



★ **2015** ★  
**SEVENS**  
GAME MANAGEMENT  
GUIDELINES



**USA RUGBY**



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## INTRODUCTION

USA Rugby Referees' management has established guidelines to refereeing at all Sevens levels in USA Rugby. These guidelines enable players and referees to have a clearer approach to the game and to be more consistent in Law application throughout the country. They also reflect directives from World Rugby Sevens.

These guidelines are to be distributed and applied nationally everyone involved in Sevens for 2015.

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## PRINCIPLES OF THE GAME

“It is through discipline, control and mutual respect that the spirit of the game flourishes and, in the context of a game as physically challenging as rugby, these are the qualities which forge the fellowship and sense of fair play so essential to the game’s ongoing success and survival.” - World Rugby: Laws of the Game 2015

It is essential that we, as a community, stand together and work together to develop rugby in the United States. It will be through mutual respect and support that we grow the game.

Match officials, players and team administrators should work together and refrain from verbal abuse toward each other, nor make any derogatory public remarks or comments, including on social media, as this behavior is not beneficial to the development and growth of the game. It is important that officials, players, coaches, etc. share their thoughts and experiences with one another for the betterment of all.

Be professional and open to discussion with players and coaches, and supportive of colleagues. Promote the game. You are accountable for your actions on and off the field. Refrain from discussing any issues with referee coaches during halftime. Refrain from discussions with coaches, etc. during the match, at halftime, and immediately after the match if a “cooling off” period would be the better option.

## REFEREE ABUSE

Verbal abuse by team coaches, team staff or team substitutes directed at match officials or players should not be tolerated and the following process should be followed:

1. The referee will ask the identified person to refrain from their behavior.
2. On the second occasion the referee will EJECT the person from the playing enclosure for the remainder of the match.
3. Zero tolerance approach should be applied and if the person refuses to leave the referee should request that team’s captain to assist.
4. Failing compliance the referee may abandon the match and the person’s team forfeit’s the match.

**NOTE:** The referee should restart the game from the last stoppage, or if the game was stopped during play with a scrum to the team in possession at the time, and NOT a PK due to the sideline incident.

## SEVENS LAW VARIATIONS OVERVIEW

### A. NUMBER OF PLAYERS, SUBSTITUTIONS AND TEMPORARY SUSPENSIONS

1. Each team must have no more than seven players on the playing area.
2. Each team can nominate and use 5 substitutes/replacements.
3. Substituted players may only return as blood substitutes.
4. Temporary suspension is 2 minutes.

### B. TIME

1. Matches are 7 minutes each half, and Finals may be 10 minutes each half and no longer than 20 minutes total. Half time is 2 minutes and teams change ends.
2. Extra time: When there is a drawn match and extra time is required, after a break of one minute the extra time is played in periods of five minutes. After each period, the teams change ends without an interval. The team that scores first in extra time is declared the winner.

### C. CONVERSION KICKS

1. The conversion must be a drop kick, and taken within 40 seconds from when the try is scored otherwise it should be disallowed.
2. The opposition players must assemble near their 10m line and not behind the goal line. They should not be close to the kicker or interfere with the kicker.

### D. KICK OFFS AND RESTARTS

1. All players of the team that is kicking off have to be behind the kicker.  
**FK in the centre the halfway line**
2. After a score, the team that scored kicks off with a drop kick.
3. If the ball does not travel 10m (and is not played by an opponent), OR is kicked directly into touch, OR is kicked into in-goal where it is made dead or has crossed the dead ball line or touch-in-goal line a free kick is awarded.  
**FK in the centre the halfway line**

### E. SCRUM

1. A scrum is formed by 3 players from each team
2. Players must remain in the scrum until it ends and may not intentionally kick the ball out. **PK**

### F. PENALTY KICKS AND FREE KICKS

1. Any player may take a penalty/free kick but may not take a place kick.
2. If a player's intention is to take a penalty kick at goal (drop kick) they have 30 seconds to take the kick or a scrum is awarded to the opposition team.

