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HKTA RULE CLARIFICATIONS FIT 5th EDITION PLAYING RULES

INTRODUCTION

5th Edition Rules Clarification

- Inaugural rule clarifications procedure to enhance the refereeing standards and improve the game towards international levels
- Discussed with FIT's Chair of Referee commission, Ian Matthew, on the 5th Edition Playing Rules
- Consulted both clubs and referees across the community
- Greatly value constructive feedback on this new process after Summer 2022





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**Special thanks to the Federation of International Touch
Ian Matthew and Bianca Arco**



FIT 5th Edition Rules

FIT 5th Edition Rules Update



The 5th Edition FIT Rule Book has been updated and now reflects the way the game is coached, played and refereed, worldwide.

These rule changes/variations have been made to make the game easier for referees to officiate and removes the ambiguity of rulings and allows Referees to apply rules more consistently.

Let's now examine these updates



Start of Match

- Team Captains are to Toss a coin
- Winning Team Captains having the choice of:
 - ✓ Direction the team wishes to run in the first half
 - ✓ Interchange Areas for the duration of the match
 - ✓ Which team will commence the match in possession

The Captain that wins the toss now has the choice of:

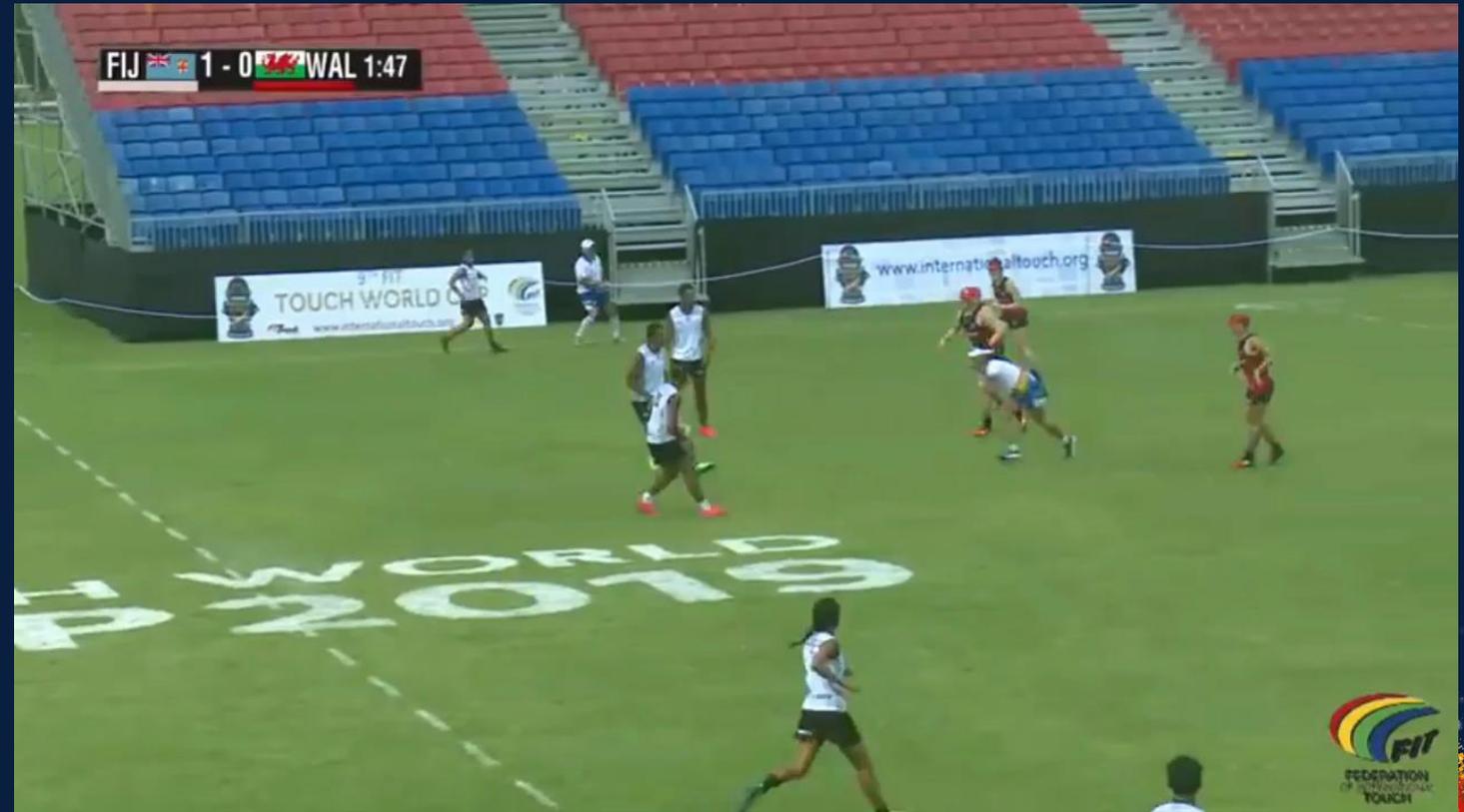
- Which way to run
- Which box their team has and
- Choice of whether they tap off or defend first



