



X-League: Limited Contact Rugby League 2023

'X-League' can be viewed as a pathway game into the 13-a-side full tackle game of Rugby League, but also, an inclusive social variant of Rugby League aimed at a broader participation demographic. Across age ranges, genders, fitness levels, physical ability and levels of experience.

ETHOS OF THE GAME

'X-League' can vary in its intensity, from a social variant of Rugby League, similar to Touch, Tag and Master RL, to being a training game that is close to the full-contact version. The aim of 'X-League' is to provide an environment in which to play a semi-contact version of Rugby League, which enables specific RL skills to be practiced whilst maintaining a lower risk of injury. Whilst most rules of 'X-League' are merely logical adaptations of the full RL game rules, the 'X-League' tackle is what sets it apart from other variants. A X-League 'tackle' is made when a defender places a hand on the ball that is in the possession of an opponent.

9GAME RULES

1. DURATION

1.1 Standard games in a competition setting are to run for 13 minutes in total (no half time). This can be flexible and changed by agreement of the teams.

1.2 The X-League SG prescribes the duration for stand alone & series games as 2 x 10 min halves.

2. IN-GAME POINTS

2.1. Scoring is 4 points per try, 2 points for a conversion.

2.2. A try is scored by placing the ball down over the opponents try line without the ball being touched by a defender. Or by touching both feet into the in-goal area before the ball has been touched by a defender. Catching a kick in the in-goal area would also result in a try being awarded, provided the catcher was not in front of the kicker when the ball was kicked.

2.3. 'Conversion Rule' : After a try, the scoring team will have an attempt at converting the try with a single play from 10m from the try line in line with where the try was scored, the converting team score the conversion with any method mentioned in Rule 2.2, the play will end by any normal means (tackle, knock on, ball out of play, etc.) plus if the defending team regain possession of the ball . In the event of a penalty against the defending team during the conversion play, or preventing the play from starting (time wasting) the conversion will be deemed automatically successful. The attacking team

will have a maximum of 30 seconds to prepare for the conversion, failure to start the play in this time will result in an unsuccessful conversion.

3. MISCONDUCT

'X-League' must always be considered as only a semi-contact version of Rugby League. Whilst 'Fending-off' a defender is permitted, a fend-off to the face or neck (above shoulder) is not, and therefore should be penalised. Also, whilst a defender can grab onto the ball carrier in order to enable them to get a touch on the ball, defenders must not attempt to make a 'full' tackle that brings the ball carrier to the ground. This will also result in a penalty against the offender.

4. THE TACKLE

4.1. A tackle will be affected once the defensive player has made contact with their hand on the ball that is in an opponent's possession. The Tackler should call 'tackle', but even if not called, where the 'touch' on the ball is obvious to all parties involved, the tackle is deemed to have been made.

4.2. A deliberate touch/tackle can only be made with the hand or lower part of the arm. A player cannot deliberately make a touch with the foot, leg or shoulder and doing so is considered dangerous play.

4.3. "Phantom tackle" if a player calls a 'tackle' and then admits there was not a 'tackle' made. This results in a zero tackle play-the-ball penalty to the team in possession. Honesty is to be encouraged, and even though 'rule bending' is a part of most games, it is to be discouraged in X-League. If a defender says that they made a tackle on the ball, and the ball carrier disputes it, the referee will, (unless they are 100% sure there was no tackle made) accept the defenders call.

4.4. When a 'tackle' has been called, the defender may keep their hand on the ball for a short period, A maximum of 3 seconds, a referee may (but is not required to) call release at which point the player must release immediately. If the defender loses contact with the ball and tries to put their hand back on the ball to lengthen the delay, a zero-tackle play-the-ball penalty will be awarded to the ball carrier for interference at the play-the-ball. It must also be stressed; the defender may ONLY maintain contact with the ball and must not take the opportunity to 'clamp' the attacking player.

4.5 When a 'tackle' has been called, the defender can remain at the site of the play-the-ball, and act as a single 'marker'. This means they do not have to retreat the 5 metres, but the player must stay 'square' i.e. directly in front of the tackled player until the dummy half has picked up and either made a passing motion or taken a step with the ball, (THIS IS SLIGHTLY LONGER THAN IN THE FULL CONTACT GAME) or the defender will be penalized for offside.

4.6 When a tackle is complete it will be called by the referee (or the defending captain)

4.7 In the case where a ball carrier is surrounded or enveloped by defenders for some time, but the ball has not yet been touched, to prevent excessive wrestling, a tackle can still be called.

