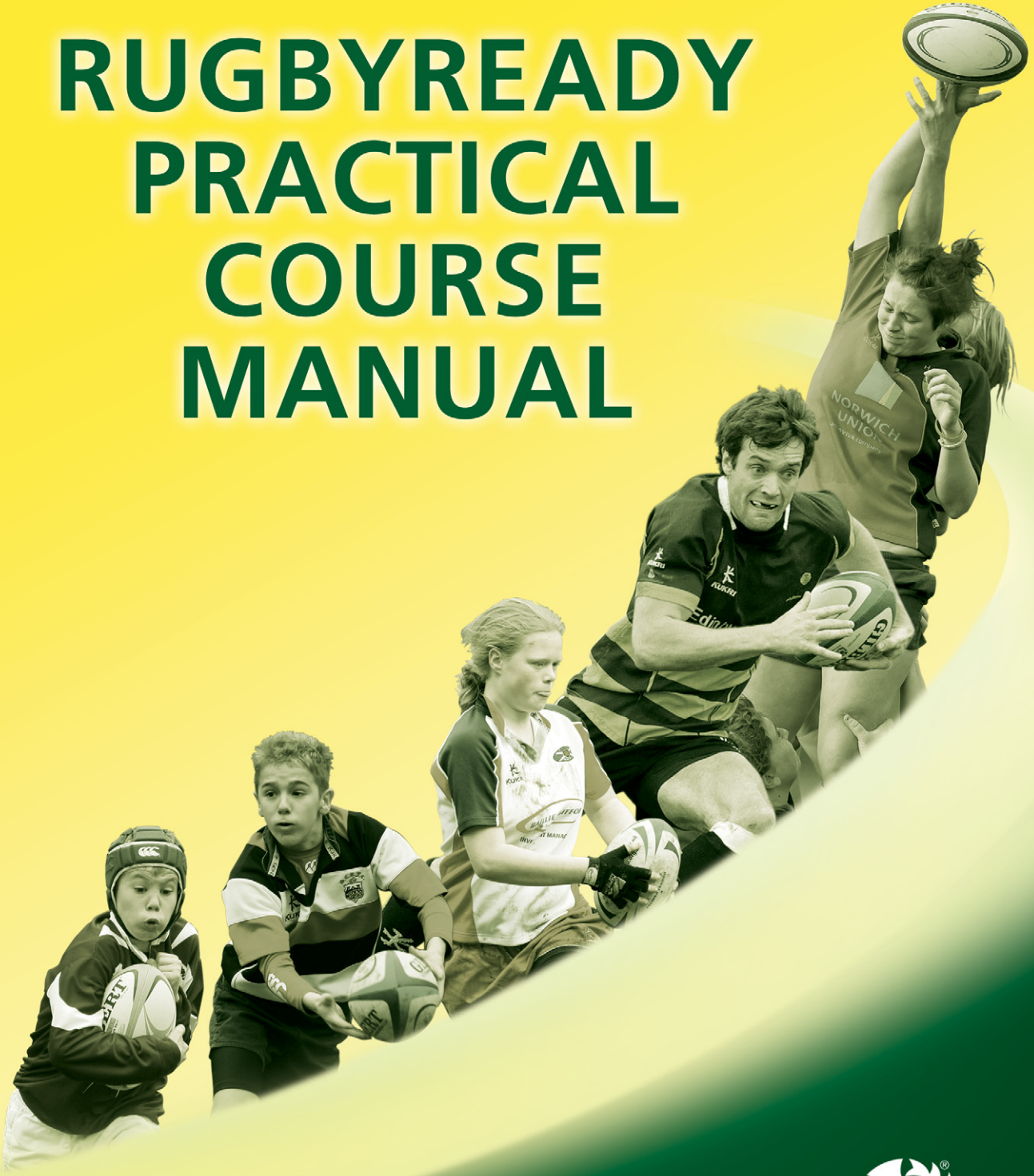
RUGBYREADY PRACTICAL COURSE MANUAL



JULY 2011

rugbyready

SCOTTISH RUGBY

sport scotland
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Introduction

This publication has been designed to give you a summary of Scottish Rugby's policies regarding player safety and complements the IRB Rugby Ready booklet (2011 edition) that you received on the RugbyReady Practical course. In this booklet, you'll find supporting information on all player safety aspects of the game covered in the course.

SCOTTISH RUGBY

Contents

Are You Ready to Play Rugby? P06

Scottish Rugby's player safety programme including specific information on the following:

Minimum standards for coaching, teaching and refereeing **P05**

Age grade law variations **P07**

Age bandings - including under-16 players in under-18 rugby, under-18 players in adult rugby and player dispensation **P07**

Injury reporting, minimum standards of pitchside care and Team Attendant course **P10**

Spirit of the game **P10**

Game coaching guidelines for mini rugby **P13**

Other supporting information **P26**

BACKGROUND

The **Are You Ready to Play Rugby?** campaign was launched by Scottish Rugby at the start of 2009 to ensure that a consistent approach to player safety is adopted across Scotland by all coaches, teachers, referees and volunteers.

Rugby is a safe sport played by ten's of thousands of people in Scotland each year however, like all contact sports there is a risk of injury. Although the instances of serious injury in rugby remain low there has been an increase in serious neck injuries in recent seasons. As a result, it is paramount that we all work together to reduce the risk of serious injury.

The **Are You Ready to Play Rugby?** campaign resulted in a number of changes to the game at the start of season 2009/10. Early indications on the initial impact of these changes in the game are positive, with no instances of serious neck injuries reported over the last two seasons. However, it is too early to say if this is a result of the changes that have been made and conclusions can only be drawn after monitoring injury trends over a number of seasons.

