



DUDLEY KINGSWINFORD RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB



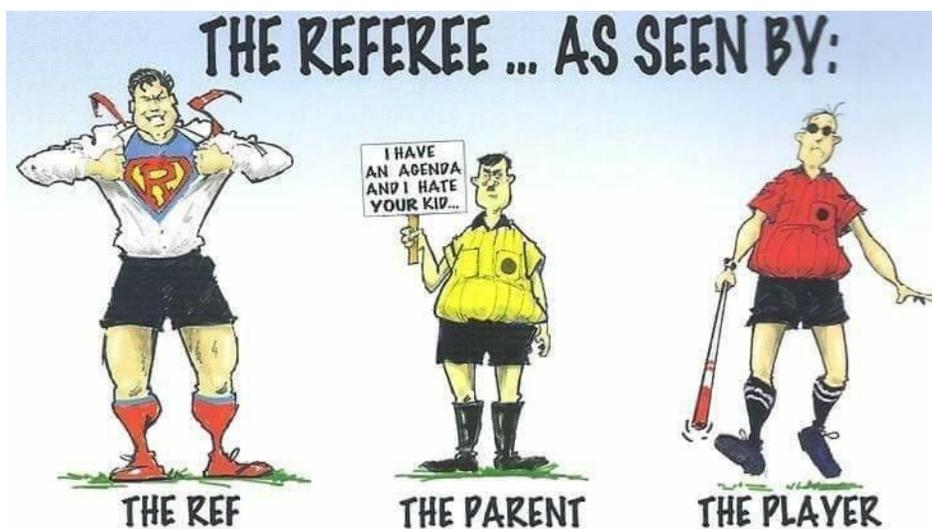
Accredited Club



The Beginners Guide Series

No 2

The Referee



The last beginners Guide looked at the playing positions, <https://dkrugby.rfu.club/news/rugby-for-beginners-positions> We now look at the official in the middle. This is of course a personal view! I wish I had a £1 for the number of times I have heard a supporter from the touchline criticise a referee! I always find it amazing how someone can see an incident from 50m away better than a referee who is 2m away? I for one, never criticise a referee, why? Well it's because I used to be one, for about 10 years I was on the circuit with the North Midlands Society of Rugby Football Referees (NMSRFR). During this time, I travelled the country, all over the Midlands, from Cornwall to Newcastle, and London to the Lake District, all as a volunteer because I enjoyed it.

The thing is I have seen games go ahead with 10 players on one side and 13 on the other, but I have yet to see a game go ahead without a referee, even if one of the players had to step up! It doesn't matter what you think of the referee, good, bad or indifferent, the fact is there wouldn't be a game without them!

Then there is the pressure a referee must endure, it reminded me of a story I once heard.

"A rugby referee died and went to heaven. Stopped by St Peter at the gates he was told that only brave people who had performed heroic deeds and had the courage of their convictions could enter. If the ref could describe a situation in his life where he had shown these characteristics, he would be allowed in.

"Well," said the ref, "I was refereeing a game between DK and Stourbridge at Heathbrook. DK were 2 points ahead, 1 minute to go. The Stourbridge wing made a break, passed inside to his lock. The lock was driven on by his forwards, passed out to the flanker who ducked blind and went over in the corner. However, the flanker dropped the ball and then grounded it, I ruled that he had dropped the ball backwards, not forward, and awarded the try."

St Peter said: "OK, that was fairly brave of you, but I am sorry, there is no record of this. Can you help me to trace it? When did all this happen?"

The ref looked at his watch and replied "45 seconds ago."

And this is the point! He gave the try and was vilified by the home supporters, if he had given a knock on, he would have been vilified by the away supporters, refs are forever in a no-win situation! Furthermore, if the player had knocked on he would have been patted on the back and told he was unlucky, his team mates would have rallied around to support him! Players make errors all the time, but it appears to me that the referee is the only person on the pitch who is not allowed to make any!

Now, I know this will be hard for you to believe but I remember making a mistake once! It was at Walsall, wet, cold day, pitch was muddy. Walsall were attacking, scrum 5m out, Walsall put in, they got pushed back but the No8 picked up and went blind, he was tackled, next player picked up and drove over the line and went to ground. I blew the whistle with gusto signalling a try! The players all looked at me, no celebrations from the Walsall team? We stared at each other for what seemed like an age, I then realised it was the 5m line not the try line!! "Oh dear" I said, "sorry." Now rugby being rugby, there was a lot of laughter and a few comments from the touch line "should I go and get your white stick from the changing rooms ref?" I smiled and awarded a scrum to the team in possession.

