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RUGBY FOOTBALL.

HINTS ON FORWARD PLAY.

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" Playing out of touch, as at present in vogue in the Rugby Union game, appears not to find favour with a number of the spectators of the game, and the Northern Union have adopted another style of play. I have no wish here to discuss the merits of one style over the other, but the change does not appear to me to have benefitted the game very materially. I will grant that it makes the game faster and also rather more open, but that is all; and I do not think it would suit the requirements of the once-a-week players of the South.

There are many different styles of play out of touch, and on a great number of occasions when the ball is thrown out of touch the result is merely a scrummage. It is not an easy matter for a forward to gain much ground out of touch, or at any rate it should not be, if the opposing forwards mark their men properly. A forward has no business to be allowed to catch the ball when thrown out of touch and run away with it. If this does happen, it is simply a sign of carelessness on the part of his opponents.

A powerful forward often makes several yards for his side by struggling on until he is finally thrown down or the ball is held, but the best way of gaining ground out of touch is by breaking away with the ball at your feet. When the half throws the ball out to his forwards, the man who catches it must try and put it down at once in front of the man next to him, who must then break away into a dribble, followed by the others.

It is better to put the ball in front of another forward, as it is generally a good deal easier for him to break away than for the man who has caught the ball, as the latter is already probably half collared by his *vis-à-vis*, and is thus hampered. I have seen this done most successfully – the only danger being at the very commencement, when the forward who is breaking away is rather apt to kick the ball too hard, and thus feed the opposing three-quarters, who will then have time either to get in a kick or start a passing run.

Another good way of making ground easily out of touch, and one that is very disheartening to the other side, is for the forward who catches the ball to throw it back again to the half, who must run behind the line-out immediately he has thrown the ball out of touch, or else to one of his three-quarters, who can then kick it over the forwards into touch again a long way down. I have often seen the ball carried right down the field like this. To carry this out properly there must be a perfect understanding existing between the forwards and the halves; and the forwards have to be very careful that the ball is passed straight to the half and not thrown wildly away anywhere, while the half has to make sure of his kick clearing his forwards and also finding touch. It is useless kicking it anywhere up the field, it must go into touch; while if the half kicks it right into the backs of his forwards he very often lets his side down badly.

Both these methods I have mentioned should only be adopted as far as possible in mid-field, as when playing on the defensive or in one's twenty-five, it is foolish to risk anything, while again, when one is in the attack it is the behinds who must do the scoring by passing movements, and the ball must be kept out of touch as much as possible. I always consider it advisable when playing on the defensive to give the preference to a five yards' scrummage rather than risk a throw out of touch, especially if one has the better scrummage, and also when on the attack a five or fifteen yards' scrummage may be advisable. Every kick-off must be well backed up by the forwards, and when the kick-off is with your opponents the same three forwards should always drop back – one in the centre and one on each touch line.

It is, above all, most important that the touch lines should be marked, so as to prevent the ball from bouncing and rolling into touch. Forwards should, besides this, always be able to use their hands, and be capable of receiving and giving a good pass. " –

- From an article on "Rugby Football," appearing in the March number of the "Windsor Magazine,"; which likewise contains articles on "Training Sheep-Dogs," "The Poland of To-Day," "Animals in Churches," "A Remarkable Collection of Chessmen," and "A Cure for Drunkenness"; also the commencement of a powerful new serial, "In the Fog" by Richard Harding Davis, and a further exciting instalment of Cutcliffe Hyne's world-famous "Thompson's Progress."