Over the last three years, Scottish Rugby has been working very closely with the Scottish Committee of Orthopaedic and Trauma Surgeons (SCOT) and the Scottish Government to implement safety changes. We would like to thank them for their continued support and guidance. Scottish Rugby would also like to thank the rugby clubs and schools for working with us to improve safety through implementing these policy changes.

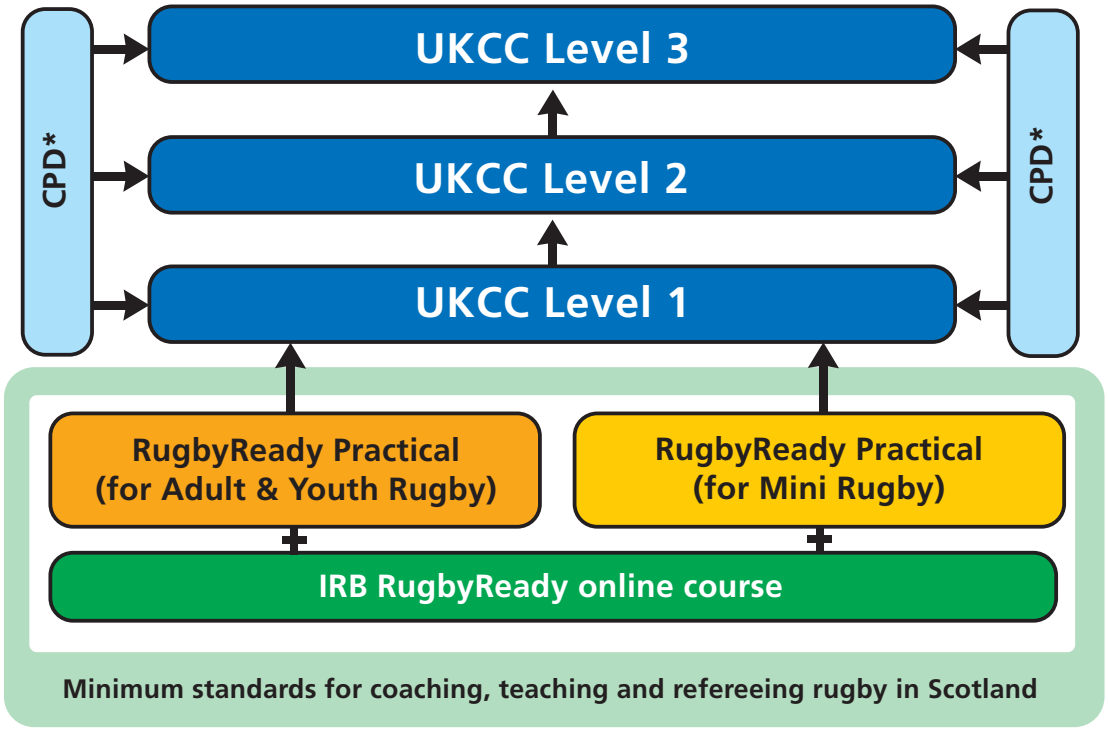
Full information, including the relevant policies and forms, is available in the **Are You Ready to Play Rugby?** section of **www.scottishrugby.org**

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR COACHING, TEACHING AND REFEREEING

As of August 2009, it became a minimum requirement for all coaches, teachers and referees to have completed the online IRB RugbyReady qualification. In 2010 Scottish Rugby increased this minimum requirement by introducing a new practical update course for all coaches, teachers and referees at the start of every season.

Scotland is not unique in this approach. The introduction of such a course in New Zealand, for example, has contributed to a marked decrease in the instances of serious spinal injuries.

Coaching Qualification Structure:



* **Continual Professional Development**.
Please contact your club coach co-ordinator, or visit www.**scottishrugby.org/coaching** for dates and venues.

For referee education opportunities please visit **www.scottishrugby.org/referees**

WHICH COURSE IS SUITABLE FOR ME?

The RugbyReady Practical course (for adult and youth rugby)

This course is for all coaches, teachers and referees involved in rugby from S1 (12 years old) up to and including adults and will cover the following topics:

- Law variations and age banding
- Injury management
- Physical competency
- Introducing warm-ups for contact
- Safe practice in the scrum
- Safe practice in the tackle

The RugbyReady Practical course (for mini rugby)

This course is designed for all coaches, teachers and referees involved in rugby in P7s or below (11 years old) and below and will cover the same syllabus as above with the addition of:

- Game coaching, including refereeing principles

Anyone wishing to progress to UKCC Level one can apply through the Scottish Rugby website however all coaches **must** have attended one of the above courses beforehand.

AGE GRADE LAW VARIATIONS

Scottish Rugby requires all clubs and schools to follow the appropriate age grade law variations without exception. This allows youngsters to learn the game and enjoy rugby in a structured, consistent and safe manner. The Law Variations have been developed to support Scottish Rugby's Long Term Player Development Strategy (LTPD) which can be downloaded from the **Are You Ready to Play Rugby?** pages of **www.scottishrugby.org.**

The age grade law variations were revised for season 2010/11 and will be reviewed every two years. They should not be viewed in isolation, but should always be used in conjunction with the full IRB laws of the game, available at **www.irblaws.com**.

All coaches should be aware of the full laws of the game as well as the law variations for the age group they are coaching.

Age grade law variations are available in a pocket-sized booklet and can also be downloaded from the **Are You Ready to Play Rugby?** pages of **www.scottishrugby.org**.

