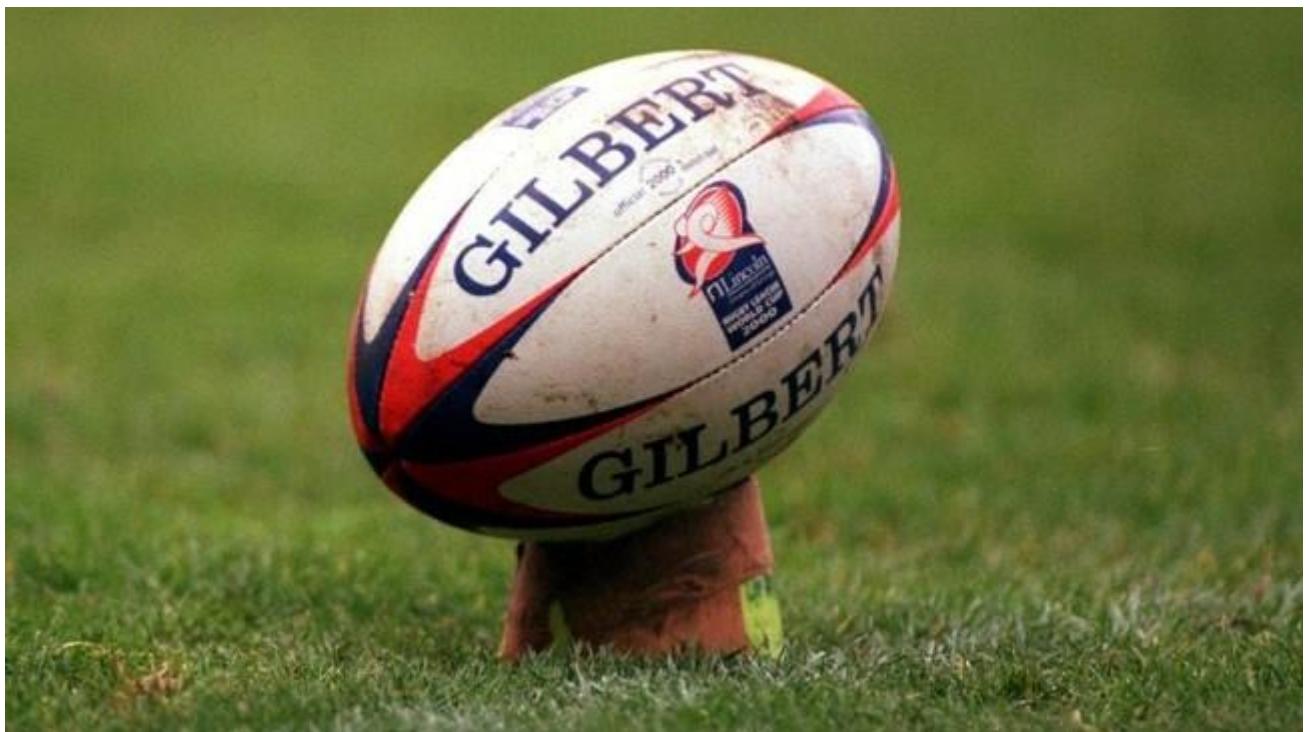


RUGBY UNION

BASIC RULES OF THE GAME



BASIC INFORMATION

- Rugby union is played by two teams of **15 players**.
- The aim of the game is very simple – use the ball to score more points than the other team.
- You can run with the ball, kick it and pass it, but **passing forwards is not allowed**.
- Rugby union is a **contact sport**, so you can tackle an opponent in order to get the ball, as long as you stay within the rules.
- There is a **referee**, aided by **two touch judges** (one on each side of the pitch), to decide how the rules should be applied during a game.

There are several ways to score points.

- *A try* – **five points** are awarded for touching the ball down in your opponent's goal area.
- *A conversion* – **two points** are added for a successful kick through the goalposts after a try
- *A goal kick* – **three points** are awarded for a penalty kick or drop goal through the posts
- If both teams score the same amount of points, or no points are scored, then the match is a draw. In some cases, extra time is played to decide who wins.

TIMING

- A game of rugby union has **two periods of 40 minutes** each. In international matches the referee will stop the clock for stoppages.
- Between the two halves, there is a maximum **10-minute interval**, after which both teams change ends.
- The referee's whistle indicates the start and finish of the half.
- **Extra time** will only be played if it's a **knockout competition**.