## THE BREAKDOWN

### A. THE TACKLE

The tackle is one of the most important aspects of Sevens. When refereed accurately it generates quick ball and elevates the game. Get to the tackle as quickly as possible. Know where the ball is at all times - create a presence at the breakdown. Set your standard from the outset and maintain consistency to enable quick ball availability. It is important to maintain a high work rate throughout the match. To play penalty advantage for an infringement at the tackle, the ball must be immediately available OR an immediate score probable. Often in Sevens there are tackles only that do not develop into rucks. The referee may communicate “Tackle Only” if no ruck has formed.

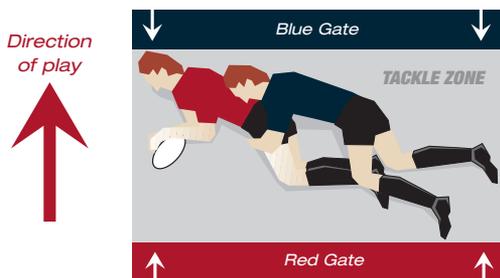
1. Tacklers have to release the tackled player immediately, and move/roll away or get to their feet. **PK**
2. Tackled player must exercise their options immediately. **PK**
3. Players that slow down ball availability should be penalized immediately. **PK**
4. Players that are isolated may attempt to “buy time” for their support and use the squeeze ball and keep the ball under their bodies, or they add an extra roll while holding onto the ball. Referee should be alert to these actions and penalize when the opposition is denied access to the ball. **PK**

### B. TACKLER ASSIST

1. Defending players that remain on their feet, but assist in bringing the ball carrier to the ground (Tackler Assist), must release the tackled player and the ball, and may only then play the ball from their side and through the gate. These players, even if they remain on their feet, must clearly release the tackled player before they may attempt to play the ball.

### C. THE GATE

1. All arriving players must enter the tackle zone through their gate. No part of a player’s body (including the arms), may enter the tackle through any other area. **PK**



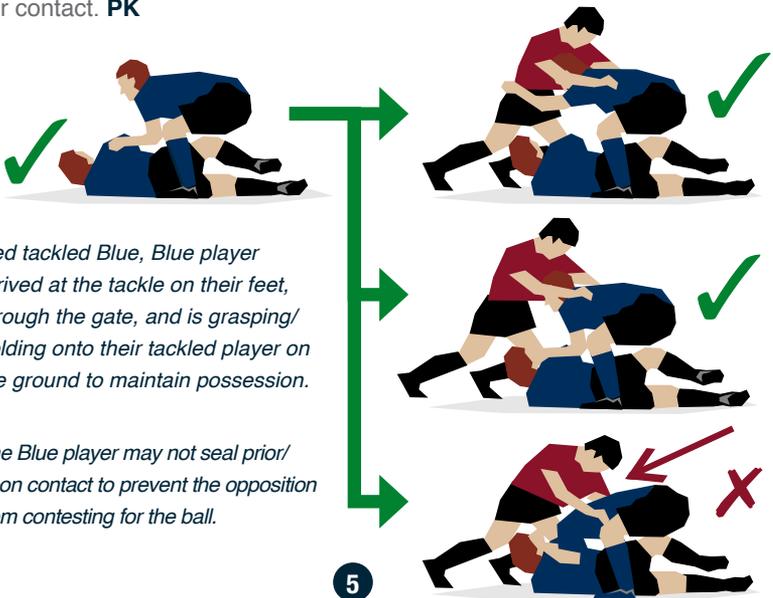
*Overhead view, Blue tackled Red. Players are only allowed entry through their gate.*

**D. ARRIVING PLAYERS**

1. Players who enter the tackle area or zone must stay on their feet. **PK**
2. At a tackle, arriving players are allowed to play the ball with their hands after an opposition player binds onto them, if they:
  - a. Arrive at the tackle legally,
  - b. Remain on their feet, and
  - c. Have possession of the ball prior to the contact occurring (i.e. was grasping/holding the ball - this should be a positive action to gain possession of the ball, not merely putting one's hands/arms on/over the ball).

NOTE: Thus, a ruck has not yet formed.

