing in may step into the Line-out before the ball leaves the hands of the thrower, if at the same time a player of this team in the Line-out steps out to take his place as receiver?"
The number of players in the Line-Out is not materially effected, and switching of position in the Line-Out is allowed prior to the ball being launched.
2. "Is it correct to assume that the receiver of the team throwing in may not step into the Line-out before the ball leaves the hands of the thrower, if another player of his team in the Line-Out does not step out?"

In practice the receiver in this case steps in just prior to the ball being launched which does not allow time for the other team to reciprocate by having their receiver step in to readjust the number of players. Materially the team throwing in now have an extra man in.

Ruling

The Designated Members of the Laws Committee have ruled as follows:

1. Law 19.11(c) states that "Players may change their positions in the line-out before the ball is thrown in. The receiver is therefore allowed to step into the line-out before the ball leaves the hands of the thrower, if at the same time a player of his own team in the line-out steps out to take his place as a receiver.
2. Players taking part in the line-out include the two players waiting to receive the ball.

Law 19.10 Exception 2 allows the receiver to run into a gap in the line-out and take the ball. If the receiver does run into the gap and does not take the ball, then he is liable to penalty.

RULING 8: 2002

Scrum binding - ratified by Council

29 OCTOBER 2002

The Canadian Rugby Union has requested a Ruling with regard to the following question:

"At the Canadian Women's Championships in Winnipeg a Canadian lock forward was allowed to bind in the right lock position with proper binding up to the armpits but her head was fully out from between the hooker and tight heads hips. Her head was turned to the side and raised upwards to sight the ball when it came out. Is this legal and safe?"

Ruling

The Designated Members of the Laws Committee have ruled as follows:

Locks in the scrum must have their heads between the hips of the hooker and the prop forward.

RULING 7: 2002
Kick-off and Restarts - ratified by Council

1 OCTOBER 2002

The FPR (Portuguese Rugby Union) has requested a ruling with regard to the following question:

According to Law 13.9, if the ball goes directly into touch at the kick-off (or restart kick), the opposing team has 3 choices:

- to have the ball kicked off again, or
- to have a scrum at the centre and they have the throw -in, or
- to accept the kick

If they accept the kick, the line-out is on the half - way line. If the ball is blown behind the half-way line and goes directly into touch, the line - out is at the place where it went into touch.

At the kick - off or at a restart kick, team A kicks the ball directly into touch, without the ball ever having crossed or reached the opposing team's 10-metre line.

Does team B still have the 3 options available in Law 13.9, or does Law 13.8 prevail?

It was our understanding and interpretation of the Law that the opposing team (team B, in this case) would always have the 3 options available, especially if, due to the effect of the wind or due to a terrible kick, or any other reason, the ball was blown/went directly into touch behind the half-way line. The throw-in would be at the place where the ball crossed the touch-line / where the ball went into touch. Could you please clarify this situation?

Ruling

The Designated Members of the Laws Committee have ruled as follows:

Law 13.9 is not influenced by the ball not travelling 10 metres. If the ball goes directly into touch, the opposing team have the three options in Law. The fact that the ball did not go ten metres is immaterial.

RULING 6: 2002
Scrum - ratified by Council

5 SEPTEMBER 2002

The IRFU have requested a further Ruling with regard to quickly taken kicks after the collapse of a scrum:

The clarification which we seek is the continuation of play by way of quick tap PK/FK when a collapsed scrummage is still engaged.

In practice, at the higher levels of the Game and when all the correct requirements for a quick PK/FK are observed it is likely that the front rows will be disengaged.

However, if the front rows are not disengaged (and this may be more likely at the lower levels of the Game) we are concerned - under the following Laws - that the game be allowed to continue.

Law 6 A
9(g); 10(a); 10(c);

These do not state, per se, that play should not continue when a collapsed scrum is still engaged. However, there appear to be certain clear implications within these Laws which would place the referee (and others) in an extremely difficult legal situation in the event of a serious injury, if play continues under these circumstances.

Law 21
4 - (i) & (j) Kick taken quickly;

These Laws require the players of the kicker's team to be retiring, and that they then become on-side when they run behind the team mate who took the penalty or free kick, or when a team mate carrying the ball runs in front of them.

Again, in practice, if the collapsed front rows are not disengaged, then these players - who are not retiring - become support players who have not been on-side.

Perhaps if all players were required to be retiring (i.e. on their feet) prior to quick taps then these issues would be covered.