Most players start at an early age, some as young as 4 or 5, and then spend the rest of their playing days learning and being coached. Most referees start later in life, many after their playing days were over, like me. Doing it this way means that you must learn a whole new skill set and a knowledge of the laws in a short space of time. These days you are sent on a course, take an exam, you are mentored and assessed. I remember contacting the NMSRFR and said I would like to try refereeing, they sent me a Law book and told me my first game was at Woodrush on Saturday!

IDWAL WAS A BRILLIANT PROP
UNTIL 'E YURT 'IS KNEE.
AND WHEN 'IS EYESIGHT
FINALLY POPPED
'E BACAME A REFEREE

REF



So, for the first time ever, I had to look at a Law Book and learn it! Let me put this into perspective for you!

The IRB (International Rugby Board) law book is 146 pages long and this doesn't include the separate RFU regulations. One of these regulations is "Regulation 15". This has a whole set of Law variations for Youth Rugby, each age group from U7 to U18 have a slightly different set of Laws. A referee must know these as they were developed for the safety of the players!

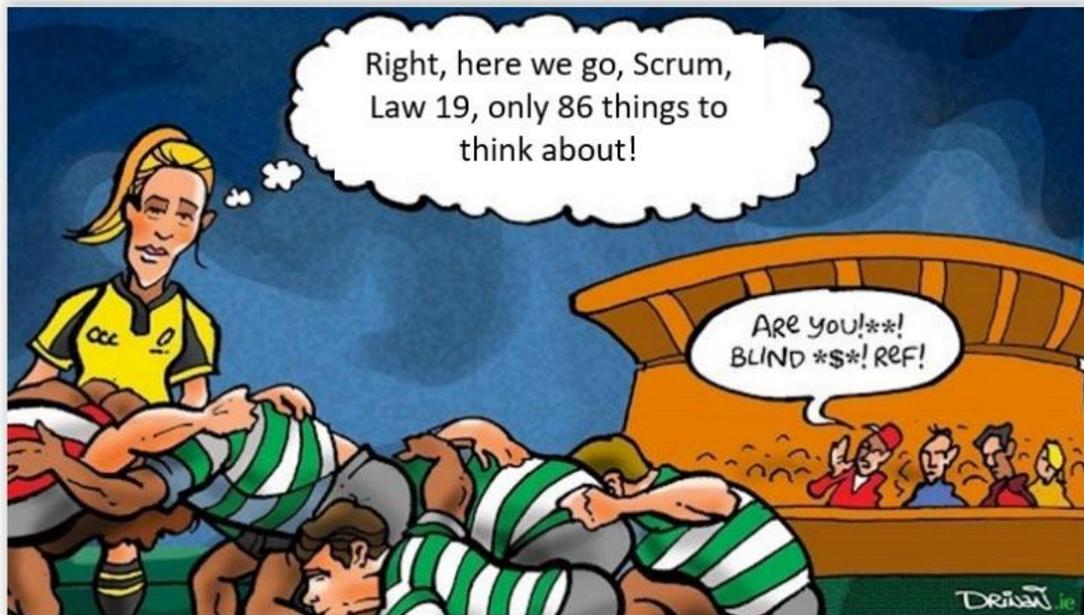
RFU Regulation 15: Age Grade Rugby	Appendix 1 Under 7s Rules of Play	Non-EAPs playing out of age grade form
	Appendix 2 Under 8s Rules of Play	EAP Playing out Age Grade form
	Appendix 3 Under 9s Rules of Play	Playing adult rugby form
	Appendix 4 Under 10s Rules of Play	Guide to Age Grade out of season activities
	Appendix 5 Under 11s Rules of Play	RFU goggles update
	Appendix 6 Under 12s Rules of Play - Boys only	Age Grade Codes of Practice
	Appendix 7 Under 13s Rules of Play - Boys only	
	Appendix 8 Under 14s Rules of Play - Boys only	
	Appendix 9 Under 15s to 18s Rules of Play - Boys only	
	Appendix 10 Under 13s Rules of Play - Girls only	
	Appendix 11 Under 15s to 18s Rules of Play - Girls only	

In the IRB Laws of Rugby Football Union there are just 21 Laws, but that doesn't tell the whole story!

