



REFEREES

Teams deciding not to engage the maul

There has been some considerable debate in the last month about the recent "defence" of some line out drives: namely a defending team deciding not to engage the maul at all.

At the recent JWC tournament, the IRB made a decision around how the referee should apply the Law in this case.

This is what was decided, within Law, in order to give everyone clarity around the reaction to a defending team choosing not to engage in the potential maul from a line out:

- 1) If the defenders in the line out choose to not engage the line out drive by leaving the line out as a group, then PK to attacking team.
- 2) If the defenders in the line out choose to not engage the line out drive by simply opening up a gap and creating space, and not leaving the line out, the following process would be followed:
 - a) Attackers would need to keep the ball with the front player, if they were to drive down-field (therefore play on, general play - defenders could either engage to form a maul, or tackle the ball carrier only)
 - b) If they had immediately passed it back to the player at the rear of the group, the referee would tell them to "Use it" which they must do immediately...
 - c) If they drove forward with the ball at the back (and did not release the ball), the referee would award a scrum for "accidental offside" rather than PK for obstruction.

The reason the IRB used (which was widely accepted by both team coaches & referees) was that we did not want this tactic to be unfairly rewarded with a PK v the attack team, as we felt this went entirely against the principle of rugby being a "contest".

We believe that teams who are adept at mauling will very quickly make use of their options to their advantage and therefore defending teams will be taking a massive risk if they choose not to compete with the initial maul.

There are 3 video clips accompanying this memo:

- 1) *Old approach PK.mpg* – The referee adopts the former approach of PK for obstruction.
- 2) *New approach Use It PO.mpg* – The referee adopts the new approach of calling "Use it" which the players do and play continues.
- 3) *New approach Use It Scrum.mpg* – The referee adopts the new approach of calling "Use it" which the players do not do, and a scrum is awarded.