

WHY THE WHISTLE WANT (第9版 1973年)

スクラム 再読・考察

ラグビーをもっと楽しむためにスクラムのルールを学びましょう。

スクラムのルール理解が不十分なためにつまらないものになっています。残念ながら equal condition, open play, safety という基本理念から外れて力まかせのぶつかり合い、押し合いになっています。今日までルールの変更が何回もありましたが本質は変わっていません。本書は「Note on the Laws of RUGBY FOOTBALL」という副題に見られるようにルールを守るために必要なルール理解を深めることを目的としています。ルールを守るということはルール違反をしないということだけでなくルールが制定された意図が生きるようにルールに従ってプレーすることで、ルールの意図が生かされてこと初めてみんなでラグビーを楽しむことができるのです。スポーツは勝敗が全てではないのです。勝利至上主義の人には適用しないかもしれませんが非常に大切なことでルール制定の過程と目的を熟知し理解と納得をしてプレーすることはプレーヤーの責任なのです。Power と Flair を糧として進化し続けるラグビーを楽しむために Power と Flair のバランスを計りながらルールは改訂されるでしょう。本書はラグビー精神とルールの原理を元に「誤解されがち」なものや「なおざりにされている」ものを取り上げて理解の助けをしています。それでは本文に入りましょう。

スクラムの構成・組み方・etc

スクラムは基本的には両チームのフロントロー3人とその他の参加しているプレーヤーで構成されます。前の3人を柱立てとして先ず規定されていることに注目しましょう。

- (a) フロントローは3人でそれより多くても少なくてもいけません。フロントローはボールが入れられてから出るまで (all the time) 固く掴んで (bind) いなければいけません。bindの方法はフッカーの腕を外側の2人のフロントローの脇の上または下のどちらからに回し2人を腕またはその下の部分をしっかりと掴んでいなければなりません。頸まわりに手をまわしてはいけません。両側のフロントローは同様に内側の腕で掴まねばなりません。
- (b) フロントロー以外のスクラムに参加しているプレーヤーは皆少なくとも一方の腕と手を胴に回して組み合っていないければなりません。スクラムの中に入っても第2列・第3列に寄りかかっていりだけではスクラムに参加していることになりません(スクラムに参加しているかどうかは後で出てきますがオフサイドについては大変重要な問題になっています)。

組み方

どちらのチームもスクラムを組むのを棚上げ (held up) してはいけません。棚上げとはスクラムに参加するに遅れたプレーヤーに時間を稼ぐために指定ポイント以外の場所で組むなどして時間を稼ぐことを言います、

距離を隔てて戦車のように突進 (rush) して組んではいけません。痛いだけでなく危険です。

双方フロントローが組んだら遅滞なく (without delay) ボールをいれなくてはなりません。

スクラムはスローフォワード、ノックオン、その他の原因で組むことになり、原因が起こった時点で組みます。

ボールが入れられる前に押して (by shoving) 地域を稼ぐことはできません。もしそうなったらレフリーはスクラム自体の元の場所に戻します。そしてボールが入る前にスクラムは停止しているかどうか見届けます。その場合レフリーの領で後にさげられているFWがさがっている最中にボールを入れられたら非常に不利になることを心に留めて著しく公平を欠くことのないようにしなければなりません。

相手を押すことによってスクラムは一方が指定地点を超えて組むこと言うことが絶対にあってはならないのです。なおこの場合も押すは shove (温く屈げていた膝を伸ばすようにする一押し) であって push ではないのです。

ボールイン

最初に基礎理念をそれから基本的ルールを充足するものと2段構成になっています。

基礎理念は両チームは fair, equal condition の理念に基づきスクラムでボールを獲得するのはボールを入れる側と相手側は通常公平なチャンスを持つ。

基本ルールは

- A. ボールは両フロントローの中央 (midway) に入らなければならない。
- B. 両チームはボールが入ってくるのを見ることが可能である。両チームはボールが入ってくる (when it is coming) が知りことが可能でなければならない。
両チームは見える状況でなければならないし見て行動しなければならないのです。
- C. ボールは常識的に道理に合った速さ (reasonable way) で入れられなければならない。常識的の道理に合ったとは速度 19 マイルでなく、地面をほう (いつ地面に落ちる分らない) ようなゆるい速度でなくということ。
ルールに使われるようになった moderate (中庸に) は速くもなく遅くもない中間ということです。
- D. ボールはスクラムの道理に合った位置 (reasonable distance) に入れられること。
reasonable distance とはボールを取り合うために双方が fair chance を持つことができるという目的に見合う位置です。

充足ルール

上の A~D のルールが保証されるために独特の(a)~(d)が充足されています。

- (a) スクラムは真っ直ぐ (square) に組まなければならない。square の方形のフィールドで square 方形に組む即ち真っ直ぐにです。
square は真っ直ぐ (ゴールラインに直角に) という前に四角に固く組むことを求められています。ボールは両フロントローの中央に即ち両フロントローの肩の線に平行に投げられなくてははいけません。
- (b) 投入者は 1 ヤード離れ、スクラムに真っ直ぐに面し、両フロントローのトンネルの中央線上に立ち、両手で、膝と踵の中中間で水平にボールを持ち、単動作 (反動をつけない、途中で止まらない) で入れる。
- (c) ボールは速いスピード (at a quick speed) で投げ入れねばならない。a quick speed は先の reasonable way で説明されています。
- (d) ボールは一番近いフロントローを超えた地点で最初に (immediately) 地面に着かねばならない。途中誰もそれを止めてはならない (途中誰かの足に当たれば反則)。
両チームのフロントローはスクラムを組む時、自分の対面の相手と真正面に向かい合うことなく、左右両手の 3 本の指を交互に組む時のように少しずつうまく頭が入るように組まねばなりません。
その時頭を自由にできるフロントローが両チーム 1 人ずつできます。
スクラムハーフはボールを入れる時このルーズヘッド (loose head) の側からボールを入れるでしょう。何故ならこのフロントローの方から相手より少しハーフに近いからです。それをルール(d)をもって証明すればボールが丁度このルーズヘッドを越えたばかりの地面につかねばならないのです (その人は equal condition の元で一番早くフッキング出来る人です)。

フッキング

スクラムが正しく固く組まれた両チームがスクラムからボールを獲得する平等なチャンスを保証するための第 1 は正しくボールが入られることであり、第 2 は正しくフッキングされることです。正しく入れられたボールは妨害されず、トンネルを素通りせず、正しくフッキングされることが保証されねばなりません。

①はっきりしたトンネルが形成されている

フロントローの足はボールがやってくるまでじっとしていなければなりません。ボールが一番近いフロントローを超える地点に触れるまで足を上げたり、前へ押ししたりしてはいけません。

(no must be raised or push forward) 足を上げること前へ押すことが禁じられています。スクラムは押し合うものであるという概念が横行しています。フロントロー以外のプレーヤーもトンネルの中にあるボールを妨害してはいけません。正しく入ったら次は出てくるまでのこ

とになります。

ボールが地面に触れて正しく入ったらフロントローはどちらの足でフック（足でかく）してもよい。スクラムの中の他のプレーヤーもトンネルから後ろへきたらフックしてもよい。ボールがトンネルの両端から出る以外はどんな通路を通ってもよい。今日のプレーヤーはスクラムのボール投入やボール出しに関してルールの混乱を言う人はいません。この問題を解く図も今日では誰も必要にしています。

スクラムが潰れたり、クチャグチャになったりすることを防ぐために決められたルールがあります。それはラックにも言えるものですがここで取り上げましょう。先ず次のスクラムについての特別の一组のルールがあります。

フロントローのどのプレーヤーも両足を同時に地面から上げてはいけないということです。ということはフッカーが時計の振子のようにぶら下がって足を振るのはいけないのです。

ボールが入ってきた時、誰でも故意にボールをトンネルから出してはいけません。

そして最後にもう一つ、ボールが正しく入り正しく出たら一旦出してきたボールをスクラムへ戻してはいけません。違法です。

問 スクラムにボールを入れるのはどちらのチームですか

答 反則またはスクラムになった原因に責任ない方のチーム、反則がなかったが倒れたチームの重なりの下にボールがあってプレーできない時等ゲーム停止の責任がどちらとも決められない時はレフリーはスクラムが行われる地点が自陣側にあるチーム（即ち防御側）にボールを入れる権利を与える。レフリーは常にどちらのチームが責任があるか決めるのに最善をつくすでしょう。

問 レフリーは誰が原因となるようなことをしたか決定できない時、攻撃側チームにボールを与えるようなことがありますか

答 ありますが、というのはインゴールで起こったことについて考えることになりますのでその時に取扱います（待てないというのであれば 38, 39, 40 ページを読んで下さい）。

問 いつでも反則またはその他の出来事があったその場所でスクラムを組むのですか

答 通常はそうです。しかしその地点が非常にタッチラインに近い時はスクラムを組む全員がフィールドオブプレーにいるようにまたゴールラインにごく近い時は防御側チームのフロントローが全員ゴールラインを越えてフィールドオブプレーにいるように point を移して組むこととなります。

スクラムとラック 一般ルール

スクラムと同様にラックに適用される一般のルールがあります。

ボールが地面にあり、数人のプレーヤーが集まりボールをかき出そう (heelout, leave) とするラック（昔は loose scrum と呼ばれていた）に関するルールの主な目的はスクラムやラックが進展する望みにないプレーヤーの山積み状態に陥ることを防ぐことです。

どうしたらよいのでしょうか。困ったものです。ボールがスクラムまたはラックの中にある間にトライやタッチダウンをする時以外手で扱ったら拾い上げたりしてはいけないのです。膝の間にボールを挟むこともいけません。ボールを足でプレーしなければならないのです。スクラムやラックを崩す原因になるようなことをしてはいけません。集団の上に飛び乗ってはいけません。ボールが中にある間に意図的に倒れこんだり膝をついてはいけません。もしプレーヤーが地面に横たわっているならばいかなるやり方でもボールを邪魔してはいけません。そしてボールが転退するようにベストをつくさなければなりません。動かない障害物の一種になっていることは全くよくないことです。スクラムやラックから一旦ボールが出たら再び戻してはいけません。off-side Rules 等以下の項目についてはルール改訂による根本的な書き換えが必要ですので別項とします。

後記

球技でボールを捕り合う形は色々あります。ラグビーでのスクラムは形と動きに永く歴史と興味深い特徴があります。ラグビーの面白さの一つであるスクラムを十分理解することがラグビーの楽しみ方に欠かすことができません。ボールをフックして捕ることよりもぶつかり合いと押し合いに終始している現状は残念なことです。温故知新原点から見直す必要があります。