KNOW THE LAWS

To understand the full laws we recommend that every coach completes the online test available at: **www.irblaws.com**

AGE BANDING POLICY

Children and young people should be playing and training with other people of the same age and physical maturity.

Male Rugby
Scottish Rugby recommends that male youth rugby is played in a maximum of two year age bandings; for example, players in S1 can play with the S2 year group, but not with the S3s.
Where clubs or schools need to combine age groupings (eg S1 and S2) the lower age grade law variation (S1) should be applied.

Female Rugby

In the case of female rugby, where player numbers and levels of playing experience are relatively low, players between the ages of 12 - 17 play in two age bands, each covering three years - under-18 and under-15. The bands are selected to minimise disparities in physical maturity and development, while allowing meaningful player development to take place. When a girl turns 15 years old she can play in under-18 rugby.

As the number of girls playing rugby increases, Scottish Rugby aims to reduce the size of these age bands. The existing age bands for girls should be viewed as a maximum range, with clubs and schools adopting the smallest age range possible when arranging training and matches.

Medical Research

Medical research into boys' rugby strongly indicates that there is increased risk of serious injury when under-16 players play under-18 rugby and when under-18 players play adult rugby. **It is Scottish Rugby's policy that the age at which male players are allowed to play under-18 rugby is 16 years old**.

Girls may play under-18 rugby aged 15 years old and this difference is due to the relative physical maturity of 15-year-old girls when compared to boys. **It will remain Scottish Rugby policy that the age at which any player is permitted to play adult rugby is 18 years old**.

Player Dispensation

There are sometimes exceptional cases of players who combine increased technical ability and early physical maturity. For a few of those players it may be that they are capable of safely playing up an age band. Scottish Rugby offers exceptional players the opportunity to apply for dispensation to play up in the following age grades.

Under-16 male players in under-17 and under-18 rugby

This policy was introduced to cater for the few exceptional male players whose physical maturity and development, skill and experience levels are sufficient to compete safely at under-18 level. In season 2010/11, 370 boys completed the dispensation process, including a physical maturity assessment and were cleared to play under-18 rugby. Scottish Rugby urges clubs and schools to only submit applications for their exceptional male players and keep the majority of under-16 players in their own age banding.

Working in partnership with the SCOT group of orthopaedic and trauma surgeons, Scottish Rugby reviewed the large amount of data gathered from over 900 physical maturity assessments - and pilot projects conducted in some sample schools - and has updated the physical maturity assessment parameters accordingly. On an annual basis we will continue to monitor this process with the expertise provided by the medical profession.

Under-18 players in adult rugby
Players should be training and playing with other people of the same physical maturity. With 270 under-18 male players completing the dispensation process and being cleared to play adult rugby in season 2010/11, we are urging clubs to only submit applications for their **exceptional** male players.

Over the next few seasons Scottish Rugby will be working hard with clubs and schools to improve the quantity and quality of playing opportunities in under-18 rugby, to ensure regular and appropriate fixtures for all male players.

After concerns raised last season that a high percentage of under-18 male players were playing adult rugby, Scottish Rugby is encouraged that 40% less players have applied in season 2010/11 compared to season 2009/10 and are playing in their appropriate age band. We will continue to monitor this figure closely over the next few seasons, with a view to removing the under-18 dispensation. Any decision would be in line with several other unions worldwide and in accordance with guidance from the IRB. The rationale behind such a change is that only the very best male players, such as those with national age-grade representative honours, could be considered to play adult rugby, if remaining in under-18 rugby is deemed to be a hindrance to their playing development.

Female players aged 17 years old or over may currently apply for dispensation through the existing process in a similar way to their male counterparts.

Player dispensation based on medical grounds
Scottish Rugby has a policy which would give a player permission to play down an age grade when his or her safety may be compromised due to an existing or previous medical disability, physical or behavioural condition.

Details of how to apply for this type of dispensation, along with all of the above policies and forms are available at **www.scottishrugby.org**, in the age banding section of **Are You Ready to Play Rugby?**

INJURY REPORTING, MINIMUM STANDARDS OF PITCHSIDE CARE AND TEAM ATTENDANT COURSE

Injury reporting
It is important that an injury reporting form is filled out for any rugby injury that requires hospital treatment. This information will allow Scottish Rugby to record, monitor and evaluate injury trends and make any informed changes to help reduce the risk of injury. Analysis from last season's injury reports have directly informed the content of this season's RugbyReady Practical course. See the **Are You Ready to Play Rugby?** pages of **www.scottishrugby.org** for a copy of the injury reporting form and courses details.

Minimum standards of pitchside care
The basic minimum standard of pitchside care across all levels of rugby is that a responsible adult be present, with the means to contact the emergency services. We also advise that there is someone present with a recognised basic first aid qualification. Any tournament or event organisers should consider the provision of formal first aiders and/or medical staff from a recognised provider.

Team Attendant course
Following the success of the Team Attendant courses delivered in season 2010 more courses will be available, free of charge, in 2011/12. Details of these courses can be found on the **Are You Ready to Play Rugby?** pages of **www.scottishrugby.org**

Spirit of the Game

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXTRACT FROM THE IRB PLAYING CHARTER (2011) INCORPORATING THE IRB CORE VALUES:

Rugby is valued as a sport for men and women, boys and girls. It builds teamwork, understanding, co-operation and respect for fellow athletes. Its cornerstones are, as they always have been:

- the pleasure of participating;
- the courage and skill which the game demands;
- the love of a team sport that enriches the lives of all involved; and
- the lifelong friendships forged through a shared interest in the game.

