

WATER CARRIERS & TECHNICAL ZONE CHANGES

1 JULY 2022

Following the World Rugby Council meeting in May 2022, a number of law changes have been made.

One of two new Global Law Trials sees new restrictions on medics and water carriers being introduced as well as formalising technical zones into law. The major changes being introduced are for the elite game (in matches with a 23-squad size), but the principles apply to all levels of the game.

The following document contains the wording of the new law, and then some FAQs that member unions may find helpful for the coming season.

If you have any feedback on the new Global Law Trials, email keith.lewis@worldrugby.org.

Global Law Trial: Water carriers and medics

Definitions – to be added

Technical Zone/Area: A designated area shown in Law 1, where replacements, water carriers and coaches must remain until required. In matches with a squad size of 23, only water carriers are allowed in the Technical zone.

Misconduct: an offence under World Rugby Regulation 18 or Match organiser's equivalent.

Law 6 – Match Officials

Duties of the referee during the match

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 without needing permission.

Additional persons

An additional person who fails to adhere to the Laws may be cautioned or sent off in which case Misconduct charges may be issued by the Match organiser.

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

29. At the relevant times, the following may enter the playing area ~~without the referee's permission~~, 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, they may only enter during the approved water times, and no more than twice per half with the approval of the sideline managers/4th official. A water carrier must not be a Head Coach or Director of Rugby. Note: the hot weather guidelines may warrant one further 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

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.

Current law 6.30 is renumbered to 6.31.

WATER CARRIERS & TECHNICAL ZONE GLOBAL LAW TRIAL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is this being introduced?

- The Global Law Trial aims to improve the flow of matches by reducing unnecessary stoppages without compromising welfare. There was an extensive review of the current elite rugby environment, including research into player hydration needs, as well as recognition of the increasing disruption to play caused by multiple water carriers entering the field of play at every stoppage.
- The new trial sets out when medics and water carriers can access the field of play, limiting the ability to interact with the match officials, and providing a sanctioning framework for any action that either interferes with play or is against the values of the sport.

In elite-level rugby, who determines or agrees the times for water breaks? Will they be at a set time – 15/30min etc?

- Reminder – this element only applies to elite end rugby with matches with a squad size of 23 players.
- The referee/match officials will decide when the breaks will be and should be in natural stoppage points – try, injury, TMO break etc.
- There are no set times, as per existing hot weather/covid-era breaks. The first one should no earlier than 15mins.

What if no tries are scored?

- If no tries are scored, match officials will use other natural breaks in play – injury, TMO check etc.
- Failing that, in line with hot weather water breaks and specific breaks introduced during Covid, the referee will determine a time when the ball is dead in a neutral area of the pitch when neither side will be disadvantaged.

How long should a water break last?

- There is no prescribed **length**, but we'd expect them to last no longer than a minute, or the length of the existing stoppage.

Where can water be accessed?

- In elite level games, water can be available at all times in the technical zones and from behind the dead ball line at tries.

At a try, how can the scoring side access water?

- The scoring side can access water from their own technical zone during a conversion, unless the score would act as one of the two water breaks, when water can be brought onto the field by the two water carriers.
- The tee carrier may also bring a water bottle for the conversion/penalty kicker only.

At a try, how can the non-scoring side access water?

- The non-scoring side can access water from the racks/bottles left behind the dead ball line.

Can a medic/physio bring a rack of water with them when treating a player?

- No, medics can only bring one water bottle for the injured player.

In non-elite rugby, are there specified breaks for water?

- No – the limit of 2 water breaks per half only applies to matches with a squad size of 23 players (i.e. elite competitions).
- In other levels of the game, two water carriers can enter during a stoppage in play for an injury to a player or when a try has been scored.

Can a person bringing on a kicking tee pass messages on?

- Yes, any tee carrier/medic/water carrier can pass messages onto their players, but not address comments to the match officials apart from on medical-related matters.

Can players speak with coaches if they come to the Technical Zone for water?

- Yes.

If a try is scored, are physios allowed to speak to players?

- Yes, if during a water break or they are treating a player.

Do the water bottles have to stay unattended behind dead ball or can water carriers take them over as try scored?

- The water bottles/racks can be left unattended behind the dead ball line and replaced between tries by water carriers if required.

Where can the bottles/trays be placed in the dead ball?

- They must be left behind the **dead ball line** so they don't interfere with play if ball is kicked into in-goal.

Is there a limit to the amount of water bottle racks/trays that can be left behind the dead ball line?

- No limits are set – however, two racks would normally equate to 16 bottles

Are there any limits to the how many bottles/trays can be kept in the Technical Zone?

- No, there are no set limits although in RWC competitions, there is a limit of 2 racks per tech zone.

Can an injured player being treated pass a water bottle to a fit player?

- No – the water is for the player being treated only.

If the hot weather protocols are activated, does that water break count as one of the two?

- No – any hot weather water break would be additional to the two in the law trial