THE HISTORY OF THE LAWS OF RUGBY FOOTBALL, Law II Definitions, Scrummage を元に定型的なスクラムのルールがまとめられ、Law XV に広くボールの捕り合う組み方という Scrummage がまとめられています。Law II Scrummage を①場所、②人数、③投入という3種に分類して考察してみました。

年代	項目 ① 場所 ② 人数 ③ 投入	内容	英文
1892	① ②	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・フィールドの中だけ ・複数人 (be ball is put down between players) ・プレーヤーの集団に put down される 	Although there were particulars re Scrummage in the early days, they all came in the Law ; it was not until 1892 that a definition was introduced which read : “ A scrummage, which can only take place in the field of play, is when the ball is put down between players who have a closed round on their respective sides.”
1905	②	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・双方1人またはそれ以上 (one or more players) は集まって準備している (closing up in readiness) ・プレーヤー達の間でボールが put on される 	1905. This was changed to “ A scrummage, which can only take place in the field of play, is formed by one or more players from each side closing round the ball when it is on the ground, or by their closing up in readiness to allow the ball to be put on the ground between them.”
1911	③	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・レフリーが命じる (he may choose) ・プレーヤーはボールが公平に入れるように予防措置をする (a) FW 第1列の足の線を越えて片足を移動する (b) どちらかの足にボールを put into するようにフォローする 	1911. The following notes were added to the definition : “ The Referee may order the ball to be put into the scrummage from either side he may choose. ” “ A player shall be considered as wilfully preventing a ball being fairly put into a scrummage if before the ball is fairly in (a) he moves either of his feet beyond the front line of his forwards ; (b) follows the ball into the scrummage with either foot. ”
1922	②	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・FW1列は3人以下とする 	1922. Two more notes were added : “ The attention of Referees is specially drawn to the necessity of rigidly and immediately enforcing the penalty incurred. ” “ It shall be illegal for more than three players from either side to form up or become part of the front row of a scrummage. ”

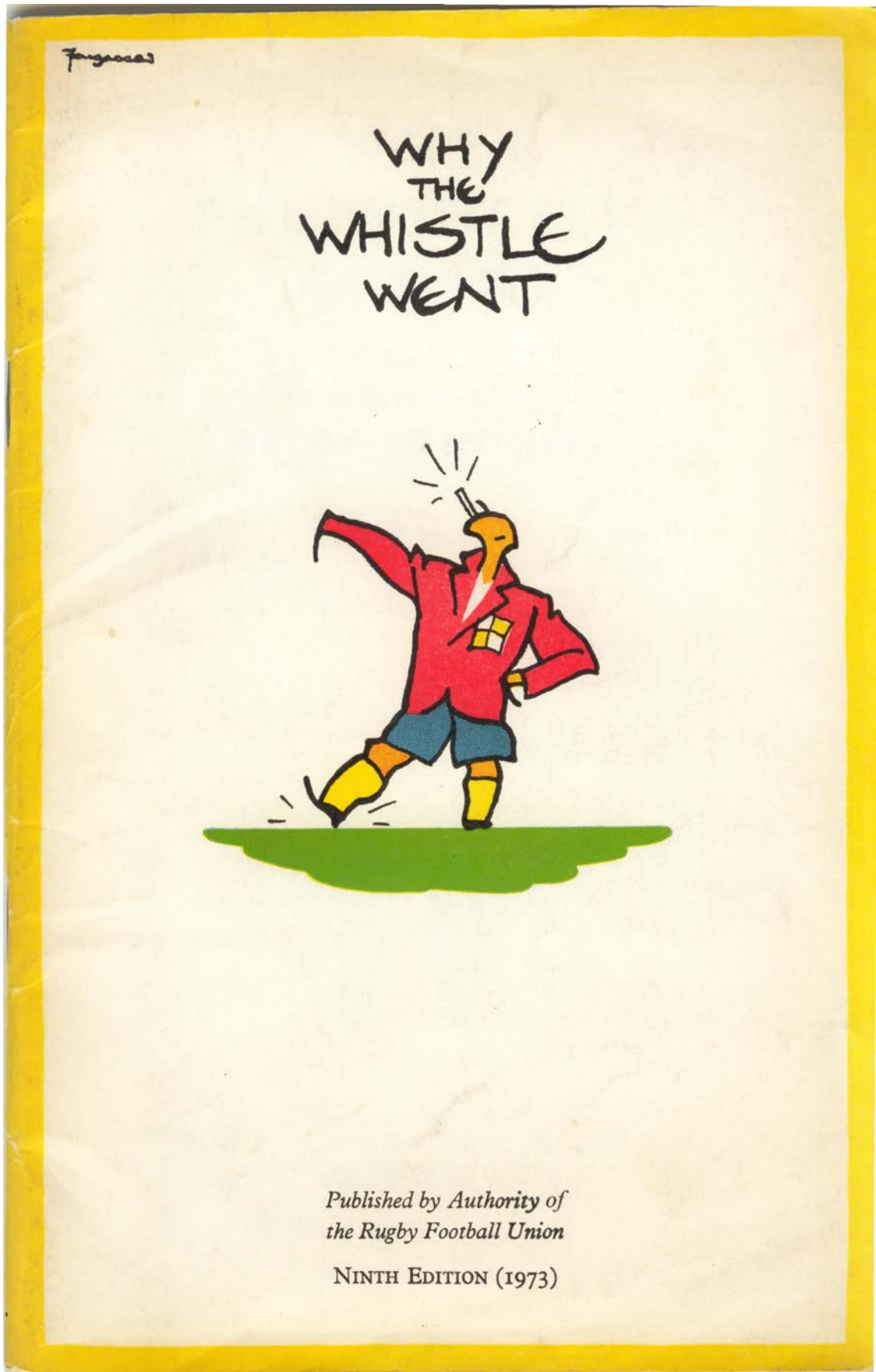
年代	項目 ④ 場所 ⑤ 人数 ⑥ 投入	内容	英文
1925	③	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・レフリーは stop の責任の無い側が投入ができる ・どちらか責任がない場合、防御側が入れる 	1925. The definition read : “ A scrummage, which can only take place in the field of play, is formed by one or more players from each side closing round the ball when it is on the ground, or by their closing up in readiness to allow the ball to be put on the ground between them. ” Note.-- In all cases when the Referee orders a scrummage, the Referee shall award to the team which is not responsible for the stoppage in the game, the right of putting the ball into the scrummage on either side. In case of doubt, the referee shall award such right to the side which is territorially on the defensive. A player shall be considered as wilfully preventing a ball being fairly put into a scrummage, if, before the ball is fairly in the scrummage, he moves either of his feet beyond the front line of his forwards. The attention of referees is specially drawn to the necessity of rigidly and immediately imposing the penalty incurred. It is illegal for more than three players on each side to form the front row of their forwards before the ball is put into the scrummage. The ball is not fairly in the scrummage until it has passed a player on each side. ”
	②	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・one or more players で組まれるがボールを入れられる前に 4 人以上になってはいけない 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・ボールがパスされてしまう前でスクラムの中でボールがどうなるかわからない (not fairly in the scrummage) 	

最後の項目（ボールがパスされてしまう前でスクラムの中でボールがどうなるかわからない (not fairly in the scrummage)）はスクラムの原点を示しています。スクラムの本質を述べています。正しく入り正しくふつとされる限り正に足によるボールの取り合いです。勝負をつけるぶつかり合い、押し合いであってはいけないしボールを入れる前に前に出してはいけないのです。時間を浪費することなく open play への道筋をつけることが大切です

ボールが入れられる前にポイントより前に出ることをオフサイドのように反則をとれば無用の押しは無くなるのです。それからラックのところに述べられていることを思い出してください。飛び上がってはいけません。倒れ込んではいけません。膝をついてはいけません。地面に横たわってボールの邪魔をしてはいけません。

ボールから転退しなくてはなりません。動かない障害物の一種になってはいけません。レフリーが反則としてとらなかったまたはとらないのをよいことにして仕方なかったようなふりをして色々なよくないことをするのをやめなくてはなりません

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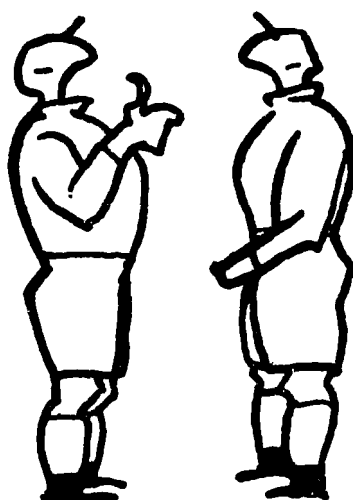
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WHY THE WHISTLE WENT

Notes on the Laws of
RUGBY FOOTBALL

By H. F. ELLIS

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FOREWORD

The object of this booklet is to explain the Laws of the Game as simply as possible, and to give the *reason* for them wherever that may not be obvious. The official Handbook cannot go into all the whys and wherefores, and it is sometimes helpful for a beginner to understand what lies behind this or that provision or prohibition. Understanding also inclines, or should incline, a player to observe the Laws. They were made, and are from time to time amended, to ensure that everyone has an enjoyable game—a game that "flows", as they say—and deliberately to break any one of them is really neither more nor less than an attempt to destroy the pleasure of some thirty people, or some thirty thousand if the ground is full.

This Ninth Edition covers all changes in the Laws approved by the International Board up to the beginning of the 1973-74 Season and has been made necessary by the important amend-ments agreed in March 1973. These principally affect the line-out and the nature of a knock-on. They also debar a scrum-half from kicking the ball while it is in a scrum, confirm the increase from three points to four for a try, and authorise some additional strips of whitewash on the field-of-play to indicate the new 15-yard limit of a line-out.

It is perhaps worth repeating that the booklet does not include *all* the Laws, nor all possible interpretations and misinterpreta-tions of them. It is intended, and should suffice as a guide, for ordinary players—and even for those few spectators willing to admit that their knowledge of the Laws is imperfect. For referees there is no short cut to a word-by-word study of the official Handbook and the "Notes for Guidance".



1. SCRUM, RUCK AND MAUL

This chapter deals with the Laws that control those vigorous tussles between forwards (other than the line-out) wherein each side struggles to get, or keep, "possession", namely :

Scrum. This is the set formation in which forwards pack down with a tunnel between them into which a scrum-half puts the ball. It is the means by which play is normally restarted after the referee has blown his whistle for some minor infringement or check (other than "touch"), and it can only take place in the "field-of-play"-which is defined as the space bounded by, but not including, the goal lines and touch lines.

Ruck. A ruck occurs when the ball is lying on the ground and one or more players on each side gather round and try to force it through or heel it back *with their feet*. It resembles a scrum, in its more disorderly way, and shares some of the same rules.