It is because of, not despite, rugby's intensely physical and athletic characteristics that such great camaraderie exists before and after matches. The long-standing tradition of players from competing teams enjoying each others' company away from the pitch and in a social context remains at the very core of the game.

Rugby has fully embraced the professional era, but has retained the ethos and traditions of the recreational game. In an age in which many traditional sporting qualities are being diluted or even challenged, rugby is rightly proud of its ability to retain high standards of sportsmanship, ethical behaviour and fair play. It is hoped that this Charter will help reinforce those cherished values.

Rugby is a sport for all which is proud of its values and remains true to them. The game's core values are:

• **INTEGRITY** - Integrity is central to the fabric of the game and is generated through honesty and fair play.

• **PASSION** - Rugby people have a passionate enthusiasm for the game. Rugby generates excitement, emotional attachment and a sense of belonging to the global Rugby family.

• **SOLIDARITY** - Rugby provides a unifying spirit that leads to lifelong friendships, camaraderie, teamwork and loyalty which transcends cultural, geographic, political and religious differences.

• **DISCIPLINE** - Discipline is an integral part of the game, both on and off the field, and is reflected through adherence to the laws, the regulations and rugby's core values.

• **RESPECT** - Respect for team mates, opponents, match officials and those involved in the game is paramount.

View the IRB Core Values video at www.irbrugbyready.com/en/corevaluesvideo

Everyone who is involved in the game must be aware of and abide by Scottish Rugby's Code of Conduct which is available to download from the **Are You Ready to Play Rugby?** pages of: **www.scottishrugby.org**

GAME COACHING GUIDELINES - MINI RUGBY

Introduction

This resource provides guidance for coaches, teachers, match officials and parents who are involved in the provision of mini rugby to primary school aged children and should be used in conjunction with Scottish Rugby's Age Grade Law Variations, RugbyReady resources and our LTPD Coaching Tag and Mini Rugby resource.

Throughout this resource the referee is referred to as a 'game coach'. This is in recognition of the referee's role in developing young players during play and enabling matches to flow. The game coach should coach players as the game is played, encourage them to follow best practice, correct poor practice, provide feedback and allow the game to flow with fewer stoppages, therefore providing a more effective learning environment which is FUN and exciting for all those involved.

There should only be one game coach on the field at all times.
No other adults should be on the field of play.
This allows players to make decisions for themselves based on the situation around them.

MINI RUGBY

Mini rugby is one of the versions of the game that is played in the first two stages of Scottish Rugby's Long Term Player Development Strategy (the other being Tag rugby). It is not merely a smaller version of the adult game - and its objectives differ from the full 15-a-side game. The objective is to create a game that will provide an effective learning environment for children to be introduced to and to develop the basic skills of the game with as few stoppages as possible.

Aims of Mini Rugby:

- To provide an exciting and enjoyable physical activity for youngsters in school years primary four to primary seven.
- To introduce and develop the basic skills required for rugby in a safe and enjoyable games-based environment.
- To introduce and develop the physical competence required for rugby in the present and to provide a strong foundation for physical development through future LTPD stages.
- To develop the player not just **IN** rugby but **THROUGH** rugby in other areas such as confidence, creativity, self-worth, team-work, leadership and respect.
- To introduce and uphold the spirit and traditions of the game and to adhere to its values.

Age Grade Law Variations, such as tackling below the waist, help to promote skill learning and development opportunities for all players. This resource will explain these laws and will also provide some tips on how to help the game coach facilitate the game.

INTRODUCTION TO CONTACT

Scottish Rugby policy is that contact should not be introduced prior to Primary Four.

This is for two reasons:-

1. Safety - Players need to be physically competent prior to learning how to make and take contact with other players.
2. Player development - It is vital that players have been introduced to and are developing invasive and evasive running skills, handling, passing and support skills prior to their introduction to contact.

Non-contact forms of the game such as Tag should only be played in Primary 1-3.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF GAME COACHING

What makes a good game coach?

Honesty	Understanding of the game	Knowledge of the laws
Integrity	Interest in the outcome	Firm manner
Fairness	Sympathy and empathy	Suitable refereeing style

There are also some 'nots' - **NOT** officious, **NOT** fussy!

General principles
The following general principles apply:

SAFETY is paramount to game coaching any rugby match. Nothing must be allowed to happen which is unsafe in any phase of the game. Safety takes precedence over everything. Every game coach must attend the mandatory RugbyReady practical course on a yearly basis.

IF IT LOOKS DANGEROUS THEN STOP IT!

EQUITY players must see the game coach being fair and impartial. You may not always be correct but be consistent and fair.

LAWS are an integral part of the game. It is important that game coaches at all levels learn, understand and apply the laws. Game coaches who know they are correct in law are more confident than those who are in doubt. Laws that apply to mini rugby are designed with the safety of young players in mind as well as their development.

The role of the game coach:

- Know and apply the laws (the full laws of the game and the Age Grade Law Variation for your age group).
- Educate players in the laws of the game.
- Appreciate and apply advantage.
- Referee in the spirit of the game.
- Be sympathetic not domineering.
- To develop every player.
- Referee in accordance with the players' levels of experience.
- To ensure that all players enjoy the game.

Know the Laws!
It is the responsibility of every player, coach, teacher, referee and game coach to know the laws. Scottish Rugby encourages all involved in the game to complete the IRB Laws self-assessment each year. This is available at **www.irblaws.com**.

Scottish Rugby's law variations can be downloaded from the **Are You Ready to Play Rugby?** pages of **www.scottishrugby.org**. These should be used in conjunction with the IRB laws which can be found at **www.irblaws.com**.