Ruling

The Designated Members of the Laws Committee have ruled as follows:

In practical terms the referee will whistle immediately for a collapsed scrum and give his decision. If the referee has awarded a kick as a result of a penalty provision, and provided there are no reasons why the game should not continue, a quick tap kick can be taken.

If there is a reason why a quick tap should not be taken the referee will blow his whistle a second time, and the quick tap will not be taken. Reasons for such an action would be an injury to a player, or a situation where the referee believes an injury may have occurred.

RULING 5: 2002

Line out - ratified by Council

5 SEPTEMBER 2002

Exception 2 - Receiver runs into gap. A receiver may run into a gap in the line-out and take the ball. The receiver must not charge or obstruct an opponent in the line-out during such action.

The recent ruling by the Designated members under this exception allows the receiver, of either the throwing-in team or of the non-throwing-in team to run into a gap and take the ball. The receiver may not support a team mate but he may be supported by a team-mate. In practice, this player moves into the lineout, and becomes an active lineout player, often being supported both in front and behind by players who were in the lineout at formation.

However, Law 19 - 7(b) states that the team throwing-in the ball determines the maximum number of players in the line out. [i.e. line out players, under 'definitions']

And,

Law 19 - 7(c) states that the opposing team may have fewer line-out players but they must not have more.

The query is as follows:

1. Is the non-throwing-in receiver subject to the overriding constraints of 19 - 7(b) and 19 - 7(c), when the line out is formed with an equal number of players from each team?

2. If he is not, then how is 19 - 7(b) fulfilled by the throwing-in team - as this would allow the non-throwing-in team to have more players in the line out, also contrary to Law 19 - 7(c)?

The IRFU would submit that the receiver of the non-throwing-in team should be under the constraint of 19 - 7(b) and 19 - 7(c), and that the Exception remains governed by Law. This still leaves the following available options in accordance with Law:

(i) If the non-throwing-in team has one or more players fewer in the lineout [conforming with 19-7(c)], their receiver may then move into the lineout without constraints.

(ii) If both teams have an equal number of players in the line out and the receiver of the throwing-in team moves into the line out, then the non-throwing-in team receiver may also so move. This conforms with 19 - 7(b). [This is also consistent with Exception 1 which states that "... a player of the same team may run forward to take the ball. If so, an opponent may also run forward.] In brief, the IRFU believe that the Exception is a "positional" exception allowing either receiver to move into the lineout, provided there is compliance with Law. Otherwise, - given that the immediate opponent of the player throwing-in the ball is allowed to support the non-throwing-in team can have, for example, 9 players competing against 7, (or 6 against 4; or 4 against 2). This clearly is an unfair contest, weighed in favour of the non-throwing-in team.

Ruling

The Designated Members of the Laws Committee have ruled as follows:

A player (receiver) of the team throwing in the ball to the lineout may run into a gap to take the ball. This ensures compliance with Law 19 7 (b) as the team throwing in determines the maximum numbers in the lineout. If a player (receiver) of the team throwing in the ball exercises the right to run into a gap in the lineout an opposition player may also run into the gap to take the ball.

A player (receiver) of the team not throwing in the ball to the lineout may only run into a gap to take the ball if an opposition player (receiver) has first moved in a gap to take the ball. If a player of the team not throwing in moves into a gap without the opposition player having done so first, that player contravenes Law 19 - 7 (b) for which the penalty provision is a free kick (save for the situation where the team not throwing in the ball have less players in the lineout than the team throwing in).

The Exception in Law 19-10 requires the player entering the gap to do so to "take the ball" and not for any other reason. If a player enters the gap and thus the lineout for any other reason that player contravenes Law 19 - 10 for which the penalty provision is a penalty kick.

RULING 4: 2002 **Scrum - ratified by Council**

6 AUGUST 2002

The WRU has requested a ruling with regard to the following point of Law:

'These can be taken following a scrum collapse providing the kick is taken either through the mark or in a line through and directly behind the mark'.

The implication of this interpretation is that even though the scrum has collapsed and both front rows may still be engaged on the ground, the referee will allow the non-offending team to take a quick tap penalty/free kick. Such an interpretation is contrary to the first principle of refereeing as set out in the IRB Level One Referee Beginner Course, that of player safety.

Law 6. 9 (g) "The referee must blow the whistle when it would be dangerous to let play continue". This includes when a scrum collapses or when a front row player is lifted into the air or is forced upwards out of a scrum, or when it is probable that a player has been seriously injured".

