

# **SURVIVING 'THE LAWS**

**IRB REINTERPRETATIONS  
AND RULINGS 2009-10**

by Dan Cottrell

# **LAWS**



**RugbyCoach Weekly**

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# How the laws changes affect you

Over the past few years, new laws have been introduced through the Experimental Law Variations and there have been a number of interpretations of other laws. You need to keep up with them, so you can coach more effectively and your team is not at a disadvantage.

Here are the latest law changes and amendments that are current from 20th August 2009 in all competitions.

We outline the key technical and tactical areas to consider.

	TECHNICAL	TACTICAL
<b>LAW 6 - MATCH OFFICIALS</b>		
Assistant referees are able to assist the referee in any way that the referee requires.	No technical difference.	No tactical difference.
<b>LAW 15 - BALL CARRIER BROUGHT TO THE GROUND</b>		
<p><b>Law clarification</b> A tackler who has put at least one knee on the ground whilst making the tackle can get up and play the ball from ANY direction.</p>	<p>The tackler should work on getting to his feet quicker and perhaps on entering the tackle from a different angle. To aid this, he should try to control the contact contest by staying on his feet for as long as possible in the tackle. As he falls, he should aim to land on top of the tackled player.</p> <p>The player winning the ball needs to work out how to twist and turn to get the ball back onto his team's side of the tackle situation.</p> <p>The ball carrier needs to fight to keep the tackler at a disadvantage so he cannot return to the game quickly.</p>	<p><b>Defence:</b> There is a greater onus on getting two players to every contact situation. Defensive systems should see a one-on-one tackle as a failure of the system.</p> <p>A good team at the breakdown might expect more turnover ball. What are the tactics you will use from turnover ball?</p> <p><b>Attack:</b> There is greater emphasis on the ball carrier not getting isolated.</p> <p>Your players should only take the ball into deliberate contact in pairs.</p> <p>It might also be better to kick for territory than expose yourself to a turnover.</p>

	TECHNICAL	TACTICAL
<p><b>Law clarification</b> A player who is involved in the tackle but does not go off his feet must enter the tackle through the "gate".</p>	<p>Double tacklers need to be aware of their rights.</p>	<p>(See previous page for tactics.)</p>
<p>After a tackle is made, a player who puts his hands on the ball from a legal position (on his feet, through the gate), can keep his hands on the ball even if a ruck forms around him.</p>	<p>The next player to the tackle situation must focus on getting his hands onto the ball. It will require good technique (a wide base, strong core and balance) plus bravery.</p> <p>Players who are close to tackle situations will need to react quickly.</p> <p>The player who wins the ball on the ground needs to consider how to get the ball back to his team.</p> <p>The ball carrier needs to work on not getting isolated. If he is, then he should stay on his feet and fight forward.</p>	

## LAW 19 - TOUCH AND LINEOUT

<p>If a team puts the ball back into its own 22 and the ball is subsequently kicked directly into touch, there is no gain in ground [for the lineout].</p>	<p>The back three will need to improve their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long kicking.</li> <li>• High ball kick and chase.</li> <li>• High ball catch and return.</li> <li>• Positioning to offer options to the player taking the ball.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Attack:</b> You need to decide whether to kick from a set piece just outside your 22.</p> <p>If you want to use a kicking game, it seems sensible to kick long for the corners, or use a high ball down the centre of the pitch.</p> <p>It is likely you will kick infield more than before the changes, so your chase needs more organisation with a chasing team and a backfield recovery team in place.</p> <p><b>Defence:</b> Defending against these kicks requires a new type of set piece from lineouts and scrums on the edge or just outside the opposition 22.</p>
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	TECHNICAL	TACTICAL
		<p>Wingers need to be deep and the full back lined up inside the line of the opposition fly half.</p> <p>The predominant foot of the fly half usually dictates the position they take. More sophisticated teams may look at the possible options offered by a "wiper"/cross kick or with a kick from a different footed centre. This affects the positioning of the defensive openside winger.</p>
<p>A quick throw in may be thrown in straight or towards the throwing team's own goal line.</p>	<p>Wingers making and taking long passes.</p> <p>Players need to be in position to take the throw. They need to think about arcing round from midfield positions, looking to find space to run on to the ball from behind the throw.</p> <p>Wingers and full backs need to improve their kick and chase game.</p>	<p>The quick throw in carries a certain amount of risk, so you need to work out how risk averse you are as a team.</p> <p>A quick throw guarantees possession, but the receiver has to either run to space or kick to space. It also risks the receiver becoming isolated, so the rest of the team need to be aware of the possibility of taking the quick throw.</p> <p>A quick throw could take place some way behind the possible lineout position, so the lost ground needs to be made up. Hence the quick throw needs to be a team tactical plan, not just a whim from a quick witted winger.</p> <p>A kick return from a quick throw could be either a high ball, a chip for a shorter retrieval, a long kick to the corners or, as some sides are already doing, long down the middle of the pitch.</p> <p>A kick to touch needs to be further beyond the touch line to reduce the chances of a quick throw. Your chasing players need to be aware of the quick throw in possibilities.</p>