Maul. A maul is formed when one or more players from each side close round a player *who is carrying the ball*. The struggle here is, on the one side, to retain and exploit possession; on the other, to dispossess the man with the ball or to tackle him and thus force him to release the ball-in which case, with the ball now on the ground, the maul will automatically become a ruck.

We deal first with the rules peculiar to scrums, then take those that govern scrum and ruck alike, and finally tackle the slightly different off-side rules for mauls.

Getting Down in the Scrum

The Laws do not say a great deal about the actual composition of a scrum, but what they do say is definite:

(a) There must at all times be no more and no less than three men in the front row, and these three must bind firmly together while the ball is being put into the scrum and until it comes out again. The hooker may have his arms either under or over the arms of the outside men (or "props"), but in either case he must grip these two men firmly round the body at or below the level of the armpits-*not* round their necks. And they must bind on to him, with their inner arms, in the same way.

The outside arm of the near prop of the team putting the ball in must be inside that of his opposite number.

(b) All other players in the scrum must bind with at least one hand and arm around the body of another member of their own side. People can't just go and lean on the second or third row and thereby claim to be "in the scrum". (Whether a man is, or is not, "in the scrum" is a very important point, as we shall see later on when we tackle Off-side.)

Neither team must hold up the formation of a scrum (e.g., by forming up in the wrong place, to give latecomers time to join the scrum), nor must the front row form up at a distance from their opponents and rush at them like a battering ram-a painful and even dangerous practice. And when the two front rows have come together, the ball must be put in without delay.

A scrum must take place where the incident-forward pass, knock-on, or whatever it was-that caused it occurred. A pack is not entitled to gain ground by shoving *before* the ball is put in. If it does so, the referee will make the whole scrum shuffle back to the original place; and he will see to it, what's more, that the whole concern is stationary again before he allows the ball to be put in. A pack that has been made to move backwards is at a serious disadvantage if the ball arrives while it is still retreating according to orders.

Getting the Ball In

It is obvious that if both teams are to have a reasonably fair chance of getting the ball from a scrum :-

(a) it must be put in midway between the two front rows,

(b) both sides must be able to see it coming, and know *when* it is coming,

(c) it must arrive in a reasonable way-not going at ninety miles an hour, nor trickling along the ground,

(d) it must get a reasonable distance into the scrum.

Special rules have had to be devised to make sure that all the conditions from (a) to (d) above are observed. Here they are:-

(a) The scrum must be as square as possible with the field of play, and the ball must be thrown in midway between, and along a line parallel to, the two front rows.

(b) The ball must be thrown from a distance of one yard from the scrum, and the scrum-half must hold it in both hands at a level midway between knee and ankle and propel it with a single forward movement (i.e. no back-swing and no check-ing). He must also be square with the scrum, i.e. he must stand on the line of the middle of the tunnel formed by the two front rows.

(c) It must be thrown in "at a quick speed" (i.e. with a brisk movement rather than a sluggish one).

(d) It must first touch the ground immediately beyond the front-row man nearest to the scrum-half, and *nobody must stop it doing so*. (When two front rows form down, each man is not directly opposite his "opposite number". They have to fit their heads in somehow and, as you will see if you interlace three knuckles of each hand, there will be one man in each front row who has his head free.

Your scrum-half, when your team is putting the ball in, will choose to put it in on his "loose-head" side-because, of course, each of your front-row men will then be that little bit nearer to him than their opposite numbers.

So another way of expressing this (d) rule would be to say that the ball must bounce just beyond the loose-head man.)



Hooking

With the ball fairly on its way into the scrum, it only remains to ensure that it gets in without obstruction, does not come straight out again, and is fairly hooked. So the Laws say:-

There must be a clear "tunnel"; i.e. the feet of the front row must be so placed before the ball arrives as to leave a freeway for it, and must stay so placed until it is well in. In fact, no front-row foot must be raised or pushed forward until the ball has touched the ground beyond the nearest front-row man. And no player not in the front row must interfere with the ball while it is still in the tunnel.

Now to get the ball fairly out again Once it has touched the ground and is fairly in, any front-row man may hook with either foot. So may the other players in the scrum as soon as the ball has come back out of the actual tunnel.

Any route out of the scrum is legal, other than via either end of the tunnel.

No modern player need complain too much about the "complication" of the laws about getting the ball into the scrum and out again. Within the memory of man this booklet had no less than five specially drawn diagrams to illuminate the business.

We now, it will be observed, need none.

There are one or two rules, designed to prevent a scrum from collapsing or getting snarled up, that apply to rucks as well.

Those we shall come to in a moment. But there are a couple of special ones for scrums only that must be mentioned now:

No player in the front row may lift both feet off the ground simultaneously, i.e. no swinging about like a pendulum by the hooker.

No one must deliberately kick the ball out of the tunnel in the direction whence it came.

Lastly, having got the ball fairly in and fairly out again, *keep it out*. It is illegal for anyone to return the ball into the scrum after it has come out.

Q. Which side puts the ball into a set scrum?

A. The side not responsible for the infringement or the stoppage that caused the scrum. When there has been no infringement and the referee can't decide which team was responsible for the "stoppage" (e.g. when the ball has become unplayable under a heap of players), he will give the ball to the team that was moving forward before the stoppage or, failing that, to the team in whose half of the ground the scrum is to take place (i.e. the "defenders"). But he will always do his best to decide which team was responsible-i.e. whose action led up to the stoppage. Falling on the ball might be such an action.

Q. Aren't there any occasions when the referee, unable to decide who did what, gives the ball to the *attacking* side?

A. Well, yes, there are. But we will deal with those when we come to consider what happens in In-goal. (See pages 29 and 30, if you can't wait.)

Q. Is a scrum *always* held just where the infringement or other incident occurred?

A. Normally, yes. But when the "mark" is too near a touch line, the whole scrum should be in the field-of-play; and when close to a goal line the whole front row of the defending scrum must be beyond that line, in the field-of-play.

Scrum and Ruck-General Rules

We now come to a set of rules that apply to rucks as well as to scrums-the ruck, remember, being a hearty consortium of players around a ball lying on the ground (once called a "loose scrum" by your grandfathers). The main purpose of these rules is to prevent scrum or ruck from degenerating into a hope-less heap of bodies. Here they are. The moment a ball is in scrum or ruck it must not be handled or picked up (except when attempting to score a try or make a touch-down, *see* page 39) or gripped between the knees; it must be played with die feet. It is foul play to do anything to cause a scrum or ruck to collapse or to jump on top of other players in a ruck. Nor is a player allowed to fall or kneel intentionally while

the ball is in, nor, if he *does* find himself lying on the ground, may he interfere with the ball in any way—he must, in fact, do his best to roll away from it; it isn't good enough to remain there acting as a sort of inert stumbling-block. And once the ball has come out of scrum or ruck, it must not be sent in again.



Offside Rules for Scrums and Rucks

Off-side is an important subject and has a chapter to itself later on. You will see, when we come to it, that in open play, as opposed to scrums and rucks (and line-outs), the secret of keeping on-side when your team is in possession is to stay behind the man with the ball. At scrums and rucks there *is* no "man with the ball", in quite the same sense; and for this reason, among others, the Laws are different. We may as well, while we are on the subject, find out how to keep on-side while a scrum or ruck is going on—whether involved in it or not.

First, draw an imaginary line parallel to the goal lines, through the hindmost foot of the players in your own scrum or ruck, and label it "the off-side line".

Second, remember that when the word "behind" is used with reference to off-side it means that *both* feet must be nearer your own goal line than the imaginary line, ball, or whatever else it is you are told to keep behind.

Now we are ready to make some pronouncements :

Players Taking Part in a Scrum or Ruck

This is easy. So long as you don't try to enter a scrum or ruck from your opponents' side, you can't be off-side while the ball is still in—and while *you* are still in. To establish the fact that you are in the scrum or the ruck you must bind on to one of your own men with at least one arm.

Problems only arise when you leave the party. But before con-sidering them, we had better legislate for :

Players Not Taking Part in a Scrum or Ruck

Players who do *not* join a scrum or ruck must at once retire behind, and stay behind, the off-side line, until the ball comes out.

This is easy, too, except that in the case of scrummages an exception has to be made of the scrum-half, so that he can perform his duties properly. The rule for a scrum-half is that he must keep both feet behind the ball, while it is in the scrum.

Q. Can a scrum-half in any circumstances help the ball out of a scrum with his foot?

A. No.

Leaving the Scrum or Ruck

Players in a scrum or ruck, as we have seen, are necessarily in front of their own off-side line and are only on-side as long as they are in there and binding. When can they legally leave it?

The answer to this is that a player behind the ball may leave a scrum or ruck at any time provided he immediately retires behind the off-side line and takes no part in the play until he is behind it. Thus a No. 8, packing in the third row, will normally be on-side immediately he leaves the scrum, because by leaving it he automatically shifts the off-side line, so to speak, forward to the hindmost foot of the second row. So he can get up and act as a scrum-half when the ball emerges, or dribble it away. If it does not emerge he can pack down again, provided he does so behind the ball.

And note that a player taking part in a "wheel" can leave the scrum and continue to play the ball providing he keeps

behind the ball.

In a ruck, a player can unbind and rejoin the ruck elsewhere (in a position, perhaps, where he can shove more efficiently), provided he does so at once and without advancing.



Leaving the scrum

Hard-luck Story

- Q. The scrum formed so quickly, and I was so far away, that I couldn't get back behind the off-side line in time. Is it fair that I should be given off-side?
- A. No. Nor will you be, provided you try to get on-side as quickly as you can. The referee is only concerned to see that you don't loiter about off-side and, in particular, that you take no part in the game while you *are* off-side.
- Q. I accidentally over-ran the off-side line, thinking the ball was just about to come out of the scrum on their side, but it didn't. So I got back behind the line - Yet I was penalised. Wasn't that a scandal?
- A. No. This is the kind of "accident" that can be avoided. In no circumstances should the offence be overlooked if you get yourself off-side by moving forward while the ball is in a scrum-whether by crossing the off-side line or (if a scrum-half) by putting a foot in front of the ball.