COMMUNICATION

Game coaches must communicate effectively with players. This is done in three ways:

1. The VOICE:

The most important tool that a game coach can use.

- Clear vocal communication is vital if the players are going to understand what they can and cannot do. For example, "Red number 2 you joined the maul in front of the hindmost player, you are offside. Penalty kick to blue."
- The voice can be used to prevent offences taking place and to coach players through the game. Phrases such as "keep two hands on the ball", "tackle below the waist" and "stay onside" are helpful. Game coaches should also praise and qualify good practice such as "well done - good pass - because you followed through to your target", or "good tackle, now roll away".
- The voice can also set the tone by demonstrating sympathy or by indicating "I am not going to accept any nonsense" in a confident but not officious manner.

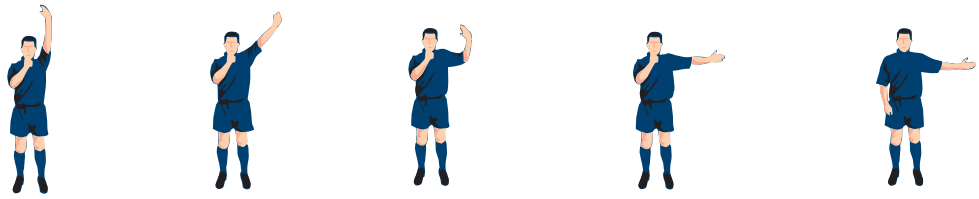
2. The WHISTLE:

- Players should be aware of the game coach's decision from the tone of their whistle. For example, the tone of the whistle will vary between an accidental infringement to a deliberate piece of foul or dangerous play.

Crowd noise and the wind may also have an effect on the way you blow your whistle. Remember, that the whistle must be loud enough for the players to hear and should only be used to stop the game when necessary.

3. The BODY and HAND SIGNALS:

- Any decision by a game coach should be shown by his or her body language
- Clear and crisp signals should be used as shown in the IRB Laws of the Game and **www.irblaws.com**
- There are five main signals required in mini rugby - the try, penalty, free kick, scrum and advantage signals.



Try **Penalty** **Free-kick** **Scrum awarded** **Advantage played**

As a general rule the voice should be used to avoid stopping the game but if it is necessary to stop it, the sequence of communication should be whistle, signal then tell the player of the offence and resulting action. Keep the explanation as short and clear as possible.

ADVANTAGE

Advantage (Law 8) is the most creative tool at the game coach's command and should be played at every opportunity.

The purpose of the advantage law is to make play more continuous with fewer stoppages for infringements. Players are encouraged to play to the whistle despite infringements by their opponents. The voice, as well as hand signals can be used to show that the infringement has been seen by the game coach and that the players should play on.

Using advantage correctly will allow the game to flow and create a more fun and enjoyable game for all of those involved.

Some Tips for Advantage

- If the game coach sees an offence, their first thought should always be, "Can I play advantage and keep the game flowing?"

- Advantage can be either:

  - Tactical - An opportunity to use the ball and possibly score.

  - Territorial - A gain in ground i.e. moving the ball forward through the line of infringement.

- Advantage should not be played for too long, especially if the ball is trapped on the ground.

- Players should not be put in danger by playing advantage.

- Advantage should not be used when there are persistent offences. Stop the game and explain to the players the nature of the offence.

- Let the players know you are playing advantage by calling "playing advantage" and by using the advantage signal. Letting the players know what the infringement was, will also help them. Once the game coach has decided there has been enough advantage played, they should indicate this by saying "advantage is over".

GAME COACHING OPEN PLAY AND OFFSIDE

OPEN PLAY

In mini rugby the ball should be held in two hands at all times. This is to provide increased opportunities to develop skills (evasion, passing and offloading for the ball carrier and individual tackle technique for the tackler) and to ensure a more enjoyable, flowing game.

The hand-off is not permitted in mini rugby.

Provided there is no hand-off, if a player is holding the ball in one hand, the game coach should use his or her voice to encourage them to hold it in two hands. The referee's discretion should be used with regard to holding the ball in one hand and denying passing opportunities. If a player is consistently holding the ball in one hand and is not passing the ball when opportunities arise, a penalty may be awarded.

OFFSIDE IN OPEN PLAY

Offside stops the game flowing - we should prevent it where possible.

- During a tackle or attempted tackle - when the ball carrier is attempting to play the ball out of the tackle to supporting players then the ball is the offside line. This means that a defensive player is not permitted to interfere with the attempted pass or offload.

- A player in front of a team-mate who either:
  - carries the ball; or
  - kicks the ball (P6 and 7 only)

  is also offside but should only be penalised if they follow a kick up-field from an offside position. The referee or game coach should try to prevent this action by calling to offside players to "retreat" until they become onside. This will put them onside more quickly, allowing them to get back into the game sooner. They are back onside when they are passed to by the kicker or someone who has come from an onside position.

