CHANGES IN THE PLAYING OF INTERNATIONAL RUGBY OVER A 20 YEAR PERIOD

A STATISTICAL COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS OF A GROUP OF INTERNATIONAL MATCHES PLAYED IN THE EARLY 1980S WITH A SIMILAR GROUP OF MATCHES PLAYED 20 YEARS LATER.

IRB Game Analysis
SEPT 2005

Note:

1 The attached report comprises a detailed analysis of 16 matches played in the early 1980s with corresponding matches played 20 years later. The matches examined are given in a footnote to this page.

2 The results are included in three sections.

Section 1 is a narrative of the research and conclusions

Section2 is a bullet point summary of the major conclusions

Section 3 comprises the more comprehensive data from which the data in sections 1 and 2 was obtained. This section expands on the earlier summaries and gives examples of what is often interesting data extracted from individual matches. It shows, for example, that the Irish forwards made just 3 passes in the entire game against Australia in 1984: that apart from the outside half, in the entire game against England in 1984, the 5 Scottish backs made just one pass between them as well as only receiving one pass.

Note:

Matches;

E v I	**1982**	E v I 2004	**S v E**	**1982**	S v E 2002
S v W	**1983**	S v W 2003	**I v E**	**1983**	I v E 2003
W v I	**1983**	W v I 2003	**F v W**	**1983**	F v W 2003
W v E	**1983**	W v E 2003	**W v S**	**1982**	W v S 2004
E v NZ	**1983**	E v NZ 2002	**A v NZ**	**1984(1)**	A v NZ 2003
A v NZ	**1984(2)**	A v NZ 2003	**A v NZ**	**1984**(3)	A v NZ 2003 rwc
S v A	**1984**	A v S 2004	**I v A**	**1984**	I v A 2002
E v W	**1984**	E v W 2004	**S v E**	**1984**	S v E 2004

SECTION 1 RESEARCH AND CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

The fact that the game of rugby has changed over the last several decades is both apparent and accepted.

The players are bigger, faster and stronger. They are, after all, at senior level, professional athletes. This means that, inevitably, there is a lot more going on. It is also clear, even to the most passing observer, that the rhythm of the game has undergone a significant change. A consequence of this is that the role of each player is perceived to have altered as has the relationship of the traditional rugby set pieces of scrum and lineout with the rest of the game.

The extent of these changes however has never been quantified. What is even more important is that their impact on the playing of the game has not been evaluated. What this paper has attempted to do is address such deficiencies and produce a body of data that goes some way to determining what has happened to the playing of rugby at senior international level over the last 2 decades.

This has been done through the detailed examination of 2 groups of matches. The report compares 16 international matches played in 1982, 1983 and 1984 with the corresponding 16 matches played 20 years later. As an illustration, England v Wales 1984 was compared with England v Wales 2004.

The selection of the matches was largely dependent on the video evidence available from the 80s and fortunately, a broad representative sample was obtained. The 16 matches included 5 Nations matches, what would now be Tri Nations matches and matches between countries playing in those two tournaments. A list of the matches involved is attached to this report.

THE FINDINGS

The first noticeable fact was that matches are now longer - the average match takes 5 minutes more than it did 20 years ago.

This is hardly surprising. There are now new elements in the game. Since the early 80s, blood bin replacements and tactical substitutions have been introduced, yellow cards can be used, references are made to the Television Match Official and stoppages for equipment malfunction are not unknown.

Half time now takes longer. The 3 minute half time of the 1980s is now an 11 minute break. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that matches take longer, stoppages in the modern game are far fewer.

The average of 131 that was seen in the early 80s is 40% more than today's average of 93 per game, the major reason being the dramatic decline in the number of scrums and lineouts.

As a consequence, ball in play, is also over 40% higher. A game that had 24 minutes ball in play in the 80s is now more likely to see 35 minutes. At the extremes, matches may now see twice the action of games in the 80s.

Such increases in ball in play means more activity – and more activity means more rucks and passes. This increase in activity has been huge

in the 2000s, there were almost 150 rucks/mauls per game
- 3 times more than the 80s while passes per game
doubled to around 280

The inevitable consequence of this is that individual passages of play are much longer.

In the 80s, half the time the ball came into play, it became dead less than 10 seconds later. This 1 in 2 became 1 in 5 in the 2000s. Again, only 9% of movements lasted more than 25 seconds compared with 41% in the 2000s.

