HONG KONG REFEREES GAME MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES 2020/21

Produced by the HKRU Referee Department with the Coaching and Selection Group

This Game Management document forms the basis on how the rugby laws shall be interpreted and applied in Hong Kong across all levels of the game. It is a document for the whole rugby community to assist all to better understand how Laws are applied and to avoid misunderstanding. It is hoped that across the board it will assist in communicating to all on how the game should be played and adjudicated and create more consistency from referees and better cooperation between players, coaches and referees. It should be viewed in conjunction with the relevant clips that have been produced for each priority area.

1. It is on this document that referees should base their decision making and it is on this document that CMO's will score their performance level.

2. Most information in this document should be applied with *materiality* in mind. Does it have a significant impact on the outcome of the situation and the continuity of the game? If you believe so, then you must take action. If not, play on.

3. If something is considered dangerous or foul play, then it must always be acted upon.

4. With a wide variety of abilities and ages playing the game at community level in Hong Kong, a large part of the referee's role is to have *empathy* for the game.

5. Let the game breath. Communicating clearly and effectively during the game is key to this. Use *preventative communication* before you blow your whistle and explanation after you have blown your whistle.

6. What is also important is the use of *advantage*. Whenever playing advantage, communicate effectively to the players what the advantage is for and when it is over. Remember, sometimes the best advantage for the teams is a quick whistle.

7. Above all, enjoying being involved in the great game of rugby and getting the best seat in the house!!

TACKLE

'for a tackle to occur, the ball carrier is held and brought to ground by one or more opponents.'

Referees priority at a tackle

1. Tackler/Assist Tacklers
2. Tackled Player
3. Arriving Players

TACKLER – A player who goes to ground in the act of making a tackle
ASSIST TACKLERS – Players who did not go to ground in the act of making a tackle

- These players must **clearly release** the tackled player and the ball
- **Referees should be strict on the tackler who doesn't quickly roll away. They must move away east-west from the tackled player and the ball. Tacklers who prevent *quick ball (*see below*) or affect the quality of the cleanout may be penalised. – 2020/21 priority**

*An understanding of the speed of the ball at different levels is important in getting what matters in this area of the game

- Tacklers and assist tacklers can only play from their side of the tackle – through the gate and square to their goal line

THE TACKLED PLAYER – A ball carrier who is held and brought to ground

- **The tackled player must make the ball available in one dynamic movement. They must not crawl or roll repeatedly to slow the ball when isolated or under pressure – 2020/21 priority**
- U19 rugby – no squeeze ball. This must be penalised when identified

ARRIVING PLAYERS – Other players from both teams not involved in the tackle

- **Players from both teams entering the tackle must arrive from the direction of their own goal line – through the gate – 2020/21 priority**
- **Arriving players must not go to ground to seal possession or deny a contest. – 2020/21 priority**
- Players who legally clean out and then end up off their feet should not be penalised. If there is time, they must be encouraged to reload into an on feet position
- Players who are on their feet and have a firm grasp of the ball before the ruck forms, can continue to play the ball. To win a holding on penalty, the 'jackler' must be on their feet, supporting their own body weight and be attempting to lift the ball
- **Teammates who go to ground with the ball carrier in a tackle ('the Latcher') must roll away or get to their feet. These players cannot stay on top of the ball to deny a contest for possession. If there is time, referees must communicate with these players – 2020/21 priority**

SUMMARY - PRIORITY AT THE TACKLE AREA:
Tacklers - clear release and roll
Assist Tacklers - clear release and through the gate
Tackled Player - make the ball available quickly
Arriving Players - through the gate and stay on their feet

RUCK

'A ruck is formed when at least one player from each team are in contact, on their feet and over the ball.'