4.8 If a ball carrier falls to the ground, so that their knee or elbow touches the ground, a tackle is called in the interest of safety.

5. CONTACT

A defender can, whilst attempting to get to the ball, pull the shirt or pull or push at the ball carrier's arms when dealing with an attempted fend. The attacker can protect the ball and keep the defender's arms at bay. But, all players, either attacking or defending, may not deliberately attempt to change the

momentum of an opponent, by barging, pulling or pushing. This is considered misconduct. The first offence will result in a Warning, subsequent offences will result in a 'Sin-binning' of the offending player, who can only return after a try has been scored by either team.

6. 'OVER HEAD'

If the ball carrier raises the ball up to keep the ball out of the reach of a defender, they must pass the ball from that raised position. If the ball is not passed the referee will call 'Overhead' and this results in a turnover and a zero tackle play-the-ball. The definition of an 'Overhead' is when all of the ball is raised above all of the head of that player.

7. PLAY-THE-BALL

7.1 The play-the-ball should be made by rolling the ball back with the hand, and if necessary pushing the ball back to the dummy-half, with the foot. The tackled player must be standing on one foot and

the other foot must appear to be assisting the ball backwards to the dummy-half. A failure to be standing on one foot will result in a zero tackle play-the-ball penalty turnover.

7.2. The play-the-ball must also be made on the mark (point of being tackled) or within one step of the mark. Players will be penalised for running off, or not returning to the mark before playing the ball (i.e. more than one step off the mark). However, the ball carrier sets the mark for the play-the-ball, NOT the defender, If a defender stays in the position they made the tackle, and the play-the-ball occurs within one step of them, they will be considered offside if they attempt to get involved with play, without either retreating to the marker position or the defensive line.

7.3. The defending team cannot advance forward from the off-side line (5m point) nor the marker move from the mark until the dummy-half has picked up the ball. However, the dummy-half must pick up the ball without delay. If the dummy-half delays to try to draw the defenders offside, the dummy-half will be penalised.

7.4. The player playing the ball must do so as soon as practically possible after being tackled. As a guide, it is expected that the player playing the ball does so within 2 seconds of being tackled. If the referee feels in his/hers opinion it is an unnecessary delay in playing the ball this will be penalised.

7.5. If the ball is played with no dummy-half present, as long as a player from the same team is attempting to get to the ball, the defensive line will still not be allowed to move off the line until the ball is picked up. If there is no effort from the attacking team to get to the ball, the referee may blow a penalty for "dummy half delaying".

7.6. Once the dummy half picks up the ball they must immediately make an attempt to pass or run with the ball. Standing still to draw the defence offside is not part of the game, and will result in a penalty for "dummy half delaying".

7.7. If the ball carrier is tackled between the 5metre line and the try line the play-the-ball takes place back on the 5metre line, unless it is the last tackle, in which case a zero tackle play-the-ball turnover takes place on the 5 metre line.

8. MISS-HANDLING

8.1. An accidental forward pass, or dropped ball, whether it travels forward or not, results in a turnover, zero tackle play-the-ball.

8.2. The restart of a new set of six is to be started upon the ref's whistle or captain's call. Quick restarts are not allowed. This is so that scoring opportunities are created from good tactics and not simply taking advantage of an unprepared defences.

8.3. 'Advantage' will apply if a forward pass or a fumble is caught by the opposition provided the ball does not hit the ground. If the ball is subsequently dropped before an advantage has been taken, the first offence is deemed to be the error and the team that committed the first offence will lose possession.

9. RESTARTS

9.1. The game starts, and restarts after a try, with a 'tap' in the centre of the field. Any tap technique will do, i.e. if the ball is on the ground it can be touched with the foot and then picked up, the ball can be held in the hands and touched off any part of the leg, below the knee. A rugby union style tap penalty, whilst legal, is to be discouraged because of the risk of dropping the ball.

9.2. The opening tap-off will be decided by a coin toss or other appropriate means.

9.3. Tap-offs after a score are performed by the non-scoring team.

9.4 If a ball is kicked dead, or lost in the in-goal area, by the attacking team, the ball is turned over to the opposition and play restarts with a tap, centre field, 5m out from the try line.

9.5 A 'Zero tackle, play-the-ball' restart takes place at the site of any miss-handling errors or when the sixth tackle has been completed and the ball has been turned over to the opposition.

10. KICKING IN GENERAL PLAY

10.1. Kicking the ball is permitted in X-League at any time during the set of six.

10.2. Kicks can go any height and any distance.

10.3. If a kick goes out of play on the full, the non-kicking team will be awarded a 'zero tackle, play-the-ball' from where it was kicked.