The Maul

A note on the kind of vigorous assembly known as a "maul" comes in conveniently here, since it has a good deal in common with a ruck. A maul is formed when one or more players from each team close round a player *who is carrying the ball*. Here again, as at scrummage and ruck, an imaginary "off-side line" is drawn through the hindmost foot of the player's team, and the rules governing off-side at mauls are as follows :

- (a) Players in the maul are on-side anyway;
- (b) A player *joining* the maul is off-side if he joins it from his opponents' side ;
- (c) A player *leaving* the maul is off-side if he does not at once rejoin it behind the ball or retire behind the off-side line;
- (d) Players *not* in the maul are off-side if they fail to retire without delay behind the off-side line, or if they advance either foot beyond that line without joining the maul.
- Q. What exactly is meant by being "in" a maul, since there is no compulsory binding as there is in a ruck?
- A. The Law (22) requires "physical contact", which means being "caught in or bound to the maul, and not merely alongside it". Since a maul often develops at a line-out, we shall meet it again in the next Chapter. For the time being, the only additional point to make is that it is illegal in the maul-as in the ruck-to jump on top of other players.

If all these rules seem to the beginner a bit numerous and fussy, they are none the less necessary. Scrum, ruck and maul are the heart and backbone of the game-a heritage from the early days when twenty or more played on each side and almost everyone was a forward. But they had to be fairly strictly controlled-to bring some order and method into the business, to avoid injury, and to ensure that these shoving and wrestling matches do not go on for ever.



. . . almost everyone was a forward . . .

2. THE LINE-OUT

There are fewer line-outs than there used to be before the Law about kicking into touch outside your own twenty-five (*see* next page) was introduced. Still, the line-out remains second only in importance to scrums. The object of a line-out, of course, is to get the ball back into play after it has gone into touch-and to get it back in such a way that both sides have a fair chance of gaining possession (with a slight bias in favour of the side throwing in), and that there is a reasonable hope of the game developing into some-thing interesting rather than just a confused maul. We shall have to see how the Laws set about achieving these aims, and we shall do it step-by-step. First, we shall talk about Touch itself. Then we shall deal with Throwing-in, including the "quick throw", when no real line-out exists. After that we shall have to *define* a line-out, both in space and time, and then go on to ask what may and may not be done by various players-those in the line-out, those not in it, and a couple of absurdities who are not quite one thing or the other-and at this final stage we shall have to make a distinction between the three or four progressive phases of line-out play.

Where is Touch?

Here are some very simple things about Touch :-
The touch line is in touch-all of it.

If any part of you is in touch (if some part of you is *touching the line*, that is, or the ground beyond it) and you are *holding* the ball, then the ball is "in touch" too-even if it isn't.

If you are partly in touch and the ball is still in the field of play, you can play it *with your foot*. That is, you can dribble the whole length of the field, if you like, with your left foot in touch and your right foot doing the dribbling the other side of the line; not an easy thing to do, perhaps, but legal. You can also play the ball with your hand while your feet are in touch, always provided you don't pick it up or hold it. And you can catch a ball that has gone over the touch line, as long as you are yourself within the field-of-play.

You can kick or dribble the ball into touch, or run or step into touch with it, if nothing more useful occurs to you at the time.

But you must not *deliberately* knock or throw it over the touch line.



. . . *not easy but legal* . . .

Throwing In

Obviously the side that didn't put the ball into touch should have the right to throw it back into play, and that is the rule. The ball is thrown in by an opponent of the last player to touch it before it went out-which includes, of course, the player who carries it out in his hands. If the touch judge can't decide whose throw-in it is, and the referee doesn't know either, he (the referee) gives the throw-in to the team in whose half of the ground the ball went into touch. The ball is thrown in at the place where it crossed the touch line, *unless* it does so full-pitch from a kick (other than a penalty) made from any point outside the kicker's own "twenty-five". In this latter case the throw-in is made opposite the place where the ball was kicked. The man throwing the ball in has one or two small points to keep in mind :-

- (1) He must not put either foot into the field-of-play.
- (2) He must throw the ball in straight; that is, at right angles to the bit of touch line he is standing behind so that it travels along the "line-of-touch" {see page 13} between the two files of players in the line-out.
- (3) He must throw the ball so that it comes down (whether into somebody's hands or on to the ground) at least five yards from the touch line.
- (4) He may throw one-handed, two-handed, under-arm, over- arm, with a bowling action or a putt, fast, slow, high, low, short or far-just so long as it carries five yards and is straight.

Q. What happens if the throw is not straight, or fails to carry five yards?

A. Well, if the error benefits the other team, the referee will use the Advantage Rule (Chapter 9) and let play continue. Otherwise, the non-offending side have the choice of trying a throw-in themselves or taking a scrum.

Q. In that case, can each side keep on throwing in, in turn, until somebody gets it right?

A. No. After a second bad throw the referee orders a scrum-which is formed fifteen yards from the touch line. The side that first threw in puts the ball in.

Q. Suppose a kick taken outside the kicker's own 25-yard line is so bad that it goes full-pitch into touch nearer his own goal line, what then?

A. In that case the throw-in is taken at the place where the ball crossed the touch line.

A Quick Throw

A point to remember is that there is no need to delay a throw-in until all the players on both sides have ranged themselves in readiness for it. A quick throw-in to a single man is perfectly legal. Indeed, the thrower-in may run into the field-of-play and catch the ball himself-always provided he threw it from the right spot, straight, and five yards. (A further pretty point is that the ball used for a quick throw-in must be the same one that just went into touch, and must not have been handed to the thrower by some over-keen spectator.)

But if a quick throw-in of this kind is not taken-and it seldom, in practice, is-then we have an official line-out, and all the rules for a line-out, which are strict, necessary, and at first sight a little tricky, come into force. We now boldly face them.

The Line-out-General Principles

Anybody who has seen a line-out actually happening knows that it is likely, or anyway ought, to develop in one of two ways. Either the forwards keep the ball after it has been caught and play it themselves-by breaking away with the ball at their feet or in their hands, or by forming a ruck or maul round it-*or* they get it out to their backs.

To bring some order and method into the business of jumping for and catching the ball, it is necessary to keep the two sets of forwards in clearly separated lines until the ball arrives.

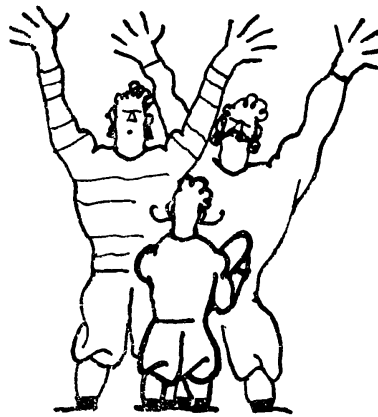
To prevent an indiscriminate tussle, if the forwards decide to keep the ball, it is necessary to control what they may do while struggling for possession, striving to break away, etc.

To give the backs room to move, if the ball is sent out to them, it is necessary to limit the length of the line-out-and to keep a good clear space at the start between the two lines of backs.

For the first and last of these three requirements, we draw (as we did when discussing scrums) a couple of imaginary lines. A line at right angles to the touch line, from the spot at which the ball is thrown in, is called the "line-of-touch". A line parallel to the line-of-touch and ten yards behind it (there are two such lines naturally-one for each team) is called the "off-side line".

And we add a real line, marked out at intervals, fifteen yards infield from touch.

For the second requirement, i.e. to prevent an indiscriminate tussle, "lines" are not the whole answer. Control in this case is exercised, first by rules relating to the position of the *ball*, and only later, if a maul or ruck develops, by imaginary lines.



. . . in clearly separated lines . . .

The Line-out-Definitions

The first thing to get clear about a line-out is *what it is*. Special rules (off-side Laws actually) apply when a line-out is in progress (as with scrummages), and these rules affect very differently those *in* the line-out and those not. So we need to know exactly who is in it and who isn't, and we must also know when a line-out starts and when it finishes. Having got those points straight, we shall be able to go ahead and describe just what may and may not be done by the "in" players, the "out" players, and by a couple of characters on each side who live in a kind of twilight world, neither altogether in nor altogether out.

A line-out is formed by players (not less than two from each side) forming up in two parallel single files on either side of the line-of-touch. It starts five yards from the touch line, and it ends wherever the last in line of the team having the throw-in (Team A) elects to stand-which must be not more than fifteen yards from the touch line.

A line-out *begins*, in time, when the ball leaves the hands of the thrower-in. It *ends* when the ball has been passed or knocked back or is thrown beyond the furthest player in the line. It also ends, of course, when a player breaks away from the line with the ball in his hands or at his feet. It does *not* end with the formation of a ruck or maul, until *all* the players taking part have moved away from the line-of-touch.

Players in the Line-out

A line-out has at least three different phases, often four, and the laws governing what a player may or may not do vary from phase to phase. So we will tackle them in order, as they come, dealing first with the "forming up" period, before the ball is thrown, then with the critical time while the ball is in the air, then with the procedure after it has touched a player (or the ground), and finally with the special laws that apply when a line-out develops into a ruck or maul.

(1) Forming Up

We know something about this already. Single, parallel files of limited length. But there is more to it than this. A line-out is not meant to resemble a jostling bus-queue. So-

(a) Nobody in either team in the line-out must stand nearer than five yards or further than fifteen yards from the touch line.

Nobody in Team B (the non-thrower's) must stand further back than the rear man in Team A.

(b) Each man in the line-out must stand at least one yard from the next player of his own team in the line. (He can leave a gap of more than a yard if he likes, but the rear man in the line must be within "a reasonable distance" of the last-but- one-unless the ball is to be thrown to him directly.)

(c) There must be a clear space of two feet between the two files.

So there we are, with two nicely spaced out lines waiting for the ball to be thrown to them. The line-out may be, within the limits laid down, either a short one or a long one-at the choice of Team A, who can shorten it by reducing the number of players taking part, or lengthen it according to the position taken up by their back-marker. It can not be a short line in the old "bunched up" way that was permissible before the introduction of the one-yard rule at (b) above.

(2) While the ball is in the air

We now have to consider the situation during the brief second or two *after* the ball has left the hands of the thrower-in and before it touches a player or the ground. Who can do what? And to what extent, if any, do our (a), (b) and (c) rules still apply?

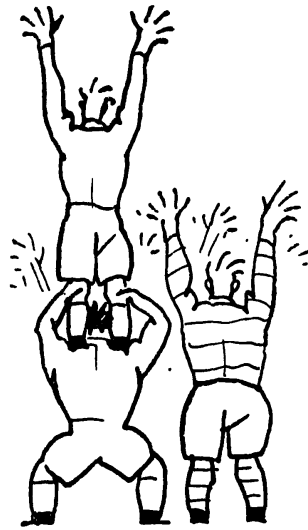
(a) The *length* of the line-out remains limited as before, except that (i) a player at the front of the line-out may move into the space between touch and the five-yards mark after the ball has been thrown beyond him, and (ii) players of Team A may run back beyond the position of their "furthest man" for the sole purpose of catching a long throw-in (and, if they do so, players of Team B may follow them). Always remembering that Team A will be penalised if the ball is not thrown to or beyond the last player in their line-out.

