

Ruck Contests

Spirit of the Law

The player whose sole objective is to contest the ruck shall be permitted to do so.

There is one law specific to infringements at ruck contests: 15.4.5 f

A player makes prohibited contact with an opposition player if he or she PUSHES, BUMPS or BLOCKS an opposition player who is contesting a bounce or throw by a field umpire or boundary throw in.

Points to consider

The vast majority of ruck contests are legal

At ball ups, umpires need to back out quickly 20 to 25 metres in order to have a good view of the ruck contest and a wide perspective on the players surrounding the contest

One of the keys is to WAIT. Don't be in a rush to pay free kicks. An early whistle because you believe a player is prevented from getting to the contest by the actions of one ruckman looks silly if the "infringed" ruckman gets the hit out

High leaps which result in one player climbing over another player should not be penalised if the leap and the successful hit out are all in one action

If a ruckman runs past the flight of the ball at a centre bounce, this is a cue that an infringement may be about to occur

If a ruckman leaps early and doesn't make contact with the ball until his feet hit the ground after making contact with his opponent, it is likely to be an infringement

If a ruckman puts an arm out and this action prevents his opponent from getting to the contest, it should be a free kick. However, you need to make sure that missing out on the contest is not the result of a mistimed leap

Free kicks should not be paid because players "take their eyes off the ball". This is a cue for the umpire but there still needs to be a push, bump or block for it to be an infringement

At FIELD BOUNCES & BOUNDARY THROW INS, any number of players may contest the ruck

When a ruckman takes the ball out of the ruck, it is holding the ball ONLY if he is tackled legally AND fails to kick or handball IMMEDIATELY

Position & Laws

Boundary Throw Ins

Start about 5 metres from the boundary line and run parallel with the flight of the ball about 15 metres away from the contest. When the ruckmen make contact with the ball, you should be side on to the contest. Alternatively, this could be done by arcing around from the front of where the ruckmen are gathering (close to the boundary line) and ending up side on to the contest.

Two umpire system: within 25 metres of goal, the position should be on the same end of the ground as the other umpire; for all other positions it should be on the opposite end to the other umpire

Three umpire system: For MZ BTIs, you should be on the longer side.

For EZ BTIs within 25 metres of goal, long side.

For EZ BTIs, 25 to 35 metres from goal, goal side.

For EZ BTIs more than 35 metres from goal, switch to the MZ

If the ball is knocked out of bounds at a BTI ON THE FULL by any player, it is DELIBERATE OUT OF BOUNDS.

Field Ball Ups

The ball is thrown up where the ball up was called for. If it's in the mud or within one metre of the boundary line, then that's where the ball up occurs.

Umpires back out towards the major axis. In the three umpire system, umpires may wish to back out towards the boundary line.

If the ball is knocked out of bounds at a field ball up ON THE FULL by one ruckman, it is DELIBERATE OUT OF BOUNDS.

If the ball is knocked over the scoring line at a field ball up or BTI ON THE FULL by any defender, it is a DELIBERATE RUSHED BEHIND

Centre Ball Ups

You must wait until both boundary umpires are on their corners. Check that both ruckmen are inside the circles and then commence your approach.

If one ruckman is not, he is not permitted to contest the ruck. Best to keep him out of the circle and let the other ruckman have a free hit at the ball. If you need to recall a bounce in these circumstances, the ruckman is still locked out.

Bounces should only be recalled if the ball ends up outside the outer circle.

If one ruckman steps on or outside the outer circle it is a free kick to the nearest player

If any other player steps into the circles before the ball hits the ground (from a bounce) or leaves your hand (from a ball up) it is a free kick to the nearest player

Field umpires must blow their whistle to acknowledge a centre square infringement

Advantage cannot be paid from a centre square infringement or an out of zone free kick at a centre bounce