Referees priority at ruck

1. Clearly identifying when a ruck forms is crucial
2. Ball available is key
3. Players cannot use their hands unless they have a firm grasp of the ball prior to a ruck forming
4. Players entering the ruck must come through the gate and must stay on their feet
5. Offside lines are at the hindmost foot of each side of the ruck

TECHNICAL

- If players do go off their feet unintentionally, they must not disrupt the availability of the ball or prevent the opposition from winning the ball cleanly and quickly
- No player may use their hands in a ruck unless they legally had a firm grasp on the ball before the ruck formed. In this situation, they can continue to play the ball, providing they are on their feet
- Players cleaning out must not go past the 1 metre area. Players must not interfere with the opposition on the fringes of a ruck or those not involved in the breakdown

BALL OUT

- Only when the ball is totally exposed or clear of bodies, is it considered to be out of the ruck
- The scrum half is allowed to free the ball if it is trapped. They must not be played until the ball is out
- **When the ball has been clearly won by a team at the ruck and the ball is available to be played, the referee should call "Use It". The scrum half then has 5 seconds to use the ball – 2020/21 priority**
- A player can pick up the ball if both their feet are level with or behind the ball. If a player is still bound with an opponent, they cannot pick up the ball
- Players cannot step through or over a ruck until the ball is cleared. These players are unbound and offside

SAFETY

- **Players must not charge into rucks without binding. Any charging that results in contact with the opposition's head or neck may result in a RED CARD – 2020/21 priority**
- Feet on bodies in a vertical motion (stamping) is not acceptable and players must be sanctioned. Depending on the incident and its severity, either yellow or red cards may be necessary.
- A player must not kick the ball out of a ruck. The ball can be hooked in a backwards motion.

SUMMARY - PRIORITIES AT THE RUCK:

Players must enter through the gate
Players must stay on their feet
No hands once the ruck has formed
Ball out when lifted and clear of the ruck, or when past the last foot
Scrum half not to be interfered with
Offside players should be managed

MAUL

'A phase of play consisting of a ball carrier and at least one player from each team, bound together and on their feet.'

Referees priority at maul

1. Locate the ball
2. Clearly identifying and communicating when a maul forms
3. Communicate if possible to allow play to continue immediately when the maul collapses or clearly stops moving

- Referees should communicate to players when a maul has clearly been formed
- The priority for the referee at the maul is to locate the ball. This will allow you to make the best decision
- The ball can only be moved backwards hand to hand once the maul has formed. A player is not allowed to move/slide to the back of the maul when they are in possession of the ball
- Grabbing a player around the head or neck in a maul is dangerous play and should be treated accordingly

PLAYERS JOINING THE MAUL

- **Players from both sides must join from an onside position and bind onto the hindmost player in a maul. Attackers must not join clearly in front of the player in the maul with the ball – 2020/21 priority**
- When a maul is formed at a lineout or from a kick, defenders must have access to the ball carrier at the formation of the maul. It is obstruction if blockers move in front of the ball carrier before the maul is formed

DURING A MAUL

- **Players unbound on the side of the maul may not slide forward or 'swim' around the maul. These players are not remaining bound and should be managed first or penalised – 2020/21 priority**
- Players who join the maul legally and are caught up in the maul (bound in themselves or by other players) are entitled to be in the maul and contest the ball carrier. The referee should not call out these players even though they may appear to be on the wrong side
- When attacking players deliberately detach from a maul and the ball is being carried by a player with teammates in front of him are liable to penalty for obstruction if opposition players bind on ('truck and trailer' or 'changing lanes')
- If the defending players choose to unbind and leave the maul, it is still a maul. The team in possession may continue to drive forward and opposing players must join from their side of the maul

UNPLAYABLE AND COLLAPSED MAULS

- If the ball is not playable immediately when the maul collapses, then an early whistle will be required to prevent a prolonged fight for the ball
- If the ball can be located and is available, try to **communicate** and **manage** to allow it to be played if possible
- **Players must not intentionally collapse a maul, this is dangerous play and referee must penalise – 2020/21 priority**

SCRUM

Safety is our overall objective, aiming for a quick and fair restart to the game. The referee MUST get **stability** by controlling the engagement process, using slow, clear calls, each one followed with an action by the players.

