



Hong Kong Mini Rugby Football Union

香港小型欖球總會

Mini Rugby Refereeing – U8 Laws and Guidelines



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Generic information

The following information applies to all age groups.

Introduction:

The purpose of this document is to guide

- referees on the laws of the game for a specific year group; and
- coaches as to how they should be training their players to comply with the laws that apply across all Mini Clubs, especially for inter-club competitions such as festivals.

As such it is essential that all referees and coaches make themselves aware of these laws and that clubs provide suitable support to assist members and players in interpreting these laws correctly. Coaches are strongly encouraged to participate in referee training courses.

These laws are based on those published by the iRB for the senior game to ensure

- a smooth transition for players from Mini to Youth to Senior rugby
- a consistent base for Mini rugby.

Naturally there are variations on the senior game and many of the laws have been simplified or even removed as appropriate. In what follows the numbering of laws for Mini rugby uses the corresponding numbering in the iRB booklet “Laws of the Game – Rugby Union – 2011”.

With the exception of U6 laws any additions to or **variations** of the laws of the preceding year group are given in *italics* to make it easier for coaches moving up a year to identify the changes.

The spirit of the game and its laws:

“It is not the winning but the spirit of fair play, enjoyment and safety that is paramount.” The “Spirit of the Game” includes:

- to enjoy the game.
- to play as part of a team;
- to give one's best efforts at all times;
- the ability to accept defeat gracefully and to win with equal grace;
- to play the game and not cheat because you think you may not get caught;
- the ability to abide by the referees decision without resentment;
- the ability to take hard knocks when fairly given and never bear a grudge;

Coaching and Refereeing Minis:

The laws alter progressively across the year groups to both accommodate the players' growth and maturity as well as their development of rugby skills. It is essential that a coach avoids going beyond the laws for their year group even if he/she believes that the players are capable of it. To introduce skills from later year groups will both be unfair and possibly dangerous in inter-club games.

In games coaches are expected to encourage respect for the opposing team. In particular, where one team is clearly dominating a game at the expense of the morale of the other team coaches should work with the referee in trying to bring some form of balance to the game so that both teams leave the pitch with a sense of satisfaction and achievement.

When coaches are allowed to accompany teams onto the pitch they are there to help the referee to ensure that players get the maximum enjoyment and benefit from participating within the laws of the game. By their own actions and attitudes coaches must set an example to players of how the decisions of the referee must be accepted with good grace at all times. It is acceptable to request clarification of a decision, but it is totally inappropriate to challenge that decision on the field of play. Any further discussion should take place off the pitch away from the players.

The primary role of the referee is to allow the game to flow as far as possible and to achieve that aim full use of the ‘advantage’ rule should be taken. A referee is expected to

- conduct the game to ensure the safety of all participants;
- apply advantage equally to both sides;
- apply the rules fairly to both teams;
- communicate clearly decisions to the players and, as far as possible, to spectators;
- keep up with the game.

When the referee considers that spectators are behaving inappropriately towards the referee, then a direct confrontation should be avoided. A complaint should be registered after the game with the coach of the relevant side and/or the chair of the club concerned. For serious cases the referee should report the incident to the organizer of the event and/or the chair of the Mini Union.

Common failings of some referees are:

- not blowing the whistle loudly to ensure that all concerned are aware of the stoppage;
- not clearly and loudly describing the decision by signal and voice;
- where appropriate not explaining to players involved how the offense can be avoided in the future; and

- not admitting an error.

