

12-Replacements - Fifteens

These guidelines are effective starting with the 2026-2027 Competition Year for **voluntary** use by a Geographic Union, a Territorial Union, and/or cross-GU/TU play in matches leading up to the USAR Senior Club Super Regionals for NCS teams.

Until further notice, this will **not** include USAR Senior Club Super Regionals and the National Championships. Non-NCS teams (MD4, WD3) and their events may use this at each stage of their championships by agreement within those Super Regions.

When used, this policy must be shared in advance with the local and/or regional match officials responsible for matches so that there are no issues or surprises when implemented.

Current law 3.34 (<https://www.world.rugby/the-game/laws/law/3>)

A match organiser may implement rolling tactical replacements at defined levels of the game within its jurisdiction. The number of interchanges must not exceed 12. The administration and rules relating to rolling replacements are the responsibility of the match organiser.

Replacements.

Tactical replacements will be implemented with the following general conditions:

- a) Replacements include **any time one player replaces another player from the same team** including for injury, with the exceptions noted below.
- b) Match Rosters are limited to a maximum of 23 players. [Law 3.8 applies.]
- c) The number of interchanges must not exceed twelve (12), except as noted below.
- d) There is no limit on the number of times an individual player can be replaced, or re-enter a match, so long as the maximum number of interchanges has not been reached.
- e) Despite the word “Rolling” in Law 3.34, per Law 3.6: *Replacements are made only when the ball is dead and only with the permission of the referee.*

Notes:

1) Exceptions.

a) Replacement – Blood

- i) If a player has a blood injury and is temporarily replaced by another player that does **NOT** count as an interchange.
- ii) If the bloodied player returns to the field of play within fifteen (15) minutes actual time and the temporary replacement leaves the field that does **NOT** count as an interchange.
- iii) If the bloodied player does not return to the field of play within the permitted time, the replacement becomes permanent and that **IS** an interchange. The bloodied player is considered injured.
- iv) Should a team use up its maximum number of interchanges while one of their players has been temporarily replaced for blood, and the bloodied player cannot return to the field within the permitted time, the temporary replacement will be required to leave

the field at the next stoppage after the conclusion of the permitted time (i.e., the team plays one player short).

- b) **Temporary Suspension – Yellow Card**
 - i) When a player is temporarily suspended (yellow card) and leaves the field of play that is **NOT** an interchange.
 - c) **Temporary Suspension – Yellow Card – Front Row Player**
 - i) When a scrum is ordered during the temporary suspension of a front-row player (Player A), and as a result a player (Player B) is required to leave the field to allow another front row player (Player C) to come on, that does **NOT** count as an interchange.
 - ii) If, at the end of the period of temporary suspension, Player A resumes and Player C leaves the field that does **NOT** count as an interchange.
 - iii) Player B returning to the field of play is also **NOT** an interchange. If, however, the team opts to leave Player C on at the end of the temporary suspension period instead of Player A returning, that **IS** an interchange.
 - iv) Player B returning to the field of play to replace another player during the period of temporary suspension **IS** an interchange.
 - d) **Send Off – Red Card**
 - i) When a player is sent from the field of play (red card) that is **NOT** an interchange.
 - e) **Send Off – Red Card – Front Row Player**
 - i) When a scrum is ordered after the sending off of a front-row player (Player A), and as a result a player (Player B) is required to leave the field to allow another front-row player (Player C) to come on, that does **NOT** count as an interchange.
 - ii) Player B returning to the field of play to replace another player **IS** an interchange.
- 2) Any player replaced due to **injury** – except for blood – may not for any reason return to that match or any subsequent matches played on that day. At matches where there is no match doctor available, the Referee remains responsible for establishing if a player is leaving the field of play due to being so injured that it would be unwise for the player to continue playing.
- 3) After the maximum number of interchanges has been made, no other interchanges will be allowed for any reason, except for:
- a) an **injury to a front-row player** where a suitably trained front-row replacement is available to ensure the game can continue with contested scrums or under the “recognize and remove” protocol. In these situations only, an additional replacement may be made.
 - b) a player with a head injury.
 - c) a player who has just been injured as a result of foul play (as verified by the match officials).
- 4) Reminder about the USA Rugby Concussion Policy: *If a player shows symptoms of concussion before, during or after a match, that player must be removed from play immediately, not to return during that match. Any loss of consciousness requires removal of a player. No Exceptions. **There is no HIA (Head Injury Assessment) at community level, all matches are to be played under World Rugby’s Recognise & Remove Policy.***

- 5) If a team cannot provide a suitably trained front row player and uncontested scrums are ordered, the number of players that a team is allowed on the field is 14 for an injury, 13 for a yellow card, 13 for a red card, 15 for a blood sub, and 15 for foul play. [Described in the Game Management Guidelines, Section 3.]

REASONS A TEAM CANNOT PROVIDE A SUITABLY TRAINED FRONT ROW PLAYER	INJURY	YELLOW CARD	RED CARD	BLOOD SUB	FOUL PLAY
THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS THAT A TEAM IS ALLOWED ON THE FIELD	14	13	13	15	15
	ADDITIONAL PLAYER TO LEAVE THE FIELD				

- 6) From the Game Management Guidelines, Section 7: “Each team should make clear to the referee how many substitutes they have and that they have the correct number of suitably trained front-row players.”
- 7) The referee or referee site staff will be responsible for administrating and counting the replacements and replacements, as is customary.
- 8) The replacement player pool will be based on the allowed roster for the match, as delineated in Law 3.8.

Squad size	Minimum number of front row players in the squad	Must be able to replace at the first time of asking	Total replacement pool beyond the starting 15
15 or fewer	3	-	0
16, 17 or 18	4	Either a prop or a hooker	1, 2, or 3
19, 20, 21 or 22	5	Both a prop and a hooker	4, 5, 6, or 7
23	6	Loose-head prop, tight-head prop, and hooker	8