

MARFU Front Row and Substitutes Regulation

Regulation for MARFU Competitions

Adopted by MARFU Board of Directors on 08/22/2009

Amended by MARFU Men's Competition Committee 09/17/2009

Amended by MARFU Board of Directors 03/13/2011

Applies to the following competitions:

MARFU Men D1 and D2 League and Playoffs

MARFU Men D3 Playoffs

MARFU College Men D1 League and Playoffs

MARFU College Men D2 Playoffs

MARFU College Men D3 Playoffs

MARFU Women D1 League and Playoffs

MARFU Women D2 League and Playoffs

MARFU College Women D1 Playoffs

MARFU College Women D2 Playoffs

Note added 03/13/2011

The MARFU Board approved extending these regulations to: MARFU Women D1 League and Playoffs, MARFU Women D2 League and Playoffs, MARFU College Women D1 Playoffs, and MARFU College Women D2 Playoffs.

Note added 09/17/2009

The IRB and USA Rugby have put forth a revision to Law 3 which slightly affects the regulation adopted by the MARFU Board of Directors on 22 August 2009.

The old Law 3 specified maximum roster size and number of players capable of playing in the front row (Law 3.5 – 15/3, 18/4, and 22/5). It said that when a team was unable to provide a trained front row player in the event of injury or send-off, that uncontested scrums would result. However, the team responsible for going to uncontested scrums would not suffer any penalty.

The so-called "National Union Variation for Law 3" was sent out in early September 2009 (and attached to this document). It revises the maximum roster size and number of players capable of playing in the front row (15/3, 18/4, **21/5, 23/6; the latter two are a change**). It also says that when a team is unable to provide a trained front row player in the event of injury or send-off, uncontested scrums will result but with the team responsible having to play a player down.

The MARFU men's competition Committee has reviewed the recently adopted regulation in light of the National Union Variable for Law 3 and has made the following adjustments. In general, the adopted regulation does not change significantly.

References to Law 3 below imply references to law rulings concerning Law 3 and the National Union Variation on Law 3.

Background

In early 2009, MARFU had a problem in a College Men's D3 playoff match when one team did not have front row replacements; they had plenty of subs otherwise and were permitted to use them, and they had five front row players the week before and the week after the playoff match. There have been two incidents in Rugby Super League with insufficient front row replacements, one where a team had front row replacements yet did not use them when they elected uncontested scrums; they were subsequently fined by the RSL. In the

Midwest, a D1 team showed up for a league match without a full front row, let alone any replacement front row players; the match started with uncontested scrums. There have been several reports in the UK press about incidents earlier in 2009. In all of these incidents, the nature of the game changed dramatically when the referee ordered uncontested scrums. A new competition regulation is proposed to avoid these situations.

Purpose of the Competition Regulation

The purpose of the proposed new competition regulation is to avoid uncontested scrums for as long as possible during the match in compliance with Law 3.

Competition Regulation - Front Row Replacements and Contested/Uncontested Scrums

[Identify designated front row players before the match starts.]

All designated front row players (starting and substitute/replacement) must be identified on the roster, identified to the opposing team, and identified to the referee before the game commences. The roster size and number of designated front row players permitted by the National Union Variation on Law 3 is in effect.

[What to do when there are less than 5 designated front row players.] If a team designates less than 5 front row players on the match roster, not only is the match roster limited to 18 (if 4 are designated) or 15 (if 3 are designated), the team will forfeit the game if they elect uncontested scrums as a result of injury to or send-off of a front row player. This rule applies even if the forfeiting team had more front row players designated on the roster than the other team at the start of the match (the other team is not responsible for having to go to uncontested scrums prematurely).

[Must use designated front row replacement players.]

The designated front row substitutes/replacements must be utilized to the extent required by Law 3 and when the need arises if they are available to play. Only when a team has replaced front row players in accordance with Law 3 and this regulation and to the extent front row players were named on the match roster, can the referee accede to that team's request to go to uncontested scrums, and the team can avoid the forfeit.

[Contested scrums with players who were not designated front row players.] A team may choose to continue contested scrums with players who were not designated front row players on the match roster at the start of the match. As Law 3.13(a) says, it is the team's responsibility to ensure that front row players are properly trained.

[What to do when one or both teams don't have a complete front row to start the match.]

If a team is unable to begin the game with a complete front row that can play contested scrums, they shall forfeit the game at the start. [This is consistent with the National Union Variation on Law 3.] If both teams are unable to begin with a complete front row (regardless of which team has more front row players), the game shall be played to an official result with uncontested scrums. (If the game is forfeited at the start, the two teams may mutually decide how they want to proceed with match activities, but with uncontested scrums.)

[When a team may choose uncontested scrums without having to forfeit the match.]

If the team designates 5 front row players on the match roster [FIVE], they are obligated to replace two front row players if needed. If the team designates 6 or more front row

players on the match roster [SIX], they are obligated to replace three front row players if needed. If the need arises for a third front row replacement (ref. FIVE) or a fourth front row replacement (ref. SIX), the team may choose to utilize another player on the roster and continue with contested scrums, or choose uncontested scrums. Uncontested scrums may be chosen at or after the time the third (ref. FIVE)/fourth (ref. SIX) or later replacement front row player enters the game. Once the team chooses uncontested scrums, there is no going back to contested scrums, except in the case of a front row player being sin-binned and the team not having a suitable front row replacement; contested scrums will resume when the player's time in the sin bin has expired.

[What happens if a team chooses uncontested scrums after using all their front row replacements?]

Given the requirements of the National Union Variation on Law 3, any team going to uncontested scrums must play a player down. This presumes that teams have replaced at least two front row players to this point and have avoided the forfeit.

[Clarification of the effect of Law 3.5(c) and how it relates to the proposed regulation.]

If any of a team's designated replacement front row players are in the starting roster (any position other than the front row), and if any of them become injured before being called into the front row as replacement players, then there shall be no penalty for failure to have a front row replacement player available. The team met the spirit of the regulations in naming these players prior to the start of the match, and unless unsportsmanlike conduct can be identified as playing a part in their eventual non-availability, the match shall not be forfeited.

[The following is more of a reminder than any new regulation.]

Any "funny business or unsportsmanlike conduct" about any substituted or replaced players should be immediately reported (within 72 hours after the match) to the game's respective Competitions Committee. The Competition Committee will immediately hold a hearing to discuss the matter. The penalty could be as high as forfeiture of the match should any unsportsmanlike conduct (for example, feigned injuries). As always, teams can appeal the decision to the MARFU Disciplinary Committee and the MARFU Board of Directors.