

## **Midi Rugby: Rules of Play**

February 1, 2009

Players and match officials must endeavor to ensure the IRB Laws of the Game, modified by the following playing rules, are observed when playing Midi Rugby. The Midi Rugby game is designed for players (playing in appropriate age groupings) aged as young as eleven (under 12 or sixth grade) to players as old as thirteen (under 14 or eighth grade). Players may be older, particularly those that have had little or no previous rugby experience. The aggregate level of previous experience of the players and the quality of the support for them are more important determinants for the timing of the introduction of Midi Rugby than is the age of the players. Ideally most of the players involved in Midi Rugby should have had some exposure to the Mini Rugby game, and players that have had no previous rugby experience should be integrated into Midi Rugby programs not more than one or two at a time.

### **3.1 Object:**

The object of the game is to score a try (five points) and conversion (two points). A penalty try will be awarded if a try would probably have been scored but for foul play by the defending team.

### **3.2 Teams**

The game is played between teams having a maximum of ten players, five of whom will be forwards and form the scrum, with the remaining players forming the back line. Each team can have an agreed number of substitutes. Substituted players can be re-used at any time. Substitutions may only take place when the ball is dead or at half time and always with the referee's knowledge.

### **3.3 Starts**

- (a) A drop-kick from the center of the half-way line is used to start the game, the second half, and for all restarts after a score. The kicker's team must be behind the ball until it has been kicked and the receiving team must be at least seven meters back from the ball.
- (b) If, from the kick-off, the ball is kicked directly into touch, the opposition has the choice of:
  - the kick-off being taken again; or
  - the throw-in to a scrum at the center of the half-way line; or
  - accepting the kick and contesting a line-out at the half-way line.
- (c) If from the kick-off the ball is not kicked seven meters and the ball is not first touched by an opponent of the kicker, the opposition has the choice of:
  - the kick-off being taken again; or
  - their throw-in to a scrum at the center of the half-way line.

(d) If from the kick-off the ball is kicked into in-goal, without having touched or been touched by a player, the ball goes directly into in-goal and is then immediately touched down or made dead, or the ball goes into touch-in-goal, the opposition has the choice of:

- the kick-off being taken again; or
- their throw-in to a scrum at the center of the half-way line.

(e) Following an infringement for:

- off-side; or
- high or late tackle; or
- hand-off/fend-off ; (A hand-off being the placing of an open palmed hand by the ball carrier against an opponent's face or body, while a fend-off is an outstretched arm by the ball carrier towards an opponent to discourage that person making a tackle. Players should be encouraged to carry the ball in two hands to reduce the temptation to hand-off/fend off with a free hand. ); or
- kicking (including fly-hacking, i.e. kicking a loose ball on the ground); or
- obstruction,

the match restarts at the place of infringement with a penalty kick to the non-offending team.

(f) After any stoppage not covered elsewhere in this Section (e.g. an injury), the match restarts with a scrum to the team moving forward or, if neither team was moving forward, to the team last in possession of the ball.

### 3.4 General Play

(a) In general play, the ball can only be passed sideways or backwards, defined as 'towards the player's own dead-ball line'. If the ball is thrown forward or knocked on, a scrum is awarded to the opponents unless the referee plays advantage to the non-offending team.

(b) Off-side in general play is penalized in accordance with the IRB Laws of the Game. A player off-side in general play is to be penalized for being off-side unless that player is making an obvious attempt to return to an on-side position. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.

(c) If a player carrying the ball goes to ground in general play or if a player goes to ground to gather the ball in general play, the player must immediately do one of three things, or be penalized:

- get up with the ball; or
- pass the ball to another player; or
- release the ball for another player to pick up.

**Note:** If a player releases the ball by placing it on the ground and the player's team-mates drive over the ball to prevent the opposition gaining possession, a ruck will generally be formed, and in this case the

ball may not be picked up by hand until the ball has left the ruck, as described in Section 3.7. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.

