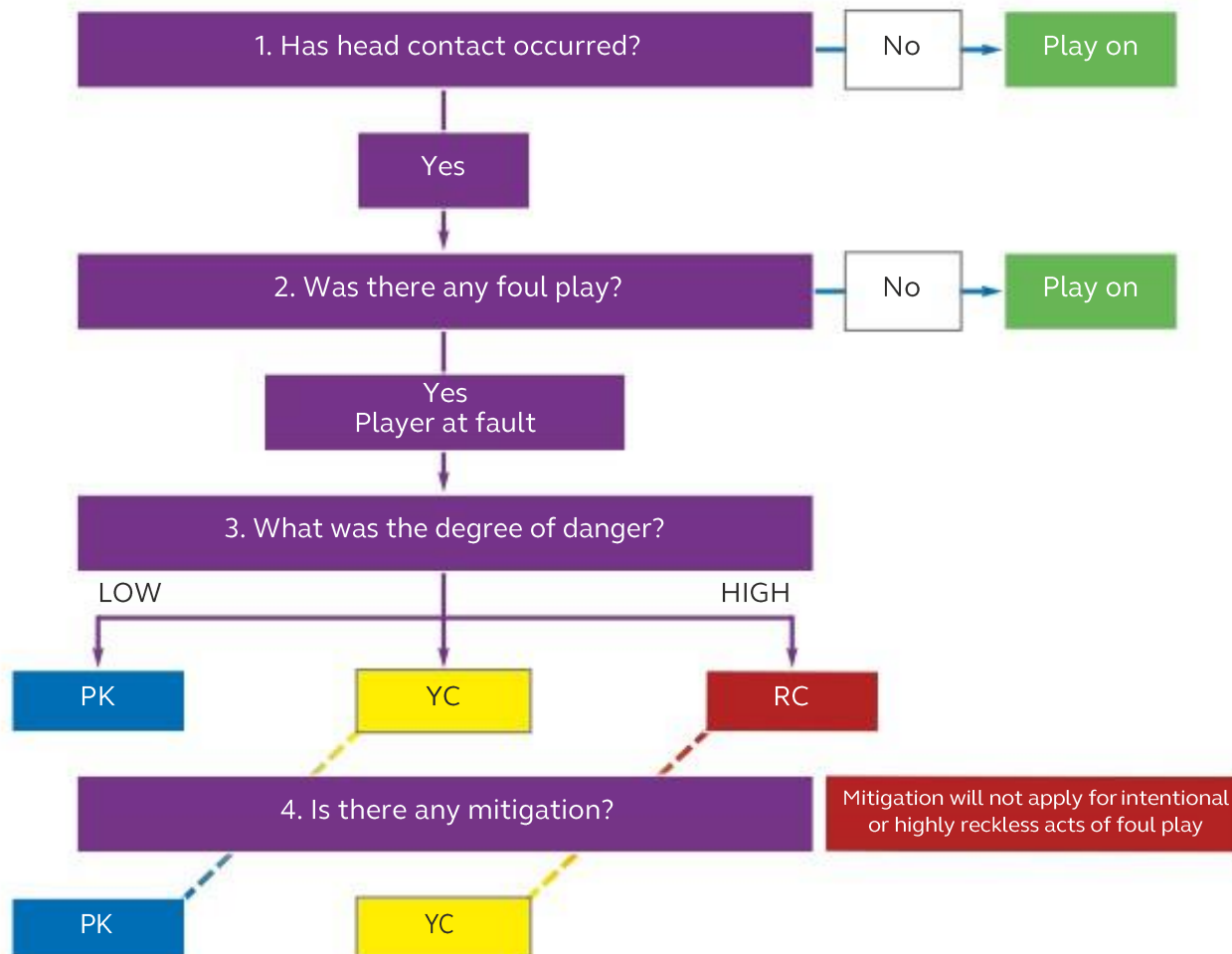


Head Contact Process

updated December 2021



Context

Player welfare drives World Rugby’s decision making for zero tolerance of foul play, especially where head contact occurs.

The focus must be on the actions of those involved, not the injury - the need for an HIA does not necessarily mean that there has been illegal head contact.

The ‘power of choice’ for tacklers is crucial, especially as 72% of head injuries occur in the tackle.

There needs to be an understanding that tacklers stay up to allow them to ‘adjust and react’ - dropping quickly into the low tackle entry position - using their ‘eyes and feet’ to get their timing right.

It is important that coaches and players continually develop safe tackling techniques in training.

Aims of the Head Contact Process

The process is designed to protect the head, neck and throat area of players.

The process can be applied to:

- High tackles
- Shoulder charges
- Dangerous cleanouts
- Head-to-head collisions
- Leading elbow / forearm

The Head Contact Process is a Law Application Guideline. Under 9.11, the referee is always entitled to issue a red or yellow card for anything deemed to be reckless or dangerous. However, this process is intended to aid consistency in the application of sanctions by providing guidance on how contact with the head should be approached by match officials and disciplinary personnel.



LAW 9 Foul play

DANGEROUS PLAY

11. Players must not do anything that is reckless or dangerous to others including leading with the elbow or forearm.
13. A player must not tackle an opponent early, late or dangerously. Dangerous tackling includes, but is not limited to, tackling or attempting to tackle an opponent above the line of the shoulders even if the tackle starts below the line of the shoulders.
20. Dangerous play in a ruck or maul.
 - a. A player must not charge into a ruck or maul. Charging includes any contact made without binding onto another player in the ruck or maul.
 - b. A player must not make contact with an opponent above the line of the shoulders.

This includes head-on-head

Process questions and considerations

1. Has head contact occurred?

Head contact includes neck and throat area

2. Was there foul play?

Considerations:

- Intentional
- Reckless
- Avoidable

3. What was the degree of danger?

Considerations include:

- Direct vs indirect contact
- High force vs low force

4. Is there any mitigation?

Considerations include:

- Line of sight
- Sudden and significant drop or movement
- Clear attempt to change height
- Level of control
- Upright - passive vs dynamic

Mitigation will not apply for intentional or highly reckless acts of foul play

Trigger words for match officials

Match officials may wish to use the non-exhaustive list of trigger words below to help them identify whether a player is at fault, the degree of danger involved and whether any mitigation should be applied.

PLAY ON

No fault

- Sudden and significant drop in height by the ball carrier
- Player had no time to readjust
- Passive action
- Involuntary collision
- No leading arm when close to the body

PK

YC

Low danger

- Indirect contact
- Low force
- Low speed
- Passive
- No leading head / shoulder / forearm

RC

High danger

- Direct contact
- Lack of control
- High speed
- Upright and dynamic
- Leading head / shoulder / elbow / forearm
- Swinging arm
- No mitigation for intentional or highly reckless act of foul play

Mitigation

- Sudden/significant drop in height or change in direction from ball carrier
- A late change in dynamics due to another player in the Contact
- An effort to wrap / bind and having no time to adjust