(b) The one-yard rule still applies unless a player is actually jumping for the ball or is "peeling off". To peel off means to run down the line, parallel with and close to it, with the object of receiving the ball from another member of your team in the line-out. It does not mean that a player can nip back into line and try to catch the ball himself.

(c) The rule about keeping a clear two-foot space between the lines no longer applies once the ball has left the thrower-in's hands, but you must still stay on your own side of the line-of-touch unless actually jumping for the ball.

(d) It is untidy to have to add a (d) here, but the fact is that, with the clear-space rule no longer in force, some prohibitions of a different kind become necessary. While the ball is on its way through the air and the two files are closing on the line-of-touch, ready for the jump, there is a temptation to try to butt the other fellow away or to elbow him down as you jump.

This must be resisted. It comes under the heading of obstruction. Nor must you hold or bind with a player of *either* team, because that forms an obstructive "wall"; and in particular, when you are jumping for the ball, you must not use another man as a kind of prop to increase the height of your leap. And, finally, it is all too easy to grab an opponent the instant *before* he catches the ball, instead of the instant *after*. This temptation also must be sternly resisted.



. . . as a kind of prop . . .

(3) After the ball has arrived

Up to this point the Laws have been chiefly concerned with the *separation* of players, to equalise the chances of jumping for and catching the ball, and to cut out barging, holding, lifting and other unfair practices. Now that the ball has arrived (touched a player or the ground), a struggle for possession is likely to begin and we shall expect some changes in our alphabetical sub-paragraphs to cope with the new situation. Sure enough, we find them.

- (a) But not here. The permitted length of the line-out is still controlled (with the "long throw" exception already noted) by the **original** position of the furthest man, and it remains so controlled until the line-out ends. If players were allowed at this time to extend the line-out indefinitely across the field they would form an unwanted barrier in the way of move-ments developed by the backs in possession after the line-out ends.
- (b) The one-yard rule no longer applies. This is the time for all good men to join the party.
- (c) We said goodbye to the two-foot rule when the ball left the hands of the thrower-in, substituting a prohibition against crossing the Une-of-touch while the ball is in the air, unless actually jumping for it. Now that the ball has arrived the line-of-touch is no longer a barrier. It is now the ball you must keep behind until the line-out ends-or until a ruck or maul (with their distinctive rules, to which we shall come in a moment) develops within it. The object of the Laws at this stage is to ensure that the man in possession has a reasonable chance of getting the ball away (or of getting away with the ball): to see to it that his opponents, while not deprived of their natural right to tackle him or try to get the ball away from him, cannot manoeuvre themselves between him and his supporting players so that any chance of opening up the game is lost. The rule is therefore that you must not have either foot in front (i.e. on your opponents' side) of the ball, *unless* you have got it yourself or are tackling or attempting to tackle an opponent-and even then such a tackle must start from your own side of the ball.
- (d) Obstruction, as always in any phase of the game, is illegal. Unless and until a ruck or maul develops, you must not hold, push, shoulder or charge an opponent who has not got the ball. Of course, you can charge ahead *with* the ball, or *at* a player who has the ball, but you must not just hurl yourself about, regardless.

(4) Ruck and maul at a line-out

A line-out is apt to develop, whenever the ball is not got back cleanly to the half-backs, into either a ruck, when players struggle for possession with the ball at their feet, or a maul, when someone has the ball in his hands. In neither case, as we have seen, does the line-out end until the whole heaving mass has moved away, to one side or the other, from the line-of-touch.

What does it matter, one may well ask, whether the line-out has ended or not, when what we have actually *got* is a ruck or a maul?

It matters because the Laws governing rucks and mauls *during a line-out* differ from those in force in any other phase of the game-not so much as they affect those taking part in ruck or maul, but as they affect those *not* taking part.

It is by no means compulsory for all line-out players to join, or to remain in, any ruck or maul that forms, so we are back with sub-divisions again :

- (i) Those who join ruck or maul must do so from their own side.
- (ii) Those who do not join, or leave again, must remain on or retire to a line level with the hindmost foot of their own team in the ruck or maul.

How do these not very complex off-side rules differ from those in force for *any* ruck or maul? Have a look back at pages 6-8 and you will see that, though our old friend the "hindmost foot" off-side line has cropped up again, it is now much more restrictive.

At ordinary rucks or mauls non-participants are free to roam where they will, provided they keep *behind* this line; line-out players who don't participate are pinned to it, like a chicken to a line of chalk. This, in conjunction with the still operative Law limiting the length of the line-out, is a point of great importance to the patiently waiting backs. To them we can now turn.

Players Not in the Line-out

Those who do not join the line-out but merely wait hopefully to see whether anything will come of it-the "backs", in general terms-are very simply dealt with. From start to finish of the line-out they must remain at least ten yards behind the line-of-touch: beyond the "off-side" line, in oilier words.

To this splendidly simple rule, there are just two small exceptions :

- (i) A back belonging to the thrower's team may run forward across this off-side line, as the ball leaves the thrower's hands, with the object of catching a long throw-in designed to clear the line-out completely. But if he does this, his opponents are automatically released from *their* obligation to keep back and may advance to meet him. He must also be aware that he will be penalised if the ball does not reach him.
- (ii) When the line-of-touch is within ten yards of a goal line the defending backs need retire only to just beyond their goal line.

Twilight Characters

In any game of Rugby football there are four men who, while not in the line-out, are too closely concerned with it to be banished to a distance often yards. These are the player who throws the ball in, his opposite number, who has to mark him and may be called on (in the event of a crooked throw) to throw the ball in himself, and the two scrum-halves who must form a link between forwards and backs. These four men are excluded from the special (off-side) line-out laws we have been considering, and are free to take up their normal positions at the throw-in. Thereafter, while the line-out is in being, a scrum-half can operate without restriction in the ten-yard area, forbidden to others, between the line-of-touch and the backs' off-side line, or he can run into a gap in the line-out, if he sees one, and take the ball-provided he can do so without barging or obstruction. As to the thrower-in and his immediate opponent, these two must, after the ball has been thrown in, either

- (1) Remain within five yards of the touch line, *or*
- (2) Join the line-out, *or*
- (3) Retire ten yards from the line-of-touch, *or*
- (4) Operate as a substitute scrum-half at the forwards' heels. But if a player takes this last course, the genuine scrum-half must stand back behind the off-side line. There cannot be two players of any one team both taking advantage, at the same line-out, of the special dispensation for scrum-halves.

Summary

It has been a longish haul, this line-out business, but what it boils down to, once you have grasped the principles that govern the *length* of a line-out, both in space and time, is this :-

If a forward, keep in a *single, separate spaced-out* line until you jump, don't obstruct, and keep behind the ball except when tackling. If a fly-half or threequarter, stay ten yards behind the line-of-touch and *remain* there until you are certain that the line-out (ruck or maul included) is over. If a scrum-half or a thrower-in (or his opposite number) do the natural thing.

3. OBSTRUCTION

We have already had a mention of this nuisance, when talking about the line-out, where there is more of it than in any other phase of the game. This chapter ties the subject up.



... more obstruction in the line-out ...

Obstruction, in the line-out or anywhere else, really means getting in the way of, holding, hampering and generally frustrating an opponent *who hasn't got the ball*. You must not lay hands on an opponent who is not grasping the ball. The temptation to grab at the jersey of a man, slightly faster than oneself, who is also running for the ball, is almost overwhelming, but it must be resisted. One thing you *can* do, when two of you are running for the ball, is to shoulder the other man off, but even this can only be done when you are both definitely out to get the ball.

You cannot go charging into a man simply on the plea that he was going in the general direction of the ball and happened to cross your path. You must not push a man from behind if he hasn't got hold of the ball, not even when he is stooping to pick it up or to score a try or make a touch-down. You must wait until he has got his hands on it, and then tackle him; or you can dive for it yourself. You may, however, drag away a player lying on the ground in close proximity to the ball, *provided* he is not in a scrummage or ruck.

While we are on the subject of obstruction, it may be worth remarking that only a fool gets annoyed every time he is tackled or knocked over without the ball. If you have drawn your man properly you must expect to be tackled after you have passed the ball. Your opponent will have started his tackle before you made your pass, and it is too much to expect him to change his plans in mid-air. On the other hand, *deliberately* to tackle a man after he has passed the ball is obviously unfair--and so is tackling a man *before* he has got the ball, in the belief that he will probably have it by the time the tackle is completed. Both early and late tackling are dangerous as well as unfair.

Q. Can I be guilty of obstruction when I am actually in possession of the ball?

A. Well, in a way--in the sense that you can cause others to obstruct. One way is to dodge behind a member of your own side, so that your opponents cannot get at you. Another is to attempt, after a line-out or scrum, to force your way through a clump of your own players. In both these cases you are, so to speak, using your own men as a shield--forcing *them* to obstruct--and the referee will award a penalty.

There are two forms of obstruction, apart from unfair play in the line-out, that you must determine never to be guilty of:-

- (1) When an opponent has kicked ahead and is following up his kick, you must not deliberately get in his way. If you are yourself running for the ball--well and good; but if you are not, you must make no move to hinder him.
- (2) Wing-forwards, packing down on the outside of the second or the back row of the scrum, must not try to stop the opposing scrum-half coming round the scrum by swinging their hind legs, so to speak, out at right angles. Still less are they permitted to stand up and obstruct him.

4. FORWARD!

It is a familiar enough cry. Spectators love it, since everybody knows that in Rugby football the ball must be passed *back*, it must not be knocked *on*. It is fundamental to the handling game, curiously, that the only way to propel the ball *forward* legitimately is to use the foot. But there are one or two points to clear up on this important subject.

What is Meant by Forward?

The essence of a forward pass or knock-on is that the ball goes *direct* from hand or arm in the direction of your opponents' end of the field, i.e. that it *starts off* in that direction. If you misfield a ball, for instance, and it drops away from you in the direction of your own goal line and then bounces forwards towards your opponents' goal line it is *not* a knock-on.

Q. What about wind? Would it be a forward pass, if the ball started off innocently enough and was then suddenly blown forward?

A. By no means. Wind doesn't count in Rugby football. This affects kicking too, of course. Once the ball has reached any place or line that matters (e.g. touch or the twenty-five yards line or the crossbar) it *has* reached it, no matter if the wind blows it back again immediately afterwards.

Q. But wind *does* count, surely, when it turns what would other-wise have been a straight throw-in from touch into a crooked one?

A. Yes, so it does. Sorry!

Q. Is a little nudge forward a knock-on?

A. We are coming to that.

Knock-ons that Aren't

A forward pass is always a forward pass, but not all knock-ons count as knock-ons. It is *not* a knock-on, legally speaking

(a) If you knock the ball forward, when catching it (from a pass or a kick, say) or when picking it up, and can catch it again before it touches the ground or another player;

(b) If you knock the ball forward when in the act of charging down an opponent's kick-whether the ball hits the ground thereafter or no.