### 3.5 Tackling

(a) Players who have the ball and are on their feet (except in a maul) can be tackled. Following a tackle :

- The tackler must immediately release the tackled player and get up or move away from the tackled player and the ball. The tackler must get up before playing the ball.

**Note 1:** Any tackle level with or above the armpit is to be considered a high tackle.

**Note 2:** The scrag-type tackle (i.e. swinging the player round by the shirt) must be considered dangerous play and must be penalized.

**Note 3:** The piledriver-type tackle (i.e. lifting the ball carrier off the ground and then slamming the ball-carrier to the ground violently) must be considered dangerous play and penalized.

- The tackled player must immediately pass or release the ball and must get up or move away from the ball. The tackled player may put the ball on the ground in any direction, or may push the ball along the ground in any direction except forward (towards the opponents' goal line), providing this is done immediately.
- At a tackle, or near to a tackle, players other than the tackler(s) or tackled player who play the ball must do so from behind the ball and from behind the tackled player, or the tackler closest to those players' goal line.
- Any player who first gains possession of the ball at the tackle or near to it may be tackled by an opponent, providing that the opponent does so from behind the ball and from behind the tackled player or tackler nearest that player's goal line.

**Penalty:** (a) 1 thru 4. Penalty kick.

(b) If, after a tackle, the ball becomes unplayable, a scrum is awarded. The scrum is awarded to the team that was moving forward immediately prior to the tackle or, if no team was moving forward, to the attacking team (the team in the opponents' half of the pitch).

(c) No player shall use the technique known or referred to as 'Squeezeball' and no person involved in the teaching or coaching of Mini or Midi Rugby may teach or coach or encourage players to use the 'Squeezeball' technique. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.

**Note:** 'Squeezeball' is a technique where the ball carrier goes to ground, head forward (touching or close to the ground), irrespective of immediate contact with opponents, usually keeping parallel to the touch line, holding and protecting the ball close to the chest and, when on the ground, pushes the ball back between the legs.

- (d) It is illegal for any player to voluntarily fall on or over a player lying on the ground with the ball in the player's possession or to voluntarily fall on or over players lying on the ground with the ball between them, or near them. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.

**Note:** No advantage shall be played. A player is assumed to have fallen voluntarily unless the referee is absolutely certain the fall was accidental. In the very rare instances when the fall is accidental, play must be stopped and a scrum awarded to the team previously in possession. The objective is to remove a dangerous area of play keep players by keeping on their feet and preventing them from falling to the ground. This will create proper rucks and mauls through encouraging players from both teams to remain on their feet.

### 3.6 Maul

- (a) A maul occurs when a player carrying the ball is held by one or more opponents, and one or more of the ball-carrier's team-mates bind onto the ball-carrier. It is helpful if the referee calls 'Maul formed'. All the players involved are on their feet.
- (b) Once a maul is formed, other players may only join the maul from behind the foot of their hindmost team-mate in the maul. Players joining the maul from in front of this (e.g. from the side) are off-side and should be penalized. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (c) A maul ends successfully when either the ball or a player with the ball leaves the maul or the ball is on the ground or the maul is on or over the goal line (when the ball may be grounded for a try or touch-down as the case may be).
- (d) A maul ends unsuccessfully if the ball becomes unplayable or the maul collapses (not as a result of foul play) and a scrum is awarded. Should a maul collapse, the referee must immediately blow the whistle to stop play, to prevent a pile-up from developing.
- (e) When a maul remains stationary or has stopped moving forward for more than five seconds, but the ball is being moved and the referee can see it, a reasonable time is allowed for the ball to emerge. If it does not emerge within a reasonable time, a scrum is ordered. It is helpful in all maul situations if the referee calls "Use it or lose it" prior to awarding a scrum.
- (f) When a maul has stopped moving forward it may start moving forward again providing it does so within five seconds. If the maul stops moving forward for a second time, and if the ball is being moved and the referee can see it, a reasonable time is allowed for the ball to emerge. A scrum is awarded if it does not emerge within a reasonable time.
- (g) In the case of a scrum following a maul the team not in possession of the ball when the maul began will throw the ball in at the subsequent scrum. If the referee cannot decide which team had possession, the

team moving forward before the maul stopped throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward, the attacking team throws in the ball.