One of the assumed conclusions from all this extra activity is that every player is involved more in game activity with both forwards and backs frequently being interchangeable. The traditional distinction between backs involvement and the forwards involvement in the game has become more blurred. This however is not an altogether accurate reflection of what is really happening..

What appears to be a perception that forwards now play like backs and the backs like forwards is not supported by the evidence.

The data showed that forwards now pass proportionately <u>less</u> than they did 20 years ago. They may make more passes (17 compared to 10 in the 80s) but in relation to the rest of the team they are making fewer.

Little has changed therefore. There may be a lot more going on but

forwards still make few passes
backs make a lot more

and the scrum half makes almost as many passes as the other 14 players combined.

And yet, things have changed – if only partially. There does remain an element of truth behind the perception that forwards are playing more like backs and the backs like forwards. What appears to be happening is that while forwards may not be passing the ball, they are at least receiving many more passes. The data shows that while the total passes in a game has doubled over the period, passes to forwards has tripled.

What has not changed however, is what happens after. The role of the forward who receives a pass is still primarily to take contact. It is not to be a link in a continuous passing movement.

- The forwards' role therefore is still in the contact area. It's just that the contact area has changed from set piece to breakdown

These are not, however, the only changes in the set pieces. While the number has decreased so the retention by the team in possession has gone in the opposite direction. The team in possession is now more likely to maintain possession than ever before.

And while possession has always been retained more often than not by the team in possession (scrums 88% in the 80s, lineouts 58% and breakdowns 83%), the greater percentage of retention at both scrum and lineout in the 2000s, and far fewer turnovers now than in the 1980 means that the contest for possession is largely predictable if not almost wholly guaranteed.

Expressed in a different way, the team in possession now retains the ball

- 13 out of 14 times at the breakdown
- 9 times out of 10 at the scrum
- 8 times out of 10 at the lineout.

The contest for possession is, therefore, frequently not much of a contest.

Teams are also more adept at hanging on to possession. They now make half as many handling errors than they did 20 years ago and make fewer kicking errors. Further, turnovers at the breakdown are 4 times less likely than they use to be.

The possibility of transferring possession is also now less because of a reduction in the number of open play kicks.

In the 80s, there were 76 per game –now there are 60. Further, there were more penalty kicks awarded (26 compared to 22) and there were almost 60% more penalty kicks at goal.

All this had a major effect on scoring.

- Penalty goals were the major scoring weapon - they accounted for over 50% of all points (34% in the 2000s) and outnumbered tries by two and a half to one (in the 2000s - 1 to 1)

- Tries were relatively few - they were scored half as often as in the modern game. In only 2 of the 16 matches were there more than 3 tries. In the 2000s it was 12 out of 16.

- Matches were far closer - the average points difference was just 8 compared to 15. Almost twice as many matches had a points difference of less than 10 points.

There was however a paradox – despite many fewer tries being scored in the 1980s and many more penalty goals being kicked, penalty goals had even less impact on the final result then than they do now.

- In the modern game there were 2 matches where the team scoring the fewest number of tries won because of penalty goals - In the archive games there were none

- In the archive games, the team scoring the most tries won 11 of the 6 matches – in the modern game they won 10.

This confirmed earlier research which showed that, despite the try value being increased from 3 to 4 to 5 points, the impact of penalty goals on the final result has hardly changed over the last 50 years.

So while games are longer, and there is a lot more activity than in the past, with foul play penalties showing a huge decrease, and while the contest for possession is not what it was, certain core essentials have not changed, the most significant of which is that in the vast majority of cases, tries still win matches.

SECTION 2 SUMMARY

- matches now take 5 minutes longer
- half time has gone from 3 mins to 11 mins
- there are new reasons for stopping a game – incl subs, yellow cards and TMO
- there are around 40 fewer stoppages in the modern game
- ball in play, is now over 40% higher
- there are 3 times more rucks/mauls per game
- there are twice as many passes
- individual passages of play are much longer.
- forwards and backs are still not interchangeable
  forwards still make few passes
  backs make a lot more
  the scrum half makes almost as many passes as the other 14 players combined.
- forwards have moved from set piece confrontation to open play confrontation.
- the number of scrums has reduced hugely over the 20 years – from 31 to 19
- the number of lineouts has gone down from 52 to 37
- handling errors and kicking errors have halved over the 20 years; turnovers are 4 times less likely
- the team in possession likely to retain possession more than ever before. The team in possession now retains the ball
  13 out of 14 times at the breakdown
  9 times out of 10 at the scrum
  8 times out of 10 at the lineout.
- the contest for possession is now less of a contest.
- there has been a reduction in the number of open play kicks.
- there are now fewer penalty kicks awarded
- in the 80s, there were almost 60% more penalty kicks at goal.
- In the 80s, penalty goals were the major scoring weapon
- tries were relatively few
- matches were far closer
- but in both eras, the vast majority of games were won by the team scoring the greatest number of tries