Law 10. 5. Sanction clearly states "Any player who infringes any part of the Foul Play Law (including Law 10. 4. (i) Dangerous Play in a Scrum, Ruck or Maul) must be admonished or cautioned and temporarily suspended or sent off" In other words the referee's minimum action in this case is to speak to the offending player in the scrum and warn him. The opportunity to play advantage by allowing the non-offending team to take a quick tap penalty/free kick is NOT an option for the referee in this instance. Law 8. 3 (d) is specific that "Advantage MUST NOT be applied when a scrum collapses".

The Law does not allow the referee the freedom to make the decision on whether or not a collapsed scrum is dangerous. It is stated in Law 20.9 (a) that collapsing the scrum IS dangerous play and therefore under Law 10.5 Sanctions and Law 8. 3 (d) the referee MUST stop play immediately until the players in the collapsed scrum are no longer in danger. i.e. disengaged from each other.

By allowing an individual referee the latitude to decide if a collapsed scrum is dangerous or not will not only lead to perceived inconsistency in referees' interpretation in separate games by players and spectators but also to perceived inconsistency by a referee at identical situations in a particular game.

The Welsh Rugby Union is very concerned that this interpretation is the opposite of how referees, particularly in the Northern Hemisphere, have refereed collapsed scrum penalties. Not only is player safety endangered but also referees, and the IRB as the governing body, are laid open to a claim for negligence if a forward is seriously injured because a scrum is not stopped immediately when it has collapsed."

Ruling

If a scrum collapses then:

Law 6 A 9 (g) states "The referee must blow the whistle when it would be dangerous to let play continue. This includes when a scrum collapses, or when the front row player is lifted into the air or is forced upwards out of the scrum, or when it is probable that a player has been seriously injured."

If there is an injury then:

Law 6 A 10 (a) states "If a player is injured and continuation of play would be dangerous the referee must blow the whistle immediately."

Law 10.5 does not state when the player must be admonished or cautioned and temporarily suspended or sent off. These actions can take place after another phase of play.

Law 8.3 (d) states that "Advantage must not be applied when a scrum collapses. The referee must blow his whistle immediately". It does not preclude a quick tap kick after the whistle is blown, as any action after the blowing of the whistle is not playing advantage.

Law 8.3 (d) does not state that "the referee must stop play immediately until the players in the collapsed scrum are no longer in danger i.e. disengaged from each other".

The Designated Members therefore rule that there is no Law which precludes the referee from allowing a free kick/penalty kick taken in the form of a quickly taken tap kick, from the correct position.

RULING 3: 2002

Touch and line out - ratified by Council

23 JULY 2002

The RFU has requested a ruling with regard to the following point of Law:

A receiver in the Line-out is clearly defined. Page 103 (Definitions)

Apart from receiving the ball from the Line-out, this Receiver has an additional option which is Exception 2 on page 109.

Members of the RFU Laws Task Group have a view that this player (the Receiver) may, of course, take the option as mentioned in Exception 2 and in so doing he may be supported by other players in the Line-out.

However we consider that is the total extent of his possible involvement and that he is not permitted to run into a gap in the Line-out to support a jumping team mate."

Ruling

Exception 2, states in part that a receiver may run into a gap in the line-out and take the ball. This is the only act he is entitled to perform under this Exception 2. To support a player in the line-out is therefore transgressing this Exception 2 and is penalisable by a penalty kick at the point noted in Law.

RULING 2: 2002

Touch and line out - ratified by Council

17 MAY 2002

The RFU has requested a ruling with regard to the following point of Law:

The RFU has requested a ruling with regard to the following question:

When the experimental Law Variations were incorporated into the Laws of the Game 2001, amongst others Law 19 'Touch and Lineout' was amended. In particular, Law 19.11(b) was amended to take account of the experimental variations. However, an apparently key aspect of the previous law was deleted, that when a player peels off the Lineout, that player must keep moving.

Was it the objective of the IRB to remove the intention for a peeling player to keep moving until the Lineout had ended?

Ruling

It was intended that Law 19 11 (b) read:

"A player who peels off, must stay within the area from that player's line-of-touch to 10 metres from the line-of-touch and must keep moving, until the line-out has ended"

RULING ONE: 2002

Temporary replacement - ratified by Council

20 MARCH 2002

Following correspondence from the Scottish Rugby Union which requested clarification relating to Law 3 10(a);

10 TEMPORARY REPLACEMENT

(a) When a player leaves the field to have bleeding controlled and/or have an open wound covered, that player may be temporarily replaced. If the player who has been temporarily replaced does not return to the field-of-play within 15 minutes of leaving the playing area, the replacement becomes permanent and the replaced player must not return to the field of play.

Ruling

The Designated Members have ruled that the 15 minutes indicated within the Law is actual time and not playing time.