



Rule 13: Free hits awarded to the attack within 5 metres of the circle

The former requirement that a free hit awarded to the attack within 5 metres of the circle is taken at the nearest point 5 metres from the circle has been deleted.

The new Rule indicates that free hits awarded to the attack within 5 metres of the edge of the circle are now taken from where the offence occurred (i.e. there is now no requirement to take the ball back outside the dotted 5 metres line around the circle). The Rules surrounding the entry of the ball into the circle still apply, as per Rule 13.2: -

From a free hit awarded to the attack within the 23 metres area, the ball must not be played into the circle until it has travelled at least 5 metres or has been touched by a player of either team other than the player taking the free hit.

If the player taking the free hit continues to play the ball (i.e. no other player has yet played it):

- *That player may play the ball any number of times, but*
- *The ball must travel at least 5 metres, before*
- *That player plays the ball into the circle by hitting or pushing the ball again*

Alternatively:

- *Another player of either team who can legitimately play the ball must deflect, hit or push the ball before it enters the circle, or*
- *After this player has touched the ball, it can be played into the circle by any other player including the player who took the free hit.*

Commentary and additional guidance: -

The intention of the Rule change is to assist game flow, such that the attack is able to take a quick free hit from the point of the offence, rather than have to take the ball back to the dotted 5 metres line.

All players other than the player taking the free hit should be at least 5 metres from the ball. If a player is within 5 metres of the ball, they must not interfere with the taking of the free hit or must not play or attempt to play the ball. If this player is not playing the ball, attempting to play the ball or influencing play, the free hit need not be delayed.

A player within 5 metres of the ball at the taking of the free hit is not allowed to engage with play prior to the ball having travelled at least 5 metres.

However, at a free hit the ball cannot enter the circle until it has travelled at least 5 metres if the same player continues to play the ball or it has been touched by another player of either team. Defenders who are inside the circle within 5 metres of the free hit are therefore not interfering with play and may also shadow around the inside of the circle a player who takes a self-pass, provided that they do not play or attempt to play the ball or influence play until it has either travelled at least 5 metres or alternatively has been touched by another player of either team who can legitimately play the ball.

Players inside the circle who were 5 metres or more from the point of the free hit are not allowed to move and remain in a 'set' position within 5 metres of the ball when the free hit is taken.

Other than indicated above, any playing of the ball, attempting to play the ball or interference by a defender or an attacker who was not 5 metres from the ball, should be penalised accordingly.

The Rules Committee will continue to monitor the application and interpretation of this Rule change, based upon feedback from Tournaments, National Associations, Officials and other parties.

Additional for assistance for UM discussions with Coaches at HWL Semi-Finals: -

The intention of the Rule change is to assist game flow, such that the attack is able to take a quick free hit from the point of the offence, rather than have to take the ball back to the dotted 5 metres line.

Coaches, players and umpires want to be clear on what defenders are allowed and not allowed to do.

As with other attacking free hits within the 23 metres area, all players other than the player taking the free hit should be at least 5 metres from the ball. If a player is within 5 metres of the ball, and not interfering, the free hit need not be delayed.

The edge of the circle brings in a new dynamic. Attackers cannot play the ball into the circle until it has travelled at least 5 metres or has been touched by a player of either team other than the player taking the free hit. On this basis, defenders inside the circle, who are less than 5 metres from the ball, are not interfering in the play provided that they do not play or attempt to play the ball or influence play until it has travelled at least 5 metres or alternatively it has been touched by another player of either team who can legitimately play the ball.

Neither is it the intention of the Rule change that the defence should be disadvantaged to such an extent, if all defenders inside the circle have to retreat to 5 metres from the ball, that the attack is just presented with a free shot at goal.

On the basis of reports from Tournaments, from Officials and various attacking free hit videos, there appears to be few problems with the application and interpretation of the Rule as indicated above. This allows for the vast majority of free hits within 5 metres of the edge of the circle to be taken quickly, with no interruption to game flow and the ball moved right/left/back with a self-pass and/or passed to a team-mate. As with other free hits around the pitch, there will be occasions on which the umpire has to decide whether a player within 5 metres of the free hit has gained an unfair advantage.

The alternative at each attacking free hit within 5 metres of the edge of the circle is to 'set up' each one such that every player is at least 5 metres from the ball. This would most likely adversely affect the flow of the game, negating the ability to take a quick self-pass and the reason for the recent Rules change.