7 Metres

Midfield 7 Metres

No change as this is the way referees have been officiating for some time and this is to keep distance between attack and defence



7 Metres

TRY Line 7 Metres

This now becomes a more consistent application of the rule
Removed discretionary options of referees

Earlier Edition Rule book suggests a minimum of 5m it doesn't say definitively 5m.

This allows too much disparity and inconsistency between referees

Now the rule is more defined:

- There is no discretion
- To be onside you must now be 7m
- Referees are now to use the 7m line as reference



7 Metres



Obstruction

Players in the defending team may not obstruct or interfere with an attacking player



Ruling: A penalty to the non offending team at the point of the infringement or on the 7m line if the infringement occurs within the **In-Goal Area**

In the earlier Edition Rule Book, this is largely referred to as, **Shadowing**.

In the 4th Edition a defender who makes a touch can not change direction

In the FIT 5th Edition Rule Book, this has been Removed

The rule has been altered to reflect the way the game is being coached, played and refereed in the current environment.

The referee would allow the game to flow and the defence to change direction. The only time a penalty would be awarded is when the defender either obstructs the attacker or is offside

Obstruction



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Obstruction



Three Penalty Exclusion Zone



When a Player from the defending team enters the defensive 7m Zone the defending team must move forward at a reasonable pace until a touch is imminent or made.

Ruling: A penalty to the attacking team at the point of the infringement

If the defending team is penalised three (3) times upon entering their **7m Zone** during a single possession, the last offending player will be given an **Exclusion** until the end of that possession

If **any** defender enters the 7m Zone, then all defenders must move forward from this point onward and if the defending team gives away three (3) consecutive penalties for **ANYTHING**, the last player that is penalised will be sent for an Exclusion to the nearest **Sin Bin** area. The last offending player will be sent for one(1) completed set.

Completed set to be defined as a Try, change of possession or a penalty against the Attacking Team

Zero Touch

Simple Application: If a defender takes and intercept and is touched then the first touch is **Zero** rather than in the previous edition where this would have been touch one.

If a player from the **Defending Team** **deliberately makes contact** with the ball in flight and:

- The ball goes to ground, the attacking team retains the ball, the touch count restarts as **Zero (0) Touch**
- The ball is retrieved by an attacking player without touching the ground, play continues and the next touch is **Zero (0) Touch**
- Propelling the ball forward and an attacking player, in an attempt to regain possession, drops the ball, the attacking to retains possession and the touch count restarts as **Zero (0) Touch**
- Referee will call **Zero (0) Touch and Signal “6 again”**

Sin Bin



The changes in this area have been designed to allow more clarity for exactly how long a player should be in the **Sin Bin**

This has now been defined as **Four (4)** completed possessions

What defines a “**Completed Possession**”

- **Try**
- **Change of Possession**

Interchange (Breakaway)

After an intercept or line break, players are not permitted to Interchange until the next touch is made or the ball becomes dead.

Ruling A: If a player enters the field of play and prevents the scoring of a Try, a **Penalty Try** will be awarded and the offending player sent to the **Sin Bin**

Ruling B: If a player enters the Field of Play but does not impede the scoring of a Try the defender will be sent to the Sin Bin

Defensive Player Enters the 7m Zone



When a player from the defending team enters its defensive 7m Zone the defending team must move forward at a reasonable pace until a touch is imminent or made.

What is Defined as Reasonable Pace?