SECTION 3 DETAILED DATA, ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

MATCH AND BALL IN PLAY TIME

- In the 80s, the average match time was 85 min 30s
  In the 2000s, the average match time was 90 min 07s

In the 80s, one game had no stoppage time at all while in the 2000s no single game had less than six and a half minutes. This is however largely explained by externally imposed changes. In other words, it's not because there are necessarily more injuries.

In the modern game, there are blood bin replacements, tactical substitutions, yellow cards, references to the Television Match Official and possibilities of equipment malfunction. None of these were seen in the 1980s – they are all recent introductions to the game.

What was even more noticeable however was what happened at half time. In the 80s players stayed on the pitch, there was little water to be seen and they had precious little respite

- the average half time lasted 3 min 14 secs
  in the 2000s it was between 3 and 4 times longer at 11 m 22 secs

Further, there were matches in the 80s with only a 2 min 41 secs break – several games in 2003/4 had an interval of over twelve and a half minutes.

Maybe, however, a longer break is required in modern rugby –certainly there is noticeably more ball in play time and as a result a lot more on-field activity

ACTIVITY- STOPPAGES, BALL IN PLAY, PASSES AND RUCKS

In today's rugby, there are around 90 stoppages per game. In the modern matches reviewed, the average was 93.

This was certainly not the case in the 80s. The average number of stoppages then was 131 – or 41% more than in the 2000s

The differences are even more pronounced when looking at a game by game comparison

- There were 139 stoppages in the England v Wales match in 1984

There were only 79 in the same match 20 years later

- There were 144 in the Scotland v England game in 1982
  There were just 90 in the same fixture in 2002.

- Average ball in play went from 31% (or 24min 20s) to 44% (34min 58s) – an increase of 43% over the period.

The extent of this difference is further illustrated by looking at the ball in play time in certain individual matches

- In 1983, the Ireland v England game had 23min 30s b-l-p
  In 2003, the corresponding game had 40 min 05s – an increase of 70%

- In 1983, the France v Wales game had 21min 39s b-l-p
  In 2003, the corresponding game had 36 min 49s – an increase of 70%

- While the Australia v New Zealand World Cup match in 2003 had 80% more ball in play than the third Australia v New Zealand test in 1984

None of this is surprising given the number of stoppages then compared to now. When the game stops, the ball is dead and nothing much goes on. When the ball comes into play, however and an activity cycle begins, things change. The ball stays in play much longer and a lot more happens.

Even though this is self-evident, the change between the two periods is startling. In the 1980s, even when the ball came into play, it did not stay there long.

- Half the time the ball came into play, it became dead again less than 10 seconds later. This 1 in 2 became 1 in 5 by the 2000s

- Only 9% of movements lasted more than 25 seconds. In the 2000s, it was 41%

- In the 1980s matches, there were 35 passages of play that lasted more than 40 seconds: in the 2000s there were 227, or 6 times as many.

- In the 1980s matches, there was not a single period of play that lasted more than 59 seconds: In the 2000s, and in the same number of matches, there were 78 including 8 than lasted over 2 minutes.

Since it is self evident that the more the ball in play, the more things happen, there has had to be a major increase in the game actions of rucking, passing and kicking.

The following data illustrates just how much they increased over the 20 year period

- In the 80s there were on average 46 ruck/mauls per game
  In the 2000s this went up to 148 – or 3 times more

- Passes also increased going from 149 per game in the 80s to 280 per game – or almost double – 20 years later.

Kicks however showed a different profile

- Over the 20 year period, they went down from 76 per game to 60 per game

In the 80s therefore, there were 2 passes for each kick – a ratio that doubled to 4 passes for each kick by the 2000s.

The differences in the levels of activity in the 2 periods are often best illustrated when looking at extremes ie the most and least in a game .

This is what is shown in the following tables:

	Most rucks per game	Least rucks per game
1980s	76	31
2000s	207	113
	Most passes per game	Least passes per game
1980s	213	31
2000s	344	113
	Most kicks per game	Least kicks per game
1980s	108	61
2000s	82	32

The next table average number of rucks, passes, and kicks by each team in the 2 periods under review – and the most and least in any game.