PRIOR TO THE ENGAGEMENT SEQUENCE

- Props fully bound to their hooker, locks fully bound to their front row
- Square shoulders, hips and feet

CROUCH – the above plus:

- Head and shoulders above hips
- Clear gap (approximately temple to temple but there should be a clear gap until set)
- Balanced and in alignment

BIND – the above plus:

- Bind on the side or back - not on the arm or shorts. Loosehead props must bind under the tighthead props arm. All loose forwards must have their shoulders on the second row from this point
- Clear gap (approximately ear to ear) – don't allow a pre engage where props shoulders are touching the opposition players
- **Front rows supporting own weight – not supporting themselves on the opposition – 2020/21 priority**
- Adjustment of feet is OK

SET

- Don't call set if you don't have stability
- No hit and chase
- **Ball in when there is stability - wait for it – 2020/21 priority**

POST ENGAGEMENT

- Ensure the ball is fed through the centre - look for the scrumhalf(s) shoulders being square and standing on the centre line
- Ensure players are bound and square throughout the scrum
- If you can identify any issues that cause a scrum to collapse and the ball cannot be cleared or it is unsafe, you may need to penalise. If you cannot identify any issues, a reset may be required. Don't guess!
- If the scrum becomes stationary and the ball is available at the back, the referee should call "use it"
- A legal wheel is when both props go forward together through the opposition scrum. A wheel that spins around quickly (usually on its axis) is illegal and should be penalised

MAYDAY – should only be used by players when there is a safety issue during a scrum

- Referees should ensure that all players are aware of the mayday call at the pre match briefing
- If a player calls mayday during a scrum, the referee should immediately stop the game. Check what the issue is with that particular player and try to resolve the problem. This may require coaching at lower/younger levels

Remember the objective for the scrum is for a safe, quick and fair restart.

LINEOUT

- The throwing team must not delay the formation of a lineout - no huddle away from the line of touch. They must set their numbers giving the defending team a reasonable opportunity to match
- Referees must set a clear gap at the first lineout - work with the front player of each team to have them and their team half a metre from the mark and for them to take responsibility of the gap for the rest of the game. If management of this does not get the desired outcome, teams should be sanctioned for closing the gap
- Throwers must set up on the mark and not move towards their team before they throw
- Jumpers must not be interfered with in the air. Competing for the ball is allowed but the opposition must not obstruct the jumper in the air
- **Referees should penalise a defending lineout that drives in on the jumper and/or support players while the jumper is off the ground. (Referees should manage teams holding jumpers in the air trying to gain a penalty) – 2020/21 priority**
- Sacking is legal but can only be done quickly after the ball carrier has returned to ground. Sacking is the act of tackling the ball carrier before the maul forms
- Referees should be aware of defending backline players rushing up before the lineout is over. This is particularly evident when the jumper is held in the air for any period of time. These situations should be managed. If the attacking backline moves up, then the defending backline can move also

TEAMS NOT ENGAGING THE MAUL FOLLOWING A LINEOUT

- If the defenders in the lineout choose not to engage into a maul by leaving the lineout, this will result in advantage or a penalty to the attacking team
- If the defenders in the lineout choose not to engage into a maul by opening a gap and creating space but not leaving the lineout then the following will apply:
    - The attacking team would need to keep the ball with the front player if they were to drive down field – play on, general play and the defenders can engage to form a maul or tackle the ball carrier
    - If the attacking team passes the ball back behind the front player and keeps it within this space, the referee should call “use it” which they must do quickly
    - If the team drives forward with the ball behind the front player, (and ignores the “use it” call, and/or the defending team engage on the obstructing player/s, the referee should award a scrum to the defending team for accidental offside, NOT a penalty for obstruction

FOUL PLAY

REPEATED INFRINGEMENTS

- A referee must warn a team through the captain about repeated infringements prior to taking further action

    1. Identify trend. 2. Give the captain or player the ‘heads up’. 3. Time off and a final chat with captain. 4. Intervention for a change in behaviour

DELIBERATE INFRINGEMENTS

- Can result in a Penalty Kick and a yellow card without any warning, depending on the cynical nature of the infringement particularly around the goal line

