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| To: | Referee Societies | From: | Michael D Patz – Match Official Development Manager |
| Cc: |  |  |  |
| Date: | Tuesday 17th February 2015 | Ext: |  |
| **Subject:** | World Rugby Application of Laws for Sevens Rugby Tournaments | | |

This memo and the information below is intended to help develop an understanding between players, coaches and officials on how the laws of the game are expected to be applied for the approaching Sevens tournaments, and to assist in playing and officiating Sevens in your respective Unions.

The material in this memo has been generated through consultation with officials and coaches, including Paddy O’Brien, World Rugby High Performance Sevens Referee Manager, and Paddy McNally, World Rugby Sevens Referee Selector.

It is worth noting that the laws are intended to reward the team that is most effectively applying the Principles of the Game (contesting possession, continuity of attack, applying pressure, etc). Officials attempt to judge each situation by which team is legally dominating the situation through superior force, tactics, or numbers. This means that, in some situations, committing an offence might not lead to a penalty, depending on how it affects the opposition. For example, a tackled player that takes the “Squeeze Ball”

position might not be penalised if there are no defenders contesting possession, but is more likely to be penalised if taking that position hinders a defender that was attempting to get the ball.

Below is a video generated by Paddy O’Brien to prepare the officials for the 2014-15 Sevens World Series. Although not all of the clips will apply at every tournament, it provides a good resource for players, coaches and officials to prepare themselves.

**2014-15 Sevens Technical Laws Video:** <http://play.buto.tv/l98Ts>

It is hoped that this video is self-explanatory. Please contact [Laws@RFU.com](mailto:Laws@RFU.com) if you have any questions or seek clarification.

Further to the video, there are some questions that have been raised by coaches, and after consultation with Paddy O’Brien and Paddy McNally, the following answers have been prepared in a Q&A format:

**Question: Is the position known as “Squeeze Ball” allowed?**

Answer: If there are players on their feet trying to gain possession of the ball, the tackled player must release the ball immediately and not use his/her body or additional movements (such as an extra roll) to hinder the players on their feet from gaining possession.

**Question: Can arriving players put their hands on the ground past the tackled player?**

Answer: No. Such players risk being penalized. Arriving players from the defending or supporting teams must bear their weight. Defending players attempting to gain possession must put their hands on the ball first, NOT the ground. (Law 15.6 a)

NOTE: If a player falls past the tackled player because of a lack of opposition, they might not be penalized, but must get back on their feet without delay.

**Question: Can a tackler’s support players at a ruck hold onto the tackled player as an anchor, if their shoulders are up and they are bearing their weight?**

Answer: A support player may touch or hold players on the ground provided that the support player is supporting his/her body weight. EXCEPT, if the defending team counter-rucks and the support player would have been driven backwards except for use of the tackled player as an anchor, then the support player risks being penalized.

Also, if a support player is in contact with a ball-carrier before the ball-carrier goes to ground, that support player may remain in contact with the ball-carrier, but should get back to a weight bearing position without delay. (Law 15.6 a).

**Question: What are the restrictions on players chasing kicks with regards to making contact with opposition players waiting to receive the ball?**

Answer: Players in the air are vulnerable, and it is the responsibility of other players not to put them at further risk. Contact at kicks will happen, but referees are expected to be strict with any players that, by intention or recklessness, make contact with a player that is in the air. Just “going for the ball” is not enough to avoid penalty, the player must make a legitimate effort to get hands on the ball first; players that make contact with a jumping opponent and do not touch the ball are liable to be penalized, but if they manage to touch the ball when contacting the body, then play might be allowed to continue.

**Question: How will referees manage the often-chaotic Sevens scrum?**

Answer: Scrums receive less attention in Sevens, but along with general expectations on binding and timing, there are specific areas that referees should be monitoring: the defending loose head prop standing up or turning in at the scrum, and any props pulling their opponent forwards.

**Question: At a quickly taken penalty kick, how far do the defenders have to retreat?**

Answer: There are a lot of quickly taken penalties in Sevens, and these are usually a more

potent attacking option than in XVs due to greater space and fewer defenders in depth.

Considering this, a strict interpretation of 10m could lead to repeated “not 10m” penalties against the defenders, which could magnify the impact of penalties beyond their intended value.

An attacking ball carrier that intentionally runs into a retreating defender that has not yet fully retreated 10 meters, is an example of cynical play and the ball carrier should not be awarded an additional penalty – Law 21.9.