Amendment to Law 19.10b outlaws the practice of FRs placing their heads onto opposition players' head or shoulders between the call of ‘bind’ and ‘set’ on engagement
- Effectively immediately
- Foul play framework also streamlined after U20s World Championships
- Disciplinary sanction list amended to bring foul play involving head/neck contact as a mandatory mid-range offence

Effective immediately, World Rugby has announced details of a minor amendment to the scrum law, reducing the ‘axial’ or rotational load on front row players on engagement.

The amendment to Law 19.10b outlaws the practice of front-rows placing their heads onto opposition players’ shoulders between the call of ‘bind’ and ‘set’ in the engagement sequence. The sanction is a free kick.

This has been approved by World Rugby's Executive Committee after a recommendation by the Rugby Committee to adopt key outcomes from the recent Laws Review Group (LRG) meeting recently in London. The amendment is driven by research and evaluation undertaken by the NZRFU, the RFU, England’s Premiership Rugby and the Rugby Players’ Association who all presented to the LRG. The research identified an increase in axial or rotation loading on spines during the current scrum engagement sequence. International front-row players including Ken Owens (Wales), Rory Best (Ireland) and Jamie George (England) were all involved in the research.
In 2013, the scrum engagement sequence was introduced as part of a successful focus on reducing the risk of injury. The “Crouch, bind, set” sequence has delivered a 25% reduction on compression forces, a significant reduction in scrum injuries and a more stable scrum.

World Rugby Chairman Sir Bill Beaumont said, “This latest small, but important amendment to the scrum law based on robust research could have significant welfare benefits for front-row players at all levels and therefore the World Rugby Executive Committee was overwhelmingly in favour of approving the Rugby Committee’s recommendation into law.”

High tackle framework streamlined
The High Tackle Sanction framework has also been tweaked following feedback from the recent World Rugby U20 Championship in Argentina. They have now removed the element on the high tackle flow, which previously used ‘direct v indirect’ contact as a factor to check. It was felt the process was taking too long so has now been shortened. The revised framework can be downloaded by clicking on the [HERE].

Mid-range disciplinary sanction for foul play head/neck contact
The final element is an amend to the disciplinary guidelines. The mandatory mid-range sanction in the Regulation 17 sanction table now includes both head and/or neck: “Any act of foul play which results in contact with the head and/or neck shall result in at least a mid-range sanction.”