



USRFR pre-season conference 2026
Sunday 23rd August
Affidea Stadium

IRFU National Referee Camp 2026

THEME

Better Decision Makers

Learning Objective

Building on our Situational Awareness work to become better decision makers.

Definition – Situational Awareness for Referees

Best decision a referee can make for the game **and** for themselves at that time.

OR

How can I avoid creating controversy?



In Goal Restarts

Law Change

Try Line Dropout or 22m Dropout or 5m Scrum?

Try line Dropout

- ✓ Attack knock on in-goal.
- ✓ Attacking ball carrier held up in-goal.
- ✓ Kicked or played in-goal by attack and made dead by defending team.

- ✓ Kick in field of play charged down by opponent and made dead.
- ✓ Attacking ball carrier brings ball in-goal & fail to score.

CHANGE

In-Goal

- ✓ 5m Scrum
Ball brought back by defending team & made dead.



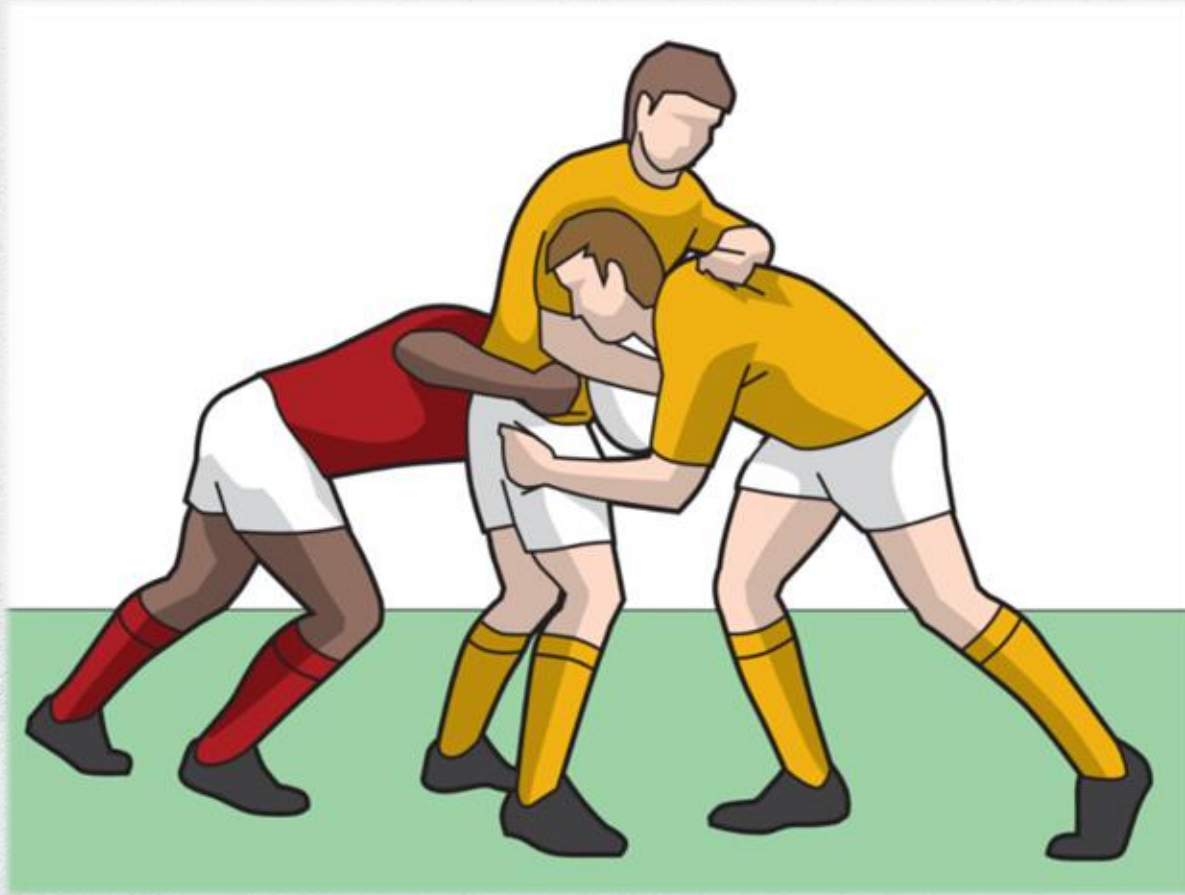
22m Dropout:

- ✓ Missed kick at goal (dead)
- ✓ Missed drop goal (dead)
- ✓ Attacking ball kicked dead through in goal in open play (22 or scrum option)

Maul

Law Application Change

What is a Maul?