		Av per team	Most by a team	Least by a team

		per game	in a game	in a game
1980s	RUCKS	23	43	10
2000s		74	143	41
1980S	PASSES	75	124	33
2000S		140	197	84
1980S	KICKS	38	55	28
2000S		30	48	14

One statistic has changed very little however despite this increase in activity

- while the number of passes has doubled, it remains a fact that around 80% of all passing movements contain 2 or fewer passes.

Nevertheless, the workload on the players has increased enormously. With ball in play time being up by 40%, all players take a more active role. Again, this is best illustrated by looking at Individual matches

- in 1983, Scotland created a total of 10 rucks/mauls in their game against Wales: in the 2003 game, Scotland had exceeded this number by the 11th minute of the game

- in 1983, England created 35 rucks/mauls in their game against Wales. This was exceptionally high for that era. (the average was 23). Despite this, 20 years later, in the corresponding game, England made an additional 110 or four times as many.

PASSES

It has already been noted that because of the increase in ball in play, the average number of passes has all but doubled with individual teams averaging 140 passes per game now compared to 75 in the past.

What then became of interest was to see if there had been any change in the sorts of players who were making the passes. Were forwards, for example, passing at the same rate as in the past? This meant looking at the number and proportion of passes made by the forwards, the scrum half and the remaining 6 backs.

Passes made in both periods were then allocated into the 3 categories. The results showed the following

- 1980s average no of passes per team per game

Forwards	11
Scrum half	32
Backs	33
	75 total passes per team

- 1980s proportion of passes by each group

Forwards	14% of all passes
Scrum half	43%
Backs	43%
	100%

What then became of interest was to see if anything had changed over the 20 year period. Were the forwards, for example, now making more passes than they were in the 1980s?Had the proportion they made changed? Was the number 9 still the cornerstone of all passing movements?

The results are seen in the following paragraphs

- 2000s average no of passes per team per game

Forwards	17
Scrum half	64
Backs	59
	140 total passes per team

- 2000s proportion of passes by each group

Forwards	12% of all passes
Scrum half	46%
Backs	42%
	100%

The results proved a major surprise- to some if not all. Any perception that the forwards now play like backs and the backs like forwards was shown to be quite untrue.

- The data showed that forwards now passed proportionately less than they did 20 years ago. They may make more passes (17 compared to 10 in the 80s) but in relation to the rest of the team they are making less.

- Only 12% of passes were made by the forwards in 2003/4 compared with 14% 20 years earlier.

Little has changed therefore

- Forwards still make few passes
- The backs make a lot more
- And the scrum half makes as many passes as the other 14 players combined.

So while more passes are being made, the overall passing profile has not changed. It's the same as ever it was.

These facts however do not sit well with the perception that forwards are now much more involved in the game outside the set pieces of scrum and lineout. After all, it is far from uncommon to see forwards taking up positions on the wing and in the centre.

Further work was therefore undertaken to see if there was anything else happening that could suggest some sort of factual basis to this perception. Maybe, for example, forwards were handling the ball more but simply not passing it.

The next exercise therefore looked at the number of passes received by forwards. Had there been a change over 20 years? Are they receiving more passes than they used to?.

The results of the analysis showed the following

- In the 1980s, on average, forwards received 19 passes per game
  In the 2000s, this figure had gone up to 61

This meant that, while the total passes in a game had doubled over the period, passes to forwards had tripled.

Forwards in the 2000s therefore are in fact handling more. What they are not doing however is passing it once they have received it.

- In the 2000s, for every 2 passes received by a forward, only one was made.

- In the 1980s, the ratio was 1 to 1 ie for every pass a forward made he also received one.

As noted above, therefore, forwards do, in fact, handle the ball more. What they are doing however is using it to create a breakdown and not to maintain passing continuity.

This particular section cannot be completed without giving a number of examples from matches played in the 80s that would cause an element of surprise if not astonishment to the 21st century observer

1980s

- The Australian forwards made 2 passes in total in their first test against New Zealand
- The Irish forwards made 3 passes in their game against Australia
- In the Scotland v England game in 1984, the 6 Scottish backs and 8 Scottish forwards made a total of 14 passes between them
- In the same game
    - the Scottish backs made a total of 3 passes, 2 of which were by the outside half
    - only one pass was received in total by the Scottish centres, wings and fullback during the entire game. Four of the 5 players did not receive a single pass. The lucky one received one.

