

IRB Rules Changes – 23 Nov 10

IRB made a number of changes to the Laws of the Game, all of which were supported by the RFU.

The changes can be summarised as follows:

1. Amendment to Spear Tackle Law
2. New Hand-Off Definition Added
3. Half time increased to a maximum of 15 minutes
4. Changes to Law 21 and 22 - Infringements in in-goal

Further details can be found at

<http://www.irb.com/newsmedia/mediazone/pressrelease/newsid=2040903.html#law+amendments+player+welfare+first>

The changes come into effect on 1st December 2010.

Regards

Chris Cuthbertson

Chairman

RFU Laws Sub Committee

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International Rugby Board Council today approved amendments to two aspects of Law that will ensure that the welfare of players always comes first.

Amendments to Law governing the spear tackle and hand-off will operate across the Game from December 1, 2010, providing greater clarity on the definition of each action and in turn delivering a stronger disciplinary position.

The other Law amendments approved by Council were an adjustment to the maximum permitted duration of the half-time interval and clarity around the procedure for infringements committed in-goal.

Council Amends Spear Tackle Law

The IRB Council has reinforced its zero-tolerance stance towards all dangerous tackles by approving an amendment to the Law relating to the spear tackle.

An amendment to Law 10.4(j) has been approved to recognise the defensive actions of the tackled player when the arms are outstretched to break a fall and to further ensure the consistency of application of the appropriate sanction for offending players.

The amended Law 10.4(j) will now read: *Lifting a player from the ground and dropping or driving that player into the ground whilst that player's feet are still off the ground such that the player's head and/or upper body come into contact with the ground is dangerous play.*

The amended Law will operate globally from December 1, 2010.

New Hand-Off Definition Approved

Council also approved an amendment to Law 7 and 10.4(f) to ensure that there is an appropriate definition for the act of handing off or fending off an opponent.

Despite the legal hand-off being part of the Game at all levels, the act was not clearly defined in Law or referred to within the mode of play section.

The new definition is intended to bring greater clarity to the act, minimising the potential for any confusion with regard to its place in the Game.

A definition has been added: *an action taken by a ball carrier to fend off an opponent by using the palm of the hand.*

The amended Law 10.4(f) will now read: *Playing an opponent without the ball. Except in a scrum, ruck or maul, a player who is not in possession of the ball must not hold, push or obstruct an opponent not carrying the ball.*

The amended Law will operate globally from December 1, 2010.

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IRB Opens the Way for 15 Minute Half-Time

The IRB Council approved an amendment to Law 5 which will permit a match organiser, Member Union or recognised body with jurisdiction over the match to implement a half-time interval of up to a maximum of 15 minutes.

The amendment to Law 5.2 will now read: *After half-time teams change ends. There is an interval of not more than 15 minutes. The length of the interval is decided by the match organiser, the Union or the recognised body which has jurisdiction over the game. During the interval the teams, the referee and the assistant referees may leave the playing enclosure.*

The amendment comes after extensive consultation with Member Unions, including an IRB sanctioned trial in the English Premiership in 2007-08 to establish whether there would be any change to the risk of injury by extending the half-time interval.

The analysis of the Premiership trial established that there was no additional injury risk and that the extended half-time period could present player welfare benefits.

The revised Law will operate from January 1, 2011.

Law 21 and 22 – Infringements in-goal

Council also approved amendments to Laws 10, 21 and 22 to ensure greater consistency between the Laws and provide clarity for infringements committed within the in-goal area.

The mark for penalty kicks and free kicks awarded as a result of an infringement in the in-goal area will be awarded in the field of play and that any kicks taken in the in-goal are as a result of players retiring to take kicks.

The awarding of sanctions (scrums, penalty kicks and free kicks) for offences in the in-goal will all be five metres from the goal line and in line with the infringement. The awarding of all scrums and kicks from actions taken in the in-goal will be five metres from the goal line.

The amended Law will operate from December 1, 2010.

IRB Member Unions have been advised of all Law Amendments and each amendment comes as a result of extensive consultation.

**LAW AMENDMENTS APPROVED BY IRB COUNCIL
TO OPERATE GLOBALLY FROM DECEMBER 1, 2010**

Laws 21 and 22

Amend Law 21.2 to read:

When a penalty or free kick is awarded in in-goal the mark for the kick is in the field of play, 5 metres from the goal line, in line with the place of infringement.

Sanction: Any infringement by the kicker's team results in a scrum 5 metres from the goal line in line with the mark. The opposing team throws in the ball.

Amend Law 21.4 (f) to read:

Kick taken in the in-goal. If a player retires into in-goal to take a penalty or free kick awarded in the field of play and a defending player by foul play prevents an opponent from scoring a try a penalty try is awarded.

Amend Law 21.4 (g) to read: If a player retires into in-goal to take a penalty or free kick awarded in the field of play and following the kick the ball goes into touch-in-goal, or on or over the dead ball line, or a defending player makes the ball dead before it has crossed the goal line, a 5 metre scrum is awarded. The attacking team throws in the ball.

Amend Law 21.8 (g) to read: If a free kick has been awarded and the player retires to in-goal to take it and the opponents charge and prevent the kick from being taken, a 5-metre scrum is ordered. The attacking team throw in the ball. If a free kick is taken in the in-goal, an opponent who legitimately plays it there can score a try.

Amend Law 18.2 (Mark) to read: The kick is awarded at the place of the mark. If the mark is made in the in-goal the kick is awarded five metres from the goal line in line with where the mark was made.