It's moving forward with a positive intention to make a touch

Ruling: A penalty to the attacking team at the point of the infringement

If the defending team is penalised three (3) times upon entering their 7m Zone during a Single possession, the last offending player will be given an **Exclusion** until the end of the possession

No Intent To Move Forward



Player Enters the 7m Zone

When a player in possession enters the Defending Teams' 7m Zone the defending team is not obliged to move forward but cannot retire backwards towards their Try Line until a touch is imminent or made

Ruling: A Penalty to the Attacking Team at the 7m line, in line with the point of the infringement

To be clear: If the ball is outside the 7m Zone the defence has to move forward with a positive intention to make a touch as defined by the referee.

However, if the ball enters the 7m Zone the defence no longer has to move forward but they can not roll back until a touch is imminent or made

Reasonable Pace – Positive Intent



Reasonable Pace – Positive Intent



Drop Off Procedure

- The **Drop Off** commences with a tap at the centre of the hallway line by the team that **Did Not** commence the game with possession
- Each team will reduce their on field playing numbers to four (4) players
- The **Drop Off** will commence with a two (2) minute period of **Extra Time**
- Should a team be leading at the conclusion of the two (2) minute period of extra time then that team will be declared the winner and the game concluded
- Should neither team be leading the game will pause at the next touch or **Dead Ball**
- Each team will then remove another player from the field of play
- Play will commence immediately after the players have left the field at the same place where it was paused and will continue until a Try is scored
- There is no change to the **Send Off** or **Sin Bin** procedures

Drop Off Procedure- Referee Notes

- If a player has been sent off or is in the sin bin either in regulation time or in the drop off, that player is still deemed as being part of the game.
- So the drop off would start with 4 v 3
- Mixed games a maximum of 2 males on the field, which obviously means a team can have 2 males and 2 females as a start point or if the coach chooses they can have 3 females and 1 male, but definitely no more than 2 males on the field at any one time
- If you have a male player that has been sin binned or sent off in regulation time or in the drop off, once again you are down to 4 v 3 and the split can only be 2 females and 1 male or 3 females



Ruling

When the “Drop Off” is reduced to 3 v 3 and a player is sent from the field for the remainder of the game reducing the playing numbers to 3 v 2.

Does the game **Continue or Conclude?**

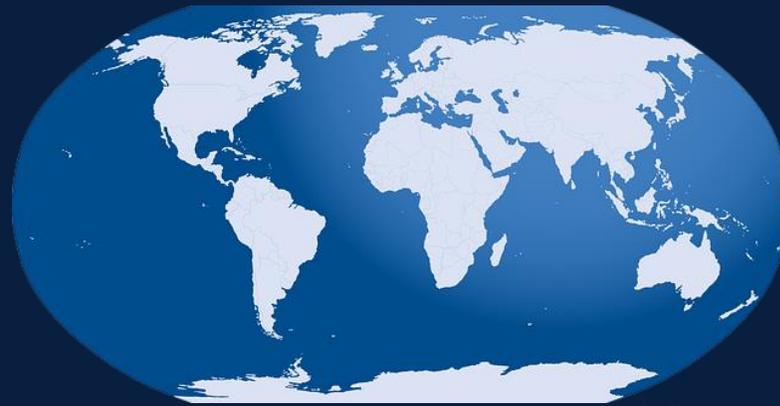
The non offending team **MUST** maintain a numerical advantage, so

The game continues until there is a result

Conclusion

The intent of the changes is not to change the way the game is played and in fact it was to change the rules to reflect the way the game is currently played and refereed

With this latest Rule update **O****U****R** game will
be coached, played and refereed with the same
Rule consistency in every Touch playing
Nation around the World





FURTHER CLARIFICATIONS

FURTHER CLARIFICATIONS FOR CLUBS

Q: What are the identifications of a forward pass?

A: The identification of a forward pass is primarily determined by whether the hands of the passing player is in a backwards motion when the ball is released from their hands. You may refer to the Instagram page @Reftouch Forward Pass Video ([see link here](#))

Q: What are the identifications of a hard touch that constitutes a penalty?

A: The identifications of a hard touch is listed under Rule 10.3, and is interpreted as any touch that use more than “minimal force” as set outlined by the on-field referee.