STARTING A MATCH

- Before the start of the match, the **referee tosses a coin** to decide which team will kick off the match.
- The **captain** of the team that wins the toss gets to decide which end he wants to attack first, or whether his side or the opposition will kick off.
- The game is started by a **place kick** or a **drop kick** from the **middle of the halfway line**.
- The ball must travel forwards **at least 10 metres** from the kick-off. If it does not, the opposition get the choice of a scrum or line-out on the halfway line, with the advantage of the feed or throw.
- If a penalty or drop goal is scored during the game, **play is restarted with a drop kick from the halfway line**. The team that has conceded the points takes the kick.

THE LAWS OF THE RUCK

- When a tackled player **goes to ground**, they must **release the ball immediately**.
- As soon as that happens, the opposition will want to get their hands on the ball, and the team in possession will not want to give it away.
- According to the laws, "**the ruck is a phase of play where one or more players from each team, who are on their feet, in physical contact, close around the ball on the ground**".
- So to gain possession, both sides must try to drive over the ball to make it available for their team-mates.

DIVING IN

- All players joining a ruck **must be on their feet**.
- But sometimes players dive in off their feet in an attempt to slow the ball down, allowing defences to re-group.
- Referees are particularly strict on this.

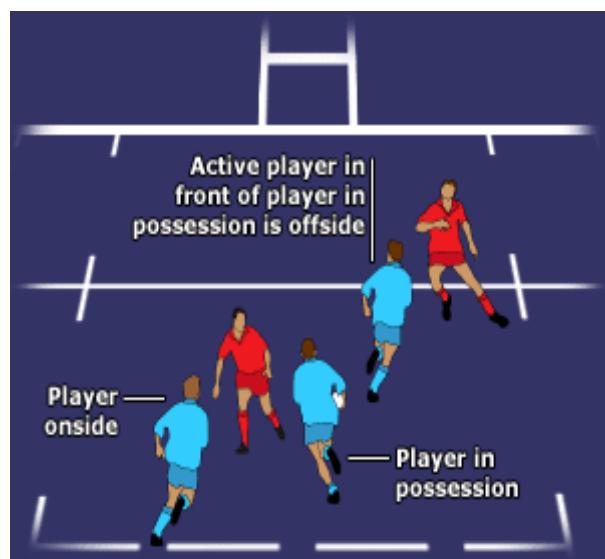
BALL NOT FREE

- If the ball **does not come out of a ruck** after about **five seconds**, the referee will award a **scrum** to the team he considers to have **the greater forward momentum in the ruck**.

THE OFFSIDE LAW

Different phases of the game have their own set of offside laws.

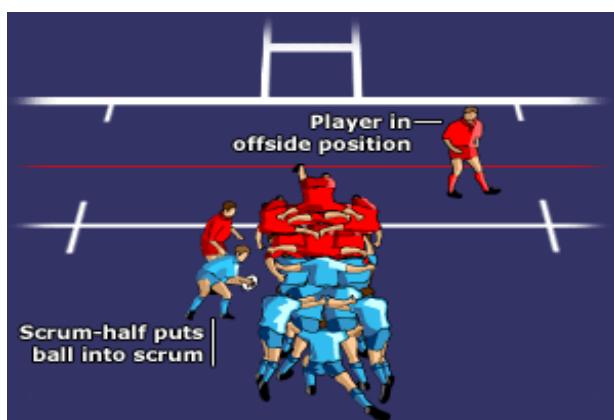
OFFSIDE IN OPEN PLAY



If a player is in front of a team-mate in possession of the ball, or in front of a team-mate who last played the ball, they will be offside if they:

- **Actively try to play the ball**
- Do not retreat within 10m of an opponent who is waiting for the ball
- **Move towards the opponents or the place where the ball lands without first coming back onside**
- The referee will award a **penalty** at the place where the offence took place

