

TACKLE FAQs

FOR COACHES AND REFEREES

The underlying principle of the Tackle Height experimental law variation is to improve the safety of the game and increase the appeal and flow of the game. This is achieved by making the tackle safer for all involved by lowering the tackle height of the first tackler to allow more “space” for subsequent tacklers. This creates greater separation between the heads of the ball carrier, Tackler one and any subsequent tacklers, which decreases risk of head-on-head contact. The additional benefits of lowering the tackle height are more opportunities for both off-loading of the ball and contesting of the ball on the ground following a tackle; both resulting in more continuity of play.

The target area for tackler one is also the softest part of the body (below the sternum or the tummy height of the ball carrier).

The tackle is an extremely dynamic event and there are many different variables in every tackle. So how can coaches prepare players for these different tackle scenarios, and how can referees manage different tackle scenarios?

Referees should apply Laws based on the principle that infringements should be “clear and obvious”, if not – PLAY ON.

Let’s look at some common on-field scenarios.

Scenario 1. The ball carrier dropping their torso into the tackle/tackler just prior to contact.

EXAMPLE

What are the considerations for the referee?

The Referee needs to understand the head contact process and accurately apply judgment “Is there foul play - Yes or No”. Referees understanding of mitigation factors is important.

How will that situation be refereed in the game situation?

If the tackler is attempting to execute a legal tackle, having dropped their height to tackle below the sternum, then they should not be deemed to have committed foul play.

What training activities can I use to develop players’ skills for defending this scenario?

Small Blacks [HERE](#)

OTHERS [HERE](#) [HERE](#)

Scenario 2. Two or more tacklers arriving at or about the same time.

EXAMPLE

Where two tacklers arrive almost at the same time, or simultaneously – one higher and one lower, it may be difficult for the referee to determine if the sequence is wrong. If it is not clearly and obviously wrong the referee should play on. The key picture for referees is that there are two tacklers are at the differing heights of at least below the sternum and below the line of the shoulders.

All tacklers are required to contact the ball carrier within the required height restrictions.

One of the intentions of the Tackle experimental law variation is to create more separation of the heads of participants in the tackle.

Coaches should be looking to develop players' tackle skills based on the ball carriers body position and the different target areas available to the tackler under this Law.

Scenario 3. Close to the Goal line the ball carrier driving toward the goal line with their torso in the horizontal plane. EXAMPLE

How does a defender legally halt the forward progress of the ball carrier?

The best options are to tackle low, targeting the legs "Chop tackle", getting lower than the ball carrier and either tackle or hold up. Another option may be tackling from the side of the ball carrier or at an angle targeting the tummy area and controlling the leg of the ball carrier. (Video may be available to demonstrate).

What are the considerations for a referee?

Can the tackler get any lower than the ball carrier's sternum based on their angle of attack? Is there "intent" for any dangerous action(s) by defender?

Advice for referees is to apply judgement and penalise clear and obvious infringements in these scenarios.

How will that situation be refereed in the game situation?

If a tackler(s) is legal in all their actions the referee should NOT deem their actions foul play. Mitigation factors come into play.

e.g. Often defenders just dive at feet and don't try and tackle illegally/wrap - this is dangerous play.

What training activities can I use to develop players skills for defending this scenario?

Practice co-ordinated defending near goal line focusing on things like body height to get under the torso of the ball carrier, controlling the ball carriers leg drive in the tackle etc.

EXAMPLE

Scenario 4. The tackler tackles the ball carrier from behind.

When tackling a player from behind, does the tackle height remain the same as when tackling from the front or side?

Yes, however, Referees should consider playing Penalty Kick (PK) advantage if there is no danger and no contact around neck or head.

Note: PK advantage is always an option unless there is immediate danger or safety issues for either or both tackler/s and tackled player.

What are the considerations for the referee? How will that situation be refereed in the game situation?

Safety is paramount. If the tackle is from behind and up around the neck or head area, a PK is the appropriate sanction, as opposed to the jersey pull above the high tackle line which advantage might be played from.

Scenario 5. The “tackler/s grabs the ball carrier by the jersey above the line of the sternum and attempts to halt the ball carrier’s progress. And:

- *they do not bring the ball carrier to the ground or stop their progress (unsuccessful grab).*

In this situation, unless there is danger or foul play involved, it should be play on.

OR

- *the ball carrier is either held up or pulled to the ground (but the “tackler” does not go to ground with the ball carrier) – in these situations, there has been a “successful” contact with the ball carrier.*

In these situations, the grabbing or holding action would need to be compliant with the tackle height. I.e., below the sternum for the first “tackler”. If the first tackler successfully grabs and holds on to the ball carrier above the height of the sternum, then a PK should be awarded

Do either of these scenarios become a tackle?

The simple answer - No. Neither scenario is technically a tackle under the Laws of the game.

What tackle height is applicable to the “tackler/s” in these situations?

These scenarios are viewed as “attempted” tackles and Safety is the first consideration. As such the lower tackle heights set out in the experimental law variations apply. With mitigation able to be applied.

What are the considerations for the referee?

Height of contact, nature of contact

Other General Questions

How do I coach players to generally tackle below the sternum?

To prepare them for contact (confidence in contact – not just the tackle) We have resources on RugbyToolbox. This is an example we are trying out in our Ripa grades.

[Plank Push Tackle Confidence](#)

[Bear Hug Rugby Tackle Confidence](#)

To develop skills for the different tackle heights depending on their role in the tackle and taking into consideration the players age and skill level.

[Tackle clinics](#)