10.4. If the kicker re-gathers their own kick, they can score.

10.5 If a kick is successfully caught by a member of the kicking team, with both feet over the try line a try will be awarded, even though the ball has not been touched down.

10.6 If a kick is successfully caught, or touched with the hand and then dropped, by a member of the non-kicking team, whilst they have one or both feet over the try line the kick is deemed to have been 'defused' and a tap turnover will be awarded, to take place centre field, 5 meters out from the try line.

10.7 'Free Catch Rule'. If a kick is not successfully caught, but it is touched by the hand of a player on the non-kicking team, it is deemed to have been 'defused' and a turnover will occur where it was touched.

10.8 If a player from team A kicks the ball, and a player from team B does not attempt to catch or touch the ball with his hands, but instead kicks the ball, they then becomes the kicker and a player from team A need only touch the ball with their hands to get possession back.

10.9 If a player catches a ball cleanly and plays on, the next tackle will be a 'zero tackle', but if they play on and then make an error, they will be deemed to have taken the advantage and then lost possession, and therefore the team that kicked the ball originally will get possession back with a zero tackle play-the-ball.

11 OTHER IN-GOAL RULES

11.1. If in general play a player in possession is tackled whilst either foot is behind their own try line, they must perform a dropout from centre field on their own try line. (which cannot be re-gathered by the kicking team).

11.2. Even if the dropout bounces in field and rolls over the sideline, the kicking team loses possession and the receiving team restarts the game with a 'zero tackle, play-the-ball' 5 meters in-field from where the ball went out.

11.3. If the dropout goes over the sideline on the full, it is a tap to the receiving team on the 5m line in the centre of the field.

11.4. In the unlikely event that the dropout goes the full length of the field and out over the dead-ball line at the other end of the field, the other team must then perform a dropout.

11.5. A try is awarded even if the ball carrier is tackled over the try line, provided that the ball carrier has had both feet over the line (NFL Touchdown rule).

12. OBSTRUCTION

A player cannot deliberately use a teammate to shield themselves from being tackled. If however a defenders direct route to a ball carrier is blocked by an attacking player without the ball, as long as that attacking player does not deliberately move to obstruct the defender there is no infringement. A deliberate obstruction results in a zero tackle play-the-ball penalty turnover.

13. DEFENSIVE LINE & OFFSIDE

13.1. The defensive team must retreat 5 metres back from the mark of the play-the-ball as quickly as possible. The team must make it back to the referee or captain who is setting the on-side line. However, if they are offside when the play-the-ball takes place, if they continue to retreat so that they get back 5 metres from the original mark, they are then onside. Retreating/defensive players who do not retreat directly, are not attempting to get on-side as quickly as possible, and can be penalised for being off-side.

13.2. Advantage can be played and the ball carrier can ignore the tackle of an obviously off-side player and continue. If the advantage does not result in a try, and the attacking team are tackled, a zero tackle play-the-ball will be awarded to them.

13.3. Repeated offside infringements can result in a sin-binning (until a try is scored). However, this is a last resort and it is not in the spirit of the game.

14. DUMMY HALF

The Dummy-Half can get touched, without losing possession and can score without having to pass the ball first. (this is different from other forms of touch and tag).

15. PLAYING AT A BALL THAT HAS BEEN PASSED OR KICKED

15.1. If a pass is thrown and a defensive player makes a play at the ball knocking it to the ground, the passing team will receive a new set of six. Starting with a zero tackle play-the-ball.

15.2. If a pass is thrown and it hits a defensive player and goes to ground, it is deemed not played at, the passing team is responsible for the error, and this results in a zero tackle play-the-ball turnover.

16. DISCIPLINE AND REFEREEING

16.1. Control of the game can be done by an appointed referee, or by 'captains' agreement'.

16.2. 'Captains' agreement' means that a player from each team sets the on-side and calls out the tackle count, and calls out any miss-handling errors or infringements. Each team will also appoint a vice-captain.

16.3. Most infringements are obvious, but if there is a dispute between the two captains, the decision is made by a vice-captain from one of the teams. This decision is indisputable. The right to make this indisputable decision switches from team to team on each occasion.

16.4. The game is always meant to be played in a spirit of cooperation and fun. But in cases of repeated deliberate infringements or dissent, a player can be sin-binned, until a try is scored, or sent-off for the rest of the game.

17. COMPETITION SPECIFIC RULES AND OPTIONAL BY-LAWS

17.1. Competitions may wish to include additional rules to the game this is permitted as long as agreed by the referees and captains of all competing teams and The X-League Rules Committee. It is recommended this is flagged in the referees meeting in the weeks leading up to the event.