- (a) Any player at any stage in a maul who has or causes an opponent to have the shoulders lower than the hip joint must immediately be penalized by awarding a free pass. The object of this rule is to prevent the pulling down or collapse of a maul. Any player who has the shoulders lower than the hip joint can only move downwards unless the player has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forwards and upwards. All players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile-up and possible injury.

### 3.7 Rucks

- (a) A ruck occurs where one or more players from each team, who are on their feet, in physical contact, close over the ball on the ground. It is helpful if the referee calls "Ruck formed". Players are rucking when they are in a ruck and using their feet to try to win or keep possession of the ball, without being guilty of foul play. Players must not stand on any part of another player's body in a ruck - **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (b) Once a ruck is formed, other players may only join the ruck from behind the foot of their hindmost team-mate in the ruck. A player may join alongside this hindmost player. Players joining the ruck from in front of this (e.g. from the side) are off-side and should be penalized. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (c) Players must not use their hands to pick up the ball while it is still in the ruck. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (d) A ruck ends successfully when the ball leaves the ruck, or when the ball is on or over the goal line (when the ball may be grounded for a try or touch-down as the case may be).
- (e) A ruck ends unsuccessfully when the ball becomes unplayable and a scrum is awarded. Should a ruck collapse, the referee must immediately blow the whistle to stop play, to prevent a pile-up from developing.
- (f) Scrum following ruck: The team that was moving forward immediately before the ball became unplayable in the ruck throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward, or if the referee cannot decide which team was moving forward before the ball became unplayable in the ruck, the team that was moving forward before the ruck began throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward, then the attacking team throws in the ball. Before the referee blows the whistle for a scrum, the referee allows a reasonable amount of time for the ball to emerge. If the ruck stops moving or if the referee decides that the ball will probably not emerge within a reasonable time, the referee must order a scrum.
- (g) Any player at any stage in a ruck who has or causes an opponent to have, the shoulders lower than the hip joint must immediately be penalized by awarding a penalty kick. The object of this rule is to prevent the pulling down or collapse of a ruck. It is to help the coach to

teach good technique and the referee to penalize bad technique. Any player who has the shoulders lower than the hip joint can only move downwards unless the player has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forwards and upwards. All players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile-up and possible injury.

### 3.8 Scrums

- (a) The scrum will be made up of five players from each team - the front row (a row of three players, i.e. a prop on either side of the hooker) and two locks forming the second row. The locks must bind to each other using the inside arm, with the outside arm around the hips (not between the legs) of the front row (props). Neither of the locks may unbind to pick up the ball at the rear of the scrum but must remain bound onto the scrum until the ball is carried or passed out by the scrum-half. **Penalty:** Penalty kick.
- (b) Before starting the engagement procedure the players from each front row will bind together approximately half a meter from their opponents, with the props each binding firmly with one arm around their hooker, and the hooker with arms binding firmly around each prop. In all binds the hands will be at or below the level of the armpit. The locks will then bind to each other and to the props - the referee should check that each team's locks are bound on to the front row before proceeding. Each prop will then touch the upper arm of his opponent, and then pause before the engagement. The referee will talk the players through the engagement procedure in the sequence **Crouch, Touch, Pause**, and **Engage**. On the grounds of safety, it is important that the referee manages the engagement of every scrum in this way. There must be no downward pressure exerted by hands or arms.
- (c) Although scrums are contested in Midi Rugby, under no circumstances is the scrum to be:
  - pulled in any way, or pushed more than 1.5 meters towards either goal line **Penalty:** A penalty kick at the original place against the team that has pushed or pulled the scrum;
  - wheeled more than 45 degrees **Penalty:** If a team intentionally wheels a scrum, a penalty kick will be awarded against that team. If the scrum is wheeled more than 45 degrees without a penalty kick award, the scrum will be reset with the same team throwing the ball in.
- (d) Front rows must not be allowed to charge at each other. If they start to engage too close together and with necks and backs bent, they must be stopped and the scrum reformed. Props' body positions must be parallel to the touch line (not boring in). There must be no downward pressure exerted by hands or arms. Shoulders must always be above the level of the hips.
- (e) If the scrum collapses, the whistle must immediately be blown and the appropriate penalty awarded, or the scrum reset. If a player is

persistently involved in collapsing or illegal binding they must be replaced. If a player's lack of technique or strength is a danger then they must be replaced.