It will be clear from this that a fumbled pick-up, when the ball is scuffled forward *along the ground* before being secured, is a knock-on. And it is quite illegal, by the way, to knock-on deliberately.

When, for instance, the ball is too far ahead of you to allow a clean interception, you must not take a forward swat at it in order to knock down an opponent's pass.



Spectators love it . . .

5. OFF-SIDE OR ON?

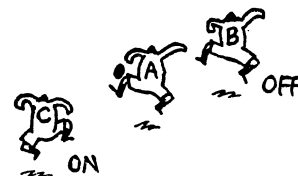
This rather formidable nut has already to some extent been cracked by the device of dealing separately with the special sets of rules that apply when the game has reached one of its statutory "checks"-when, that is, the teams sort themselves out, so to speak, for a scrum or a line-out and retire each to their own territory. We have also made some mention of off-side at rucks and mauls. Now we have to tackle the rules for ordinary open play, i.e. when the ball is being dribbled, or passed, or run with, or punted-all that sort of thing.

There will be some talk about being "in front" of the man or the ball, or both. This always means being nearer your opponents' goal line than the man or ball. Similarly, the word "behind" means having your feet, *both* feet, on your own side of an imaginary line running straight across the field through the man (or the ball, as the case may be) to the touch lines. If you will remember that-and also that we are not talking now about scrums, rucks, line-outs, etc.-we can go right ahead.

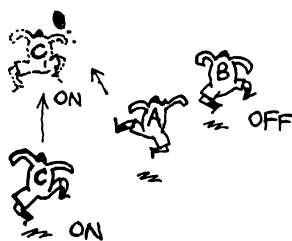
The first point to get straight is that it is *only when one of your own side has the ball, or was the last to touch it, that you need worry about offside*. You will see in a minute that, though you may be off-side for a second or so after the ball has gone from one of your own men to one of the other side, you will very soon be put on-side again by the mere fact of their man playing the ball and thereafter *you cannot be off-side again so long as they keep possession of the ball*.

Chalk that up on your changing-room wall. It is a rule that many people *never* get clear.

We had better start with the ball in the possession of your side (playing in White against the Black team). You will see from the picture that A has the ball. He is hareing up the field with it at his feet. Now it is fair to say that all the ground between your goal line and A is yours. You have got the ball that far, and you have a perfect right to roam about anywhere inside that territory-but no further. A is the spearhead of the attack, and if you want to join in the attack you must not be in front of the spearhead.



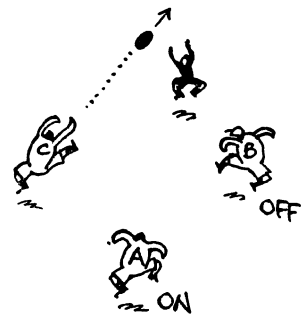
Look at B! B is out of the game, *hors jeu* as the French say, off-side as we say. If A kicks the ball a bit ahead and B so much as touches it, the referee blows his whistle. He will order a scrum if he thought B didn't mean to touch the ball but couldn't avoid it, and a penalty kick against your side if he thought B played the ball deliberately. In either case B has ruined the attack by being off-side.



But suppose A kicks the ball ahead and to the left, and C dashes up past A and dribbles it on. Is C off-side? He is not, because he was behind A at the critical moment when A lost touch with the ball. So now C has the ball, and he is the man all your side must be careful to keep behind. We have lost interest in A.

It is the man on your side who has the ball, or who last touched it, who matters. Keep behind him up to the moment he gets rid of the ball and you are all right.

Now Q finding that the ball has bounced up conveniently into his hands, gives a tremendous punt up-field in the direction of the Black full-back. All the White men who were behind him when he punted are on-side and are at liberty to dash up the field and make things awkward for the Black full-back. But what about the wretched B, who, not content with being off-side when A had the ball, still continued to run ahead when A had passed and was, therefore, off-side at the fatal moment when C gave his prodigious kick? Is B doomed to be off-side for the rest of his life? Happily, the rules cover this point. B can put himself back in the game again by letting C get in front of him, because C was the last man to touch the ball.



Observe the supreme importance of the man who has the ball. Not only does he keep you on-side by being in front of you all the time he has the ball, he also has the remarkable gift of putting on-side any of his men who were in front of him when he kicked it. Simply by getting in front of *them*.



This latter gift is shared, as a matter of fact, by any member of C's team who was on-side (i.e. behind him) when he kicked.

We can now state a few simple rules:-

A player is off-side if he is in front of one of his own side who is carrying the ball, or has just kicked or touched it.

He becomes on-side again as soon as he gets behind the man on his own side who is carrying the ball, or has just kicked or touched it. He also becomes on-side when either a team-mate who kicked the ball from behind him, or any team-mate who was on-side when it was kicked, has run in front of him.

Once he is on-side he remains on-side until one of his own team behind him again touches the ball.

Now that we have stated them, these three rules seem so simple that the wonder is we didn't state them at the start, instead of going through all that rigmarole about A, B and C.

Q. This is all very well, but it often happens that the whole team is in front of the man with the ball, e.g. when the full-back has just gathered a long kick ahead. Are they all off-side?

A. Yes.

Q. Well then, supposing the full-back kicks right back up the field, have all the others on his side got to hang about doing nothing until he has galloped in front of the whole lot of them? Or, if he feels too tired to run up, must they all go trooping back behind him, what time their opponents come tearing down the field with nobody to stop them?

A. No. Because if your own man doesn't put you on-side your opponents soon will. The rules are devised to ensure that if you are off-side at the time the ball passes from your own side to the opposition, you must pay for being off-side by giving the enemy a little rope; but you needn't give him much. He is allowed, so to speak, one free turn. You must not interfere with the ball, or molest your opponent in any way until he has either:-

(a) kicked or passed the ball, or

(b) run five yards with it, or

(c) *intentionally* touched it, without getting it cleanly into his hands-when he fails to gather or catch it properly, for instance.

When he has done one of those three things you are at once on-side again. But *until* he has had his free turn, you must not approach within ten yards of him-and, if you are already nearer than that, you must go away if you can possibly manage it. You must not run nearer than ten yards, that is, to the opponent who is waiting for the ball to come to him. The Laws are very emphatic on this point.

If you *have* approached within ten yards of an opponent waiting for the ball, or wilfully remained within that distance, *nothing* the opposition may do can put you on-side again. You must retire at once, and wait until you are put on-side by your own team coming up. But before that happens you will in all probability have been penalised.

If there are any lingering doubts about this rule, a little more kicking should clear them up. Let us say the White full-back puts in a long kick. He is the last White man to play the ball and all his team, being in front of him, are off-side. White full-back begins to trot up-field after his kick, automatically putting on-side any Whites he passes on the way. Meanwhile the ball has reached Black full-back who catches it. All the Black men in front of their full-back are now off-side, so that for a second or two it may be that everyone on the field except the two full-backs is off-side. However, Black full-back kicks for touch, and at once all the Whites are on-side again. Or he starts to run. The Whites let him have his five yards and then go for him. And so on.



A more practical question is, what can the White men who are off-side do while they are waiting to be put on-side again?

Must they remain standing where they are, with their arms hanging by their sides and the backs of their thumbs touching the seams of their trousers? No. They are allowed to follow-up provided they don't get nearer than ten yards to the opponent waiting for the ball.

Q. As a general rule, when I am off-side must I take every possible step to get on-side again as quickly as I can?

A. In the sort of open play we have been talking about in this chapter-*no*, unless you are standing within 10 yards of an opponent waiting for the ball. You are not expected to spend your time dashing back to get behind the man with the ball- unless, of course, you ought to be back there to support him. You can move freely to the part of the field where you expect to be wanted next, provided you don't interfere with the ball or any opponent until you get on-side again.

But, as we know, there are certain occasions when you must not even *stand* off-side, however docilely. These occasions are the scrum and the line-out, and, happily, we have already dealt with them.

Last Words on Off-side

We have just about finished with the off-side rules now. Half a dozen quick questions, to clear up some possible minor difficulties, and we can consider the subject closed.

Q. When I am off-side, through no fault of my own, and I get involved in the game, again through no fault of my own, am I likely to be penalised?

A. Since a rule has been broken, the ball must become dead and the game be stopped. But, as usual with unintentional infringements, the referee orders a scrum, not a penalty kick.

Q. If one of my side kicks the ball and it hits an opponent on its way up the field; that puts us all on-side at once, doesn't it, even if we were in front when he kicked it?

A. No.

Q. Why not? You said that a player touching the ball, but failing to catch or gather it, put the other team on-side.

A. We said "a player *intentionally* touching it".

Q. Well then, suppose this player intentionally charges at the kicker, and the ball touches him as it goes by, are we all on-side *then*?

A. Certainly.

Q. This one is going to test you. The man I am marking has got past me by some fluke, and I chase after him and by a happy chance intercept his pass and then turn round and go careering off towards their goal line pursued by shouts of "off-side" in which everybody, including the headmaster, joins. What are the rights of it?

A. *Of course* you are on-side. You were on-side when the first man got past you, and the only thing that could put you off-side would be one of your own men, between you and your goal line, touching the ball. But none of your men did touch it. What makes people shout "off-side" on occasions like this is an utterly bogus idea that a man is off-side if he is on *his opponents' side of the ball*. If that *was* the rule, nobody could ever tackle a man from behind.

Q. Can a man be off-side in his own in-goal?

A. Yes. Read all about it on page 38.

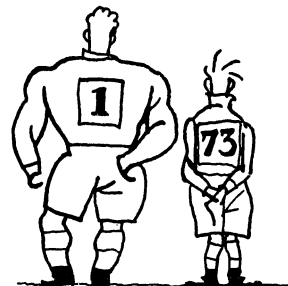
6. PLAYING THE BALL

A tackle, when you come to think of it, produces a curious situation. Runner A is brought down with a bump by tackler B. Both are lying on the ground, with the ball probably still in A's grasp and B's arms still round A's legs. A wants to get up and continue his interrupted run; B is blown if he is going to let him; C, D, and E arriving on the scene care nothing for A and B: what they want is the ball. The problem is how to get the game restarted without a lot of undignified wrestling and tugging.

The Laws solve this problem by saying, in effect, that A must release the ball and get up; B must let him; and nobody must try to pick up the ball *before* it has been released.

Here, in a little more detail, is what players must and must not do after a down-to-earth tackle.

The tackled player must **IMMEDIATELY** release the ball and roll clear of it. When he has got up, but not before, he may play it with hand or foot.



