

# Law 3 Number of Players - The Team

## DEFINITIONS

**A Team.** A team consists of fifteen players who start the match plus any authorised replacements and/or substitutes.

**Replacement.** A player who replaces an injured team mate.

**Substitute.** A player who replaces a team mate for tactical reasons.

### 3.1 MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PLAYERS ON THE PLAYING AREA

**Maximum:** each team must have no more than fifteen players on the playing area.

### 3.2 TEAM WITH MORE THAN THE PERMITTED NUMBER OF PLAYERS

**Objection:** at any time before or during a match a team may make an objection to the referee about the number of players in their opponents' team. As soon as the referee knows that a team has too many players, the referee must order the captain of that team to reduce the number appropriately. The score at the time of the objection remains unaltered.

**Penalty:** [Penalty at the place where the game would restart.](#)

### 3.3 WHEN THERE ARE FEWER THAN FIFTEEN PLAYERS

A Union may authorise matches to be played with fewer than fifteen players in each team. When that happens, all the Laws of the Game apply except that each team must have at least five players in the scrum at all times.

**Exception:** matches between teams of seven-a-side are an exception. These matches are covered by the seven-a-side variations to the Laws of the Game.

### 3.4 PLAYERS NOMINATED AS SUBSTITUTES

For international matches a Union may nominate up to seven replacements/substitutes.

A team can substitute up to two front row players and up to five other players. Substitutions may only be made when the ball is dead and with the permission of the referee.

For other matches, the Union with jurisdiction over the match decides how many replacements/substitutes may be nominated to a maximum of seven (subject to Law 3.14 when it may be eight).

A team can substitute up to two front row players (subject to Law 3.14 when it may be 3) and up to five other players. Substitutions may only be made when the ball is dead and with the permission of the referee.

### 3.5 SUITABLY TRAINED AND EXPERIENCED PLAYERS IN THE FRONT ROW

(a) The table below indicates the numbers of suitably trained and experienced players for the front row when nominating different numbers of players.

<b>Number of Players</b>	<b>Number of Suitably Trained and Experienced Players</b>
15 or less	3 players who can play in the front row
16, 17 or 18	4 players who can play in the front row
19, 20, 21 or 22	5 players who can play in the front row
Union Specific Variations Law 3.14 22	6 players who can play in the front row
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(b) Each player in the front row and any potential replacement(s) must be suitably trained and experienced.

(c) When 19, 20, 21 or 22 players are nominated in a team there must be five players who can play in the front row to ensure that on the first occasion that a replacement hooker is required and, on the first occasion that a replacement prop forward is required, the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums.

(d) The replacement of a front row forward must come from suitably trained and experienced players who started the match or from the nominated replacements.

### **3.6 SENT OFF FOR FOUL PLAY**

A player sent off for foul play must not be replaced or substituted. For an exception to this Law, refer to Law 3.13.

### **3.7 PERMANENT REPLACEMENT**

A player may be replaced if injured. If the player is permanently replaced, that player must not return and play in that match. The replacement of the injured player must be made when the ball is dead and with the permission of the referee.

### **3.8 THE DECISION FOR PERMANENT REPLACEMENT**

(a) When a national representative team is playing in a match, a player may be replaced only when, in the opinion of a doctor, the player is so injured that it would be unwise for that player to continue playing in that match.

(b) In other matches, where a Union has given explicit permission, an injured player may be replaced on the advice of a medically trained person. If none is present, that player may be replaced if the referee agrees.

### **3.9 THE REFEREE'S POWER TO STOP AN INJURED PLAYER FROM CONTINUING**

If the referee decides – with or without the advice of a doctor or other medically qualified person – that a player is so injured that the player should stop playing, the referee may order that player to leave the playing area. The referee may also order an injured player to leave the field in order to be medically examined.

### **3.10 TEMPORARY REPLACEMENT**

(a) When a player leaves the field to have bleeding controlled and/or have an open wound covered, that player may be temporarily replaced. If the player who has been temporarily replaced does not return to the field of play within 15 minutes (actual time) of leaving the playing area, the replacement becomes permanent and the replaced player must not return to the field of play.

(b) If the temporary replacement is injured, that player may also be replaced.

(c) If the temporary replacement is sent off for foul play, the replaced player may not return to the field of play.

(d) If a temporary replacement is cautioned and temporarily suspended, the replaced player may not return to the field of play until after the period of suspension.

### **3.11 PLAYER WISHING TO REJOIN THE MATCH**

(a) A player who has an open or bleeding wound must leave the playing area. The player must not return until the bleeding is controlled and the wound has been covered.

(b) A player who leaves a match because of injury or any other reason must not rejoin the match until the referee permits the player to return. The referee must not let a player rejoin a match until the ball is dead.

(c) If the player rejoins the match without the referee's permission, and the referee believes the player did so to help that player's team or obstruct the opposing team, the referee penalises the player for misconduct.

**Penalty:** A penalty kick is awarded at the place where play would restart.

### **3.12 SUBSTITUTED PLAYERS REJOINING THE MATCH**

If a player is substituted, that player must not return and play in that match even to replace an injured player.

**Exception 1:** a substituted player may replace a player with a bleeding or open wound.

**Exception 2:** a substituted player may replace a front row player when injured, temporarily suspended or sent off.

### **3.13 FRONT ROW FORWARD SENT OFF OR TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED OR INJURED**

(a) If after a front row player has been sent off or during the time a front row player is temporarily suspended, and there are no further front row players available from the nominated team, then uncontested scrums will be ordered. It is not the responsibility of the referee to determine the suitability of trained front row replacements nor their availability, as this is a team responsibility.

(b) After a front row player is sent off or during the time a front row player is temporarily suspended the referee, upon awarding the next scrum, will ask that player's captain whether or not the team has another player on the field of play who is suitably trained to play in the front row. If not, the captain chooses any player from that team who then must leave the field of play and be replaced by a suitably trained front row player from the team's replacements. The captain may do this immediately prior to the next scrum or after another player has been tried in the front row.

(c) When a period of temporary suspension ends and a front row player returns to the field of play, the replacement front row player leaves the field of play and the nominated player who left the field of play for the period of the suspension may resume playing in the match.

(d) Furthermore, if, because of sending off or injury, a team cannot provide enough suitably trained front row players, the match continues with uncontested scrums.

(e) An uncontested scrum is the same as a normal scrum, except that the teams do not compete for the ball, the team throwing in the ball must win it, and neither team is allowed to push.

(f) When the referee orders uncontested scrums, during a match, as a result of a team not having suitably trained and experienced front row players in compliance with Law the referee will report the matter to the Match Organiser.

(g) When a team does not have suitably trained front row players prior to the match such that contested scrums cannot take place the referee will order uncontested scrums. The referee will report the matter to the Match Organiser.

(h) When a team does not have suitably trained front row players prior to the match such that contested scrums cannot take place a Match Organiser may decide that the match must not start.

### **3.14 UNION SPECIFIC VARIATIONS**

- (a) A Union having jurisdiction (or where a match or competition is played between teams from two or more Unions those Unions by agreement between them) may implement variations to Law 3 .4 for matches below international level as set out in 3(b) and/or 3 (c) below .
- (b) When 22 or 23 players are nominated in a team there must be sufficient front row players to play at hooker, tight-head prop and loose-head prop who are suitably trained and experienced to ensure that on the first occasion that a replacement in any front row position is required, the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums.
- ( c) A provision may be introduced that where uncontested scrums are ordered as result of there being no suitably trained and experienced front row replacement for any reason, the team concerned play with not more than 14 players