



# IRB Law Application Guidelines

## IRB Maul Working Group, August 2009

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### Outcome notes

Visit [www.irblaws.com/en/guidelines](http://www.irblaws.com/en/guidelines) to watch video clips showing the Maul Working Group conclusions

The ELV Conference in March 2009 expressed a concern that the maul can be observed to be, and actually can be a form of 'legalised obstruction'. This is evidenced by players at the back of an elongated maul holding the ball whilst the maul moves forward ('truck and trailer'). An IRB working group concluded:

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1

The maul must be formed so that the opposition can contest the maul at the formation; this includes the formation of the maul at a lineout and from a maul formed after kick-offs or restart kicks. (Match Officials were instructed to apply this from May 2009 - a DVD was circulated to all match elite match officials and Referee Managers.) Mauls from open play should be refereed in the same way as mauls formed at lineouts or from restart kicks.

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2

A player may have both hands on the ball and be bound into the maul by other players involved in the maul.

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3

If a player takes the ball in a formed maul and detaches whilst the players in the maul continue going forward, they are obstructing the opposition if that player continues moving forward using the players in front as a shield.

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4

If the ball carrying team in the maul is moved backwards at or immediately after the formation, Law 17 (d) and (e) should apply :

*"(d) When a maul has stopped moving forward for more than five seconds, but the ball is being moved and the referee can see it, a reasonable time is allowed for the ball to emerge. If it does not emerge within a reasonable time, a scrum is ordered.*

*(e) When a maul has stopped moving forward it may start moving forward again providing it does so within 5 seconds. If the maul stops moving forward a second time and if the ball is being moved and the referee can see it, a reasonable time is allowed for the ball to emerge. If it does not emerge within a reasonable time, a scrum is ordered."*



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If the maul is moved backwards, match officials currently do not apply Law 17 (d) at the maul formation. If they did so it would only allow one more movement forward and it may encourage the non-ball-carrying side to commit to the maul at its formation.

Match officials also permit mauls to move sideways and do not apply 17 (d) and (e). Strict application may assist.

If the referee says “use it” the ball **must** be used and restarting the maul is not an option.

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5

The concern about ‘truck and trailer’ is not about the ball being one or two players back from the ball carrier when the maul is moving forward, as that replicates a scrum. The concern is about the player ‘hanging’ on the back of the maul. Strict application of the definition of a bind may assist in resolving this issue:

**“Binding.** *Grasping firmly another player’s body between shoulders and the hips with the whole arm in contact from hand to shoulder”.*

If the ball carrier player does not bind in this way, the maul is considered to be over match officials insist the ball is used. If the player rejoins and binds on the players in front, the team should be penalised for obstruction. This may encourage players to bind appropriately.