



RFU MIDLANDS LEAGUES ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Please note that further revised Game Regulations 7.2 and 7.3 were issued on the 27th August 2009. MLOC were blissfully unaware that these were forthcoming. My apologies, therefore, but the revised letter reflects those changes which refer to the position on red and yellow cards.

A Pre-Season Note from the MLOC Chairman (Version 2)

For better or for worse the Rugby Landscape changes are now with us. Despite the much flawed process leading to these changes, we now have to put that into the past and get on with the job ensuring a successful and competitive season. The season will be very full, leaving little scope for flexibility or inclement weather. This is particularly true for those clubs at levels 5 and 6, (National 3 Midlands, Midlands 1 W and Midlands 1 E), who are now in 14 club leagues. Please remember if your club has a potential problem, then the first point of contact should be the league secretary. He will be able to either advise immediately, or will seek further guidance. Much better to address an issue before the event rather than when facing a two point deduction!

All clubs should by now have received a copy of the amended Game Regulations 7.2 and 7.3. However, as this has been sent via the Rugby First database, you will understand if it has arrived at the address of the club secretary of five years ago. Therefore a further copy of the changes accompanies this note. I make no apology if you receive it several times over.

In principle these changes are fairly simple. In practice, to put the changes into regulation, taking into account red and yellow cards, blood replacements etc, has proved much more of a challenge. The regulation writers have made a reasonable fist of it, but it has inevitably led to some confusion. I will therefore try to clarify the changes without, I hope, adding to the smoke.

The “Health Warning”

The paragraphs below are intended as a working guide to the changed Law and Regulations. They are not definitive and it cannot be the case that they replace the Regulations themselves or their wording. If issues are raised it will be necessary to refer directly to those Regulations.

The “Why”

League matches abandoned because of uncontested scrums have become the major bone of discontent between the clubs and those of us administering the leagues. It is very understandable that a club should feel aggrieved when having believed they have won a game, they are then told that a re-play has been ordered because the match finished with uncontested scrums. This can be compounded if the club concerned was not responsible for the uncontested scrums and if, as the away team, they are forced to travel for a second occasion.

The proposed solution has been used with considerable success in France for many years, and was used in RFU Cup competitions prior to it being outlawed by the IRB as being outside The Laws of the Game. The RFU were then forced to put aside plans to introduce it on an experimental basis, into the league system. Needless to say, our cross channel neighbours took a more pragmatic view.

The “How”

Matches in which uncontested scrums are ordered will continue and the result at 80 minutes will stand.

The number of replacements will remain at 3 with a minimum of 4 players in the squad of 18 trained and capable of playing in the front row.

If a front row player in any of the three positions cannot continue, then he must be replaced on the first occasion one is required. If a team is unable to do so, then they will be deemed to have lost the game (0-0 win to non-offending team) and will, in the normal course of events, suffer a subsequent points deduction. The game will continue with uncontested scrums.

If on the second occasion a front row player is required to be replaced, the referee will ask if a replacement front row player is available. If no replacement is available, then uncontested scrums will be ordered and the team responsible will be required to play on with one fewer player. Normally, but not exclusively, one would expect this to be fulfilled by the non-replacement of the injured front row player.

Blood Injury. If, on the second occasion, the front row player is unable to continue because of a blood injury, and therefore leaves the field on a temporary basis only, uncontested scrums will be ordered. This situation will continue for a maximum of 15 minutes, until the player returns to the game or not. If he returns, then the game continues with contested scrums once more. If he does not return, then the game carries on with uncontested scrums, his side playing with one fewer player i.e. 14 players.

Yellow card. If a front row player is awarded a yellow card, the referee will enquire if he can be replaced in his front row position. If he cannot be replaced, then the team of the offending player will have caused the game to go to uncontested scrums. His side will then play with 14 players for the duration of the yellow card offence. The player may return to the field of play, subsequent to the period of temporary suspension ending and the game will continue with contested scrums.

Red card. If a front row player is awarded a red card, the referee will enquire if he can be replaced in his front row position. If he cannot be replaced, then the team of the offending player will have caused the game to go to uncontested scrums. His side will then play with 14 players for the duration of the game.

Play Offs and Cups

There are further variations for play offs and cups. These can be found in the Regulation changes. Further guidance may be issued prior to the 1st round of the National Cups and the end of season Play Offs.

The Safety

Players, referees and administrators are reminded that, as at present, the responsibility for ensuring that front row players are trained and capable of playing in the front row remains the responsibility of the management of the team and of the player in question. There can be no excuse for allowing an untrained person to participate in competitive scrummaging.

The Result

The evidence from France suggests that this is a means of protecting the integrity of our competitive scrummaging game from the scourge of uncontested scrums without any apparent increase in safety issues. The vexation of replaying a match finishing with uncontested scrums will be virtually eliminated. A longer term aspiration is that it will result in a real increase in the number of trained front row players.

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