

Game Innovation – Captain’s Challenge

Purpose: Provide a mechanism which allows team captains to be part of the on-field decision making process

Outcomes:

- Team captains have shared ownership in decision making along with match officials
- Decision accuracy is enhanced
- Game outcomes are positively enhanced

Captain’s Challenge

How it works (Captain)

- Captains/team gets one challenge to use – this is an added layer on top of the current TMO protocol that referees will still apply during the game.
- If their challenge is correct, then they get to keep that challenge to use again. If they are incorrect and their challenge is over-ruled, they lose it.
- The captain must make challenge within **20 seconds** of a try being scored, a whistled decision, or a stoppage in play.
- The captain must be specific about what they want challenged to in Scenarios 1-3 below.
- Anything that is challenged must be clear and obvious.
- Set piece play will be taken out of the review process.
- If the captain is off the field of play, he will nominate an acting captain to make any challenges.

What can be challenged (Three Scenarios)

1. Infringements before a try is scored anywhere within the last restart in play (remove requirement for within two phases). Otherwise current protocol applies and includes:

- a. Law 8.1. Scoring points
- b. Law 9.1 to 9.6 and 10.11 to 10.23. Foul play: obstruction, dangerous play, tackling a player without the ball
- c. Law 10.4 Offside: player in front of the kicker
- d. Law 11 Knock-on or throw forward
- e. Law 15.5 to 15.9 Ruck: offside at the ruck –players not joining the ruck
- f. Law 16.5. Maul: offside at the maul – players not joining the maul
- g. Law 18.1 and 2. Player in touch
- h. Law 18.3 to 18.7. Lineout: quick throw
- i. Law 21 In goal (including ball grounded by a defending player
- j. Law 21.7 and 21.8 In goal: grounding the ball and double movement

2. Foul Play: Any decision under Law 9.1 to 9.6 and 10.11 to 10.23. This also includes whether the referee needs to increase their sanction from Penalty kick to yellow card, or yellow card to red card.

3. Any whistled decision in the last five minutes of regular match time and any extra time: Any decision that a referee blows their whistle for, a team could challenge that decision to the TMO so that the end of the game is not influenced by an incorrect decision.

What cannot be challenged

- Anything which is outside of the above protocol
- A restart in play has happened including a quick tap or quick throw in has been taken, so the team has chosen to play quickly.
- Non-decisions - where a referee does not blow their whistle for a decision and play continues (unless there is foul play).

Note: The referee team may still want to check foul play which they have not penalised yet as per current protocol.

How it works

- The captain signals their intent to challenge and then describes exactly what they want to check
 - “We want to challenge a potential High tackle”
 - “We want to challenge a knock on at the last ruck before this try”
 - “We want to challenge the PK only for that high tackle as we believe it should be sanctioned higher”
 - “We want to challenge the holding on Penalty because he is not supporting his bodyweight” – in the last five minutes only
- The referee will clarify with the captain which decision is to be reviewed
- The referee will ask the TMO to review that decision and the TMO will decide if the decision was right or wrong.
- The TMO can only review the decision that was asked of them however if something else is picked up then a decision should be made on what has been seen.

Note: The footage must clearly show the referee decision is wrong in order to overturn the decision.

Outcomes:

- The referee has made the incorrect decision – the referee withdraws their whistled decision, and restarts with the correct decision, or a scrum to the team who which should have the ball. The team that made the challenge keeps it’s challenge.
 - “Challenge accepted – scrum to blue”
 - “Challenge accepted – PK to blue”
- The referee decision is correct – The team that made the challenge loses its challenge and play restarts with the referee’s original decision.
 - “Challenge declined – team loses their challenge – play restarts with original decision”

Examples Game	Decision	Current protocol Outcome	Captains Challenge Outcome
Blues v Chiefs SRA 2020	Incorrect holding on to Blues	Outside of protocol can't check	Whistled decision in last 5 minutes of the game Captains challenge = check holding on decision Challenge upheld and PK to Chiefs as player NSBW
Video link: https://prorugby.imagencloud.com/record/3249			
Crusaders v Hurricanes SR 2019	Incorrect knock on against Hurricanes	Outside of protocol can't check	Whistled decision in last 5 minutes of the game Captains challenge = check accuracy of knock on Challenge upheld and scrum to Hurricanes as KO by SW
Video Link: https://prorugby.imagencloud.com/record/3250			
Australia v Scotland Semi Final RWC 2015	Incorrect PK to Australia for offside after a knock on	Outside of protocol can't check	Whistled decision in last 5 minutes of the game Captains challenge = check offside decision
Video link: https://prorugby.imagencloud.com/record/3251			