What is the order?	How to game coach the tap and pass
1. Where is the tap and pass?	Tap and pass restarts for all penalties are taken from the place of infringement or middle of the pitch following a try. The game coach shows where the tap should be taken from by creating a mark in the grass with their boot.
2. Where do the players go during the tap?	After a try has been scored, the team conceding the try will start the game with a tap and pass at the centre. The scoring team should be given sufficient time to return to their own half before the restart. For any other tap, the player taking the tap and pass takes it from where the game coach made the mark. The defending team must be 5m back from where the tap is taking place in both instances. The game coach can help by standing 5m from the mark on the defensive line.
3. What happens during the tap?	The tap is taken by the attacking team. This involves moving the ball a visible distance with the foot on either the ground or from the hand. The game coach should ask for a retake if the skill is not performed correctly. The game coach should also encourage different players to take the tap (thus developing all players).
4. What happens after the tap?	Both teams should not move until the ball has left the first player's (player undertaking the tap and pass) hands but both teams should be encouraged to move forwards following the pass. The first receiver (person catching the ball from the tap and pass) does not need to take the ball standing still but should practise running onto the ball once it has been passed. Once this player has caught the ball they must pass straight away. The defending team can advance once the ball has left the first players hands.
5. What commands should I give during the tap and pass?	The game coach should remind players that they are not to move forward until the ball has left the first player's hands. By encouraging players from both teams to move forward following the pass, game coaches will foster an understanding of the principles of play (go-forward in attack and defence).

What is the order?	How to game coach the scrum	Which age group?
1. Where is the scrum?	Scrums are taken from the place of infringement or stoppage. The game coach should blow the whistle, make appropriate hand signals and explain why the scrum has been awarded. They then make a mark in the middle line of the scrum using their foot. The scrum must be at least 5m from the goal line and touch line.	P6 & P7
2. Who is in the scrum?	The game coach calls the nearest three players in from each team to form the scrum consisting of two props and a hooker. The next closest players become the scrum halves for each team.	P6
	A front row consisting of two props and a hooker, as well as two second rows.	P7
3. Where should the game coach stand?	The initial positioning is on the side of the scrum where the ball is being put in unless problems have occurred on the other side at previous scrums. The message is, go to where the problem is. Stand behind the scrum half slightly to one side - look over the scrum to see if there are any problems. From this position the referee can observe the ball going into the scrum, down the middle line.	P6 & P7
4. Any safety checks prior to engagement?	Game coaches should check for good practice in body position, pre-engagement and engagement as per www.irbrugbyready.com. Any faults should be corrected there and then by the game coach.	P6 & P7
	Game coach should remind players there is no pushing but that both hookers are encouraged to strike for the ball once it is in the scrum.	P6 & P7
5. What commands should I give during the scrum and what are they for?	Following successful pre-engagement checks the game coach should initiate scrum engagement using the four commands in a calm, even tone: **"Crouch"** Players crouch down in preparation to engage **"Touch"** Each prop touches their opposition props outside shoulder then withdraws their arm back to their side. This is done to check the two front rows are not too far apart. If they are unable to touch, the scrum should be restarted, closer together **"Pause"** A final chance for the game coach to check all is safe **"Engage"** Both sets of forwards fold in towards each other. The players must not be allowed to charge at each other. Game coaches should look to correct poor body position.	P6 & P7
6. What happens during the scrum?	Props must bind on opposite prop's backs, with a straight arm parallel to the ground; the game coach should correct any incorrect binding before the ball is put into the scrum.	P6 & P7
	Second rows should bind onto each other with their inside arm, then bind onto their props with their outside arm. Heads should be placed between the prop and hooker with shoulders making contact with the thighs of the hooker and prop.	P7
	The non offending team throws the ball in from the left hand side of their hooker. The opposing scrum half should also take up position here. The scrum half throws the ball into the scrum along the middle line. The defending scrum-half must remain at the mid-line of the scrum and not follow the attacking scrum half round the scrum. Defending backs must be 5m back from the scrum until the ball has been passed away from the scrum.	P7
7. What happens after the scrum?	Once the ball has emerged from the scrum the scrum half must pass it. One further pass must be made before a try can be scored. Once the ball has left the scrum, the players can leave the scrum.	P6 & P7

For further guidance on coaching the scrum including video and graphic representations please visit **www.irbrugbyready.com** or refer to the **2011 Edition of IRB RugbyReady.**

What is the order?	How to game coach the lineout	Which age group?
1. Where is the lineout?	Lineouts are taken from the place the ball went into touch (out of play on either side of the pitch), never closer than 5m from either of the try lines. Should the ball go into touch closer than 5m to the try line, the lineout forms 5m out. The game coach should blow their whistle, make appropriate hand signals and make a mark on the touch line using their foot where the ball went out. Three steps (3m) should be walked in from the mark on the touchline to show where the lineout should form.	P7 - no lineouts until this age group
2. Who is in the lineout?	All of the forwards are involved in the lineout. One to throw in (they stand at the game coach's mark) with the other four forming the lineout, 3m from the touch line. The extra player in the defending team (defending hooker) stands near the front of the lineout but must give 2m space for the thrower to get the ball in. All backs, excluding the scrum halves must be 5m back from the lineout.	
3. Where should the game coach stand?	The game coach should stand at the front of the lineout but should ensure they can observe each aspect of the above and should face the defending backs to ensure they remain 5m back until the ball emerges.	
4. What commands should I give during the lineout and what are they for?	The game coach should emphasise that only the attacking team may compete for the ball, and that they should jump to catch it with both feet off the ground and both hands above the head. If this is not possible due to a poor throw, the game coach may choose to bring the lineout closer to the person throwing the ball in and allow for a re-throw.	
6. What happens during the lineout?	The ball is thrown down the middle of the lineout by the thrower. Provided the throw is accurate, the catching player catches the ball with both feet off the ground and hands above their heads. Once the catching player lands, the defending team may contest possession. The contest for possession will either be a tackle or a maul. In mini rugby, this is the only time a maul should be created as the players in open play should always look to offload if not tackled to the ground. If the throw is inaccurate and is caught by a member of the defending team who has not contested the throw, they may catch it and play on. The game coach should encourage an accurate throw in down the middle to enable the attacking team to regain possession.	
7. What happens after the lineout?	If the ball is passed to the scrum half straight away, they must pass. One more pass is required before a try may be scored. If the lineout is driven, the defending team can prevent the drive in a legal fashion. Once the maul has stopped and the ball has emerged, the scrum half can either run or pass. A second pass is still required before a try may be scored.	