The U8 game

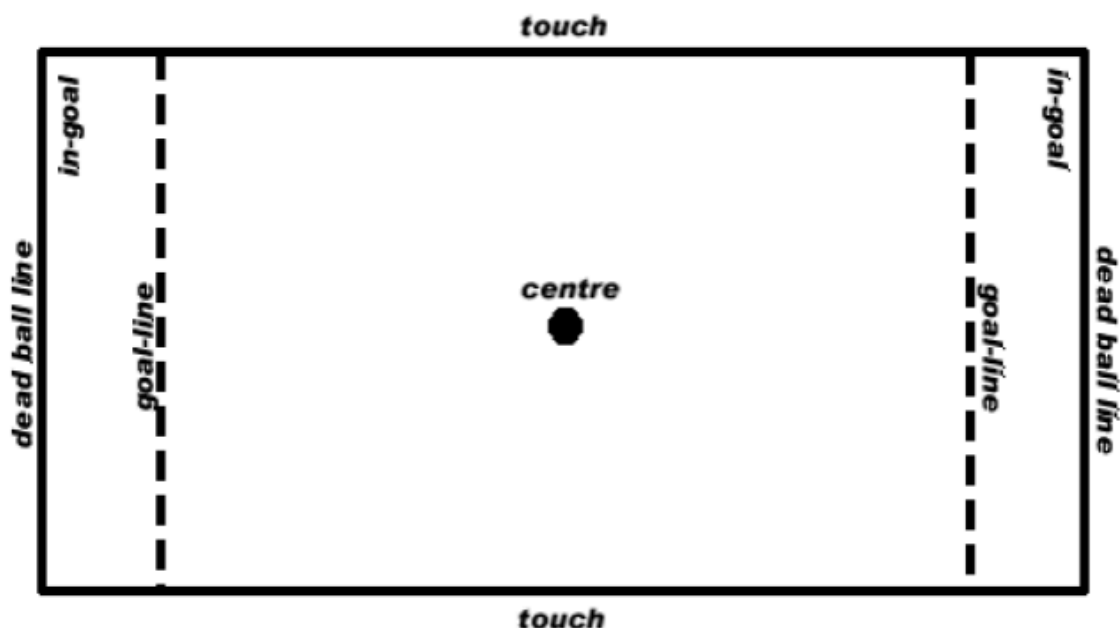
The main objectives of this year group are to build on U7 skills in that players learn how to:

- *appreciate some of the different roles for forwards and backs*
- *participate in a non-contested, no-push 3-man scrum including its offside rules*
- *distribute the ball from a set piece*

1 Pitch size

Inevitably this will depend on

- the size of the players;
- the number of players involved; and
- the amount of space available.



As a general guide the length of the pitch should be *three-quarters* the width of a full-size pitch and half as wide.

Note that for this year group there are no goal posts as kicking for points is not allowed.

2 Ball size:

Size 3.

3 Number of players:

A team will consist of eight players with up to three substitutes. *Three players will be designated as forwards and five players designated as backs.*

Substitutions can be made at any time provided that coaches notify the referee of any change so that a check can be made on numbers on the pitch.

The coach may accompany the team on the pitch during the game to instruct players; however, the coach must not deliberately interfere with

- the movement of the ball or any players;
- the referee's control of the game.

4 Players' clothing:

Each player must wear a mouth-guard.

Boots should not have a leading single stud and should have no sharp edges on the studs.

Any spectacles, gloves, or headgear should bear the iRB-approval label.

The referee's decision on the suitability of any item of clothing is final.

5 Time:

The length of a game may vary according to the event, but normally it should not be more than 15 minutes. Usually this time will include a 2-minute break at half-time at which point teams will change ends, although for shorter games this break may be dropped.

Depending on the weather the referee should ensure that suitable water breaks are taken in addition to any half-time stoppage.

6 Match officials:

Duty of the referee before the match:

Point out the lines denoting the pitch especially the goal-line.
To determine which team starts at which end and who kicks off.
To remind both sets of forwards on the conduct of scrums.

Duty of the coaches before the match:

Identify any players playing up/down to both the opposition coach and the referee. Any player playing outside of his/her age group without approval will be required to leave the pitch.
Check players kit for compliance with the laws especially boots.

Mandatory substitution of a player:

Where the referee considers that a player has been guilty of dangerous play on more than one occasion, then the referee can require that the player be substituted.

7 Mode of play

Playing a match:

The match starts with a kick-off.
After the kick-off, any player who is on-side may take the ball and run with it.
Any player may throw it or pass the ball to another player.
Any player may tackle an opponent holding the ball.
Any player may take part in a scrum.
Any player may ground the ball in in-goal.

8 Advantage:

The Law of advantage takes precedence over most other Laws and its purpose is to make play more continuous with fewer stoppages for infringements. Players are encouraged to play to the whistle despite infringements by their opponents. When the result of an infringement by one team is that their opposing team may gain an advantage, the referee does not whistle immediately for the infringement.

The referee is sole judge of whether or not a team has gained an advantage. The referee has wide discretion when making decisions.

Advantage can be either territorial or tactical.

Advantage must not be applied when the ball comes out of either end of the tunnel at a scrum without having been played.