3. At a tackle, arriving players that put themselves over the ball with their weight supported by their hands, and then sweep their arms back to play the ball, should be penalized for going to ground. **PK**
4. Players may grasp or hold onto their tackled player who is on the ground, as long as they have their weight firmly on their feet and are not using the player on the ground to support their weight. **PK**
5. If the player grasps onto their teammate, the tackled player is still required to place the ball away from their body to ensure its availability. **PK**
6. Players that have grasped/are holding onto their player on the ground may not lower their shoulders below their hips or lean with their weight on their player that is on the ground to prevent the contest when an opponent makes contact with them. They may continue to hold onto their player on the ground after contact. **PK**



*Red tackled Blue, Blue player arrived at the tackle on their feet, through the gate, and is grasping/holding onto their tackled player on the ground to maintain possession.*

*The Blue player may not seal prior/upon contact to prevent the opposition from contesting for the ball.*

7. Players who are SEALING, secure the ball without their weight fully on their feet (i.e. leaning on the tackler/tackled player on the ground) OR who go to ground head first, or dive over players on the ground, OR dive over players on the ground with the ball between them should not be tolerated and penalized as they are preventing a contest. **PK**



*Blue tackled Red, Red player has secured possession by SEALING. This is NOT allowed.*

8. Players may position themselves at the tackle to prepare for contact with opposition players, however they have to be near/over the ball. They may not be too far ahead of the ball, i.e. “flooding” and taking away space in front of the ball. **PK**



*Being too far ahead of the ball, 'flooding', and taking away space in front of the ball.*



*Red tackled Blue, Blue player arrived at the tackle on their feet, through the gate, is NOT binding on players on the ground, remaining on their feet and preparing for contact at the tackle area.*



*Red tackled Blue, both players that arrived at the tackle are on their feet, arrived through the gate, and are contesting for possession. A ruck has formed.*

9. Players that use the saddle roll (See Page 12), must roll the player free and clear of the ball. If the player is rolled or pulled onto the ball, the player who attempted/executed the roll should be penalized. **PK**



## E. THE RUCK

1. The referee should use the term “Ruck” to indicate a ruck has formed.
2. Once a ruck is formed, it continues even if all defenders leave or fall to ground, as long as the ball is still contained within the ruck.
3. Referees are to immediately manage the offside line and strictly apply the offside law to the fringes and the backlines. Defenders are to remain behind the offside line until the ball is out. **PK**
4. Players may contest the ruck by pushing on opponents but may not pull an opponent out the ruck or to the ground. **PK**
5. Players that join the ruck have to do so from the hindmost foot of a team mate and are not allowed to charge into the ruck without binding legally onto players in the ruck. **PK**

## MAUL

A maul is a defensive benefit in Sevens as often the ball is not available and the defensive team are awarded a turnover scrum. Referees should immediately announce “Maul” when a maul has formed.

### A. MANAGING THE MAUL

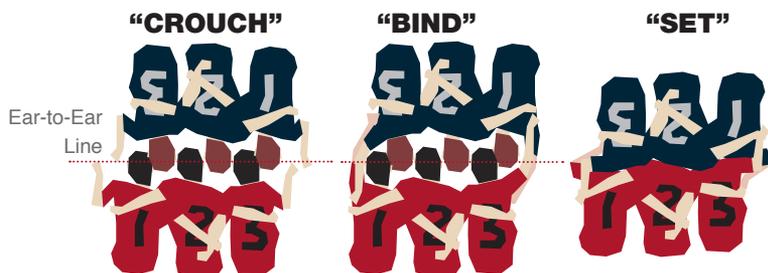
1. If a maul becomes stationary OR is moving parallel to the goal lines OR is moving backwards, referees will instruct players to “USE IT ONCE”, and give that team ample opportunity to comply within Law. If the maul again becomes stationary, the referee will instruct the team in possession to “USE IT”. If the ball does not become available the referee will award a turnover scrum.
2. The referee should not allow prolonged wrestling for the ball at a maul if it is clear that the ball will not emerge.
3. Pulling down the maul and/or collapsing the maul is NOT allowed by either team as often the defensive team may collapse the maul to win turnover possession. **PK**
4. Defensive players should enter from the last foot on their side. Entering around the side of a maul to attempt to hold up the ball carrier to gain a turnover should be penalized. **PK**

## SCRUM

The object is to get the ball into play as quickly as possible. Set your standards early, minimize resets, be demanding and precise. If the team that puts the ball in gets clean ball, play on, even if you notice an issue at the scrum that has no immediate material affect. Ensure to address the issue at the following scrum.

