



Hong Kong Mini Rugby Football Union

香港小型欖球總會

Mini Rugby Newsletter – September 2011



Peter Hudson – HKMRFU Coaching and Refereeing Coordinator

Dear Chairman,

Communications

I would like to begin this newsletter by discussing the topic of communications. As the Mini Chairman of your respective clubs, you are the focal point for the flow of information to the HKMRFU committee. I'm a big supporter of passionate discussion and feedback, but if I have to deal with individual coaches from every club, I will never have the opportunity to leave my computer! I recently received a very passionate email from Duncan Macfarlane (HKU) raising his concerns over the introduction of the 3M Offside Rule. Duncan has raised some very valid points for which I intend to address in this newsletter. The point I would like to make is that Duncan also included 27 other HKU coaches in his e-mail. You can only imagine the number of e-mails this creates if you multiply that across 19 Mini Rugby Clubs. Going forward, as a first step, can I please encourage you to remind your coaches to summarize their concerns or feedback and have the Clubs Mini Chairman present this information to the HKMRFU Committee. As a second step, I'm also happy to deal with the Head Coaches of various age groups to address their questions, concerns and feedback. If the Head Coach does e-mail me, can they please refrain from including all the coaches!

3M Offside

At present, Singapore, Malaysia and Wales are using the 3M Offside and 6-tackle Turnover laws. Before I continue I want to make one thing perfectly clear. In Mini's we are totally focused on the FUN-damental aspects of player pathway development. Duncan Macfarlane's passion in this area of concern has sound grounding, as it is central to our philosophy and modus operandi. The core of his concern is relating to the purpose this law has in the FUN-damental aspects of player pathway development? A very good question!

Before answering this, I would like to present some research findings from the Australian Rugby Union and history of how this law was introduced to Hong Kong Mini Rugby. The ARU has adopted a 'no offside' law as opposed to the 'two-handed touch' law. I read with interest in the ARU 2009-2010 Rugby Pathway Review 'White Paper', the findings on which version of Walla Rugby has the higher activity levels and number of tries scored – the original 'no offside' or the 'two-handed touch' law? The 'no offside' version allows for players once tagged to stop and pass to a teammate with forward momentum, whereas the 'two-handed touch' version requires players to return to the position in which they were tagged. **The 'no offside' version encourages defensive players to retire towards their own try line after a tag**, the 'two-handed touch' version requires defensive players to retire 5M after each tag. Twenty U6s-U7s Walla Rugby Teams were professionally filmed and digitally coded in order to record each player's level of involvement. The findings indicated the following:

- 1) The 'no offside' version has 45% more player activity than the 'two-handed touch',
- 2) The 'no offside' version has 17% more tries than the 'two-handed touch',
- 3) The 'no offside' version is easier to referee as there is a less rigid management of the tag.
- 4) The 'no offside' version promotes attack over defense more than 'two-handed touch' which results in higher activity levels and numbers of tries scored.

The ARU Common Pathway Law defining "The Tag" states the following:

- A tag is a two-handed touch on the shorts only. Tags are not permitted on the jersey above the waist, no the legs. Player's jerseys should be tucked in.
- Referee will call "Tag", the coach may then call "Turn and Pass".
- Once tagged, players are required to stop as quickly as possible and turn and pass to a teammate. They are not required to return to the mark where they were tagged.
- There are no offside lines. This ensures the game continuity and forward progress by removing a setline of defense.
- No opposing player may block or prevent the tagged player from passing the ball to a teammate (FK).
- If a player cannot pass for any reason, a scrum is awarded and the team in possession gets the throw-in. (Note: ARU Law allows U6s – U8s to scrum).

In my opinion this law makes total sense and could be adopted by the U8s (scrum) and U6s-U7s with a minor modification that if a player cannot pass for any reason, or a defensive player does not retire towards their try line, a (FK) is awarded to the team in possession, assuming there was material effect on the attacking team. This law allows advantage to be applied and materiality on play to be officiated sensibly.

You can see that the 3M Offside and 6-tackle turn over law, is a hybrid of the 'two-handed touch' law. Instead of requiring a tagged player to return to the tagged mark, it allows three steps to be taken. Instead of requiring the defensive players to retire 5M, it requires 3M. Prior to me being appointed to the HKMRFU Committee, there had been several applications made by Hong Kong Mini's clubs to the HKMRFU to adopt this law along with Singapore and Malaysia. The Singapore Law was trialed at the HKFC 125 Year Tai Pan Tournament. As the Deputy Head Coach of the Discovery Bay Pirates U6s I was keen to enter a squad into this tournament to trial its effectiveness. In preparation for this new version of the

game, I used the following FUN-damental games to train the Onside/Offside aspect of this law variation. I used games like, Line Tag, Corner Line Tag, Battle Line Attack, Line Raiders and Channel Ball to simply and progressively train the players in this aspect of rugby. My reflections were that the 3M offside line did very much encourage the creation of time and space to play the game. The 6-tackle turnover aspect made very little or no impact on player activity and played no part in balancing possession.

“HAVING SAID ALL THAT, THE REAL QUESTION IS WHAT VERSION CREATES THE BEST EXPERIENCE AND PROGRESSION FOR OUR HONG KONG MINIS PLAYERS???”

In both the last Chairman’s Meeting and Newsletter (August 2011 Edition) I made the statement that nowhere in rugby law, or the principals of the game, does a tackle count dictate possession. I stand by this statement and subsequently the HKMRFU has not included the 6-tackle variation of Singapore Law. Duncan Macfarlane (HKU) states that nowhere in the rugby law does a player have to retreat 3M when a tackle is made before moving forward again and that there is an absence of consistency here in my logic. It must be remembered that offside lines are created at set piece and breakdown to protect the balance of continuity of possession and contest for possession. **This is a fundamental principle of the game.** Therefore, the 3M offside law creates some progression in law and principal. That progression being defined by an example of a breakdown in play (tackle first, then progressing to ruck or maul) or set piece (scrum or lineout). It forms part of the first stage of FUN-damental rugby that must be understood by players and the use of a 3M offside law can produce this understanding if coached correctly.

“REALITY CHECK, REALITY CHECK! THEY ARE ONLY 5 YEARS OLD!”

As a coach, if you intend to sit your U6s-U8s players down and try to explain to them the principle behind the 3M offside rule, then don’t bother to turn up!! As coaches we are compelled to use very simple FUN-damental games that instill these principles in young players without them really comprehending what they are learning. It is the simple rules of the training games that will instill the FUN-damental principles of rugby, not laws! Therefore we are now onto the question of what simple, fun training games can we use to teach players these principles. As previously stated I use games like, Line Tag, Corner Line Tag, Battle Line Attack, Line Raiders and Channel Ball to simply and progressively train the players in the aspect of onside/offside. In the September Issue of “Mini Rugby Coaching – Newsletter” these games are discussed and described in detail.

Conclusions

The process of trialing the hybrid version of the ‘two-handed touch’ law (3M offside) was well underway before I came onto the HKMRFU committee. As previously stated the HKMRFU is willing to commence this season using this progression on a trial basis. PLEASE REMEMBER, as a coach it is the simple rules of the training games that will instill the FUN-damental principles of rugby, not laws! Your feedback and experience from festivals is most welcome and open for discussion. My answer to the above question of what version creates the best experience and progression is the ‘no offside’ law! However, it is just my opinion and we as a committee must collect our experiences and feedback to determine if yet another change is warranted?

As always, we are open to feedback and suggestions from the Chairman, so please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter Hudson
HKMRFU – Coaching and Refereeing Coordinator.