



MANAGING the KICK

(Throughout the following text the pronoun “he” is used exclusively. The choice of word is based upon brevity rather than to detract from the role of equal importance that female referees perform in our game.)

It is essential for all referees to allow their thought processes to progress through a series of checklists throughout the game. Such a checklist is essential to standardize the referee’s thought processes at all phases of play including those phases that involve kicks.

The checklist should include matters pertaining to laws, referee positioning and desirable communication. The referee should ensure that all of these issues are included in his checklist of thought processes.

A basic issue of concern for all referees is to ensure that they are in a position to observe and adjudicate on any infringements that occur as a kick is taken and in the moments immediately after a kick. This will require a referee to automatically adopt set routines.

- *Observe the kicker as he kicks and immediately after he kicks.*
- *Commence a running line straight down the field but do not remain stationary and do not gaze at the ball in flight.*
- *Scan in order to identify legal and illegal advancing players.*
- *Manage players who are off side, those who are inappropriately obstructing runners as well as advancing players who do not have the privilege to improve their position on the field.*

*Do not look at the ball in the air.
Observe players at ground level.
Infringements are initiated by players at ground level; not by the ball in the air.
Player movement will be indicative of where the ball will land.*

KICK-OFFS, RESTART KICKS and 22 METRE DROP-OUTS

What are the issues that concern a referee at kick-offs, restart kicks and 22 metre drop-outs? What are the issues to be included in the referee’s checklist for these phases of play?

Application of the Laws and Competition Rules

The referee should develop this component of his checklist based upon what the Laws expect of his decision-making. This should then correspond with what the players and coaches expect as well as what the spectators expect of the referee.

- *Ensure that both teams are on the field in order that the game commences on time.*
- *Ensure that half time adheres to competition rules and the re-start is on time.*
- *Ensure that all kick-offs and restarts are taken correctly (method and place).*
- *Ensure that all 22 metre drop-outs are taken correctly (method and place).*
- *Ensure that players remain on side at kick-offs, restart kicks and drop-outs.*
- *Ensure that kick-offs, restart kicks and drop outs travel the required distance or cross the appropriate lines.*

Positioning of Referee

The referee should position himself “outside” the kicker along a line beside the kicker. This is the best position for him to be vigilant in his observation of those team mates who are in front of the kicker and warrant some player management. It should be noted that the referee cannot accurately observe team mates if he, the referee, is in front of the kicker or if he, the referee, is already advancing downfield at the time that the kick is taken.



Immediately after the kick the referee's observation must relocate to the receiving side to ensure that receiving team members do not deliberately move or pack in front of the ball receiver thus obstructing opponents and preventing them from contesting the ball.

- *Ensure that positioning enables identification of off side players at the kick.*
- *Scan for off side at the kick and/or identify obstruction.*

Communication

As with all phases of play, referees are encouraged to manage the players rather than to continually penalise offenders. The same principle applies at kick-offs, restart kicks and drop-outs. Communicate with off side players and players causing an obstruction to eliminate this behaviour. It is not essential to automatically whistle a penalty for these offences, however, it is inefficient and ineffective refereeing for match officials to do nothing about these offences. It is essential to manage these actions and eliminate them from the game.

- *Communicate before the kick to prevent off side.*
- *Communicate with players in an off side position and/or obstructing players after the kick in order to reduce penalties.*

KICKS in GENERAL PLAY

Although there are many issues that are similar to the referee's checklist for kick-offs, restarts and drop-outs there are a number of differences based upon the openness of general play and the variety of situations that general play presents. Once again the referee's checklist should include issues pertaining to laws, referee positioning and desirable communication.

Application of the Laws

- *Scan to identify (and differentiate between) all on-side and off-side players*
- *Ensure that only players in an on-side position are advancing.*
- *Ensure that players in an off-side position are retreating.*
- *Ensure the safety of the kicker and the safety of the person receiving the kick.*
- *Ensure that appropriate sanctions are introduced for late and early tackles.*
- *Manage the potential obstruction of advancing runners and then ensure that appropriate sanctions are introduced for such illegal actions.*
- *Ensure that all appropriate sanctions are introduced for interfering with players in the air.*
- *Ensure that marks are awarded and taken correctly.*
- *Ensure management communication and law decisions are implemented in a consistent manner.*

Positioning

- *Move downfield whilst scanning.*
- *Observe players at ground level not the ball in the air.*

Communication

- *Ensure that off side players are alerted.*
- *Ensure that repeat offenders are individually cautioned.*
- *Ensure that decisions are communicated in a consistent manner.*
- *Effective communication is evident via correct signals.*
- *Ensure that captains are involved in the communication process.*

PENALTY KICK at GOAL



It is desirable for the referee should position himself “outside” the kicker along a line beside the kicker. This then enables the referee to scan for off side at the kick. The referee must ensure he is not infringing upon the kicker’s view, that he will not interfere with his approach and that he does not cast a shadow over the ball as it is being placed.

Once the ball has been kicked the referee is encouraged to follow the ball towards the post and to run on a line that will place him directly behind the ball in flight in order to gain the best possible view of the success of the kick.

CONVERSION KICK

The same principles apply for a conversion kick as for a penalty kick at goal. The one exception is that as off-side is not an issue at this phase of play, the referee should stand well behind the kicker and then follow the flight of the ball directly to the goal posts.

MANAGING THE QUICK TAP PENALTY

When awarding a Penalty Kick or Free Kick it is essential for a referee to develop a specific sequence of “whistle” + “signal” + “talk” as you make the mark with your boot. This specific sequence must be undertaken quickly and clearly. It should be accompanied immediately by a signal and distinct communication for defenders to commence retiring. Such a specific and sequenced technique:

- informs all participants and spectators of the infringement;
- creates space for a quick tap kick;
- allows the game to flow; and,
- eliminates referee “fault” at causing a second stoppage 10 metres downfield.

A referee should never turn his back to defenders during this sequence and should never remain on the mark providing lengthy, repeated and superfluous explanations.

All quick taps should be taken in such a manner that they adhere to Law 21. This includes:

- any part of the lower leg from below the knee to the foot (but not the knee or heel);
- the same ball that was already in play must be used; and,
- it must clearly leave the hands or, if on the ground, it must clearly leave the mark.

The above three issues should be managed by the referee in such a manner that any deviation from these law matters should never be seen on a second occasion in a game as a result of emphatic referee management intervention.

Extract from *Referee Aide Memoire 2005* (p.7 of 7).

QUICK TAPS

Quick taps can be taken following scrum collapse providing the kick is taken either through the mark or in a line through and behind the mark – the mark will normally be in the centre of scrum along the middle line.

All quick taps at scrums/rucks/mauls/tackle must be taken in accordance with the above

Touch Judges discouraged from indicating not ten when there is no offence.

Players who look for the second penalty deserve what happens to them.

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