The referee blows the whistle immediately once the referee decides an advantage cannot be gained by the non-offending team.

9 Method of scoring:

Each try counts for one point.
Note that there are no other means of scoring.

10 Foul play:

Obstruction:

Charging or pushing – penalty: free kick.
Running in front of a ball carrier. A player must not intentionally move or stand in front of a team-mate carrying the ball thereby preventing opponents from tackling the current ball-carrier or the opportunity to tackle potential ball-carriers when they gain possession. – penalty: free kick.

Dangerous tackling:

A player must not grab the clothes of the ball-carrier, tackle above the waist or below the thigh, or attempt to physically stop a player. – penalty: free kick.

Dangerous play in a scrum:

The front row of a scrum must not push against its opponents. – penalty: free kick.

Players must not intentionally collapse a scrum. – penalty: free kick.

The defending team must not contest for the ball in the scrum. – penalty: free kick.

Acts contrary to good sportsmanship:

– penalty: free kick.

Kicking the ball.

A player may not kick the ball out of hand or a loose ball – penalty: free kick.

Ripping the ball:

An opposition player may not rip the ball from the ball carrier – penalty: free kick

11 Off-side and on-side in general play:

In general play a player is off-side if the player is in front of a team-mate who is carrying the ball, or in front of a team-mate who last played the ball.

Off-side means that a player is temporarily out of the game. Such players are liable to be penalized if they take part in the game.

A player who is in an off-side position is not automatically penalized.

In general play, there are three ways by which an off-side player can be put on-side:

- When the off-side player runs behind the team-mate who last touched or carried the ball.
- When a team-mate carrying the ball runs in front of the off-side player.
- When an opponent obtains the ball.

At a scrum, a player is off-side if the player is in front of the off-side line as described in the relevant parts of these Laws.

When a scrum forms, a player who is off-side and is retiring as required by Law remains off-side even when the opposing team wins possession in the scrum.

- *The player is put on-side by retiring behind the applicable off-side line. No other action of the off-side player and no action of that player's team-mates can put the off-side player on-side.*
- *If the player remains off-side the player can be put on-side only the action of the opposing team; i.e. when it advances 2 metres with ball.*

12 Knock-on or throw-forward:

A knock-on occurs when a player loses possession of the ball and it goes forward, or when a player hits the ball forward with the hand or arm, or when the ball hits the hand or arm and goes forward, and the ball touches the ground or another player before the original player can catch it.

A throw-forward occurs when a player throws or passes the ball forward.

A scrum is awarded at the place of the knock-on or throw-forward.

If the offense occurs within the in-goal, then the scrum is awarded 3 metres from the goal-line in line with the place of infringement not closer than 3 metres from the touchline.

13 Kick-off and restart kicks:

A kick-off is taken with the ball on the ground at the centre spot.

All the kicker's team must be behind the ball when it is kicked. If they are not, then penalty: free kick to the receiving team.

All the opposing team must stand on or behind the 5-metre 'line' until the ball is kicked.

If they are not, penalty: free kick at the centre to the kicking team.

If the ball does not reach the opponent's 5-metre 'line' but is played by an opponent, play continues.

If the ball does not reach the opponent's 5-metre 'line', then the opposing team has two choices:

- *To have the ball kicked off again, or*
- *To have a scrum at the centre. They throw-in the ball.*

Once the ball passes the 5-metre 'line', then the receiving team must be allowed to collect the ball. Interference by the kicking team results in a penalty: free kick to the receiving team at the point of interference.

If the ball is kicked directly into touch, then the opposing team has two choices:

- *To have the ball kicked off again, or*
- *To have a scrum at the centre. They throw-in the ball.*

If the ball is kicked in to the in-goal without having touched or been touched by a player, then the opposing team has two choices:

- *To have the ball kicked off again, or*
- *To have a scrum at the centre. They throw-in the ball.*

After a score the non-scoring team restarts play with a tap kick at the centre spot.

14 Ball on the Ground No-Tackle:

Any on-side player may play the ball.

15 Tackle:

A **tackle** is defined as placing two hands on the area of the body between the waist and mid-thighs (basically the shorts).

A tackle occurs when the player carrying the ball is tagged by one of the opposing team.

