

Introductory Comment

Tackle-and-carry games are good for the soul. They build courage and character. Unfortunately, the tackle-and-carry game we play, as Americans, is football. Football involves padding up, hurtling yourself, using your body and head as weapons, concussion and brain injuries, skeletal deformation, and shorter life expectancy. It is bad for the body, if not for the soul.

Additionally, there is no tackle-and-carry sandlot game. One hundred years ago, children across America would play tackle football in vacant fields and schoolyards. Today, the only tackle-and-carry game that is available is organized youth football, which is a piece of stupidity in its own right.

“California Rugby” is a game we used to play when I was a kid, although we did not call it that. We actually called it “rugby,” although rugby is obviously its own game, not unlike soccer, where the ball leads the attack. California Rugby sort of a cross between “Kill the Man with the Ball” and American football.

Remember the Fifteenth Rule!

Fifteen Rules of California Rugby

1. This game is about tackling and blocking. The ball is a standard issue American football. We carry and pass the ball in California Rugby, not kick it.
2. A “goal” counts as one (1) point, as does a “safety.” The team with the most points wins. The game can either be played within a time-frame or up to a certain number of points.
3. Goals are scored by advancing the ball up the field through running, handing-off, pitching, and passing.
4. The field is divided into quarters. Midfield is the halfway point, the first quarter line is the near quadrant and the third quarter line is the far quadrant. The game begins at the midfield line, in the “reset” position.
5. A “reset” means both sides must assume a static position before play resumes with a snap from the center to a back. Defense may array itself in whatever manner it chooses, but offense must put two men on the line for every man in the backfield.
6. When a goal is scored, *the scoring team* resets the action at the first quarter line going the other way. In other words, the “winner” continues with the ball towards the other goal. If the scoring team performs a hat-trick and scores three consecutive goals without resets, then the “loser” gets the ball at midfield. But you also might want to think about realigning the teams.
7. When a player is tackled, he has three seconds to resume action before he is “pinned.” This is done by either getting back up with the ball or by getting the ball to a teammate. If he fails to do so, action is reset going the other way.

8. Play does not begin on a reset until the *defense* acknowledges it is ready (the defense is responsible to be timely and may not delay the game). Offense must remain stationary for at least one second after the defense acknowledges it is ready. Action does not begin until the ball is snapped.
9. If the ball is fumbled or comes loose, it stays live. If it is recovered by a defender, he may continue the action in the other direction, or he may fall on the ball to force a reset. If he chooses to continue the action and gets tackled and pinned, then the other team gets the ball with the reset.
10. If action is forced out of bounds, play is reset going the other way.
11. One forward pass across the line of scrimmage is permitted per play. Once the ball breaks the line, any subsequent passes and pitches must be lateral. An illegal forward pass results in a reset going the other way.
12. Except when carrying the ball, the attacking team is not allowed to use its hands. Blocking must be done without holding.
13. It should go without saying that clawing, gouging, kicking, hitting, biting, elbowing, late hits, canning the center, and other unsportsmanlike behavior is illegal.
14. Penalties are enforced by changing possession and/or moving the reset up the fields.
15. Play hard, play fair, and always remember that you win some and you lose some.