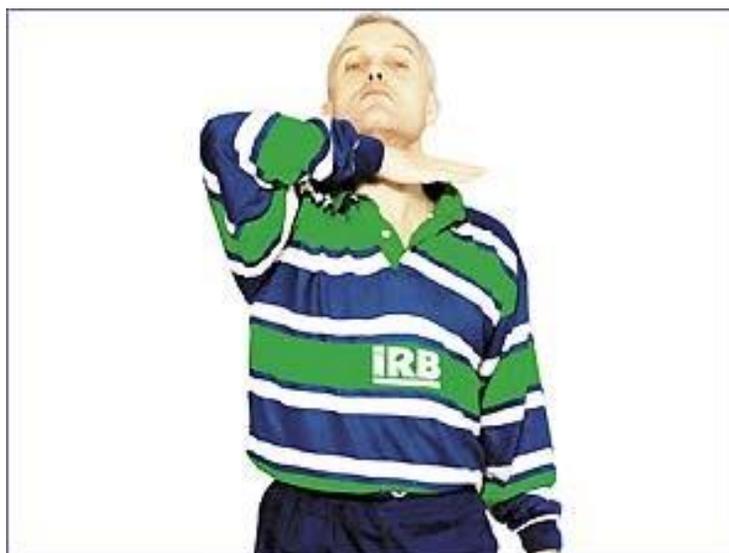
Each of these Laws have sections, some sections are broken down into more specific elements. This means that there are **370** laws to learn (not including the minor elements)! For example, **Law 7.**

Advantage: has 16 different elements to it and **Law 15. The Ruck:** has 19 sections, and section 16 has 7 elements!

So, for example. When a referee sees a tackle there are 30 elements to the tackle law, if a ruck is formed straight after the tackle then there are a further 26 points to look for under the Ruck law, and on top of that if some form of infringement occurs is it a Scrum, Penalty or Free Kick? When the ball goes out into touch for a possible lineout there are 87 elements the referee needs to know about, and on top of that they need to understand which 15 specific offences are free kicks and which 6 specific offences are a full penalty.



How do we know what infringement the referee blew his whistle for? Well you look for the signal, we all probably know what the offside signal is, or holding on to the ball in a tackle, high tackle or not releasing, but did you know that there are **53** separate referee signals in the law book!