A maul consists of a ball carrier and at least one player from each team, bound together and on their feet (Law 16.2)



Maul – Law Focus

Joining a maul –

- a. Do so from an onside position, and
- b. Bind on to the hindmost player in the maul.

During a maul –

Players must not:

- a. Intentionally collapse a maul or jump on top of it, or
- b. Attempt to drag an opponent out of a maul.





Maul – Law Application Change

1. Correct formation of the maul (no change, but a renewed focus for referees)
2. Refereeing players who swing up the side of the maul
3. Refereeing players who come through the middle and end up ON THE BALL / BALL CARRIER
4. Refereeing players who come through the middle BUT END UP PAST THE BALL LOITERING

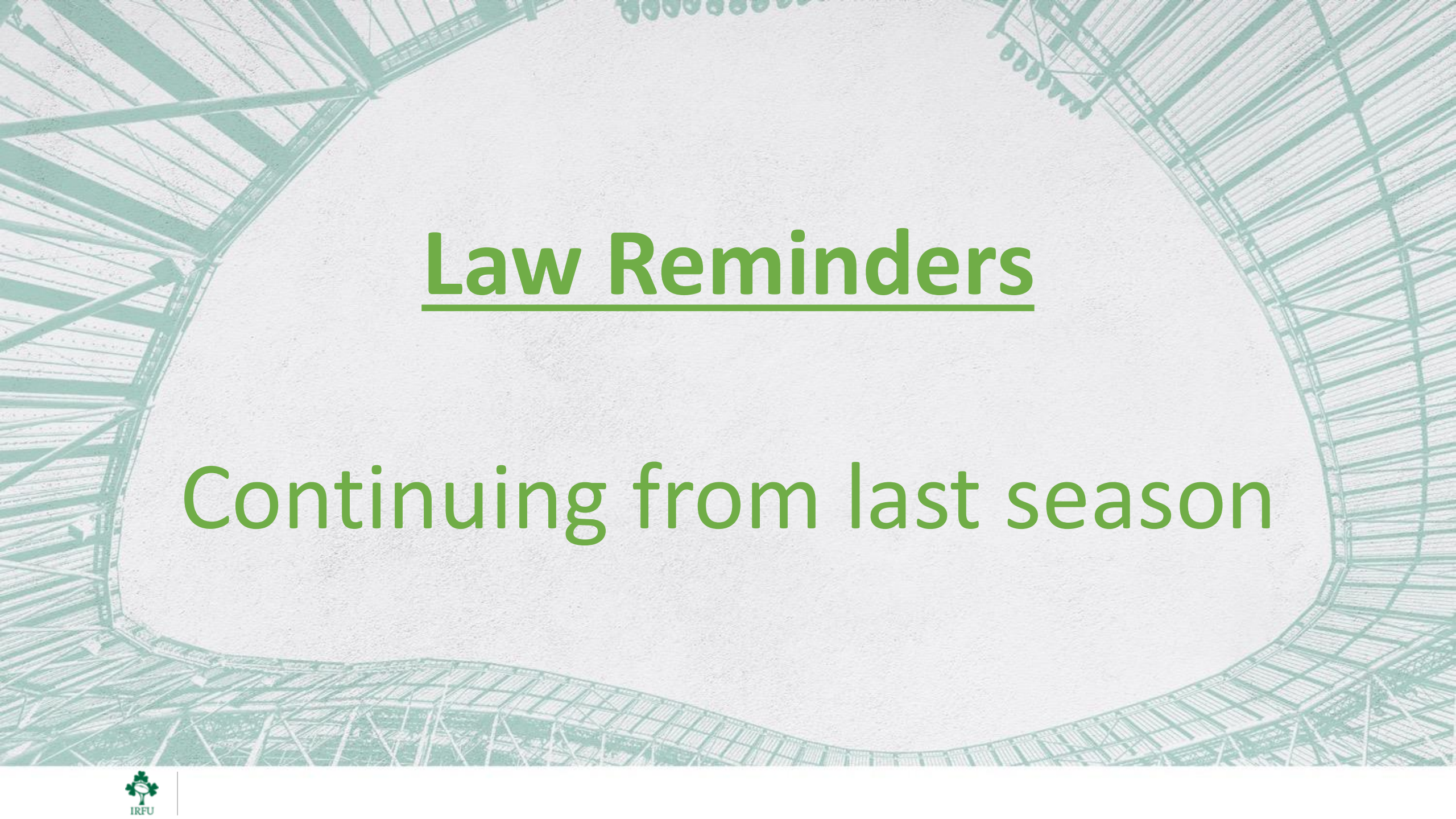




Maul Summary

- Good setup routine at lineout (no change)
- Correct formation of maul (no change)
- Players who swing up the side – **get out or risk sanction**
- Players who come through the middle and get on the ball / ball carrier – **positive action, play on**
- Players who come through the middle but end up past the ball loitering – **get out or risk sanction**





Law Reminders

Continuing from last season



Global Law Trials

Continuing From 2025 – 26 Season:

- 60 seconds for a conversion
- Not straight throw at uncontested lineout is play on
- Offside line for scrum half at the scrum
- Protecting the scrum half at the ruck and maul



Reminder of the 3 Law Changes from 24/25 Season

Crocodile Roll Prohibited

No Scrum Option at Free Kick

Offside in Open Play (Kicks)

And before that.....

- 50:22
- Goal Line Drop Out
- One player latch
- Tackle Height
- The list goes on.....

Law Clarifications

Addition to foul play law to make clear pushing a teammate with or without the ball is illegal – Law 9.15



Law Clarifications

Scrum half can use their hands to set up the ball before they play it away from the ruck.





Minor Law Wording Changes

There are a number of minor wording changes to simplify the Laws of Rugby.

Those most relevant to the Domestic Game are:

- Forward pass into touch – same as if knocked forward into touch – **Scrum or Lineout**
- Lineout – Player throwing in “...stands on the mark of touch **with both feet on or behind the touchline**. The thrower must not step into the field of play until the ball has been thrown.”
- U19 scrums – Scrum numbers do not reduce if a player in the “backs” is awarded a YC/RC, and the number of players in the scrum must be matched by both teams

Other minor changes with little or no relevance to the Domestic Game can be found on the World Rugby Laws of Rugby App or Law Book (hard copy)



