



Rugby Canada's
Approach to
SAFE RUGBY

**“SQUEEZE BALL”
TECHNIQUE**
(Under 19 Rugby)

This document was produced by Rugby Canada in 2007.

The term “squeeze ball” is applied to a technique involving a ball carrier going to ground, usually keeping his/her body parallel to the touchline, holding the ball on his/her chest and, when on the ground, protecting the ball by pushing it back through his/her legs. This results in ball retention and subsequent presentation for the side in possession.

This technique has the potential to raise a number of safety issues. A major issue of concern is that in an attempt to retain or regain the ball, the safety of young players could be jeopardised in one or more ways.

- The technique and the ball carrier’s resultant position expose his/her neck to danger from arriving players from either team.
- The ball carrier does not move away from the ball as required by Law 15.7 (f).
- There is an increasing chance that arriving players will be driven to ground by their team mates causing an increased potential of them landing dangerously.
- There is an increasing chance that arriving players will drive dangerously against or onto the nape of the neck of an opponent trying to pick up the ball.
- There is an increasing chance that arriving players will drive dangerously onto the player executing the “squeeze ball technique”.

The “squeeze ball” technique and the subsequent actions of the arriving players often result in players’ shoulders being lower than their hips. “**Shoulders above hips**” is a fundamental criterion for safety throughout **all** levels of the game.

History of the Squeeze Ball Technique and International Rugby Board Decisions

IRB Action #1

On 8 November 2001, the International Rugby Board (IRB) issued the following Note on Interpretation of **Law 15.6 (d) - the Tackled Player**.

[NB Given changes in the Laws of the Game since 2001 this is now, in 2007, Law 15.5 (d)]

“Law 15.6(d) states: “A tackled player may release the ball by pushing it along the ground in any direction except forward, providing this is done immediately.”

In recent times players having been tackled or who go to ground have done so ensuring that the ball is underneath them, they then push the ball along the ground and through their legs (a practice known as squeeze ball).

On most occasions when players attempt to push the ball along the ground under their bodies they are not making the ball available immediately and they are in contravention of Law 14.1 and Law 15.6 (d). Players who attempt the action are liable to penalty unless the ball is immediately available.”

With an emphasis on “immediately”, Referees have been instructed to enforce the above strictly.

IRB Action #2

November 8, 2001.
International Rugby Board **INTERPRETATIONS**

Unions are requested to adopt Domestic Variations, which makes the action known as the squeeze ball, illegal for all age levels from under 18 downwards.

IRB Action #3

March 29, 2002.

Meeting Minutes: **International Rugby Board AGE GRADE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**
Treviso, Italy.

Agenda Item #8:

“THE COMMITTEE AGREED TO RECOMMEND a reaffirmation of the IRB recommendation that the practice of Squeeze ball should not be permitted at all matches U18 or lower.”

IRB Action #4

April 2002.

Meeting Minutes: **International Rugby Board COUNCIL ANNUAL MINUTES**

“The Medical Advisory Committee has recommended that the strong recommendation previously circulated to Unions not to permit the use of the squeeze ball be reaffirmed and the position be kept under review.

*The Council **AGREED** to reaffirm its previous position that Unions be required to adopt Domestic Variations, that makes the action referred to as the squeeze ball, illegal for all ages from under 18 downwards.”*

RUGBY CANADA

In acknowledging the above interpretation, directives and agreements, Rugby Canada adopted the following policy.

The practice referred to as squeeze ball is to be deemed to be illegal in all Under 19 Rugby played in Canada and therefore deemed to be a Domestic Variation adopted by Rugby Canada in relation to the Under 19 Game.

Implications:

1. *No player involved in under 19 (or younger age group) Rugby shall use the technique known or referred to as “Squeeze ball”.*
2. *The above implication applies to both games and training sessions.*
3. *No person involved in the teaching or coaching of Rugby involving participants under the age of 19 are to encourage such players to use the technique known or referred to as “Squeeze ball”.*
4. *Coaches and teachers are to acknowledge that it is their responsibility to explain to their young players why this safety policy has been introduced.*
5. *Referees are to acknowledge that it is their responsibility to eliminate this technique from under 19 matches and to explain to the players (AND their Coach) why this safety policy has been introduced.*