The tackler must allow the tackled player to release the ball, and must let go of him as soon as he has released it. He must not interfere with the ball in any way while he, the tackler, is still lying on the ground. But when he has got up he may, like the tackled player, play the ball with hand or foot.

Third parties arriving on the scene must not try to pick up the ball before the tackled player has released it, nor must they prevent him from releasing it or from getting up. *When* the ball has been released, they may play it with hand or foot.

So there it is. Between them, these various rules secure that, after a tackle, the ball will immediately be freed, the tackled man will be freed immediately thereafter, that nobody lying on the ground will start scrapping about, and that anybody *on his feet* may play the freed ball in any way he likes. Notice that the ball does not have to be brought into play with the foot.

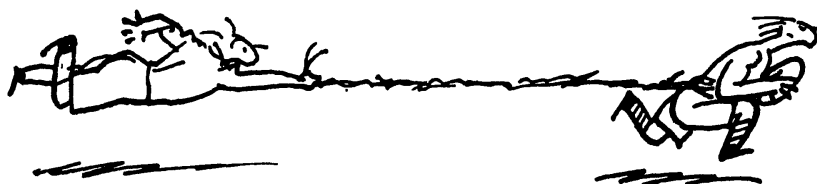
The rule about **IMMEDIATELY** releasing the ball applies equally to the other sort of tackle—the "high" tackle, when a man is held round the middle so that his arms or the ball, or both, are pinned against his body. When that happens he must *immediately* let the ball fall to the ground; he mustn't hang on and try to fight his way out. And whoever is holding him has got to let him release the ball and set him free when he has done so. Then the ball may be played with hand or foot as before.

If other players gather round a held player on his feet, so that "releasing the ball" is out of the question, a *maul* has begun. A maul ends a tackle.

What is a Tackle?

We now come to the awkward question, when is a man tackled?

For instance, suppose an opponent comes flying into you, but fails to get his arms round your legs or middle, so that you go head over heels but finish up as free as the air. Must you let go of the ball or can you go right on for a try?



... caught by the slack of your jersey ...

You needn't, and you can. A tackle is only a tackle when the other man has got you properly, i.e. when he has brought you down so that the ball hits the ground with a bump while he is still holding you, or when he has got you in such a fix that for a moment you can't pass the ball or play it. There is not the slightest doubt really when you are properly tackled. Admit it, release the ball and get on with the game. But when you are only knocked or thrown over (even if the ball touches the ground in the process), or when you are merely caught by the slack of your jersey, press on by all means.

A further merciful provision of the Laws is that, if you are tackled near your opponents' goal line, so that the ball hits the ground short of the line *but* your momentum is such that the ball (still in your grasp) ends up in in-goal, i.e. you

slither with it over the line, it is a try. It must be all part of a continuous movement, though; if you come to rest with the ball still short of the line, and then get it over with a wriggle or by stretching out your arms-no try.

Lying on the Ball

There come times in Rugby football when the only thing to do is to fall on the ball, to dive for it and clasp it to your middle.

Once you have done that, your instinct is to hug it close until some of your own side have gathered round you to form a nice ruck. The instinct is particularly strong when you are the one man between your own goal line and about five of their forwards. But you must not do it. Going to sleep on the ball leads to uncharitableness among your opponents. So the Laws say that a player lying on the ground with the ball in his possession or so near to him that he is in the way of an opponent trying to play it, must immediately play the ball himself-or get out of the way by getting up or rolling away from it.

If you decide to play the ball, you are not obliged, as you are after a tackle, to release it, roll away, and get up before doing so.

You can jump up with it and attempt to burrow through the opposing players, or crawl on your knees with it until you are tackled, or you can kick it with your feet before or after getting up. Or you can pass it (there is no law whatever against "passing from the ground"). But you must do *something* with it.

7. KICKING

This chapter deals with the different sorts of kicks that are taken after a ball, for one reason or another, has become dead. The rules about where people must stand and what they may do to help or hinder the kicker differ, naturally enough, according to the reason why the kick is being taken. At one end of the scale are the kick-off and the drop-out, which are merely methods of re-starting the game after a score or a touch-down, and here the idea is to give each side a fairly even chance of getting the ball; so the kicker isn't allowed much freedom of action. At the other end is the penalty kick, where the offending side are in disgrace and have to give the kicker plenty of rope.



Most of the rules can be put into a sort of table (page 32). Have a look at it; it will be useful for reference anyway. And then, if you read the few additional notes that follow, you will know enough about kicks to be going on with.

Kick-off and Drop-out

Generally speaking, we are more concerned in this booklet with what the rules are than with what exactly happens when they are broken. But when something goes wrong at a kick-off or drop-out, there is a rather confusing number of different pro-cedures and it may be useful to list them. So have a look at the table to see what the rules are, and then read the following summary of what you do when your side or your opponents fail to carry them out.

TABLE OF KICKS

	<i>Kick-off</i>	<i>Drop-out</i>	<i>Goal Kick</i>	<i>Free Kick</i>	<i>Penalty Kick</i>
<i>When taken?</i> ...	At start. After half-time. After a goal or unconverted try.	After a touch-down or touch-in-goal, or ball over dead-ball line. (Or when ordered by referee. See page 41 (5)).	After a try.	After a fair catch.	When given by referee for a breach of the rules.
<i>Where from?</i> ...	Centre of half-way line.	On or behind 25-yard line.	Opposite place where try was awarded.	Behind the mark where fair catch was made (which is deemed to be on goal line, if catch made in in-goal).	At or directly behind the mark made by referee.
<i>What kind of kick?</i>	Drop kick after unconverted try; otherwise place.	Drop kick	Place or drop.	Place, drop or punt.	Place, drop or punt.
<i>Who taken it?</i> ...	Anyone.	Anyone.	Anyone.	The catcher.	Anyone.
<i>Can kicker "place" ball?</i>	Yes.	-	Yes.	No.	Yes.
<i>Must kicker's team all be behind ball?</i>	Yes.	Yes.	Yes (except placer, if used)	Yes (except the placer).	Yes (except placer, if used).
<i>Where may opposing team stand?</i>	On or beyond 10-yard line.	Beyond 25-yard line.	Behind goal line.	Up to a line through the mark.	On or behind a line parallel to the goal lines and 10 yards from the mark (or on or behind their own goal line, if nearer).
<i>May opponents charge?</i>	Yes, when ball has been kicked.	Only up to 25-yard line.	Yes, when kicker begins his run or "offers" to kick.	Yes, when ball is placed on ground or when kicker "offers" to kick.	They must stand quite still until ball has been kicked.
<i>Where must ball get to?</i>	10-yard line (unless first played by an opponent).	25-yard line.	-	Line through the mark (unless first played by an opponent).	Anywhere (unless taken in in-goal, when it must cross the goal line).

At a kick-off or drop-out:

You have another kick

(a) If you cross the line before kicking, (b) If your opponents stand too close, or charge too soon, or too far. (c) If you take the wrong kind of kick, or kick from the wrong place

You have another kick, or there is a scrum at the centre of the lie-as your opponents prefer

If your kick doesn't go far enough forward.

There is a scrum at the centre

If any of your side are in front of the ball when it is kicked.

You have another kick, or there is a scrum at the centre of the lie-as your opponents prefer

If your kick goes straight into touch (or into touch-in-goal or over the dead-ball line-what a player!) without bouncing or touching an opponent.



Free Kick

This is not another name for a penalty kick. A free kick is an event that occurs *only* after a fair catch.

What is a fair catch? It is what everybody always calls a "mark".

If one of the other side hoists the ball into the air, either by kicking it off the ground, or punting it, or throwing or knocking it *forward*, all you have to do is to catch it cleanly before it bounces, and cry "Mark!" (The dispensation about a knock-on not being a knock-on when the ball is re-caught in the air (*see* page 22) does not apply to a fair catch. The ball must be caught fairly and squarely, first go.)

You must be stationary when you make the catch and have both feet on the ground. But you need not be facing the enemy, nor absolutely upright, when you make the catch, nor need you stand still after you have made it -in fact it is generally better to get moving in case the referee doesn't allow the catch.



It is worth noting that the shouting of "Mark!", which used to be optional, is now compulsory, so make a good noise while you are about it.

You may make a fair catch at any stage of the game-even off a free kick, or a penalty, or a kick-off, or drop-out, or a knock-on from the line-out. But remember this.

It's a splendid thing to do if you can place or drop a goal from the resulting free kick, or if it gives your side a chance to rally in a tight corner. But nobody will thank you much for claiming a fair catch, instead of taking an ordinary running punt, say, if the only result is to fetch all your perspiring forwards miles back to get behind the ball.

It is as well to remember, when taking a free kick, that your opponents can stand right up to the "mark" and can charge as soon as the ball is put on the ground (if you are taking a place kick) and as soon as you make a move forward (for a drop kick or punt). So you must take your kick quite a number of yards behind the mark to be sure of clearing them.

Q. Suppose I just *start* on a punt or drop kick and then decide I am too close to the mark or something, can I change my mind and wave the chargers back?

A. No. At least you can wave, but it will do you no good. They will charge on regardless, prevent you from kicking, and take a scrum on the mark.

Q. What happens if I make a mark behind my own goal line?

A. The mark is "deemed to be" *on* the goal line.

Penalty Kick

The ball may be kicked in *any* direction, forwards, sideways or backwards, and it need not travel any specified distance. A gentle sideways tap to a colleague a foot away will do, and so will an enormous kick forwards into touch or backwards into the hands of your full-back. Or the ball may be played again by the kicker.

All the kicker's opponents must retire to a line ten yards from the mark, and they must do so *without delay*. This does not mean that the kicker need wait until they have all actually got there. Indeed, it may be a good plan for him *not* to wait. His opponents are compelled to concentrate on getting back, and must continue to do that, *and nothing else*, even while the kick is being taken. Players still retiring must take no part in the game until an opponent carrying the ball has run five yards with it. Thus a quickly taken penalty kick may catch quite a number of the other side temporarily out of the game.

A final point to note about penalty kicks is that the kicker must not try to fox the opposition by going through the motions of taking a kick at goal and suddenly switching to another kind of kick, such as a high kick ahead or a short sideways "tap". Once he has indicated to the referee, either verbally or by beginning to make a hole for a place kick or in some other way, that he intends a kick at goal, then a kick at goal it must be. The referee has the right to *ask* what the kicker's intentions are.

