

FURTHER AMENDED MEMORANDUM

TO: Referees
Citing Commissioners
Judicial Officers
Non-legal Judicial Committee Members

FROM: Joël Jutge, World Rugby High Performance Match Officials Manager
Tim Gresson, World Rugby Judicial Panel Chairman

DATE: 22 May 2015

SUBJECT: (i) DANGEROUS TACKLES (HIGH TACKLES) and
(ii) DANGEROUS GRASPING OF NECK AND/OR HEAD AREA OF PLAYER NOT IN POSSESSION OF THE BALL and
(II) DANGEROUS GRASPING / HOLDING OF BALL CARRIER ABOVE THE LINE OF THE SHOULDERS

NOTE: THIS MEMORANDUM REPLACES THE MEMORANDUM OF 4 AUGUST 2011 WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT RELATING TO DANGEROUS TACKLES (HIGH TACKLES) AND DANGEROUS GRASPING OF THE NECK AND/OR HEAD AREA OF PLAYERS NOT IN POSSESSION OF THE BALL

This is a replacement memorandum in relation to Dangerous Tackles and the illegal taking out of players who are not in possession of the ball.

Law 10.4(e) in relation to Dangerous Tackles provides as follows:

A player must not tackle an opponent early, late or dangerously.

A player must not tackle (or try to tackle) an opponent above the line of the shoulders even if the tackle starts below the line of the shoulders. A tackle around the opponent's neck or head is dangerous play.

A 'stiff-arm tackle' is dangerous play. A player makes a stiff-arm tackle when using a stiff-arm to strike an opponent.

Playing a player without the ball is dangerous play.

A player must not tackle an opponent whose feet are off the ground.

High Tackles:

At an IRB Medical Seminar held in November 2010 at Lensbury the results of studies by the Rugby Football Union and New Zealand Rugby Football Union concluded that most injuries in Rugby in the elite Game were occurring as a result of high tackles. The participants generally recognised that tackles above the line of the shoulders had the potential to cause serious injury and noted that a trend had emerged whereby players responsible for such tackles were not being adequately sanctioned.

Dangerous Grasping:

A further pattern of offending was identified in the Game (Memoranda 4 August 2011) whereby players not in possession of the ball were being grasped and/or grabbed by an opponent in and around the neck and/or head area, principally in an effort to clear out

players from the breakdown. While such behaviour does not come under the definition of a tackle, as no ball carrier is involved, nevertheless it is dangerous play and Foul Play under Law 10.4(e) and/or Law 10.4(f) (playing an opponent without the ball) which must be sanctioned.

The purpose of this Memorandum is to emphasise that as with tip tackles, (see Memorandum of 8 June 2009) this type of dangerous play which is Foul Play must be dealt with severely by Match Officials and all those involved in the off-field disciplinary process. As with other types of Foul Play, depending on the circumstances of the high tackle or the illegal and dangerous taking out of players not in possession of the ball, the range of sanctions can extend from a penalty kick to the player receiving a red card.

A high tackle to the head and/or neck area of an opponent (in particular involving a 'stiff arm' or swinging arm), bears all the hallmarks of an action which should result in a yellow card or a red card being seriously considered.

The grasping and twisting of the neck and/or head area of a player to effect either a tackle or to clear out a player not in possession of the ball should also be regarded as constituting serious Foul Play and Match Officials and all those involved in the off-field disciplinary process have a responsibility to ensure that the appropriate action is taken by them.

Tackling Ball Carriers around the neck / head areas

A trend has recently emerged whereby player(s) tackle (or try to tackle) the ball carrier around and/or above the line of the shoulders in an effort to (i) keep the opponent up off the ground and force a turnover or (ii) to encourage the opponent to release the ball by "strangling" him around the neck. In these types of tackle there may be more than one tackler and a maul may rapidly form around the ball carrier.

A further purpose of this revised Memorandum is to emphasise that as with other types of dangerous tackle and dangerous grasping of the neck and/or head area, where a player tackles (or tries to tackle) the ball carrier above the line of the shoulders, this is Foul Play under Law 10.4(e) and must be dealt with severely by Match Officials and all those involved in the off-field disciplinary process in order to protect Player welfare. As with other types of Foul Play described in this Memorandum, depending on the circumstances of the high tackle, the range of on-field sanctions can extend from a penalty kick to the player receiving a red card.

Basis of Decisions

Referees and Citing Commissioners should not make their decisions based on what they consider was the intention of the offending player nor should they have regard to whether the "first" contact was below the line of the ball carrier's shoulders. Their decisions should be based on an objective assessment (as per Law 10.4(e) and Law 10.4(f)) of the overall circumstances of the tackle or the clear out in each case.

Each of the types of Foul Play referred to above:

- High Tackles
- Dangerous Grasping
- Tackling Ball Carrier around the Neck/Head Area

constitute patterns of offending in the Game for which there exists a need for a deterrent in sanctioning.

Joël Jutge
Tim Gresson