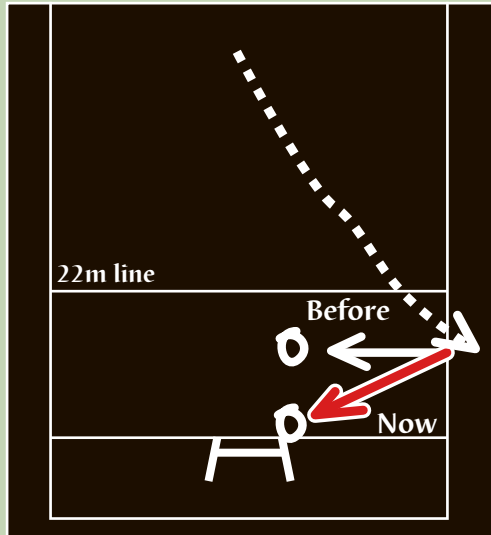


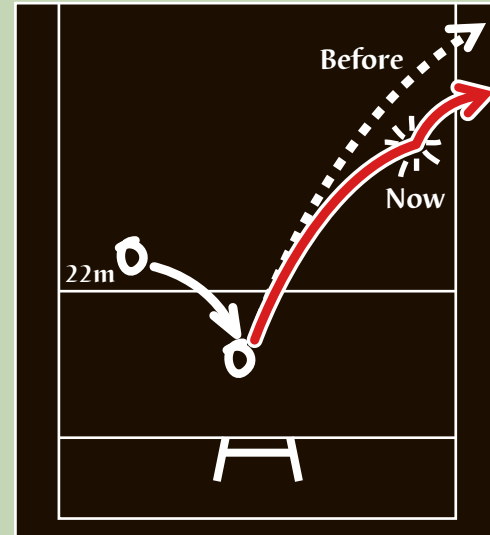
A whole new ball game

The IRB council is debating today whether to make more than 30 changes to rugby's laws, covering eight aspects of the game, some of which have been trialled for the past two months in Super 14

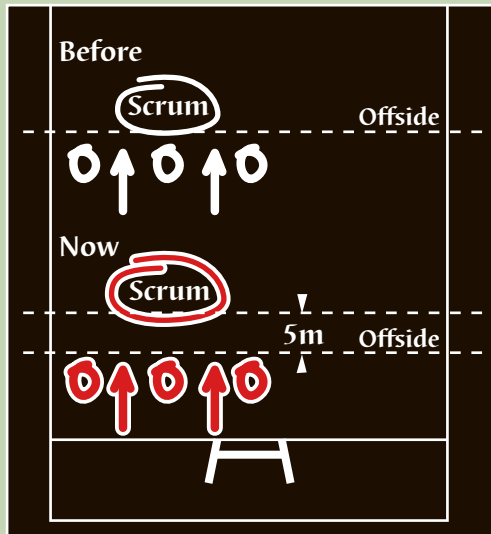
matches in the southern hemisphere. Some are sensible, some seem wrong. Here are four of the more interesting



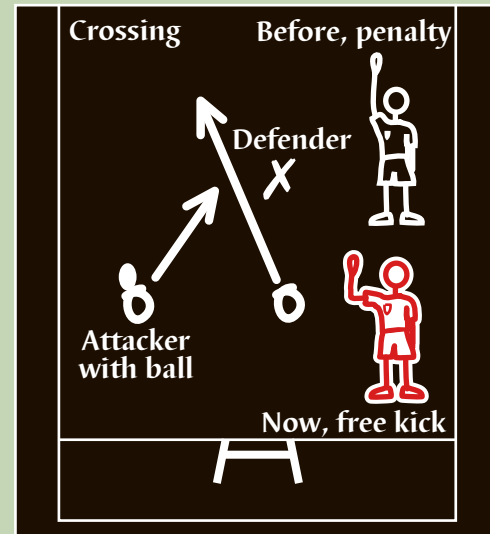
1 Quick Lineouts
Teams can take a quick lineout and throw the ball in as far backwards as they want, as well as laterally, but not forwards. This allows teams to launch a counter-attack with a bit more steam behind them



2 Passing to a player inside his own 22
If a defender passes or carries the ball into his 22 and it is then kicked straight to touch, the lineout must take place level with where the ball was kicked unless it bounces within the field of play first. This has encouraged the counter-attack but also creates the possibility of more offside play



3 Offside at the scrum
The offside line behind the scrum (for players other than the scrum half) should be five metres behind the hindmost foot of the scrum. This creates more space for the decision-makers and the Super 14 has shown good use of the blind-side wing



4 Free kicks not penalties
For all offences other than offside and foul play, the sanction should be a free kick instead of a penalty, which could result in three points. Has led to an unstructured and ultimately confusing game and professional teams are likely to take cynical advantage while junior teams cry out for rest at a set-piece. Will be furiously opposed