



**To: Secretaries / Chief Executive Officers of Unions and Regional Associations in Membership of World Rugby**

**From: David Carrigy  
Chief International Relations & Participation Officer**

**Date: December 20, 2022**

**Re: Law Application Guidelines effective January 1, 2023  
Revised Water Carrier Law Trial effective January 1, 2023**

The Chairman of the High Performance Rugby Committees agreed to approve the Law Application Guidelines set out in [ANNEX ONE](#) and the revised Water Carrier Law Trial set out in [ANNEX TWO](#) which both emanated from the Shape of the Game meeting held in London in November 2022.

The Law Application Guidelines and the revised Water Carrier Law Trial are effective from **January 1, 2023**.

Please cascade this information amongst your respective rugby communities and especially the Match Officials.

If you have any queries on this matter, then please do not hesitate to contact Mark Harrington (Chief Player Welfare and Rugby Services Office): [mark.harrington@worldrugby.org](mailto:mark.harrington@worldrugby.org).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Carrigy".

**David Carrigy  
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## ANNEX ONE

### Law Application Guideline - January 2023

At a Shape of the Game conference in November 2022, all rugby stakeholders in the men's XV game discussed ways of speeding up the game, reducing unnecessary stoppages and ensuring a safe spectacle was created for players, match officials and spectators alike.

As we near the showcase men's rugby tournament for 2023, the following law application guidelines have been brought forward for implementation in the elite game. These focus areas ensure we retain a safe, speedy spectacle of rugby at Rugby World Cup 2023 and beyond. While some areas are purely a focus for elite rugby, the general principles cover the whole of the game.

### Speeding up the game

Players and match officials are reminded of the following existing laws which need to be strictly adhered to across the game at all levels:

Law 8.8d Conversion. The kicker takes the kick within 90 seconds (playing time) from the time the try was awarded, even if the ball rolls over and has to be placed again. Sanction: Kick is disallowed.

Law 8.21: Penalty Goal: The kick must be taken within 60 seconds (playing time) from the time the team indicated their intention to do so, even if the ball rolls over and has to be placed again. Sanction: Kick is disallowed and a scrum is awarded.

Law 9.7d A player must not waste time. Sanction: Free Kick

Law 18.12 Lineout: Teams form the lineout without delay. Sanction: Free-kick.

Law 19.4 Scrum: Teams must be ready to form the scrum within 30 seconds of the mark being made. Sanction: Free-kick.

For elite rugby, we encourage broadcasters and match hosts to implement on-screen (TV and stadia) shot clocks, usually administered by the Time Keeper, for penalties and conversion to ensure referees, players and spectators can monitor the adherence of these laws.

We also encourage Unions/Competitions to apply to trial reduced times for kicks at goal to speed the game up. The outcomes of these trials can then be fed into the law review process for 2023-27.

### TMO Protocol

Match officials are reminded that the TMO process is for identifying and ensuring Clear and Obvious offences are dealt with on-field. The match official teams, led by the referee, should attempt to make speedier decisions and limit replays where not necessary.

### Water carriers

The Global Law Trial on limiting the number of water carriers to two, and reducing the times they enter the field, has successfully reduced unnecessary stoppages and unnecessary influence by water carriers on players and match officials. However, creating set windows for water has created the impression of disrupting the game, even if that water was taken during a natural stoppage (try/injury/TMO review).



After taking feedback from stakeholders, we will be amending the Global Law Trial to allow water carriers onto the field when a try is scored. The timings will match the length of the kick taken. Only in a game with no tries in the first 20 minutes, should another natural stoppage be used. If an injury stoppage is used, the water carriers must leave the field when the medic does so.

### **Negative player action**

Referees will be asked to be strong on negative player actions. For example, trapping players into ruck, and first arriving players (the jackler) not aiming to play the ball.

Players are reminded for about their responsibilities not to hold the ball or walk off with the ball at penalties – this reduces attacking options by the non-offending team and slows the game down unnecessarily and will be sanctioned.

### **Players on the floor**

Players who put their hands on the floor at tackles, rucks and mauls are subject to sanction, although judgement can be used if the player is using the ground briefly to maintain their own balance and stability.

#### **Law definitions and relevant clauses**

Off feet: Players are off their feet when any other part of the body is supported by the ground or players on the ground.

On feet: Players are on their feet if no other part of their body is supported by the ground or players on the ground.

Tackle law 14.8a Other players must: Remain on their feet and release the ball and the ball-carrier immediately, and 14.8b Remain on their feet when they play the ball.

Ruck law 15.12: Players must endeavour to remain on their feet throughout the ruck

Maul law 16.9: All other players in a maul must endeavour to stay on their feet

### **Deliberate knock-ons**

The issue of what is and what isn't a deliberate knock on continues to cause debate. All participants are reminded of the following existing laws:

11.3 A player must not intentionally knock the ball forward with hand or arm. Sanction: Penalty.

11.4 It is not an intentional knock-on if, in the act of trying to catch the ball, the player knocks on provided that there was a reasonable expectation that the player could gain possession.

Players must endeavour to catch the ball. Referees are asked to show good judgement when deciding if a player has a reasonable expectation of catching and gaining possession, and then in determining a sanction. There is no formula for determining a Yellow Card sanction in these situations.



## ANNEX TWO

### GLOBAL LAW TRIAL – Water Carriers amend to allow water at Tries – From 1.1.23

6.7 The referee gives permission for players to leave the playing area. However, a player may access water from their technical area, or from behind the dead ball line after a try has been awarded, without needing permission.

#### Additional persons

Any additional person who fails to adhere to the Laws may be cautioned or sent off and misconduct charges may be issued by the Match organiser.

6.28 Appropriately trained and accredited first-aid or immediate (pitch-side) care persons may enter the playing area to attend to injured players at any time it is safe to do so.

- a. There may be up to two medics, one on either side of the pitch, who may follow play.
- b. These medics can only carry and provide water to a player that they are treating.
- c. Medics cannot field, or touch a ball while it is in live play.

#### Sanction: Penalty where play would restart.

6.29 The following may enter the playing area provided they do not interfere with play:

- a. Two nominated water carriers during a stoppage in play for an injury to a player or when a try has been scored.
  - i. In matches with a squad size of 23, water carriers may only enter when a try is scored – the scoring side to an area on/near the 10m line in their own half. The non-scoring side, can take water into in-goal or retrieve from behind the dead-ball line. The water carriers must leave when the conversion is taken.
  - ii. At a penalty try, no water carriers may enter the field.
  - iii. Only when no tries are scored should a natural stoppage in a neutral place on the pitch be used to allow players to receive water. Where this coincides with an injury, water-carriers must leave the pitch as the medic leaves the pitch.
  - iv. Players may access water in the Technical zone and from behind their own dead ball line. If water is left in-goal this privilege will be removed.
  - v. A water carrier must not be a Head Coach or Director of Rugby.  
Note: the hot weather guidelines may warrant a one minute break per half.
- b. A person carrying only a kicking tee and one water bottle, (solely for the kicker's use) after a team has indicated they intend to kick at goal, or a try has been scored.
- c. The coaches attending to their teams at half-time.
- d. These additional persons must remain in their technical area at all times before entering the field of play as permitted above. They must not field or touch the ball while it is in live play, including while in the technical area.

#### Sanction: Penalty where play would restart.

6.30 No additional persons should approach, address or aim comments at the match officials, except for medics in relation to the treatment of a player.

6.31 The management of replacements may be delegated to sideline managers appointed by the match organiser. Information relating to sideline management can be found

at: <https://officiating.worldrugby.org>