Q. Does this point about not switching from a kick at goal to some other kind of kick apply also to Free Kicks?

A. Yes.

Q. When awarded a penalty kick has the non-offending side got to take a kick-whether punt, place or drop-kick?

A. No. They may, if they wish, take a scrum at the mark.

Q. Can a penalty kick (or scrum in lieu) be taken right on the opponents' goal line?

A. No. The minimum distance for the mark is five yards.

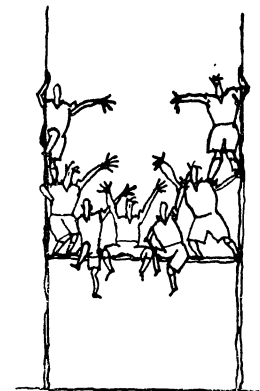
Scoring

With the solitary exception of a "conversion" after a try, which counts two points only, **ALL** goals (whether from a free kick or penalty kick or dropped in the ordinary course of play) count three points. A try counts four.

Kicks at Goal

Notice that for a kick at goal *after a try* the kicker may place the ball, and that the opponents' charge may begin as soon as the kicker starts his run-up or (if no run-up is taken) swings his leg. It is only for a place kick after a "Mark" that a placer is now needed. And remember this about *all* kicks at goal. A goal is **NOT** scored if the ball touches any player of the kicker's team on its way. Remember, too, that you don't have to take a place kick at goal after a try.

You can *have* a drop kick instead. Or, if pressed for time, you can cut out the kick altogether.



Is this legal?

Warning About Kicks

When a placer is necessary to put the ball down for you-for placed free kicks, that is-you must never touch the ball after it has been put on the ground for the kick. It sometimes happens that when the placer has put the ball down for you and you are running up for the kick, the referee whistles for a "no charge".

Your opponents have begun their charge too soon, and you are now allowed to begin your kick over again, with nobody to rush out at you this time. It is fatally easy in these circumstances for the kicker to walk up to the ball and give it a last-minute adjust-ment; but if he does, it's all over. No kick. You must get the placer to fiddle with it, if any fiddling is really necessary.



The whistle's gone !

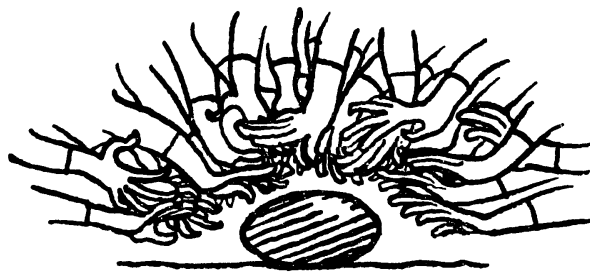
8. BEHIND THE GOAL LINE

Some players, including a few quite experienced ones, get a kind of end-of-term feeling as soon as they cross the goal line - particularly when it is their opponents' line-with a curious idea that the ordinary rules no longer apply. This is wrong, and leads to much unhappiness and criticism of the referee. One of the sad things about a referee's life is that he is even more likely to be unpopular because he knows rules which the players do not, than the other way round. It is always a waste of time to criticise the referee anyway, but it is absolutely fatuous to do so unless you really know the rules yourself.

Here is your chance to be knowledgeable about in-goal.

In Your Own In-Goal

- (1) There are three common-or-garden ways of making the ball dead in your own in-goal, and so preventing the other side from scoring a try, namely touching it down, getting it into touch-in-goal, and putting it over the dead-ball line. But it makes a bit of difference how the ball got over the goal line in the first place. If your opponents got it there (whether by kicking or dribbling or pushing it over in a scrum or carrying it) and you manage to touch it down first, then of course you have a drop-out from the twenty-five yard line. But if it was one of your own side who *intentionally or unintentionally* brought it back behind the goal line (by kicking or running or passing or even heeling it from a scrum close to the line) then instead of a drop-out there is a scrum five yards from the goal line and opposite the place where the kick, run, etc., started, and the attacking side puts the ball in. When, however, the ball, after being kicked or passed or knocked by an opponent, merely *touches* one of your side (*who makes no attempt to stop, catch or kick it*) on its way over your goal line and is thereafter touched down or made dead, there is a drop-out.
- (2) You can be off-side in your own in-goal. This is not, perhaps, a very likely contingency ; but it is worth remembering that as far as lie off-side rules are concerned there is no difference between in-goal and the ordinary "field-of-play" (apart from the penalties inflicted-for which see pages 29 (6) and 30 (5)).
- (3) You may touch the ball down in a scrum. As we know, handling the ball in any way in a scrum is forbidden, but the point here is that a scrum is no longer a scrum when it surges over the goal line. "A scrummage", say the Laws, "can only take place in the field-of-play". And the field-of-play is defined as the space bounded by, but not including, the goal lines and touch lines. So you can quite legally put a hand on the ball and claim a touch-down when a "scrum" is going on in your in-goal. The only drawback is that the other side are allowed to do the same and so claim a try. What generally happens, in practice, is that both sides try to get a hand on the ball as soon as it has been pushed over the line, the scrum collapses, and the referee, not being sure which side got it first, orders a scrum five yards from the goal line, opposite the place where the ball was grounded. The attacking team, in that case, put the ball in.



- (4) If you are holding the ball in your in-goal and are seized and held by an opponent in such a way that you cannot ground the ball the referee will observe the deadlock and order a scrum five yards from the line. Here again the attacking side will put the ball in.
- (5) You may *deliberately* throw, or knock, the ball into touch-in-goal or over the dead-ball line provided you are in in-goal at the time. The rule against deliberate throwing into touch, etc., applies to players *in the field-of-play*.
- (6) For any infringement (other than obstruction and mis-conduct) by the defending side in its own in-goal, there is a scrum five yards out from the goal line and opposite the place where the knock-on, etc., happened. If the referee thinks a try would have been scored by the opposition but for the unfair play or illegal interference of the defenders, he awards a penalty try (under the posts).

Q. You didn't make it quite clear, at (5) above, whether I may throw into touch from my own in-goal?

A. The throw would be *forward*, would it not, dear boy?

In Your Opponents' In-Goal

- (1) The goal line itself is in-goal, and so are the goal posts. So you have scored a try if you ground the ball on the line or touching one of the posts. But an inch or two farther on is safer and saves argument.
- (2) Once you have *grounded* the ball you have scored a try and the ball is dead. You can't whip it up again and decide to score again a bit nearer the posts. "Grounding," by the way, needs a little definition. It means either:-
 - (a) bringing the ball into contact with the ground while holding it in the hands or arms, or
 - (b) subjecting it, while it is on the ground, to downward pressure from hand or arm, or
 - (c) falling on it, so that it is anywhere under the front of the body "from waist to neck inclusive". (It is no good going broody and sitting on it.) The ball can still be moving when you "ground" it, incidentally. But picking the ball up is not "grounding" it, nor is the action of touching one side of it with the tips of your fingers when you are stretched out on the ground. "Downward pressure" is the essence of the business. (And all this "grounding" business applies no less to a touch-down than to a try.)
- (3) As you know, you can't *hold* the ball when you have a foot in touch without making the ball "in touch" too. But you may play it with your hand (page II), and for this reason you are allowed to score a try by putting a hand on the ball even though your feet may be in touch or touch-in-goal. But, of course, if you were *carrying* the ball, it wouldn't do. There is often a lot of fuss about tries scored right in the corner, by the post, so we had better be quite clear about this.

Suppose you are running down the touch line with the ball in your hands, keeping just in the field-of-play. Then you dive for a try, grounding the ball over the goal line and clear of the touch-in-goal line but brushing the corner post with your body en route. No try. The corner post is in touch-in-goal, and your opponents have a drop-out. But now suppose you are *dribbling* the ball down the touch line, just in play, and you kick it over the goal line, clear of touch-in-goal, and then dive on it, again knocking the corner post aside as you jump. Is this a try? It is.



... a tiresome predicament ...

- (4) If you get held up while carrying the ball in your opponents' in-goal (a tiresome predicament), so that you can't ground it for a try, the same rules apply as for a defender similarly caught and pinned. The referee orders a five-yard scrum, and your side, the attackers, put the ball in.
- (5) If you knock-on or give a forward pass or get off-side or infringe the Laws in any other way in your opponents' in-goal, they have a drop-out.
- (6) Don't forget that you can be off-side in your opponents' in-goal. Normal off-side rules apply there, as we have already seen, both to the attacking and to the defend-ing side.

9. THE ADVANTAGE RULE

The advantage rule deserves a chapter to itself because it over-rides so many other rules. It is simply this, that when some breach of the rules occurs and the result is an advantage to the other (the non-offending) side, the referee doesn't blow his whistle. He lets the game go on. This is obviously right and proper.

If your opponents give a forward pass which is intercepted by one of your side who has a good chance of getting through, it is too tiresome if your man is whistled back for a scrum where the forward pass happened. Worse still, if there were no advantage rule, players might be tempted to break a rule on purpose in order to stop the game, and so perhaps save a try against them.

A full-back, for instance, faced by a pack of forwards in full cry, could save his line simply by knocking-on. So a good referee doesn't whistle if he sees the non-offending side profiting from the offence. Sometimes he has to wait a moment or two before deciding whether to whistle or not.

Sometimes he can whistle straight away. But once he has whistled, he has whistled. He can't, so to speak, unwhistle himself and shout "No, no, sorry. Play on." Law 6 says flatly, "When he has given a decision he cannot alter it."

Q. Can't a referee ever alter a decision?

A. Well, as a matter of fact, he can. If, for instance, he awards a try and then notices that one of the touch judges has got his flag up to indicate that the ball has been in touch, the referee can cancel the try and order a line-out.

But that is because the ball was dead and he didn't know it.

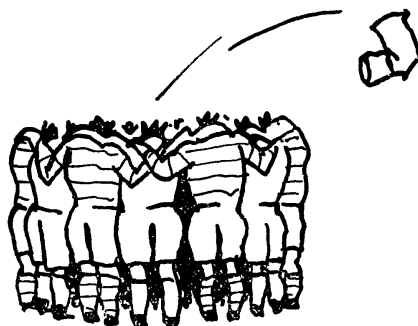
The advantage rule is not used, by the way, when any of the special rules that apply to the kick-off are broken, or when the ball emerges from a scrum by way of the tunnel. One or two further exceptions are listed in Law 8 (2), e.g. when the ball or a player carrying it touches the referee. But, in general, you can take it that the non-offending side is never handicapped by an opponent's error.



Devotion to duty

That will do for the present. We have not covered quite all the ground-there are still a few fascinating little points not touched upon-but we have covered a good deal. If you really know, and understand, the rules given in this booklet, you will do well enough for a start. But it will be worth your while, as you progress, to get hold of the official handbook of the Laws and study it. Apart from the benefit to yourself as a player, a thorough knowledge of the rules is bound to increase your respect for the referee and your understanding of his decisions.

He has a difficult enough job to do. Try not to make it harder for him.



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