### A. ENGAGEMENT

1. The hooker has to bind on both their props and the props have to bind on their hooker. **PK**
2. Engagement process should be a consistent cadence, “Crouch, Bind, Set”.
3. Props have to bind on their opponents back or side before the referee calls “Set”.
4. Props must not bind on the opponent’s arm, hip or leg. **PK**
5. Scrum stability is essential. All players are required to ensure the scrum is stable and stationary before the put in. **FK**



### B. PUT-IN

1. Promote a fair contest by communicating expectations to the scrum half, and ensure they are square on the scrum and in the centre. The put-in must be straight and credible along the center line of the front rows. **FK**

### C. SCRUMHALVES

1. The non-winning scrumhalf must maintain both feet behind the ball or they could take up a position behind the last line of feet of their scrum. **PK**
2. Players must not fall on or over the ball as it is coming out of the scrum. **PK**

### D. DURING THE SCRUM

1. Players in the scrum may not intentionally kick the ball through the scrum OR out the tunnel. **PK**
2. Players may not unbind and attempt to leave the scrum early. **PK**
3. Whip-wheel (when the scrum turns/spins on its axis) is not allowed. Before a scrum can be wheeled legally there must be a clear forward movement by the combined scrum of the team that is driving their opponents backwards. **PK**
4. Props may not pull their opponents. **PK**

## E. OFFSIDE AT THE SCRUM

1. Players who are not in the scrum and who are not the team's scrum half, are offside if they remain in front of their offside line or overstep the offside line which is a line parallel to the goal lines and 5 metres behind the hindmost player of each team in a scrum. **PK**

## LINEOUT

### A. FORMATION

1. Each team has to have a minimum of 2 players in the lineout.
2. The defending team must have a player in the 5m area. This player may not support a jumper in the lineout, and must be 2m from the line-of-touch and 2m from the five-meter line until the lineout commences. **FK**
3. If a team elects to have a player in the receiver (scrumhalf) position, the receiver must be 2m from the lineout at the moment of the throw. If this player decides to move into the lineout prior to the throw they have to be replaced by another player from the lineout before the ball is thrown in. **FK**

### B. QUICK THROW-IN

1. Requirements are to use the ball that went into touch, the throw must travel 5m, taken from between the line of touch and the player's goal line and the ball must only have been touched by the throwing in player since it went into touch.
2. Referees are to be more aware of quick throw-ins, within law, and that the throw does not have to be straight, but may not be forward, and has to travel 5m. The quick throw-in can be taken between the line-of-touch and the player's goal line.
  - a. Ball not thrown 5m = opponents' option scrum or lineout
  - b. Ball prevented from traveling 5m or played before going 5m. **FK**
3. Players who hold onto the ball, or throw the ball away, when in touch, to prevent a quick throw-in should be penalized, on the line of touch, 15m line. This should not be tolerated. **PK and suspension**
4. Players may throw the ball to themselves as long as they meet the requirements.

### C. OFFENSES TO BE AWARE OF

1. Early jumping. **FK**
2. Closing the gap. **FK**
3. Obstructing jumpers. **PK**
4. Deliberately knocking the ball on. **PK**

#### D. OFFSIDE AT LINEOUT

1. Ensure backlines are 10m from the line of touch until the lineout is over. **PK**
2. Players in the lineout are not allowed to leave the lineout until it is over, i.e. move beyond the 15m line. **PK**

### ADVANTAGE

On most occasions advantage is shorter in Sevens. Recognize that non-offending teams may move backwards with the ball to reset themselves before attacking. Often in Sevens, a penalty kick at the spot of infringement is more advantageous than slow advantage. Only play advantage when it is likely that advantage may accrue.