Q: What if a player makes a hard touch that may pose a risk to players safety (i.e. elbows to the neck)?

A: As listed above under Rule 10.3, “Players must ensure that the method employed in making a Touch does not pose an unnecessary risk to player safety”. Continued infringements of may amount to misconduct outlined in Rule 20.1.4. The correct procedure for misconduct is the following: 1) Penalty, 2) Forced sub, 3) Sin Bin or 4) Send off.

Q: Does an attacking team that changes over to defense have an obligation to return the ball to the opposite team?

A: Under Rule 9.3, the ball must be returned to the mark or opposite team upon change of possession without delay. A deliberate delay in the changeover procedure will result in a Penalty awarded to the non-offending Team ten (10) metres Forward of the Mark for the Change of Possession. For example, in a situation where an attacking team makes a long pass and the ball goes out of the field, the same team must bring the ball back to the mark or to the opposition upon change over without deliberate delay, or incur a penalty.

FURTHER CLARIFICATIONS FOR CLUBS

Q: Why is it when a defender withdraws from a touch it is a penalty. But when an attacker withdraws from a touch is it fine?

A: There are no rules that prohibits an attacker from withdrawing from a touch. It is up to players to determine what tactics they use for the game. However, under Rule 10.13 and 10.14, defenders cannot retire back towards their try line until a touch is imminent or made. The interpretation of this rule, is dependent on two factors 1) Did the defender make an earnest attempt to make the touch (a genuine attempt)? 2) If the defender earnestly made the attempt, would a touch have been made? If the defender did not make an earnest attempt to make a touch, to which an imminent touch would have happened otherwise, it is a penalty under Rule 10.14.

Q: Who has possession of the ball when a defender intercepts the ball?

A: Rule 12 highlights the proceedings for when the ball is in flight. In addition, rulings on intercepted balls are listed in the same section of the rule book. In a normal play, when an attacking team passes the ball but the ball touches the defender, the play will continue on (so it will be a change in possession if the ball hits the floor) unless the defender has an intention to make contact with the ball in flight. For further clarification, please see the scenarios below.

For success interceptions, if the defender is onside, the possession would change immediately with play on, touch zero would be counted if the player is touched. If the defender is offside, a penalty would be given and the attacking team would have a full possession with starting from touch zero.

For unsuccessful interceptions, most of the possession would retain to attacking team according to rules 12.1, 12.2, 12.3, start form touch zero. This is with the exception of Rule 12.4.

FURTHER CLARIFICATIONS FOR REFEREES

Q: What is the procedure when players refuse to remove jewelry including earrings and nose rings?

A: Please refer to Rule 4.7 of the FIT 5th Edition Playing Rules. Should the item may prove dangerous and cannot be removed, or taped to the satisfaction of the referee, players are not to participate in any matches.

Q: What is the procedure of handling coaches, players and team supporters that verbally abuse referees, inclusive of social media abuse?

A: Referees have the following tools available based on the [FIT 5th Edition Rulebook](#), [HKTA Disciplinary Action Protocol \(DAP\)](#) and [HKTA Code of Conduct](#). Measures available to referees include: penalty, sin bin and send off.

A send off will immediately enact the DAP and requires a written report from the referee of the incident. An automatic 2 game ban will be imposed on said violator. The procedure for handling referee abuse is listed in the “HKTA Referees Sub-Committee: Zero Tolerance Approach Towards Referee Abuse” sent out by HKTA on 4th Nov 2021.

HKTA has consulted FIT’s Referee Chai, Ian Matthew, on the matters of social media abuse. Social media abuse can be reported to HKTA via email with links provided. HKTA will, on confirmation that an abuse has been made, will request the player, or its respective club, to remove the post down and take any further action HKTA deems necessary. Banning participation of HKTA events of said player, or its club, upon refusal of removing said post is a possibility.

Q: What is the procedure of handling sexual abuse towards referees?

A: Sexual abuse and its procedures is listed out within the [HKTA Code of Conduct](#). Referees have the following tools available based on section 3 of said Code of Conduct. Referees experiencing any sexual abuse may report the incident in breach of the Code of Conduct, with a written complaint to HKTA, in order to enact the Disciplinary Action Protocol (DAP). HKTA will follow up on the allegations accordingly based on the DAP proceedings.

THANK YOU!