17.2. 'Alternative Tackle Rules'. These rules allow for certain players to affect the tackle by simply making any touch on the ball carrier (the same as in Touch). When these players are in possession of the ball they are only deemed to be tackled when 2 different defenders make an 'any touch' tackle on them. The first defender cannot hold this player until a teammate arrives to make the 2nd touch.

These rules have been used extensively to encourage greater participation by novice players and female players who do not feel comfortable with the level of contact in the usual X-League tackle.

17.3. 'Alternative player numbers and field dimensions'. It is possible to play X-League Rugby League on any sized pitch with any number of players however it is advised to try to keep the scale of the original rules. (see pitch dimensions below)

17.4. 'Alternative restart'. An alternative form of restarting play is a 'must take' kick taken out of the hands and from the centre spot, the kicking team cannot chase the kick. If the receiving team catches cleanly they will proceed to a tap restart at the centre spot, if it is dropped or no attempt is made to catch it and it lands in the field of play, the kicking team will start play for the centre spot with a tap. Under this rule the scoring team kicks off. The ball must go at least 10m high and must travel 10m too.

17.5. 'Excessive Contact Rule'. In the event of contact becoming excess in the eyes of the referee or one of the participating captains, a warning will be issued to both teams, if the excessive contact persists the remainder of the game will be played under modified "touch" rules: Both teams will lose

one player, the tackle will be affected by a one handed touch, no markers are permitted and the overhead rule is not applied.

18. SAFETY

18.1. All jewellery and watches should be removed.

18.2. Fingernails should be trimmed.

18.3. Any player that experiences a loss of blood will need to clear or remove the blood in order to return to the game.

19. FIELD DIMENSIONS A regulation X-League field will have a width of 40 metres and a length of 60 metres. Different dimension can be played but must be agreed by all parties before commencement of games - this may also impact team composition.

20. PLAYING KIT

20.1 When playing in an informal setting, Uniforms are unnecessary, although it is advisable to have 2 different colours to help differentiate teammates.

20.2. In a more formal, competition setting, Teams are to be in the same colour jerseys/shirts. Which should, if possible, be badged with a X-League logo and/or local competition badge and jerseys should be numbered.

21. TEAM COMPOSITION

21.1. Men's and Women's X-League should ideally have 7 people on the field; plus up to 6 reserves (13 players total)

21.2. Mixed: Whilst X-League can be played with mixed teams, all players need to be aware of the level of contact involved. If necessary rule 17.2 can be applied.

21.3 On field player numbers can be reduced if the field is considered to be too small.

21.4 **SUBSTITUTION** - Unlimited substitutions can be made, but these must be made from the middle of the field and on one side of the field between the two substitution markers on half-way. Players coming onto the field must not enter onto the field until the other player has crossed the sideline. A failure to abide by these rules may result in a zero tackle play-the-ball penalty, to the non-infringing team on halfway (or where they have the ball – whichever provides the most advantage).

22. REGISTRATION

22.1. All players must register with their domestic governing body or club in order to play. Registration of all players and their details is the responsibility of the club secretary, and is important not only for insurance purposes, but also to assist organisations in assessing participation rates.

23. INSURANCE

23.1. Insurance – Where the game is recognised as RL activity, registered players are covered by the governing body's insurance policy. In the event of injury, an incident report form must be completed and signed by the player involved, any witnesses and the club secretary.

23.2. A failure to report the injury at the time of the incident may void that player's right to make a claim.

X-League Rugby League Rules (R4) February 2023. X-League Steering Group.

Addendum.

Beach X-League Rules.

X-league rules have built in flexibility for player numbers and pitch dimensions. (see Rules 17 and 21 above)

However, it has been decided that we will make some rules specifically for X-League to be played on a Beach.

1 Field Dimensions for Beach X-League are 30m x 30m.

2 Player numbers are 5 players per team (teams are allowed a maximum of 1 player on field who is using the 17.2 Alternative Tackle Rule.)

3 All defenders must retreat 4m from the tap or play-the-ball (i.e. No marker is allowed)

4 The game starts and re-starts with a tap, 5m from their own try line. (this means that there is no need to mark the halfway, but there is a need to mark both 5m lines)

5 Tackle sets consist of 5 tackles rather than 6. To keep the regular 6 count, and in particular the 'Fifth and last' call from the ref, a Tap, and, what would usually be a 'zero tackle turnover' becomes 'Tackle 1'