

NZR 2020 Law Variation Trial 1 - 'Knock On, Play On' for U6 - U8s

Purpose

Evaluate the benefits of a law variation at U6 - U8s that enables play to continue without consequence for a knock on.

Rationale

- Within the *Learn* phase of NZR's participation model, the game design and environmental considerations should align with participants' level of development.
- Modern research indicates children up to 7 are in the pre-operational cognitive stage. This in effect means that they learn best in *deliberate play* modes where there is little emphasis on rules and structures.
- Other countries' development models have de-emphasised the formal effect (and thus need for formal restarts) arising from a knock on. This has also had the unintended benefit of creating opportunities for players to learn to dive on or pick up loose ball.

Target Audience

U6 - U8 grades across selected PUs.

Trial Focus

In selected PUs, U6, U7 and U8 grades will operate under a 'Knock on, Play on' approach for the duration of the season.

By way of clarification:

- In the event of a knock on, any player from either team may recover the ball and continue play.
- Play is not to be stopped for a knock on or multiple knock ons by:
 - The same player, or
 - A team mate of the player knocking the ball on, or
 - A subsequent knock on by an opposition player.
- A try is to be awarded irrespective of any knock on that may have occurred in the phase of play committed by any player.

Establishment of the Trial

In selected PUs with the approval of the relevant organising committee, the trial will be established for the 2020 season. Details of the trial will be communicated to clubs, coaches, referees and parents of players in the respective U6, U7, and U8 grades prior to the season's commencement.

NZR and the respective PU will:

- Implement the trial condition through a combined communication and education programme during pre-season.
- Provide and manage resources to assist in monitoring the trial.
- Undertake a mid and post season review of the trial with coaches, parents, and clubs.

Trial Evaluation

The impact of trial law variation will be measured through a NZR supported survey with:

- Coaches / Referees
- Parents of players
- PU staff

Focus of trial evaluation:

- Impact on playing time.
- Impact on number of formal restarts (free pass at U6/U7 and scrums at U8s).
- Opportunities to pick the ball off the ground/dive on loose ball.

NZR will capture footage for post-trial review on 2-3 occasions (Jun - Aug 2020) in consultation with the PUs. This may include a NZR supported festival day approach to capture as many games as possible at one location.

NZR 2020 Law Variation Trial 2 - Reduced Numbers at Scrum/Lineout for U8 - U10s

Purpose

Evaluate the benefits to overall player development and engagement by reducing the significance of scrums and line outs in an 8 and a 10 a side version of the game for U8s - U10s.

Rationale

- Within the *Learn* phase of NZR's participation model, the game design and environmental considerations should align with participants' level of development.
- Modern research indicates children up to 8-11 are in the concrete operational cognitive stage. This in effect means that they can start to problem solve with simple matters but struggle with hypothesising likely outcomes. They therefore continue to learn best in *deliberate play* modes where there is little emphasis on rules and structures (such as scrums, lineouts, and the early and unnecessary streaming of players to fill these positions).
- NZR's recent work on improving participation through increased quality of experience has indicated a need to consider the Small Blacks Development Model's level of progression to ensure it is fit for purpose for the future generation of rugby players.

Target Audience

U8 - U10 grades across selected PUs.

Trial Focus

In selected PUs, U8 - U10 grades will operate under an approach of 8 a side or 10 a side game and ½ field (60m x 40m) for the 2020 season with the following constraints:

- 3 person uncontested scrums (instead of 5) - half back must pass to players in backline.
- 3 person uncontested line outs (instead of 5) - half back must pass to players in backline.
- Scrums and line outs are to be filled by the closest players at the stoppage of play as determined by the referee or on-field coach (to encourage rotation of players).

Note: 8 a side is being trialled to also examine impact of numbers under a reduced scrum/line out approach. PUs may choose to undertake trials at either 8 a side or 10 a side however NZR wishes to have both options trialled in 2020 to enable assessment of the relative effect of the changes.

Establishment of the Trial

In selected PUs, with the approval of the relevant organising committee, U8 - U10 grades will operate under a trial 8 or 10 a side/reduced scrum/line out format for the 2020 season. Details of the trial will be communicated to clubs, coaches, referees and parents of players in the respective U6, U7, and U8 grades prior to the season's commencement.

NZR and the respective PU will:

- Implement the trial condition through a combined communication and education programme during pre-season for coaches, referees, parents.
- Provide resources to assist in monitoring the trial (NZR).
- Undertake a mid and post season review of the trial with coaches, parents, and clubs.

Trial Evaluation

The impact of the trial law variation will be measured through a mixed method approach with:

- Footage captured and coded on 2-3 occasions with a trial group and a control group (U8 - U10s grades not adopting the trial).
- Surveys/Interviews of trial and control participants, namely:
 - Players (TBC).
 - Coaches / Referees (same group).
 - Parents of players.
 - PU staff.

Focus of evaluation:

- Impact on playing time / passes / tries.
- Impact on number of touches of the ball by more players.
- Impact of use of space.
- Impact on opportunity for 1 on 1 tackles.
- Impact on opportunities to play different positions.

NZR will capture footage for post-trial review on 2-3 occasions (Jun - Aug 2020). This may include a NZR supported festival day approach to capture as many games as possible at one location.