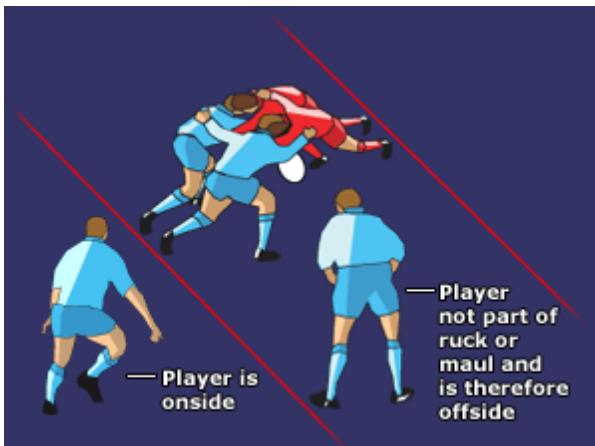
OFFSIDE AT A SCRUM



- For **scrum-halves**, the offside line is the **line of the ball fed into the scrum**.
- That means they **can't go beyond that line until the ball has been put into the scrum by the opposing number nine**.
- For all the other players, the offside line is an **imaginary line drawn through the 'hindmost' foot of the last player in the scrum**.

- **No player apart from the eight forwards and scrum-halves** are allowed within this area.
- The **opposing scrum-half** has to wait until the ball is out of the scrum before making a tackle for the ball.
- If they don't, the referee will award a **penalty**.

OFFSIDE AT A RUCK OR MAUL



- Most offside decisions in rugby union happen at rucks and mauls, especially when the ball is being recycled a lot.
- Like the scrum, an imaginary line is drawn through the **hindmost foot of the last player in the ruck or maul**.
- Players must either join the ruck or maul or retreat **behind** the offside line.

A player is offside if they:

- Join from their **opponent's side**
- Join play from **in front of the last man**
- **Do not join** either the **ruck or maul**, but fail to get **behind the offside line**
- **Leave the ruck or maul**, but do not get **behind the offside line**.

THE LAWS OF TACKLING

THE BASICS



Tackling is the only way of legally bringing down your opponent in rugby union.

But there are certain laws on how to tackle and if these are not adhered to, penalties will follow.

When you tackle an opponent, you **cannot make contact above the shoulders**. This is for safety reasons.

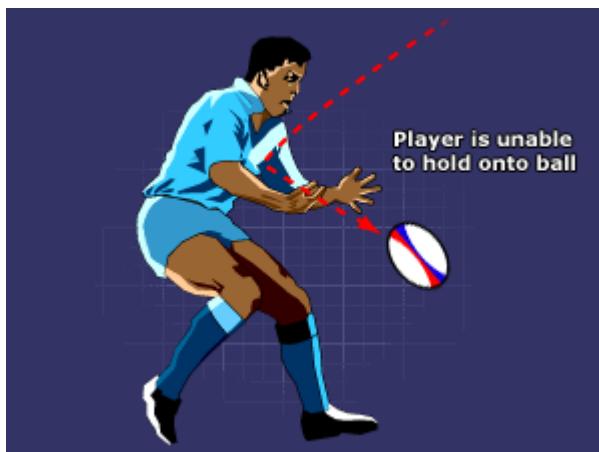
The referee will instantly give a penalty if he sees a high tackle, and a few stronger words may follow if the challenge is deemed dangerous.

- Expect a yellow card and a spell in the sin-bin or a red card and instant dismissal for more serious offences.

GOING TO GROUND

- Once a player in possession of the ball has been brought to ground by a tackler, they must release the ball immediately.
- They can do this either by passing off to a team-mate or placing the ball on the ground.
- The tackler must release the player they have just brought down and roll away from them and the ball.
- If the referee believes the tackler has not rolled away quick enough, he will award a penalty to the opposition.
- The same is true for the player who has been tackled. If they do not release the ball immediately and roll away from it, they will concede a penalty. Referees are strict on this, because players can often try to slow the ball up for the opposition, helping their side to re-group in defence.

KNOCK-ONS AND FORWARD PASSES



- Rugby union is one of the few ball games where the ball cannot be passed forwards.
- That means a player moving towards the opposition's dead ball line must pass the ball to a team-mate either along or behind an imaginary line running at right angles to the side of the pitch.
- The same principle applies even when players are not passing the ball.

- If they fail to catch or pick up the ball cleanly and it travels forward off a hand or arm and hits the ground or another player, it is called a knock-on.
- The same applies if a player is tackled and the ball goes forward.
- If a player fumbles the ball but catches it before it has hit the ground or another player, it is not a knock-on.
- When a knock-on occurs, the referee will stop play and award a scrum to the team which has not knocked on.
- If the ball is thrown forward at a line-out, a scrum is awarded 15 metres in from the touchline.
- If the referee decides a player has intentionally knocked on or thrown the ball forward, a penalty is awarded to the other team.