When the ball-carrier has been successfully tagged, the referee will call out "Pass". At which point

- the ball-carrier is expected to pass the ball within 3 steps. On failure to do so the referee will halt the game and bring the ball-carrier back to the point of the tackle to carry out the pass.
- opposing team players must not obstruct the ball-carrier in making a pass and **must retire 3 metres from the line of the tackle** as quickly as possible. Failure to do so results in a penalty: free kick to the non-offending team **at the point of the tackle**.
- if the ball-carrier then runs out of play or over the goal-line, then the referee will halt the game and bring the ball-carrier back to the point of the tackle to carry out the pass.

16 Ruck:

Not applicable at this age.

17 Maul:

Not applicable at this age.

18 Mark:

Not applicable at this age.

19 Touch and Lineout:

If the ball is dropped or carried into touch, then play is resumed with a free kick to the opposing team 3 metres from touch.

Lineout is not applicable at this age.

20 Scrum:**Definitions:**

A scrum is formed in the field of play when three players from each team, bound together in one row for each team, close up with their opponents so that the heads are interlocked. This creates a tunnel into which a scrum-half throws in the ball so that the hooker can hook the ball with either of his/her feet.

The middle line of a scrum must not be within 3 metres of the goal-line. A scrum cannot take place within 3 metres of a touch-line.

The middle player in each front row is the hooker.

The players on either side of the hooker are the props. The left-side props are the loose-head props. The right-side props are the tight-head props.

Forming a scrum:

If there is an infringement or stoppage in in-goal, the place for the scrum is 3 metres from the goal-line.

The scrum is formed in line with the place of the infringement or stoppage.

A team must not intentionally delay forming a scrum. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

A scrum must have three players from each team. All three players must stay bound to the scrum until it ends. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

Front rows coming together: First, the referee marks with a foot the place where the scrum is to be formed. Before the two front rows come together they must be standing not more than an arm's length apart. The ball is in the scrum-half's hands, ready to be thrown in. The front rows must crouch so that when they meet, each player's head and shoulders are no lower than the hips. The front rows must interlock so that no player's head is next to the head of a team-mate. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

On the referee's call the front rows 'crouch', 'touch', 'pause', and then come together only when the referee called 'engage'. This call is not a command but an indication that the front rows may come together when ready. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

A crouched position is the extension of the normal stance by bending the knees sufficiently to move into the engagement without a charge.

A front row must not form at a distance from its opponents and rush against them. This is dangerous play. – penalty: free kick.

The scrum must remain stationary until the ball has left the scrum and the scrum has unformed. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

The scrum is uncontested, that is the team throwing in the ball must win the ball. - penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

Front-row players' positions:

The front-row players must have both feet on the ground, with their weight firmly on at least one foot. Players must not cross their feet, although the foot of one player may cross a team-mate's foot. Each player's shoulders must be no lower than the hips. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

Until the ball is thrown in, the 'receiving' hooker must be in a position to hook the ball,.

The hooker must have both feet on the ground, with weight firmly on at least one foot.

The hooker's foremost foot must not be in front of the foremost foot of that team's props.

– penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

Binding in the scrum:

When a player binds on a team-mate that player must use the whole arm from hand to shoulder to grasp the team-mate's body at or below the level of the armpit. Placing a hand on another player is not satisfactory binding.

All front row players must bind firmly and continuously from the start to the finish of the scrum. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

The hooker may bind either over or under the arms of the props. The props must not support the hooker so that the hooker has no weight on either foot. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

A loose-head prop must bind on the opposing tight-head prop by placing the left arm inside the right arm of the tight-head and gripping the tight-head prop's jersey on the back or side. The loose-head prop must not grip the chest, arm, sleeve or collar of the opposition tight-head prop. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

A tight-head prop must bind on the opposing loose-head prop by placing the right arm outside the left upper arm of the loose-head and gripping the loose-head prop's jersey on the back or side. The tight-head prop must not grip the chest, arm, sleeve or collar of the opposition loose-head prop. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

If a scrum collapses, the referee must blow the whistle immediately. The scrum is reformed and the ball is thrown in by the same scrum-half unless a penalty has been awarded.

Throwing the ball into the scrum:

As soon as the front rows have come together, the scrum-half must throw-in the ball without delay once instructed by the referee. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

The scrum-half must hold the ball with both hands, with its major axis parallel to the ground and to the touch-line. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

The scrum-half must throw-in the ball straight along the middle line of the tunnel. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

If the scrum-half throws in the ball and it comes out at either end of the tunnel, the ball must be thrown in again unless a penalty has been awarded.