- (f) A non-contested scrum must replace a contested scrum in any of the following circumstances (on safety grounds):
- if a player in a scrum has to be replaced and there is no adequate replacement;
  - if players involved in a scrum have not been properly trained;
  - if one team is obviously stronger and more experienced than the other and the referee has been unable to get the stronger team to reduce their push to take this into account.

In a non-contested scrum the teams do not contest for the ball. The team putting the ball in must win it. Neither team is allowed to push the other team away from the mark.

- (g) Any player at any stage in a scrum who has or causes an opponent to have the shoulders lower than the hip joint must immediately be penalized by awarding a penalty kick. The object of this rule is to prevent the collapse of a scrum. It is to help the coach to teach good technique and the referee to penalize bad technique. Any player who has the shoulders lower than the hip joint can only move downwards unless the player has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forwards and upwards; all players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile-up and possible injury.
- (h) The back lines of both teams must remain behind a line five meters behind the hindmost foot of their respective scrums until the ball emerges or the scrum-half places his hands on it. If a scrum is awarded within five meters of the goal line, the scrum is to be taken at a mark such that the middle line of the scrum is five meters from the goal line. In this case the defending backs must stay on or behind the goal line.
- (i) The scrum-half not throwing the ball into the scrum may remain directly alongside that player's opponent, and must not move beyond the middle line of the scrum until the ball has emerged from the scrum or an opponent has placed their hands on the ball. In the event of a strike against the head (the team putting the ball in losing the ball in the scrum), the scrum-half who has thrown the ball into the scrum is similarly restricted. If either scrum-half moves from a position close to the scrum, then the scrum-half must retire behind the same offside line as that for the backs.
- (j) Referees should pay particular attention to ensure that the scrum-half throwing the ball into the scrum is not "feeding". The scrum-half must hold the ball with both hands, with its major axis parallel to the ground/the touch line, midway between knees and ankles. The scrum-half must release the ball from outside the tunnel so that it lands midway between the two front rows and beyond the width of the nearer prop's shoulders.

- (k) In the interests of player safety, where a penalty is awarded for an infringement during a scrum, the penalty kick may not be taken quickly and players must wait until the referee signals that the kick may be taken.

### 3.9 Line-outs

- (a) If the ball or player carrying the ball goes out of play, a contested line-out will take place. If a line-out is awarded within five meters of the goal line, the line-out is to be taken at a mark five meters out from the goal line. The opponents of the team who carried or last touched the ball before it went into touch throw the ball in. A quick throw-in is not permitted.
- (b) The line-out will be made up of four players from each team (who stand between two and ten meters from the touch line) plus the player throwing the ball in and an immediate opponent (who must stand within two meters of the player throwing the ball in) and one player from each team in a position to receive the ball (i.e. scrum-half). Both the thrower and the immediate opponent are able to take an active role in the line-out as soon as the ball has been touched by one of the players in the line-out. Players not taking part in the line-out must stay behind the off-side line until the line-out ends.
- (c) The off-side line for all players not participating in the line-out (all players other than those described under Section 3.9(b)) is seven meters back from the line-of-touch, parallel to the goal line, and they must remain behind that off-side line until the line-out has ended. If the line-out is closer than seven meters to the touch line, the goal line is the off-side line.
- (d) The line-out will extend from two to ten meters from the touch line. Should the ball be thrown beyond ten meters without contact, the opposition will be awarded the throw-in. Should the opponents then throw beyond 10 meters without contact, a scrum will be awarded to the team originally throwing in. The scrum will be formed ten meters in from touch opposite the point where the ball went into touch. No advantage is to be played in any of these circumstances.
- (e) The line-out begins when the ball leaves the hands of the player throwing it in. The line-out ends when the ball or a player carrying it leaves the line-out. This includes the following:
- when the ball is thrown or knocked out of the line-out;
  - when a line-out player hands the ball to a player who is peeling close to and parallel to the line;