	TECHNICAL	TACTICAL
The receiver at the lineout must be 2 metres away from the lineout.	A player coming into the lineout to jump or support has to arrive faster. Beforehand they were able to be closer.	In practice, this means it is difficult to insert a player at the front of the lineout. This is because they will not be able to get into the line fast enough, once the ball is in the air.  However, you can drop a player out of the back of the lineout and then insert the receiver before the ball is thrown in (probably at the front of the lineout).  You don't have to have a receiver at all. So, a player can start in the receiver's position to move into the lineout before the ball is thrown in. However, this process might be too slow for your team to take advantage of it.  The ruling makes no tactical difference for throws to the back of the lineout.
The player who is in opposition to the player throwing in the ball must stand in the area between the 5m line and the touch line but must be 2 metres away from the 5m line.	The hooker cannot lift from in front of the 5m line.	This is significant now numbers in the lineout have to match. The hooker cannot lift at the front of the lineout if he was standing in between the touchline and 5m line.  The practice of having a hooker at the front of the lineout to step in to lift is redundant. So you may think about having your scrum half "marking" the throw in and defending against the front peel, which would enable your hooker to cover the midfield.
Lineout players may pre-grip a jumper before the ball is thrown in.	There is little technical difference because teams tended to do this before.	No tactical difference.
The lifting of lineout players is permitted.	No technical difference.	No tactical difference, because players still cannot lift until the ball has left the thrower's hands.

	TECHNICAL	TACTICAL
<b>LAW 20 - SCRUM</b>		
Introduction of an offside line five metres behind the hindmost feet of the scrum.	A good disruptive scrum can reduce the 5 metre advantage, so scrummaging in defence is important. A slight wheel towards the attacking angle needs practicing.	<p><b>The tackle line:</b> This is now closer to the gain line if not over it, which has implications for the running lines of the back row and the pack from a scrum.</p> <p>The first attacking pack players now have better forward momentum at the first ruck, perhaps allowing quicker ruck ball. This can mean a faster second phase move, so the backs have to realign quicker than before.</p> <p><b>Attack - back row moves:</b> Close to the scrum back row moves retain their relevance in terms of tying in the opposition pack. However the extra space means your number 8 (eighthman) has more options to attack the space in front of the opposition fly half.</p> <p>Other players can feed off your 8 (or scrum half) if he picks and goes, because the opposing flanker will be pulled out of position to cover the attack. (In defence, it is likely that the flanker will cover wide and the number 8 will fill in next to the scrum.) Some teams are using 8 to make the clearing pass, with 9 making an extra backline player.</p> <p><b>Attack - backs moves:</b> From scrums, the attacking team has more time and space to move the ball wider, thus reducing the chance that the opposition will block the move at outside centre.</p> <p>The defence either has to drift or go up and out. On a drift there will a gap inside the fly half, with the up and out there will be space outside the 13 or winger.</p>

	TECHNICAL	TACTICAL
		<p><b>Defence:</b> How do your back line and back row defend from scrums?</p> <p>Your flanker is now about 7 metres in front of your fly half, not 2 metres as before. This causes a bigger dogleg in the defensive line in the area where the flanker covers inside the fly half.</p> <p>When breaking from the scrum, the defensive flanker now either needs to slow down a little or cover across more, leaving the gap inside to be covered by your number 8, or the lock packing down on that side.</p>
<p>Identification of scrum half offside lines.</p> <p>The IRB has verified that the scrum half does not need to retreat 5m behind the hindmost feet if he is not in "close proximity" to the scrum.</p>	<p>No technical difference.</p>	<p>The scrum half can challenge for the ball or aim to get out into the back line, or track back.</p> <p>The scrum half is now by far the closest defending back to the attacking back line.</p> <p>Defending an openside on the left, the scrum half can go round to the other side of the scrum to get into the midfield.</p> <p>Defending an openside on the right, he can block the pass and then move into the midfield.</p>
<b>LAW 22 - CORNER POSTS</b>		
<p>The corner posts are no longer considered to be touch-in-goal except when the ball is grounded against the post.</p>	<p>Practise diving for the line to score tries. Players must get into the air and then dip forward.</p>	<p>No tactical difference.</p>

# Clarifications

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## Laws on tackling

A high tackle can be where a tackler's arm and shoulder starts at below shoulder height but ends up higher.

A spear tackle is where a player is being lifted off the ground and tipped horizontally and is then either forced or dropped to the ground.

## Laws on rucking

The end of the ruck.

1. A ruck ends successfully when the ball leaves the ruck or enters the in-goal area (on or over the goal line).
2. A ruck ends unsuccessfully when the ball becomes unplayable.
3. If a ruck has formed, AND the criteria for a successful or unsuccessful ruck have not been exhibited, then the ruck has not ended.

Therefore a team cannot disengage from a ruck to end a ruck.

No player is allowed to put their feet on the body of another player to move them out of the way.

## Laws on the ball going out of play

If a player has one foot on the line of touch or over it when receiving the ball from the opposition, then the ball is deemed to have gone into touch from the opposition. If the kick is outside the 22m area, then the lineout is in line with where the ball was kicked.

This is true of the ball being taken over the dead ball line, BUT the ball must be in motion when the receiver takes it.

## Laws on uncontested scrums

**This law depends on your national governing body rules.**

If a team loses a front row player through an injury, or a yellow or red card and there is no suitable front row replacement, so leading to uncontested scrums, then that team has to play with one less player for the rest of the game (or until the sin-binned player returns to the game).

## Laws on substitutions

At Under 19 level, a team can replace an injured player with a substituted player.