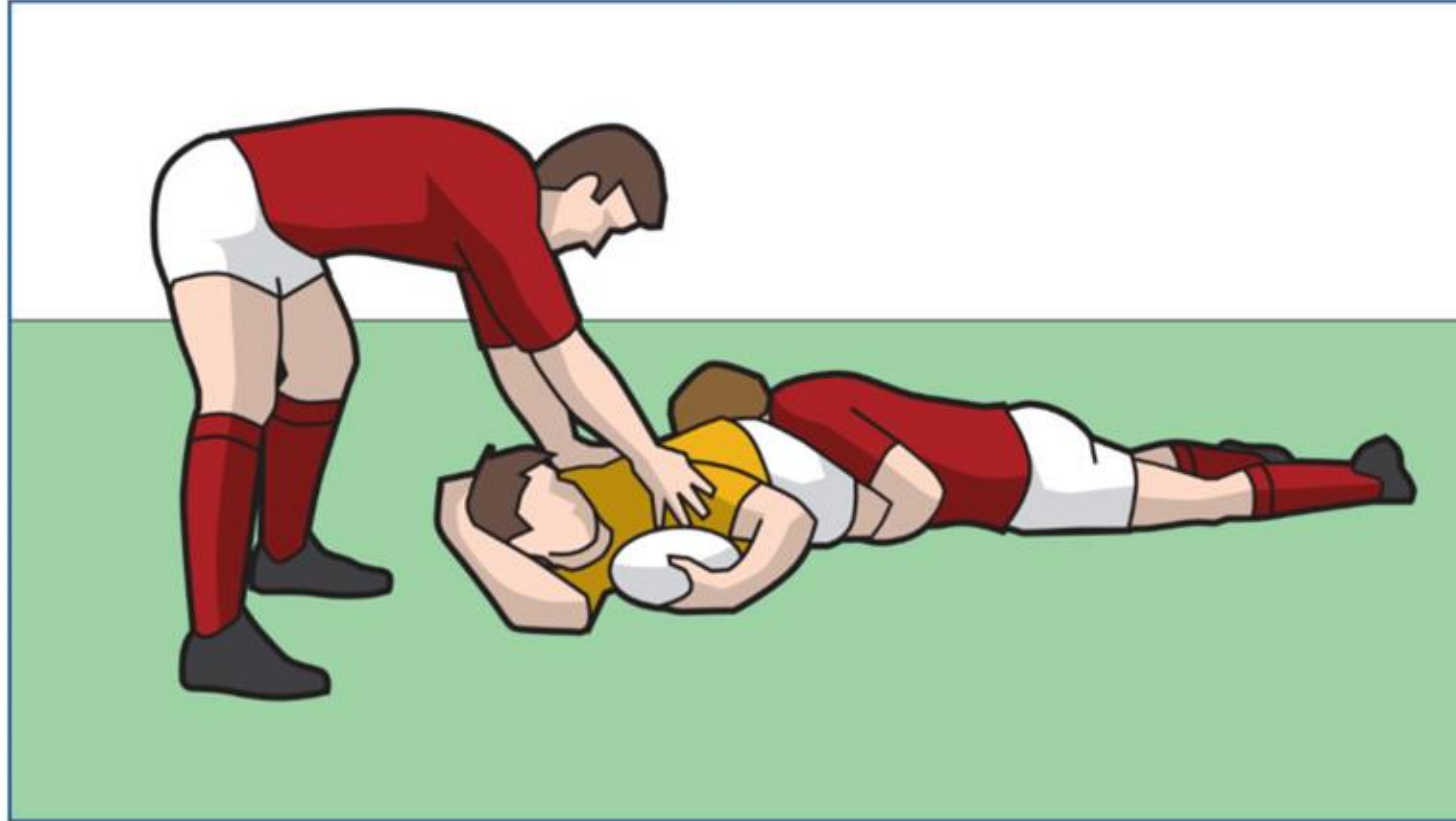
The background image shows a wide-angle view of a rugby field under a bright, cloudy sky. In the foreground, the legs of a goalpost are visible, with 'vodafone' branding on the base. A group of players in dark jerseys is gathered in the middle of the field. The green text box is positioned in the upper left quadrant.

Recognise and Remove update. National Referee Camp & Provincial Seminars 2026.



August 2026

LOWER TACKLE HEIGHT – NOW IN LAW



Requirements for a tackle

- 14.1** For a tackle to occur, the ball-carrier is held and brought to ground by one or more opponents. Tacklers have a responsibility to tackle below the relevant high tackle sanction line – shoulder line in elite rugby, or waist/base of the sternum in community rugby. The ball carrier has a responsibility to enter the tackle safely. (See Laws 9.13, 14.5a and Game-On Variation)



What we need to do moving forward

- IRFU will continue to use the sternum as the sanction line
- ***We need to remain strong on this as we go into a new season***
- Remember previous guidance
 - the tackler must show a clear bend at the hips
 - heads should not be in the same space
- Further information can be found on the Tackle Height module on Gainline





- If you remove a player under Recognise and Remove (Law 3.24) you must ensure that it is effectively communicated to the team management and technical zone personnel
- This should be done **verbally** and by a **signal** – tap your head with your hand
- All incidents must be reported through the SportLomo app ASAP after the match. You should do this when you are entering the score and any other necessary information
- On a rare occasion, you may be contacted by IRFU medical staff for further information



WEARABLES....

<https://passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/laws-by-number/4-permitted-clothing/>

m. Player monitoring devices.

4.4 A player may not wear:

a. Any item contaminated by blood.

b. Any sharp or abrasive item.

c. Any items containing buckles, clips, rings, hinges, zippers, screws, bolts or rigid material or projection not otherwise permitted under this law.

d. Jewellery.

e. Gloves.

f. Shorts or leggings with padding sewn into them.

g. Any item that is normally permitted in law but, in the referee's opinion, is liable to cause injury.

h. Communication devices.

4.5 The referee has the power to decide at any time that part of a player's clothing is dangerous or illegal. In this case, the referee must order the player to remove the item. The player must not take part in the match until the item is removed or rendered harmless.