



# MATCH OFFICIAL TEAM

## COVID-19 Law variations 2020/2021 REFEREE PRE-MATCH BRIEF

(To be read in conjunction with the England Rugby MO Match Day Guidance)

Match Officials are empowered to ensure COVID measures are in place on the field of play only. This means adhering to and applying the revised law variations & sanctioning as prescribed. *It is solely the club's responsibility to manage & ensure it is compliant with central and local Government & RFU requirements.* Match officials can be re-assured that the RFU insurance policies are fully in place.

Match Officials can further support COVID measures through reinforcing the need for players to avoid on field team huddles and celebrations. Here are some guidelines for your player/coach briefing.



- We will be encouraging the ball carrier to make the ball available quickly, although not compelled
- The tackler(s) should not look to hold up a player and should also be bringing the ball carrier to ground
- Binding onto a player in possession of the ball by a team-mate is illegal. You should make sure that captains & coaches understand this
- **Risk of Penalty sanction**



- Replaced by a free kick against a "set" defence
- No quick taps from a scrum free kick. Must pass unless on the 5m goal lines
- We will be looking to give "advantage over" quickly following a knock on or forward pass, as we believe it more advantageous to play against a broken defence rather one that has had time to set
- **Quick tap allowed from FK other than a scrum awarded**



- Defending team must match numbers between 5 and 7 players
- Attacking team to be encouraged to give numbers asap
- The player winning the ball must either pass/release it immediately to another player, or leave the line out as soon as they land or drive through the lineout
- **Quick Throw has not been varied**

### Don't forget the other Laws – There are 17 which remain unchanged

- There is no change to the law relating to taking a penalty kick, which can be played immediately, and the kicker may run with the ball
- Referee foul play as before which includes yellow and red cards. These must be reported in the normal way
- Apply the World Rugby Decision Making High Tackle framework as before - [Guidelines Link](#)

### Other Refereeing considerations

- Preventative communication is critical. The use of terms 'use it' & 'release' need to be used early where players are likely to come into face to face contact
- Think about your positioning, referee the priorities, putting yourself in a good position to see offside players
- Above all we encourage players, coaches, and everyone to embrace "the spirit of the game" during these difficult times



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## COVID-19 Law Variations 2020/21 FACT SHEET

The principal changes are to:

1. Suspend Law 19 (other than the amended Law 19.1 below) in its entirety.
2. Suspend Law 16 in its entirety.

### **Law 16: The Maul is suspended in its entirety**

Players must not bind onto a team-mate who is in possession of the ball. *Sanction: Penalty kick.*

When one or more players come into contact with an opposing ball carrier and do not bring that player to ground, those players may attempt to gain possession of the ball if done immediately, but thereafter must not prevent the ball carrier from playing the ball. *Sanction: Penalty kick to the team in possession of the ball.*

No other player may join these players in contact. *Sanction: Penalty kick against arriving players.*

The ball carrier must play the ball immediately. *Sanction: Penalty kick to the team not in possession.*

### **Law 18 Lineout**

**18.11** – Forming a Lineout. The throwing team must, when forming the lineout, have a minimum of five players and maximum of seven players. *Sanction: Free-kick to the non-throwing team.*

**18.14** - Amend to - The non-throwing team must match the number of players in the lineout with the throwing team. *Sanction: Free-kick to the throwing team.*

The player winning the ball in the lineout must either pass the ball immediately, release it to a teammate or leave the lineout as soon as they land on the ground. *Sanction: Free-kick.*

**NB: Law 18.3 & 4 (quick throw) have not been varied.**

### **Law 19 Scrum**

**19.1** - Principle. Amend to Where the game would restart play with a scrum, is replaced with a Free-kick in all circumstances.

### **Law 5 Time**

**5.7 a:** Delete 'scrum'.

**5.7 b:** Amend to - The referee awards a Penalty or Free-kick, other than a Free-kick for which a scrum would have been awarded previously. (This will end the half or full-time.)

**5.9** - Irrespective of the weather conditions, the referee has the discretion to allow water breaks at any stage of the match.

### **Law 20 Penalty and Free-Kick**

**20.3** - Amend to - A team awarded a Penalty or Free-kick may not choose a scrum.

**20.4** – Amend to - A team awarded a Penalty or Free-kick at a lineout may instead choose another lineout at the same mark.

**20.11** - Amend to - Taking a Penalty or Free-Kick. The ball must be kicked a visible distance. If the kicker is holding it, it must clearly leave the hands. If it is on the ground, it must clearly leave the mark. At a free-kick, other than on either five-metre lines, once the kick has been taken legally, the kicker may not run with the ball. *Sanction: Free-kick.*

**NB: For the avoidance of doubt, there is no change to the law relating to taking a penalty kick, which can be played immediately, and the kicker may run with the ball.**