- And if the referee decides the other team would have scored a try if the intentional knock-on had not taken place, a penalty try is awarded.
- The one exception to the knock-on rule is the charge-down.
- If a player charges down the ball as an opponent kicks it, it is not a knock-on, even if the ball travels forward.

THE LAWS OF SCRUMMAGING

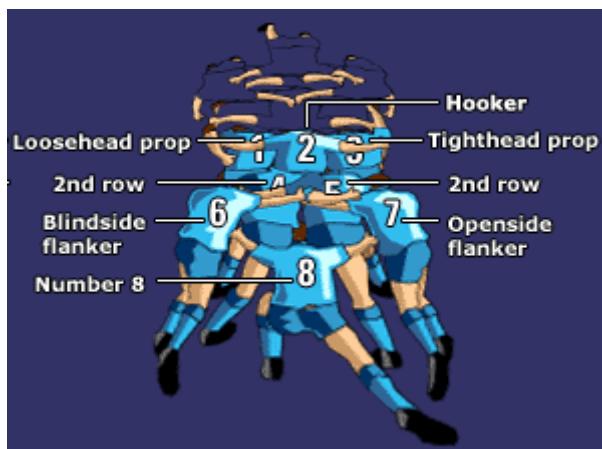
- Players aim to gain of opposition territory using the **scrum**

The scrum is used for restarting play after the following...

- The ball has been **knocked on**
- The ball has gone **forward**
- **Accidental offside**
- The ball has **not** come out from a **ruck or maul**

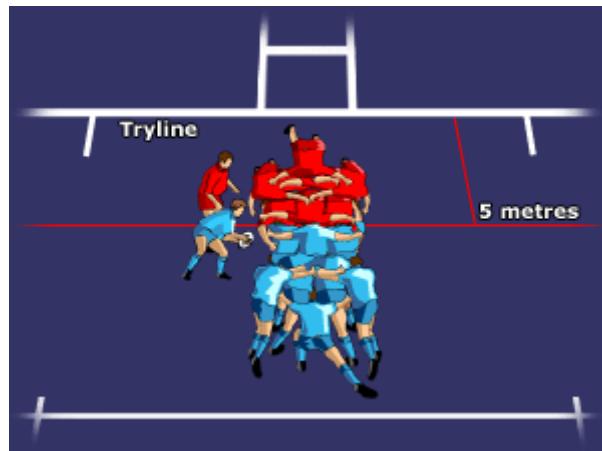
Not every player can join a scrum. Only **eight** players from each team can take part. They are almost always the eight forwards in the side.

- The scrum is formed at the place where the infringement happened



- All scrums must take place at least **five metres** from the touch or trylines
- However the scrum is one of the hardest areas of the game to referee because of the many infringements, particularly in the front row

THE FIVE-METRE SCRUM



- This scrum is one of the best ways of cranking up the pressure on your opponent's defence.
- It is given to the attacking side after one of the defending team has grounded the ball inside their own goal area.
- But it is only given if a member of the defending team has carried or passed the ball back into their own in-goal area before the ball is touched down.
- If this is not the case, the defending team is awarded a 22-metre drop-out.
- The other way a five-metre scrum can be awarded is if the attacking team gets within five metres of the try line, but is held up by the opposition's defence.
- Because the attacking team has the momentum going forward, the referee will award it the feed at the scrum.

THE SIN BIN

- The sin-bin is the bench where all players who have committed a **yellow card** offence sit out of the game for **10 minutes**.
- If the referee believes a player has **committed a serious foul or shown indiscipline**, then he will show them the yellow card, just like in football.
- Unlike in football, that player must then **immediately leave the pitch**.
- They then have to sit in the sin-bin for 10 minutes while the game continues without them.
- It leaves their team a player down for a sizeable chunk of the game, **giving the opposition the perfect opportunity to push for points**.

OTHER LAWS

- If a player has been tackled and their natural momentum takes them over the try-line and the ball is grounded, a try is awarded.
- A player tackled near the goal-line can also reach out and attempt to touch the ball down for a try.
- There are certain situations where tackles cannot be made.
- If the ball carrier has been held by an opponent, but has not gone to ground, and a team-mate has bound onto them, a maul is formed.
- At that point a tackle cannot be made for safety reasons