By the 18th minute of the England v New Zealand game in 1983, the score was 3-3. The entire England team had made a total of 1 pass between them. In the corresponding game 20 years later they had made 25.

ERRORS

There are many elements that go together in assessing the skill level of players. Some are qualitative and others are quantative – and while this report makes no attempt at the former, quantative actions can be measured.

These cover such actions as dropped passes, forward passes, knocks on, errant passes, fumbled kicks, crooked lineout throws etc. All such errors have been noted for each of the two periods, with the results showing that skill levels – if defined by the number of errors – have increased considerably over the 20 years

- in the 1980s, there was 1 knock on or dropped pass for every 7 passes
  In the 2000s, it was 1 in 14 passes, or a hundred per cent improvement

- in the 1980s, there were twice as many knocks on from kicks and twice as many kicks were kicked dead

- at the lineout, there were twice as many knocks on and three times as many crooked throws.

- and while restart errors averaged one a game in the 80s, these reduced to 1 in every 5 games in 2000.

TURNOVERS

Closely related to errors are 'Turnovers'. These arise when a team loses possession of a ball when in contact with the opposition and as a result of the opponents' action. It would include a ball grasped from an opponent at a tackle and the obtaining of possession of the ball when their opponents took the ball into the ruck. It does not therefore include knocks on and spilled passes. These are classified as 'errors'.

Turnovers happen therefore at the breakdown area – ie tackles, rucks and mauls.

- the average number of turnovers per game in the 80s was 8. This was reduced to 6 by the 2000s.

While this is a relatively small difference in numerical terms, there has been an enormous reduction in the rate of turnovers. This is because turnovers occur only at the breakdown and there are now many more breakdowns.

When these are incorporated into the analysis, the results are little short of dramatic

- in the 80s, there was 1 turnover for every 6 breakdowns
  in the 2000s, the equivalent figure was 1 for every 23

Unlike previous decades therefore, retained possession is all but guaranteed at the breakdown. Previous paragraphs also show that it is also frequently guaranteed at the other two areas of contact – the scrum and the lineout. The contest for possession is no longer the more equal contest that it was in the past. Whether or not this is desirable is

another matter, but any discussion around this area would need to consider the following data

- in the 2000s matches, the team in possession lost the ball at the breakdown - including the giving away of penalties - on just 7% of occasions
- it lost possession at the scrum – including the giving away of penalties – on 10% of occasions
- it lost possession at the lineout – including the giving away of penalties – on 20% of occasions

Expressed in a different way, the team in possession retained the ball

- 13 out of 14 times at the breakdown
- 9 times out of 10 at the scrum
- 8 times out of 10 at the lineout.

And while possession has always been retained more often than not by the team in possession (scrums 88% in the 80s, lineouts 58% and breakdowns 83%), the greater percentage of retention at both scrum and lineout in the 2000s, coupled with the exponential increases in the number of breakdowns, means that the contest for possession is largely predictable if not almost wholly guaranteed.

This takes us on to the set pieces of scrum and lineout.

SET PIECES

Lineouts and scrums were noticeably more dominant in the 80s

- in the 80s, there were 83 such set pieces per game
  in 2003/4, the total had reduced to 56

This largely explains why there were 40% more stoppages in the 1980s than there were in the 2000s.

SCRUMS

The number of scrums reduced hugely over the 20 years.

- in the 1980s scrums averaged 31 per game
  in 2003/4 the average reduced to 19

Possession rates were, nevertheless, all but identical – 88% to 89%

There was however one major change

- in the 1980s the team putting in the ball was just as likely to be penalised as their opponents.
  By the year 200 however this had completely changed when the team putting in the ball was 6 times less likely to be penalised than the opposition.

LINEOUTS

The most noticeable differences regarding lineouts was the decline in the total per match and the fact that there was more competition and less guarantee of success in retaining the ball 20 years ago

- in the 1980s there were, on average, 52 per game

  in the 2000s, the average was 37

- more were competed in the 80s – 78% to 64%

- while retention rate was less at 58% compared with 79% in 2000

It concerned scoring and points.

In the 1980s

A Penalty goals were the major scoring weapon

- they accounted for over 50% of all points (c/f 34% in 2002-4)
- they outnumbered tries by two and a half to one (c/f 1 to 1)
- in 15 of the 16 games there were more penalty goals than tries (c/f 7of 16)

B Tries were relatively few

- they were scored half as often as in the modern game
- in only 2 of the 16 matches were there more than 3 tries – the modern game had 6 times as many such matches

C Matches were far closer

- the average points difference was just 8 compared to 15
- 75% of matches had a difference of less than 10 points (c/f44%)

There was however a paradox – despite many fewer tries being scored in the 1980s and many more penalty goals being kicked, penalty goals had even less impact on the final result then than they do now.

