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ENGLAND TOUCH

5TH EDITION RULES

SUMMARY OF CHANGES



FEDERATION
OF INTERNATIONAL
TOUCH



FIT 5TH Edition Rules Summary of changes

Introduction

The Federation of International Touch (FIT) has released the 5th Edition of the Rules of Touch. These are being rolled out for a two year trial period starting in 2020.

This document summarises the main changes that have been made to the game. It has been prepared by the European Federation of Touch (EFT), based on preliminary work by the England Touch Association (ETA), with contributions from Gareth Hinds, Robin Budd, Peter Faassen de Heer, Luke McKenzie, Ian Matthew and Tim Osborne.

Many of the changes align the rulebook with what is already being played/interpreted at the elite level of our game, while some changes will have a more noticeable impact on the way the game is played. The videos provided by Touch Football Australia have been used as a reference and are available [here](#).

Another document outlining all of the changes in detail is available on the ETA website:

www.Englandtouch.org.uk/play/how-to-play/the-rules/



Terminology

The terminology used throughout the Rules realigns our sport with rugby. 'Touchdowns' are now 'Tries', the 'Touchdown Area' is now the 'In-Goal Area', the 'Scoreline' is now the 'Try Line' and 'Period of Time' is now 'Sin Bin'.

Onside Distance 7m

Defenders are now required to retreat a fixed distance of 7m from the Rollball to be onside, as opposed to the previous 'not less than 5m' rule. In line with this change, the dashed 5m line at each end of the field is replaced by a 7m line and the In-Goal Area is now 7m deep.

Obstruction (During Retreat)

Following a Touch, an offside defender may now choose any direction of retreat and change that direction as many times as they like while returning to an onside position, provided they do not obstruct (interfere with or impede) the attacking team.

This replaces the concept of 'deviation' or 'change of direction'. A defender who is obstructing (interfering with or impeding) the attack as a result of a change of direction should be subject to Penalty/Advantage.

Defence in 7m Zone – Speed of Advance and Not Dropping Early

The pace at which defenders are required to move forward once they have entered their defending 7m Zone is now more explicitly defined. This rule was previously described as the 'Mexican Standoff'.

Defenders are now required to move forward 'at a reasonable pace', until a Touch is imminent or made, which is aimed at speeding up the game. What is deemed 'reasonable pace' is showing positive intent to make a touch. This is at the discretion of the Referee.

Onside defenders now cannot drop to the Try Line when the ball enters the 7m Zone, as they could previously in the 5m. They do not need to keep moving forward, but cannot drop until a Touch is made or imminent.

Defence in 7m Zone – Exclusion for 3 Penalties

After any defender has entered their defending 7m Zone, 3 Penalty infringements by the defending team in that same Possession now result in the last player to infringe being given an Exclusion (i.e. placed in the Sin Bin Area behind the defending team's Dead Ball Line on the same side of the field as their Interchange Area) until their team regains Possession.

The previous rule on removal of a defender following 2 Penalty infringements for not advancing/dropping early no longer applies.



Drop-Off

A new Drop-Off procedure is now in place, starting with a 2-minute period of extra-time with two members of each team removed (leaving 4v4). The Tap to commence the Drop-Off is taken by the team that did not receive Possession at the start of the match. The team in the lead at the expiry of the 2-minute period is declared the winner.

If the scores are still tied, the match is paused while each team removes another player to go to 3v3. Play then resumes with the first team to score winning - there is no right of reply. Mixed teams may field no more than two male players in the Drop-Off.

Half in Place

If the Half is not within 1 metre of the Rollball, onside defenders may move forward as soon as the player performing the Rollball releases the ball.

Interchange on Intercept or Line Break

Interchanges during an intercept or line break situation are no longer permitted. Any player who enters the field from the Interchange Area during a line break or interception will be sent to the Sin Bin and if they prevent a Try, a Penalty Try will be awarded.

Sin Bin

The duration of a Sin Bin (formerly Period of Time) is now explicitly defined as 4 completed Possessions. This duration is no longer at the discretion of the Referee.

The Toss

The team winning the toss now has the option to defend from the Tap-Off at the start of the match should they wish to do so. This is in addition to choice of direction to run in the first half and choice of Interchange Area, which are both unchanged.

Zero Touch

Any Touch made following an interception is now counted as Zero Touch. If the ball is intentionally touched in flight by the defending team and regathered by the attacking team the next Touch is also counted as Zero Touch.



Tap

The Mark must now be indicated by the Referee before the Tap can be taken. A Tap performed incorrectly or taken off the Mark no longer results in a Change of Possession.

A Tap on the halfway line to start/restart the game cannot be taken until all attackers are onside and at least 4 defenders are onside.

In all of the above cases the attacking team is told to return to the Mark and perform the Tap again.

Rollball

The player performing the Rollball now only needs to make a genuine attempt to stand parallel to the sidelines. Passing only one foot over the ball is now explicitly permitted. A Tap performed instead of a Rollball no longer results in a Change of Possession – instead the attacking team is told to return to the Mark and perform the Rollball again.

Touched in Flight

Players who accidentally propel the ball forward are no longer awarded Possession if an opposition player makes intentional contact with the ball before it goes to ground.

If the ball is intentionally touched in flight by a defending player, propelling it in the direction of their own defending Dead Ball Line, a Change in Possession occurs if the attacking team attempts but fails to regather the ball.



England Touch

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Further information

This document was authored by the England Touch Referee Committee in Spring 2020.

Further communication on the new Rules will be issued in due course, including video footage and responses to requests for clarification.

For any queries regarding the rules or the updates in the 5th Edition England Touch can be contacted by email:

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