



“SQUEEZE BALL” TECHNIQUE

The term “*squeeze ball*” is applied to a technique involving a ball carrier going to ground, usually keeping his/her body parallel to the touchline, holding the ball on his/her chest and, when on the ground, protecting the ball by pushing it back through his/her legs. This results in ball retention and subsequent presentation for the side in possession.

This technique has the potential to raise a number of safety issues. A major issue of concern is that in an attempt to retain or regain the ball, the safety of young players could be jeopardised in one or more ways.

- The technique and the ball carrier’s resultant position expose his/her neck to danger from arriving players from either team.
- The ball carrier does not move away from the ball as required by Law 15.7 (f).
- There is an increasing chance that arriving players will be driven to ground by their team mates causing an increased potential of them landing dangerously.
- There is an increasing chance that arriving players will drive dangerously against or onto the nape of the neck of an opponent trying to pick up the ball.
- There is an increasing chance that arriving players will drive dangerously onto the player executing the “squeeze ball technique”.

The “*squeeze ball*” technique and the subsequent actions of the arriving players often result in players’ shoulders being lower than their hips. ‘Shoulders above hips’ is a fundamental criterion for safety throughout all levels of the game.

World Rugby Statements and Policy

World Rugby Action#1

“Law 15.6(d) states: “A tackled player may release the ball by pushing it along the ground in any direction except forward, providing this is done immediately.”

In recent times players having been tackled or who go to ground have done so ensuring that the ball is underneath them, they then push the ball along the ground and through their legs (a practice known as squeeze ball).

On most occasions when players attempt to push the ball along the ground under their bodies they are not making the ball available immediately and they are in contravention of Law 14.1 and Law 15.6 (d). Players who attempt the action are liable to penalty unless the ball is immediately available.

*With an emphasis on “immediately”, Referees have been instructed to enforce the above strictly”. (Memo from WR as an Interpretation of **Law 15.6 (d) -- the Tackled Play**, 8th November 2001.)*

[NB Given changes in the Laws of the Game since 2001 this is now Law 15.5 (d), 2008]

WR Action#2

“Unions are requested to adopt Domestic Variations, which makes the action known as the squeeze ball, illegal for all age levels from under 18 downwards.” (Memo from WR Interpretation, November 8, 2001).

WR Action#3

“THE COMMITTEE AGREED TO RECOMMEND a reaffirmation of the WR recommendation that the practice of Squeeze ball should not be permitted at all matches U18 or lower.” (Meeting Minutes: WR AGE GRADE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING, [Agenda item 8], Treviso, Italy, 29th March, 2002).

WR Action#4

“The Medical Advisory Committee has recommended that the strong recommendation previously circulated to Unions not to permit the use of the squeeze ball be reaffirmed and the position be kept under review.

*The Council **AGREED** to reaffirm its previous position that Unions be required to adopt Domestic Variations that makes the action referred to as the squeeze ball, illegal for all ages from under 18 downwards”.* (Meeting Minutes: WR Council Annual Minutes, April 2002).

USA Rugby Policy

In acknowledging the above interpretation, directives and agreements, USA Rugby adopted the following policy.

“The practice referred to as ‘squeeze ball’ is to be deemed to be illegal in all Under 19, High School and Youth Contact Rugby played in the USA and therefore deemed to be a Domestic Variation adopted by USA Rugby in relation to the game”.

Implications for Youth Rugby in USA

1. No player involved in under 19, High School (or younger age group) Rugby shall use the technique known or referred to as “Squeezeball”.
2. The policy applies to both games and training sessions.
3. No person involved in the teaching or coaching of Rugby with participants under the age of 19 is to encourage such players to use the technique known or referred to as “Squeeze ball”.
4. Coaches and teachers are to acknowledge that it is their responsibility to explain to their young players why this safety policy has been introduced.
5. Referees are to acknowledge that it is their responsibility to eliminate this technique from under 19 matches and to explain to the players (AND their Coach) why this safety policy has been introduced.