#### A. SCRUM ADVANTAGE

1. Possession not under pressure with options is considered advantage gained regardless of position on the field.

#### B. PENALTY ADVANTAGE

1. Possession not under pressure where the gain line is reached is considered advantage gained.

### GENERAL PLAY

#### A. OFFSIDE AT KICKS

1. Players in front of the kicker from their team are to remain stationary until they are put outside, or must retreat toward their goal line if they are within ten meters between where the ball lands and their goal line. Referees are responsible to create space and should place little value to the materiality of offside at kicks and demand higher compliance. **PK or SCRUM OPTION**
2. No attempt to retreat must be penalized. Offside players advancing at a kick ahead should be instructed “STOP + COLOR (+ NUMBER, if possible)”. Players who continue to move forward must be penalized. **PK or SCRUM OPTION**
3. Players that are offside but not within 10m of where the ball lands may move laterally across the field.
4. Players that are offside when a kick goes into touch continue to be offside and must not advance if a quick throw-in is an option UNLESS they are put outside by players of their own team. Manage rather than over-reacting. **PK or SCRUM OPTION**

## FOUL PLAY

**FOUL PLAY IS NOT WITHIN THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME AND HAS NO PLACE IN RUGBY. IT SHOULD NOT BE TOLERATED.**

### A. TACKLING

The following are not acceptable practices:

1. Leading with the shoulder (making deliberate contact with the shoulder first), and then wrapping with the arm(s) or swinging the arm(s) into contact.  
**PK and admonishment and/or suspension**
2. Aiming a shoulder first, no-wrap tackle at the knees (e.g. football style). **PK and suspension**
3. Failing to wrap while tackling. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**
4. Spear tackle or tip tackle. Lifting a player from the ground, turning the body horizontal or beyond, and either driving the player into the ground or dropping the player without regard for the player's safety. **PK and Red Card.**
  - When a player is lifted, there is an obligation on the tackler to get the player to the ground safely.
  - If the tackler lowers the player such that the lower body contacts the ground first there is no offense.
  - If the tackler attempts to lower the player safely, but is unsuccessful, **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**
5. High tackle (including a chest high tackle where the arm eventually makes contact above the shoulders). **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**  
NOTE: If a player bends forward/down, and is then tackled above the shoulders due to this action, the tackler should be given the benefit of the doubt if their intent was not to tackle high/dangerously.
6. Tackling a player in the air, whether intentional or not should be dealt with severely. Merely having your "eyes on the ball" is not sufficient.
  - At a kick ahead where players may jump to catch the ball, the chasing player is responsible for the safety of the receiving player, as in a tackle. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**
  - If both players jump to the same height with a clear intention of playing the ball, play on.
  - If the chasing player jumps in a clear attempt to play the ball and jumps into a stationary player, play on.

7. At a tackle, if a player is on their feet with their hands on the ball, an opposition player (if they enter through the gate) may legally bind onto them and saddle roll the player to expose the ball and/or tackle the player.
  - They may not lift the player off of the ground and they may not grab the player above the shoulders and/or around the neck.

**PK and suspension**



**B. FEET ON BODIES**

1. Players may not stamp, trample, or kick opponents.

**PK and admonishment and/or suspension/RED CARD**

**C. GENERAL**

1. Deliberate offenses should result in a suspension. This can be a first offense without prior warning, or a player that re-offends or a team that re-offends. **PK and suspension**
2. Repeated offenses can be team and/or individual, and should be addressed sooner rather than later. Repeat infringement patterns, i.e. offenses close to the goal line, AND repeated infringements by an individual player are both without time limit. Repeat team infringements in particular aspects (e.g. tackle), may warrant another admonishment rather than moving up to a suspension if sufficient time has passed without infringement. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**
3. ‘Cheap shots’ and off the ball offenses are unacceptable and should result in a suspension. **PK and suspension**
4. Holding/obstructing players off the ball. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**
5. Perpetrators and retaliators are responsible and are to be dealt with - the last offence penalized will be the restart of play. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**

6. Players disputing the referees decision should not be tolerated. Awarding a PK or advancing an already awarded PK/FK 10m is appropriate.

**PK and admonishment and/or suspension**

7. Players that deliberately prevent a quick tap penalty/free kick from being taken, should be considered deliberate and penalized. **PK and admonishment and/or suspension**

8. Players that deliberately throw/kick the ball away to prevent the opposition from playing the ball, after a stoppage or a penalty/free kick has been awarded against them.

**PK and admonishment and/or suspension**



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