- In the modern game there were 2 matches where the team scoring the fewest number of tries won because of penalty goals - In the archive games there were none
- In the archive games, the team scoring the most tries won 11 of the 6 matches – in the modern game they won 10.

This confirmed earlier research which showed that, despite the try value being increased from 3 to 4 to 5 points, the impact of penalty goals on the final result has hardly changed over the last 50 years. The vast majority of matches are still won by the team scoring most tries. Penalty goals have a relatively small impact on the final result. It was always thus.

SOURCE OF TRIES

With the balance of the game moving away from the set piece to more frequent recycling, so tries are coming from different sources.

There are 10 or so possible sources of possession which produce tries – and while the modern game is now showing a consistent pattern (with own lineouts being the most fruitful source of possession, accounting for some 30% of all tries) this was not the case in the early 80s.

- 70% of all tries in the 80s came from set pieces compared with 44% in 2003/4
- own scrums accounted for 33% of tries compared with 10% 20 years later
- almost as many tries came from the opponents lineout as the scoring teams in the early 80s. A ratio of 4:5 then, became 1:5 in 2003/4

- 17% of tries in the earlier period came from opponents handling errors, opponents kicks and turnovers. This compares with 47% in the recent games

Such differences are not altogether surprising since they are a clear reflection of the changing pattern of the game over the 20 year period. Then, there were many more set pieces and much less open play activity. The sources of possession leading to tries reflect this.

ACTIONS LEADING TO TRIES

Actions leading up to tries have also changed because of the change in the nature of the play.

Once possession is obtained, various actions take place before a try is eventually scored. Passes may be made, rucks created and kicks completed. – and the number may vary considerably. In one game in 2003 for example, there was one try that contained 19 passes – in other tries there were none.

In looking at the overall pattern, there were noticeable differences between the 80s and 2000

- in the 80s, 63% of tries did not contain a single ruck or maul. The comparative figure 20 years later was 29%

- in the 80s, 1 in 19 tries contained 2 or more rucks. In 2003/4 the figure was 1 in 2.

- The average number of passes per try in 1980 was 2.9 – 20 years later it had almost doubled to 5.2

- Not one try out of 38 contained more than 8 passes in 1980. In 2003/4, there were 15 out of a total of 68.

Again, these figures reflect the constant movement in the current game compared with that played 20 years ago.

The remaining major reason for stopping the game comes from penalties.

PENALTIES

There were more penalties awarded in the 80s.

- the average number per game was 26 in the 1980s
  the average number per game was 22 in the 2000s

The extremes were also greater

- the highest in any game in the 80s was 39
  the highest in any game in the 2000s was 31

- the lowest in any game in the 80s was 15
  the lowest in any game in the 2000s was 13

The most noticeable – and most interesting are of difference however, was not so much the number of penalties awarded but the reasons for awarding them. This is shown in the following table

offence	1980s	2000s
RUCK/TACKLE on ground	27%	50%
OFFSIDE	25	18
SCRUM	14	14
LINEOUT	19	6
FOUL PLAY	5	>1
OBSTRUCTION	4	4
ILLEGAL TACKLE	4	4
+10	1	1
MISCELLANEOUS	1	3
	100%	100%

While there is little difference in some areas eg scrum, obstruction, illegal tackle, there are noticeable differences in certain significant areas.

- ruck/tackle penalties accounted for half of all penalties awarded in 2003/4, they amounted to just over a quarter of those awarded 20 years earlier

- the change in the lineout laws over the period and the playing approach to this particular set piece is reflected in the penalty count where the modern game has just a third of those awarded 20 years ago.

Another noticeable difference has been in the area of foul play.

- twice as many penalties were tapped in 2003/4 compared with the 80s

What is perhaps surprising is the fact that there were no more kicks to touch in the 2000s than there were in the 1980s when the subsequent throw-in went to the non offending team. With the advantage of having the subsequent throw in and a higher likelihood of retaining possession, it is perhaps surprising that the figures are similar.

RESTARTS

There was little change in restarts

- 1 in 2 kicks was contestable in both eras
- 1 in 3 were won by the kicking team in both the 80's and 2003/4