If the scrum-half throws in the ball and it comes out through either front row without being struck by the receiving hooker, the ball must be thrown in again unless a penalty has been awarded.

If the ball is played by the receiving hooker and comes out of the tunnel, advantage may apply.

Front-row players:

Only the receiving hooker may strike for the ball using a foot or lower leg, but he/she must not raise or advance a foot until the ball has left the scrum-half's hands.

The receiving hooker must not strike for the ball with both feet off the ground. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

No other player must deliberately strike. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

If any other player accidentally contacts the ball, then advantage may apply otherwise the ball must be thrown in again.

The referee must penalize strictly any intentional collapsing of the scrum. This is dangerous play. – penalty: free kick.

A scrum-half must not kick the ball while it is in the scrum. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

Ending the scrum:

When the ball comes out of the scrum in accordance with the above laws, the scrum ends.

On collecting the ball the scrum-half must immediately pass the ball – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

Off-side at the scrum:

The purpose of the scrum off-side law is to ensure that, until the scrum ends, the team winning the ball has a clear space in which to make use of it.

The scrum-half not throwing the ball into the scrum

- must take up a position either at the same side of the scrum as the scrum-half throwing in the ball **and remain within 1 metre of the scrum** or behind the off-side line defined for other players. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.
- must not move beyond the middle line of the tunnel until the scrum ends. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.
- Players who are not in the scrum, and who are not the team's scrum-half, are off-side if they remain within **5 metres** of the back feet of their front row. – penalty: on the first occasion the referee will issue a warning but for any further repetition free kick.

21 Penalty and Free kicks:

A free kick is to be taken at the place of infringement. If the place is within 5 metres of the opponent's goal-line, the mark for the kick is 5 metres from the goal-line.

When a free kick is awarded for an infringement in in-goal, the mark for the kick is in the field of play, 5 metres from the goal-line.

The kicker must kick the ball a visible distance. If the kicker is holding it, it must clearly leave the hands. If it is on the ground, it must clearly leave the mark. Failure to do so will require the free kick to be retaken. Any further repetition will result in a penalty: free kick to the opposing team.

On taking the kick the kicker must immediately pass the ball. Failure to do so will result in a penalty: free kick to the opposing team.

The kicker must await the referee's signal to take the kick. Failure to do so will result in a penalty: free kick to the opposing team.

All the kicker's team must be behind the ball until it has been kicked. Failure to do so will result in a penalty: free kick to the opposing team.

The opposing team must all withdraw at least 5 metres from the line of the free kick.

They can only move forward once the ball has been kicked. Failure to do so will result in a penalty: free kick to the kicking team 5 metres forwards of the original mark but not closer than 5 metres from the goal-line.

Penalty kicks are not applicable at this age.

22 In-goal:

When an attacking player is first to ground the ball in the opponent's in-goal, the attacking player scores a try.




When a defending player is first to ground the ball in their in-goal, the defending player makes a touch-down. *The result depends on who initially placed the ball in the in-goal:*




- *If the attacking team caused the ball to enter the in-goal area prior to the touch down, then play restarts with a free-kick to the defending team 5 metres from the goal-line.*
- *If the defending team caused the ball to enter the in-goal area prior to the touch down, then play restarts with a scrum 3 metres from the goal-line with the attacking team throwing the ball into the scrum.*

When a tackle is made in-goal the referee will halt the game and restart the game with a free kick to the side with the ball 5 metres from the goal-line.

Referee Signals

The use of referee signals is recommended in order to help the referee communicate with players and spectators.

		
<p>2. Free kick Shoulders parallel with the touch line. Arm bent square at elbow, upper arm pointing towards non-offending team.</p>	<p>3. Try Referee's back to the dead ball line. Arm raised vertically.</p>	<p>4. Advantage Arm outstretched, waist high, towards non-offending team, for a period of approximately 5 seconds.</p>

		
<p>5. Scrum awarded Shoulders parallel with touch line. Arm horizontal pointing towards team to throw in the ball.</p>	<p>6. Forming a scrum Elbows bent, hands above head fingers touching.</p>	<p>7. Throw forward / forward pass Hands gesture as if passing an imaginary ball forward.</p>



8. Knock-on

Arm out-stretched with open hand above head, and moves backwards and forwards.