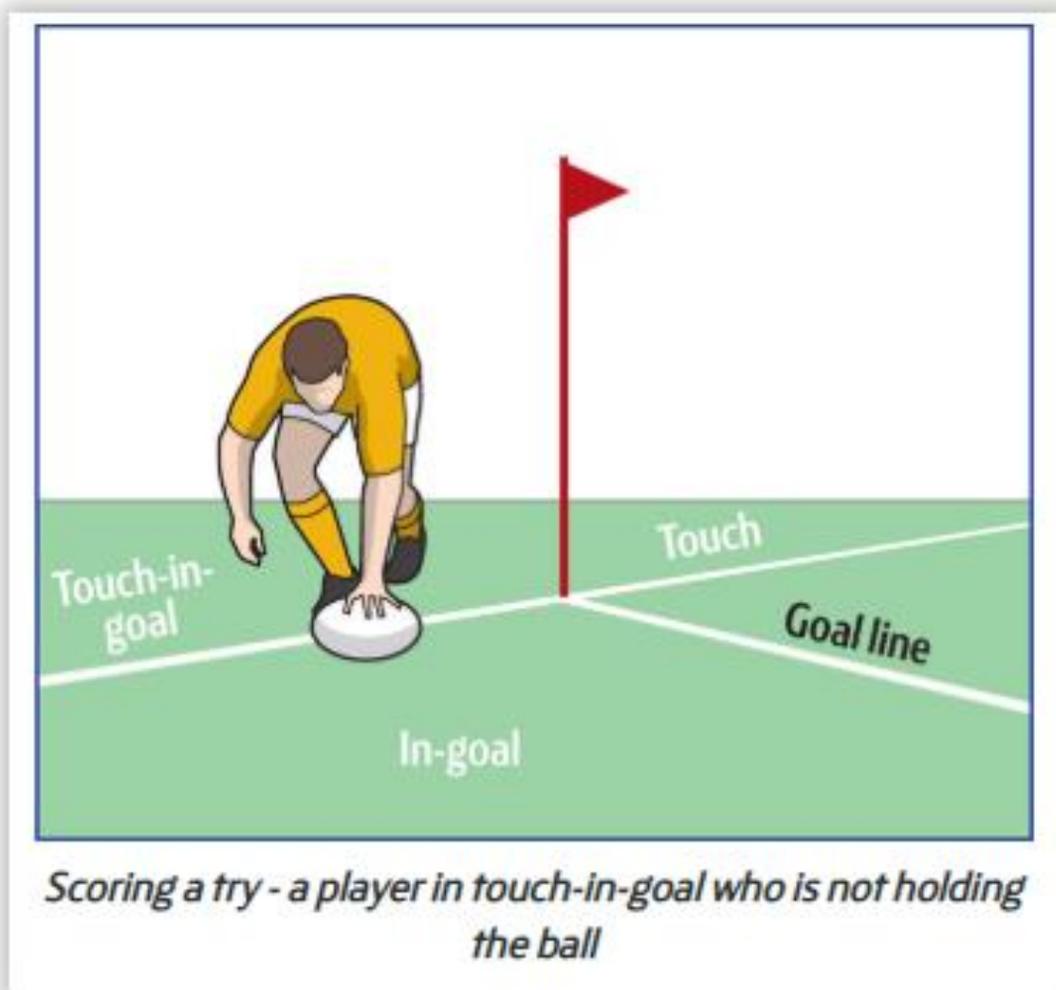


There are also some very obscure laws that if given in a game would cause havoc! Did you know that you can score a try even if you were in touch! **(Law 8.2.e)**

8. Scoring

A try is scored when an attacking player:

e. Who is in touch or touch-in-goal, grounds the ball in the opponents' in-goal provided the player is not holding the ball.



This is a far cry from the original laws of 1845, there were just 37 rules some of them make the mind boggle, for example:

Rule xviii (18) A player having touched the ball straight for a tree, and touched the tree with it, may drop from either side if he can, but the opposite side may oblige him to go to his own side of the tree.

What??

And:

Rule xx (20) All matches are drawn after 5 days, but after 3 if no goal has been kicked.

At top level there are a team of qualified referees who will take up different roles. The Referee, 2 Touch Judges and a 4th Official who will look after substitutions. There is also the TMO, the acronym stands for Television Match Official. The TMO, a qualified referee will usually sit in a van outside the ground and watches the game through monitors showing multiple angles of the action. The referee can go to the TMO to clarify a decision, the TMO might also request the referee to review footage for an infringement they might have missed.



Also, Citing Commissioners are appointed by the RFU for all Premiership and Championship matches and are entitled to cite a player for any act or acts of Foul Play that in the Citing Commissioner's opinion warranted a red card which the match officials might have missed.

This means that getting away with anything at the top level is very difficult! However, at our level none of this is available to the referee, very often the touch judges are provided by the clubs and do not have to be qualified referees. The referee in the middle is on their own!

So, Please, next time you are watching a game spare a thought for the referee, without whom the game wouldn't be happening. They are volunteers and remember he/she is only human! One of the great things about our game and one we as rugby people are very proud of, is the respect that referees get during the game, there is no arguing, players don't surround the referee to question a decision, if they do they are rightly penalised for it! If this element of our game is to continue then we must **all**, not just the players, but the spectators too, always respect the match officials!

If you want to know more click this link to view the IRB Laws of the game.

<https://laws.worldrugby.org/?law=showallbynumbers>

If you click on this link you can register on the IRB site (it is free) and take a Law Exam! If you pass you can download a certificate.

<https://laws.worldrugby.org/?language=AF&language=EN>

As a follow on, we at DK have provided many referees that have gone onto referee in the NMSRFR kit but it is worth mentioning a couple of them.

Firstly, Ken Pattinson, who passed away on 25th January 2018. He was a DK second row who took up refereeing with NMSRFR in 1964, did his first Five Nations game, France v Scotland, in 1973 and went onto referee a number of full international matches through the 70's.



Secondly Neil Chivers, an ex DK 1stXV player who decided to concentrate full time on refereeing. He is now on the National Panel and referees Championship games (level 2) and has been 4th official at Premiership games.