VALUES OF THE GAME – 2020/21 priority

- If any player appeals for a decision from the referee eg ("that's a card!"), they should be at least warned in the first instance. If this behavior continues from the same player or their team following this warning, the referee should escalate their sanction to a penalty or cards if there is no change in behaviour
- Players must not wave their arms if they disagree with a decision or to get the referees attention, or shout at any match official. This situation should be managed as above
- If there is any abuse of a match official, including swearing directly at a referee/AR or any accusations of cheating, this player should be shown a **RED CARD** in the first instance
- Punching and kicking of other players should be dealt with severely. Anytime these actions result in contact with the head or neck, a **RED CARD** should be issued. Stamping on the head, neck or joints, (knees, ankles, elbows etc) should also result in a **RED CARD.** At U19 level, punching, kicking or stamping of any kind should result in a **RED CARD** (or full game forced substitution at approved age groups)
- If spectators or non-players are repeatedly appealing for decisions, shouting at match officials or not upholding the Values of the Game, the referee should ask them to stop, or they will be forced to leave the venue. If they do not change their behaviour, or if they abuse a match official directly, the referee must stop the game and ask that person to leave. If they fail to comply, the referee must abandon the game and report this to the HKRU immediately. Where appropriate, referees may ask the coach/manager of the relevant team to assist with managing the behaviour of those present at the match
- Any time a person not involved in the match as a player, medic or coach/manager enters the playing arena to verbally or physically abuse an official or player, the referee must stop the game and ask that person to leave. If they fail to comply, the referee must abandon the game and report this to the HKRU immediately

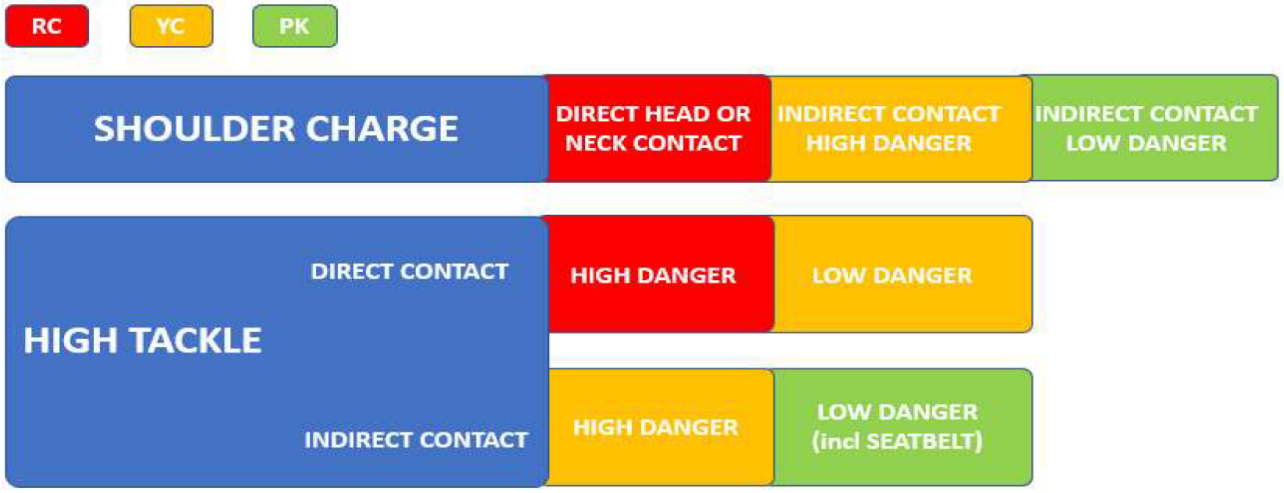
WORLD RUGBY HIGH TACKLE SANCTION FRAMEWORK

World Rugby has provided new guidance regarding high tackles. Stricter enforcement is encouraged. Contact with the head should in most cases result in a PK minimum. This includes a fend from the ball carrier where the forearm/elbow makes contact with the opposition players head

Referees should consider:

- Contact point – where did the tackle start/finish, was contact with hand/arm/shoulder?
- Action – was the tackling action accidental, reckless or deliberate?
- Severity of impact – does the tackler 'carry on' through the tackle and where?