REFEREEING THE CONTACT AREA - TACKLE

Definitions

- A tackle occurs in tag rugby when a ribbon is removed from the belt.
- A tackle occurs in mini rugby when a ball carrier is brought to ground and is held by an opponent - in line with the full IRB laws of the game.

What is the order?	How to game coach the mini rugby tackle situation
1. Is the tackle safe and legal?	Tacklers must tackle below the waist and the ball must not be targeted i.e. the tackler should not grasp the ball or prevent the pass. This will allow increased opportunity for skill development and the game to flow. The game coach should be firm in penalising illegal (above waist) and dangerous tackles (above the shoulder line or "spear" tackles). If a dangerous or illegal tackle is performed, the game should be stopped and the player made aware of why. If the tackle is above the waist and the advantage rule may be applied, then the game coach can use their common sense by allowing the game to flow, but reminding the player using their voice to keep the tackles below the waist.
2. What does the tackler do after the tackle?	Once a tackle has been made, encourage the tackler to release and move away from the tackled player. This will allow the tackled player to move the ball away. If this situation is managed well the game flows better.
3. What does the tackled player do after the tackle?	Encourage the tackled player to present the ball back to their own team. If this is done correctly it makes on the ground situations much easier to manage as the ball is quickly back into play and fewer players can interfere around the tackle area. This will allow the attacking team to get faster ball from the ruck, allowing them to continue playing.
4. What do the arriving players do?	Arriving players must approach from their own side of the tackle i.e. with their backs to their own goal line. The game coach should watch out for arriving players not remaining on their feet and falling on top of the ruck. If this happens, blow immediately to stop the game to avoid injury and award the penalty to the non-offending team. If the game coach is not sure who is at fault, the scrum (P6 and P7) or tap and pass (P4 and P5) will be awarded to the team going forward.

For further guidance on coaching the tackle including video and graphic representations please visit **www.irbrugbyready.com** or refer to the **2011 Edition of IRB RugbyReady**.

REFEREEING THE CONTACT AREA - RUCK AND MAUL

Rucks are limited in mini rugby, since players are encouraged to pass the ball out of the tackle. However, they do occur so the game coach must be aware of when and how a ruck is formed. The purpose of a ruck or maul is to recycle the ball after a tackle has been completed.

Mauls should not occur in open play if the game coach has correctly applied the tackle law. If a tackle is not completed, the game coach should encourage the ball carrier to pass the ball and defenders not to block the pass. In mini rugby, a maul should only occur at a lineout, as players are not allowed to target the ball in a tackle.

A ruck is formed when the ball is on the ground and one or more players from each team are on their feet and in physical contact, closing around the ball. A ruck can be formed by two players, one from each side.

A maul is formed by one or more players from each team on their feet and in physical contact closing around a player who is in possession of the ball. A maul requires two players from the ball-carrying side and one member of the opposition.

Ruck and maul game coaching tips & things to look out for	
1. Arriving players	Ensure players stay on their feet - players who go to ground in this situation are stopping the ball emerging quickly and causing a safety concern Arriving players must enter the ruck through the "gate" from their own team's side. This is an imaginary opening which is the width of the players who are on the ground.
2. Does the maul collapse?	Maul collapsed deliberately or accidentally - if the referee can identify players who deliberately collapse a maul they should be penalised. If the maul collapses naturally without any infringement and the ball is immediately available, the game should continue.
3. Will the ball emerge?	In a ruck or maul the team in possession is responsible for continuity of play. If the ball does not emerge within five seconds the opposition is awarded a tap and pass. Before blowing the whistle, the referee should use the phrase "use it or lose it" to encourage the side in possession to play the ball. This should rarely happen as the defending team cannot target the ball.
4. Where should the game coach stand?	Positioning - as previously indicated the game coach will gain benefit from being close to the formation of the ruck or maul but will get in the way if they remain there. Get there and then move back a metre or two towards the touchline on the side which is likely to win the ball. Position your body at 45 degrees facing the defending side so that you can get good vision of the overall situation.

For further guidance on coaching the ruck and maul including video and graphic representations please visit **www.irbrugbyready.com** or refer to the **2011 Edition of IRB RugbyReady.**

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Most games have very little foul play but it is advisable to be prepared.

Foul play and abuse of the game coach needs to be dealt with very quickly, firmly and calmly as it can cause a game to degenerate into a situation where nobody enjoys their game. It is also important to ensure that a player understands when he is cautioned and why, for example, "If you use foul play again you will be sent from the field of play" makes it very clear. It is useful if the coach of the team is present when a caution is being given. This allows the coach to know why the caution has been given so he / she can try to stop further foul play occurring.

- Where possible use a caution rather than removal.

- In serious cases ask the coach to replace the player with another one. If the coach refuses, the game coach must take action and dismiss the player.
  The game coach can use discretion to allow the offending player to resume if he / she sees that the player is able to play on. It may be an opportunity for the game coach to ask the player if he / she knows why they were removed from the field. This will help them understand not to commit the foul play again.

- Should you receive abuse from a spectator, ask the coach or club official to act.

- Should you receive abuse from a coach, caution and / or dismiss the coach from the playing enclosure if necessary.