**Note:** "Peeling" occurs when a player leaves the line-out (after the ball has been thrown in) to catch the ball knocked or passed back by a team-mate, or to take the ball from a team-mate who has caught and held it.

- when a ruck or maul develops in a line-out, and both feet of all the players in the ruck or maul move beyond the line-of-touch; and
  - the ball has been passed or carried out of the line-out or if the catcher decides to drive through the line-out.
- (f) When the ball becomes unplayable in a line-out, play restarts with a scrum to the team moving forward or, if neither team was moving forward, to the team last in possession of the ball. The scrum will take place ten meters in from the touch line opposite the point where the line-out took place.
- (g) All 'peeling off' movements must be close to and parallel with the line-out. Players must keep moving. Lifting/supporting is prohibited at this level (i.e. a player may not bind to a jumper until they return to the ground). The player designated to receive the ball (i.e. the scrum-half) may not enter the line-out to compete for the ball.

### 3.10 Kicking

- (a) All the IRB Laws of the Game pertaining to kicking in open play will apply, with the following exceptions:
- Players may only kick the ball out of their hands.
  - On a kick, the off-side line is seven, rather than ten meters from the place of the kick. The kicker's team-mates must either be behind the kicker or behind a line ten meters in front of the receiving opponent (or the place where the ball will land) or they are off-side.
  - Kicking a loose ball when it is on the ground (often called fly hacking) is not permitted – this includes a front row player kicking a ball out of the scrum.

**Penalty:** Penalty kick.

- (b) After a try has been scored, the team can attempt to convert the try with a goal. The kick at goal may take place from anywhere in front of the posts and may be by a place kick or a drop-kick.
- (c) When an infringement occurs, a penalty or penalty kick will be awarded in accordance with the IRB Laws of the Game. The referee will make a mark for the kick. The opposition will retire quickly to seven meters from the mark. If the kick is taken so quickly that opponents have no opportunity to retire, they will not be penalized for this. However, they must continue to retire without interfering with the game until they are either seven meters from the mark or a team-mate who was standing seven meters from the mark has run in front of them. The opposing team must not do anything to delay the penalty kick or obstruct the kicker. Any infringement by the opposing team results in a second penalty seven meters in front of the mark for the first kick. On the second occasion the kick will not be taken until all opponents have retired seven meters. No penalty can be taken within five meters of the goal line.
- (d) Following the award of a penalty, a kick at goal or drop-goal is not permitted. Should the team awarded the penalty opt to kick to touch

and do so directly they will be awarded the subsequent throw-in at the line-out.

(e) Drop-goals are not permitted.

### **3.11 In-goal**

- (a) The in-goal area includes the goal line (i.e. the try-line) but not the touch-in-goal line, the dead-ball line or the corner posts.
- (b) If the attacking team grounds the ball in in-goal without having committed an infringement then a try is awarded. A ball is grounded by applying downward pressure by hand, arm, or chest when the ball in contact with the ground.
- (c) If the attacking team is unable to ground the ball for a try because the ball is not in contact with the ground (e.g. a hand or body is in between) or the attacking player is unable to apply downward pressure, a scrum is awarded to the attacking team on a line five meters out from the goal line.
- (d) If the defending team grounds the ball in in-goal, or the ball becomes dead by going or being carried into touch then:
  - If the attacking team carried the ball into in-goal or last touched the ball before it went into in-goal, a drop-out is awarded to the defending team on a line 15 meters out from the goal line;
  - If the defending team carried the ball into in-goal or last touched the ball before it went into in-goal, a scrum is awarded to the attacking team on a line five meters out from the goal line.