Referees should use common sense, but player safety is paramount



Factors against mitigation:

- Open space
- Time to make a decision
- Deliberate action

Mitigating Factors:

- Tackler makes attempt to change height
- Ball carrier drops in height
- Tackler is unsighted
- Reactionary tackle with immediate release

NECK ROLLS – the act of clearing a player out at a breakdown by grabbing the neck and rolling the player out of the breakdown – 2020/21 priority

- **PENALTY ONLY** – Neck grab which is clearly dangerous but without a roll
- **YELLOW CARD** – Neck grab and roll, likely bringing the player to the ground
- **RED CARD** – Neck grab and roll with a forceful dumping action in bringing the player to the ground. In this situation, you are likely to see the players head make contact with the ground

LIFTING TACKLES

- Any time a tackled player's hips are lifted above horizontal it should result in a yellow card as a minimum
- If the tackled player is lifted and lands on his shoulder or head area it should result in a red card
- A tackled player placing a hand down to stop a dangerous landing should not influence this sanction
- Dropping or throwing tackled players once they are in a dangerous position is to be strongly sanctioned

CHALLENGE IN THE AIR

- When there is a contest in the air, both players must be in a realistic position to compete for the ball. Is it a fair challenge? If **YES**, play on. If **NO**:

  PENALTY ONLY – it's not a fair challenge with wrong timing – no pulling down
  YELLOW CARD – it's not a fair challenge, there is no contest and the player lands on his back or side
  RED CARD – it's not a fair challenge, there is a deliberate action to pull down or interfere and the player lands in a dangerous position

ADVANTAGE

- For a scrum or free kick advantage to accrue, the non-offending team needs to have gained clear and obvious possession roughly equivalent to that which they would get from a scrum
- A penalty advantage needs a greater level of reward. The non-offending team must gain either a tactical or territorial advantage roughly equivalent to that of receiving the penalty in the first instance. Remember, sometimes the penalty immediately is the best advantage
- If advantage is played for foul play, it is the referee's responsibility to warn the offending player at the next stoppage. The player who committed foul play needs to understand that advantage was played for the offence
- If the referee plays 2 or more advantages, the captain should be asked which location is preferable for the restart

OFFSIDE

BREAKDOWN

- An offside line is created after a tackle when at least one player is on their feet and over the ball. Each team's offside line is the hindmost point of any player now in the tackle area**.** No other arriving player after this point may play the ball with their hands. A player who arrives and picks up the ball does not form an offside line
- Offside players near the breakdown must be managed. These players must not have their feet or hands on the ground ahead of the offside line
- **Low tolerance for players cutting down space for the attacking team – 2020/21 priority**

- **Players must not form an offside 'wall' when their team is setting up a box kick. Players may set up behind the last feet, but can't obstruct tacklers coming through to tackle the kicker or charge down the kick – 2020/21 priority**

GENERAL PLAY

- Offside players who are advancing cut down options for the attacking team. With a long kick downfield, referees **MUST** manage any players who are in front of the kick. The referee should not continually call out to these players. If they do not stop quickly, they are liable to be penalised. With a short or high kick, there will be little chance for the referee to manage and players must immediately act as per Law or they are liable to be penalised
- If offside players are within 10 metres of where an opponent is waiting to play the ball or where the ball may land, they must immediately retreat outside the 10 metre zone. This 10 metre line stretches across the field (it is not a circle). These players who are retreating can only be put onside when an onside teammate runs past them. No action of the team catching the ball puts these players onside
- Offside players who are not within the 10 metre zone must not move towards the ball. These offside players can be put onside when an onside teammate runs past them or when an opponent runs 5 metres with the ball, kicks, passes or touches the ball

QUICK TAPS

- If a player takes a penalty or free kick **QUICKLY**, the ball must leave the hands of the player and it must be taken at or behind the mark
- Referees should have zero tolerance for the ball being thrown away or players preventing a penalty or free kick being taken quickly. If the offending team has possession when the referee blows the whistle, they must put the ball on the ground immediately or give it to an opponent who is trying to take it from them
- Defending players who are not back 10 must keep moving and retire quickly until they are onside. They are only considered onside when they move 10 metres back from the mark or when an onside player who was back 10 metres runs past them. No action of the team taking the penalty can put them onside, including running 5 metres