

ROLLING SUBSTITUTIONS - FAQs

This document sets out a number of frequently asked questions that the RFU has received in relation to the introduction of rolling substitutions.

By way of a remainder, as of 1st August 2012 new regulations were introduced to give Divisional Organising Committees the discretion to introduce rolling substitutions in League and RFU Cup matches at Level 5 and below. The specific regulations are set out in RFU Regulations 13.5.15 to 13.5.21.

The number of player interchanges permitted by each team will depend on the number of replacements that form part of the team, as set out below:

- Up to 3 replacements = 8 player interchanges
- 4 replacements = 9 player interchanges
- 5 replacements = 10 player interchanges
- 6 or 7 replacements = 12 player interchanges.

It is worth clarifying that an interchange occurs when one player leaves the field and is replaced by another (this applies in all circumstances).

Question 1

Question: A player leaves the field with a cut and is replaced. After treatment, he returns to the field of play. How many interchanges is this.

Answer: 2 interchanges. This is a simple replacement of the blood bin by interchanges.

Question 2

Question: A prop forward is subject of a yellow card. A scrum down is called and a qualified front row player comes onto the pitch for the scrum (under safety regulations) and the fullback goes off to keep the playing numbers at 14. At the end of the ten minute period, the fullback comes back onto the field of play and the prop who was given the yellow card also comes back on to replace the one who took his place during the ten minute sin-bin. How many interchanges, if any, does this count as.

Answer: 2 interchanges

- Prop is yellow carded and leaves the field – No interchange
- Fullback leaves the field and replacement prop enters – 1 interchange
- Prop returns from sin bin – No interchange
- Replacement prop leaves the field and fullback returns – 1 interchange
- If a team has no interchanges left and a prop is sin binned the game continues with uncontested scrums (unless a player already on the field can safely prop)
- The player leaving the field and the player entering the field do not have to happen at the same time, but usually will.
- Example: Player leaves the field to be assessed for injury – team do not want to use an interchange and are hoping that the injured player can return very quickly – No interchange. It becomes obvious after five minutes that the player needs further treatment, so a replacement is sent on – interchange is triggered.

Question 3

Question: If the situation arose that a front row player was injured, after the allowed 8 rolling replacements had been used, but there was a replacement front row player on the bench, would a replacement be permitted, to ensure contested scrums had to be implemented. Also at this point would the replacing team also have to reduce their numbers by one player, thus not gaining an advantage of the extra replacement.

Answer: No, if all the interchanges have been used, a further replacement is not permitted. The team will have to play with 14 men and if there is no other specialist front row player on the pitch already who can and is prepared to step into the front row, the match will also have to be played with uncontested scrums.

Question 4

Question: If the situation arose that a front row player was injured, after the allowed eight rolling replacements had been used, and the replacement front row was on the park as a replacement for another position, should that player be moved to the front row to allow contested scrums to continue to the advantage of the opposition.

Answer: This would be a tactical decision for the affected team. If the team is down to 14 men (due to no further permitted interchanges) and there is already another specialist front row player on the pitch playing a non-front row position, the team could decide to move that player to the front row so the match can continue with contested scrums or leave him where he is and go uncontested.