

Memo

To: Secretaries/CEO's of Unions and Regional Associations in Membership
From: Hugh H. Penman-Head of Council and Member Services
Subject: Law Ruling by Designated Members of Rugby Committee
Ruling: 9: 2004
Date: 23rd December 2004

The IRFU has requested a ruling with regard Law 10-Foul Play and Law 22-In Goal

Law 10 – Foul Play

Rewrite and amendment of 10.2(a), and consequential addition to Law 22.

The first paragraph states:

Intentionally Offending. *A player must not intentionally infringe any Law of the Game, or play unfairly. The player who intentionally offends must be either admonished, or cautioned that a send off will result if the offence or a similar offence is committed, or sent-off. After a caution a player is temporarily suspended from the match for a period of ten minutes playing time. After a caution, if the player commits the same or similar offence, the player must be sent-off.*

Penalty: Penalty Kick

The final paragraph states:

A penalty try must be awarded if the offence prevents a try that would probably otherwise have been scored. A player who prevents a try being scored through foul play must either be cautioned and temporarily suspended or sent off.

The final paragraph does not appear to offer the possibility of an 'admonishment' by the referee; nor does it refer to 'intentionally'.

The clarification sought is:

Is it the intention of the Law (as now rewritten) to ensure that in each and every circumstance, where a penalty try is awarded, that the offending player is temporarily suspended, whether or not the foul is intentional?

Is it the intention to remove the discretion of the referee to admonish, rather than temporarily suspend or send off a player in such circumstances?

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The reason clarification is sought is that there are circumstances where the offence is not intentional: e.g. mistimed (early or late, but not dangerous) tackle; unintentional instinctive high, but not dangerous, tackle - when an attacker steps inside a defender; certain incidences of scrum collapsing.

In these circumstances, the sanction of a penalty try, and a temporary suspension appear exceptionally severe. While it will not be a frequent occurrence, the effect on a match outcome could be hugely significant. It could also, in the event of a front row forward, lead to uncontested scrums. Finally, it would appear inconsistent for an offence which, taking place in mid-field, would not merit a temporary suspension but would merit a temporary suspension close to a goal-line.

The Designated Members have ruled the following in answer to the question raised:

Ruling

Law 10.2(a) is Unfair Play relating to Intentional Offending.

The two paragraphs in Law 10.2(a) must be read in conjunction, having due regard to the heading 'Intentionally Offending'.

Therefore, if a penalty try is awarded as the result of a player intentionally offending, then the player must be either be cautioned and temporarily suspended or sent off.

Examples of this would be after penalty tries resulting from:

- a collapsed scrum
- a collapsed maul
- a defending player intentionally offside
- a defending player intentionally knocking down the ball.

If a penalty try is awarded as the result of a player unintentionally offending, the player, as well as being liable to cautioning and temporary suspension or send off, can be admonished by the referee.

Examples of this may be after penalty tries resulting from:

- mistimed tackle (early or late, but not dangerous)
- unintentional reactionary high tackle, but not dangerous.

Yours sincerely,

Hugh H. Penman
Head of Council and Member Services