

LAW 16 – RUCK

DEFINITIONS

A ruck is a phase of play where one or more players from each team, who are on their feet, in physical contact, close around the ball on the ground. Open play has ended.

Rucking. 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.

16.1 FORMING A RUCK

- (a) **Where can a ruck take place.** A ruck can take place only in the field of play.
- (b) **How can a ruck form.** Players are on their feet. At least one player must be in physical contact with an opponent. The ball is on the ground.



Ruck



Ruck

16.2 JOINING A RUCK

- (a) All players forming, joining or taking part in a ruck must have their heads and shoulders no lower than their hips.
Penalty: Free Kick
- (b) A player joining a ruck must bind onto the ruck with at least one arm around the body of a team-mate, using the whole arm.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (c) Placing a hand on another player in the ruck does not constitute binding.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (d) All players forming, joining or taking part in a ruck must be on their feet.
Penalty: Penalty Kick

16.3 RUCKING

- (a) Players in a ruck must endeavour to stay on their feet.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (b) A player must not intentionally fall or kneel in a ruck. This is dangerous play.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (c) A player must not intentionally collapse a ruck. This is dangerous play.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (d) A player must not jump on top of a ruck.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (e) Players must have their heads and shoulders no lower than their hips.
Penalty: Free Kick
- (f) A player rucking for the ball must not ruck players on the ground. A player rucking for the ball tries to step over players on the ground and must not intentionally step on them. A player rucking must do so near the ball.
Penalty: Penalty Kick for dangerous play

16.4 OTHER RUCK OFFENCES

- (a) Players must not return the ball into a ruck.
Penalty: Free Kick
- (b) Players must not handle the ball in a ruck.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (c) Players must not pick up the ball in a ruck with their legs.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (d) Players on the ground in or near the ruck must try to move away from the ball. These players must not interfere with the ball in the ruck or as it comes out of the ruck.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (e) A player must not fall on or over a ball as it is coming out of a ruck.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (f) A player must not take any action to make the opposing team think that the ball is out of the ruck while it is still in the ruck.
Penalty: Free Kick

16.5 OFF-SIDE AT THE RUCK

- (a) **The off-side line.** There are two off-side lines parallel to the goal-lines, one for each team. Each off-side line runs through the hindmost foot of the hindmost player in the ruck. If the hindmost foot of the hindmost player is on or behind the goal-line, the off-side line for the defending team is the goal-line.
- (b) Players must either join a ruck, or retire behind the off-side line immediately. If a player loiters at the side of a ruck, the player is off-side.
Penalty: Penalty Kick
- (c) **Players joining the ruck.** All players joining a ruck must do so from behind the foot of the hindmost team-mate in the ruck. A player may join alongside this hindmost player. If the player joins the ruck from the opponents' side, or in front of the hindmost team-mate, the player is off-side.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the offending team's off-side line

- (d) **Players not joining the ruck.** If a player is in front of the off-side line and does not join the ruck, the player must retire behind the off-side line at once. If a player who is behind the off-side line oversteps it and does not join the ruck the player is off-side.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the offending team's off-side line
- (e) **Players leaving or rejoining the ruck.** If a player leaves a ruck that player must immediately retire behind the off-side line otherwise the player is off-side. Once the player is on-side, the player may rejoin the ruck. If the player rejoins in front of the hindmost team-mate in the ruck, the player is off-side. The player may rejoin the ruck alongside the hindmost team-mate.
Penalty: Penalty Kick on the offending team's off-side line



- X** *At a ruck or maul, the off-side line runs through the hindmost foot of the player of the same team. The player in the gold and green jersey on the right-hand-side is off-side.*

16.6 SUCCESSFUL END TO A RUCK

A ruck ends successfully when the ball leaves the ruck, or when the ball is on or over the goal-line.

16.7 UNSUCCESSFUL END TO A RUCK

- (a) A ruck ends unsuccessfully when the ball becomes unplayable and a scrum is ordered.

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.

- (b) Before the referee blows the whistle for a scrum, the referee allows a reasonable amount of time for the ball to emerge, especially if either team is moving forward. 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.