

Focus Areas for Referees and Referee Coaches

This paper is not a substitute for the Game Management Guidelines and **must** be read in conjunction with that document.

Rugby Australia's four key principles for referees incorporate [World Rugby's Five Key Areas of Refereeing](#) (the "Big Five") and are aimed at achieving:-

1. Quick ball at the breakdown;
2. Fair contest at the tackle;
3. Space for players to attack; and
4. Positive set pieces.

The suggestions below are aimed at assisting referees and referee coaches give effect to Rugby AU's objectives.

Tackle Contest

The aim here is to allow players to achieve quick ball and therefore continuity by referee focus on:

- Tackler on ground to release and move away *"Roll away!"* or *"Roll sideways!"*
- Tackle Assist to clearly release the tackled player (i.e. obvious daylight) *"Let him go!"* or *"Clear release!"*
- Tackled player to release the ball (i.e. push, place or pass the ball) *"Play it!"*
- Arriving players from both teams to enter through the gate
- Attacking players to stay on their feet and not deliberately seal off to prevent a contest for possession

Key elements to monitor and coach:

- Positioning
- Communication
- Tackle Checklist (see separate document)
- Transition to next phase (referee slow to exit or slow to scan can impact on transition)

Offside at Kicks (Managing "Kick Chase" Space)

Don't back off from earlier year's approach

Don't ball watch – concentrate on where the players are rather than on the ball in the air (the ball does come down)

Key elements to monitor and coach:

- Communication to offside players – *"Stop!"* or *"Move out of the 10!"*
- Scan for players to both the left and right sides of the kicker
- Type of kick – short or high kicks don't allow much time to manage offside players so referee **must act quickly**
- Be aware of game scenarios at which 'kick offside' situations are likely to occur (e.g. a pass back for a clearing kick)

Control of Scrum Engagement

The scrum engagement process **MUST** be managed to ensure it occurs safely, squarely and in synchronisation. Don't call the engagement early. Wait until both teams are bound and ready before calling on them to "Crouch".

Crouch – when all front row players are in a crouched position, a non-spoken pause **MUST** occur while the referee checks the height, the angle and the head alignment of both front rows. If not correct, stop and reset.

Bind – ensure all four Props bind on to the side or back of their opposing Prop's jersey. Resting a hand on an opponent or binding on his arm or shoulder or thigh is not to be allowed. A second non-spoken pause **MUST** occur between the calls of 'Bind' and 'Set' while the referee checks that all players are square, stable and stationary.

Set – engagement to take place only after the referee calls "Set". Early engagement can sometimes be caused by locks and backrowers driving forward in anticipation of the 'Set' call.

When the scrum is stationary, square and steady (and only then), step backwards and allow the scrum half to position him/herself at the tunnel and to throw the ball into the scrum. The scrum is stationary when there is no foot or head movement by any player in the scrum. *"I'm not stepping back while feet and heads are moving!"*

Key elements to monitor and coach:

- No "hit and chase" allowed. The scrum must be square, stable and stationary before the ball is fed.
- A scrum that is square and stationary should not wheel upon engagement or upon the ball being fed.
- Ensure Props and Flankers on both sides of the scrum maintain full arm binds until the scrum ends.

Pillars at Ruck

Pillars are players from either team who, while not correctly bound to a ruck, knowingly take up a position in front of the offside line one or two wide of the ruck. In addition to being a deliberate obstruction, other players tend to use the pillar as the marker for their team's offside line rather than the feet of their last player in the ruck.

Key elements to monitor and coach:

- A-line Positioning – managing and controlling offside (including that by pillars) is more effective from the A-line.
- Communication to pillars “*Step back!*” with wave/signal.
- Management of pillars is crucial to achieving a fast and open game.

Obstruction at Set Up of a Maul

Supporting players must not obstruct access by defenders to the ball carrier as a maul is forming.

Key elements to monitor and coach:

- Triggers: lineouts and kickoffs – it is a supporting player who does the blocking or obstructing.
- Don't ball watch – widen view to allow observation of actions taken by supporting players as the maul forms.

The Rugby Australia Referee Profile

The Referee Profile identifies a range of desirable attributes and qualities that *every referee* should seek to demonstrate at all times. You'll find a schematic of the Referee Profile on the last page of the law book.

<p style="text-align: center;">DECISION MAKING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Set standards and maintain boundaries in these key focus areas:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Tackle – clear release, tackler roll, players on feet○ Scrum – set up, stability, pushing straight○ Lineout to Maul – legal sack, transfer, obstruction, entry○ Space – pillars, set piece offside, kicks in general play○ Foul Play – applies appropriate sanctions	<p style="text-align: center;">GAME CONNECTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Understands game situations and adapts appropriately● Credibility – earns respect through decision making● Gets what matters – relevance versus technical● Makes logical decisions in game context
<p style="text-align: center;">GAME MANAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● On-field presence and body language (messages)● Effective timing of interventions / trends (warnings, YC)● Effective captain management (timing and clarity of messages)● Does not compromise standards in pressure situations● Strong and accurate in high impact moments	<p style="text-align: center;">PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Physical preparation non-negotiable● Game ready – match preparation non-negotiable● Demonstrate team values (accountable, authentic, professional)● Respects and is respected by game stakeholders● OWN IT – drive your own development● Ability to perform in a range of environments