- Responsibility for the behaviour of spectators and coaches is down to the home club.

AGE GRADE LAW VARIATIONS

Overview

Scottish Rugby's age grade law variations exist to help coaches and referees in their duty to enhance players' long-term development (see Scottish Rugby's Long Term Player Development Strategy for further information). **These law variations should be adhered to at all times.**

Law variations are designed to ensure that players develop within the scope of their physical competency and to provide opportunities for all players to progress.

Please read on for further information relating to some of the key topics covered.

Pitch Size

Pitch size is an important factor in players' development and one which is often overlooked. The size of a pitch significantly impacts upon the principles of play (contest possession, go forward, support, continuity and pressure) and has a dramatic effect on a player's rugby experience.

Playing on a pitch which is too large for a particular age group or team size can exceed the players' physical capacity, resulting in ineffective skill acquisition and game sense or management.

Similarly, playing on a pitch which is too small for an age group or team size can be detrimental to the principles of play, in particular continuity, due to the increased pressure and lack of space to promote decision making. Guidelines on pitch sizes can be found in the Law Variations Booklet.

Ball Size

Coaches and referees should be aware of the importance of an appropriately sized ball when dealing with players below under-15 (male) and under-18 (female).

Ball size affects the development of handling, kicking and movement skills, as an inappropriately sized ball can obstruct natural actions. Coaches and referees should consider this when developing or challenging players - either when the ball is too small or too large.

OPEN PLAY

i. The tackle

Up to and including P7, the tackler should always tackle below the waist. There should be no grabbing of shirts or throwing of players above the waist. This promotes both effective tackle technique (including head position, straight back and leg tackles) and continuity of play - in particular offloading skills. In addition, tackling below the waist allows the ball carrier to manage the contact area and to use their support players more effectively.

Scottish Rugby is currently promoting the importance of key national themes - the offload, tackle technique, ball presentation and hand-catch. Encouraging players to tackle above the waist can lead to poor execution of continuity skills. The flow of the game can be interrupted by tacklers targeting the ball so this is not allowed in mini rugby.

Once a tackle is completed (ball carrier brought to ground and held), normal tackle laws apply - the ball must be played immediately.

ii. Hand-offs

The hand-off is not permitted at P7 and below. Encouraging players to hand-off in mini rugby can lead to players neglecting other evasive skills (such as the side-step) that are vital to their long-term development. Players should be encouraged to evade defenders and not invite contact through direct use of the hand-off.

The priority for coaches and referees working in mini rugby is to coach the following:

- Evasion skills (including side-step, acceleration, deceleration, or spin out of contact).
- Handling skills during contact (including offload, pop off the ground and presentation skills) making sure the ball is in two hands at all times.
- Ball familiarisation (such as hand/eye co-ordination).

The hand-off is an effective close contact evasive skill which can be coached from S1 and above, once players are competent at performing the skills highlighted above.

Introducing the hand-off
For S1 level rugby, coaches should ensure all players are suitably trained to perform the hand-off effectively (for example, ensuring the ball is secured away from the tackler) and understand the importance of footwork and body position to enable low tackling when faced with a hand-off.

iii. Rucks and mauls
In mini rugby a contest for possession can take place, in the form of a ruck, once a tackle (below the waist) has taken place. As targeting of the ball is not allowed at this level, mauls should never occur in open play.
At the ruck - in which normal IRB laws apply - the game coach will give five seconds for the ball to emerge. If it does not, a tap and pass will be awarded to the opposition. As normal ruck laws apply, there should always be a contest for possession, as this is a key principle of rugby union at every level of the game. Discouraging this contest can give players a false understanding of our game (such as artificial defensive organisation at the ruck situation).

SET PIECE

i. Scrum
Scrums are introduced at P6, where the three nearest players to the ball from each side form the scrum. No pushing or wheeling is allowed and both hookers should strike for ball. Having the nearest three players form the scrum allows the whole team to experience playing in a range of positions to develop their own individual rugby skills.

Coaches and teachers should instruct all players on the safety principles of scrummaging, including the key points for correct body position, pre-engagement and the scrum engagement.

ii. Lineout
As in the scrum, the lineout law variations follow long-term player development principles. The progressive nature of the lineout variations allows players, from P7 onwards, to acquire the fundamental skills of throwing, outmanoeuvring opponents into space, jumping and catching. Prior to P7, a tap and pass is used.

At P7, lineouts are uncontested, allowing players and coaches to focus on the important skills of throwing, outmanoeuvring opponents into space, jumping and catching the ball whilst in the air.

At S1 and under-15 girls, for the 2011/12 season, the lineout will involve no supporting (as with P7) but will incorporate a contest for possession. This progression from P7 will help jumpers to develop their outmanoeuvring skills, without the added pressure of being supported. All forwards should be coached to move into space to enable an effective jump. A range of lengths of throws should also be coached.

iii. Kick-Off & Restarts

There should be a progressive introduction of the drop kick to allow the game to flow, so as not to be affected by the challenges of younger children attempting to drop kick.

Cavalry charges should not be used during the tap and pass restarts as per IRB Laws of the Game. Coaches should all be familiar with Law 10 (IRB 2011 Laws of the Game, page 69) since the 'cavalry charge' constitutes foul play.

A 'cavalry charge' is where a single player or line of attacking players charge forward prior to the ball being tapped and passed. This gives an advantage to teams that choose to give the ball to the largest player to charge up the field. It does not help the skill development and decision making of that player or their team.

Game coaches should encourage passing and distribution skills at all times.

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Find out more at www.scottishrugby.org