



KEY TIPS FOR REFEREEING YOUTH RUGBY

Referees play an important role in youth rugby by maintaining the continuity of the game and the safety of players. Remember to focus on some of these key factors when refereeing the youth game. Before you begin, be sure to be aware of any competition-specific age-level variations (i.e. number of players, contest at the scrum, line-out lifting, tackle restrictions). Confirm these variations with the coaches from both teams before the game.

1. SAFETY IS PRIMARY

- Maintain a strict standard at tackles to ensure safety of the tackled player and the tackler.
- Ensure players are arriving to the tackle are, through the gate, on their feet and seeking to bind on a teammate or opposition.
- Find out from the coaches the relative experience levels of both teams.
- Ensure scrums are safe and the players are capable of contesting scrums. If either team is not able to safely/comfortably execute contested scrums, use uncontested scrums.

2. FOUL PLAY IS NOT WITHIN THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME AND HAS NO PLACE IN RUGBY

- Foul Play should not be tolerated. Be aware you are dealing with less mature individuals and your management style can impact players and the game. Use downtime communication to keep players focused on the game.

3. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS KEY

- The more communication you have with players, the more it can be used as a preventative tool (i.e. "Tackler, roll away!") and in explaining an infraction (i.e. "Red, you must be behind the last foot at the ruck") will help the players perform at a higher standard. The referee is also an educator at this level.

Always keep in mind that the goal of the referee is to assist the players in creating a fair game with a contest for and continuity of possession, and to help achieve enjoyment and entertainment for all involved.

OPEN PLAY

Players of this age will sometimes do the unexpected: run odd lines, go backward or sideways with the ball, etc. Obstruction only occurs if someone is actually obstructed intentionally. Recognize there is the option to restart with a scrum instead of penalty when the obstruction occurrence was simply an accidental offside, and not a willful incident of impeding a defender.

Prevent and police offside at kicks. Less experienced players may not be aware they are in an offside position and move forward. Good communication and instruction can prevent unnecessary penalties (and educate players and fans).

TACKLE/RUCK

All players must enter the tackle zone through the gate - this helps create a cleaner transition to the ruck and contest at the ruck.

Do not allow piles to happen at rucks, this only increases the possibility of inadvertent injuries or intentional infractions. The ball should be available quickly. Use an unplayable ball as a management tool if necessary, restart with a scrum and communicate expectations to the players (i.e. "We need to play the game on our feet").

MAUL

Ensure defending and attacking players are joining the maul legally. Be aware, the strength and coordination of younger players may cause some collapsed mauls. Before penalizing, be sure the maul that collapses was actually taken down intentionally.

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