



“Rugby Union 101”

A guide to the game

CELEBRATING **50** YEARS
On & Off The Field

Overview

Recognized by many as the second most popular game in the world, following closely behind soccer, and one of the fastest growing sports in North America, rugby is considered by many as a “*hooligans game played by gentlemen*”. The camaraderie and friendships developed through rugby can last a lifetime, with men still playing into their 70’s in social and ‘old boy’ leagues.

The Basics

A rugby team consists of **15 players**: eight forwards, and seven backs. There may be up to seven replacements (substitutes), with a player being allowed to be substituted only once (in most cases).

A rugby union game is called a '**Match**'. Each match lasts for **80 minutes**, and consists of two halves of 40 minutes each. It is controlled by a single referee on the field of play, two touch judges (assistant referees).

All players must play **defense and offence**, and must learn to tackle as well as pass and run with the ball. Teams are responsible for keeping hold of possession after/during each tackle, as the ball can be ripped or taken from any player on the field at any time.

The object of the game is that each team scores as many points as possible.

The Positions

A team consist of 8 forwards and 7 backs.

Forwards - numbered 1 to 8 are usually larger than the backs, which generally makes them stronger but slower. Forwards take part in the scrum (cauliflower ears, scrum caps, etc) and the line-out, and have a role in taking the ball forwards, generally do so by driving into the opposing forwards. Increasingly forwards such as flankers and the number 8 are becoming athletic and fast, staying out of the breakdown to participate in running moves with the backs.

Backs - numbered 9 to 15 are often known as the better looking and faster players of the team. The forwards usually win the ball for the backs, who then control how the team will attack. The backs/backline will tend to score by focusing on the tactical placement of players, creating holes in the opposition defence line to run through, as well as running around opposition players.

Playing the Game

The team with the ball attacks the opposition goal line (in order to score) by passing, running and kicking. However, the ball may **only** be passed **backwards** from one player's hand to another, so getting the ball forward means it has to be run or kicked.

Any player who is part of the attacking team must be **behind the ball** to take an active part in the game. The game continues through tackles, passes and kicks until the ball either crosses the sidelines, the ball is dropped forward, or an infringement (off-side or foul) occurs.

Scoring

A **try (5 points)** is only scored when the player takes the ball across the goal line **and** grounds the ball. **Grounding** happens when the ball is on the ground and the player's hand is on the ball. As this is the highest points-scoring move of the game, it is often a team's primary aim to score as many tries as possible.

A **conversion (2 points)** is only attempted after a try has been scored, and is only awarded if the ball goes through/over the uprights. Unlike football, the conversion is taking in line with where the try is scored, not in front of the posts.

A **penalty goal (3 points)** occurs when a penalty is awarded due to an offence committed by the opposing side. An option a team has, if close enough to the goal posts, is an attempt at goal. Again, if the ball goes through/over the uprights, 3 points is awarded. Penalty kicks take place from where the foul is committed.

A **Drop Goal (3 points)** occurs in open play, when a player near enough to the goal posts kicks the ball between the posts and over the bar. This is a difficult skill to master, and is usually used as a last resort if a team cannot score a try.

Tackling

The defending team who wants to take possession will tackle the ball carrier to stop him and make him release the ball. A tackle consists of grabbing hold of the opposing player and bringing them to ground, or holding him so that a team-mate can rip the ball from their hands.

A tackled player must either **pass or release the ball** otherwise a foul is called. Releasing the ball allows the opposition to contest possession of the loose ball in open play. Play continues like this until a rule is broken or the ball goes out of play.

Line Out

If the ball goes out of bounds (over the sidelines), either through a player carrying it out, it being kicked out or it rolling out, play is restarted with a lineout. Both sets of forwards line up in a straight line and **jump to contest a ball** that is thrown in from the sideline. Players are usually lifted to gain more height.

Scrum

If the ball is passed forward (accidentally) or is dropped and rolls forward, play is stopped and a scrum takes place. The eight forwards from each team **push against each**, and the ball is rolled into the middle of the scrum. The forwards compete for the ball through kicking/**hooking** the ball back, and pushing.

The Pitch (Playing Area)

The pitch must have 100 meters or less between the goalposts and an in-goal/dead-ball area (around 10 meters) behind each post. The pitch must be less than 70 meters wide. The goal posts are 'H' shaped and are placed in the middle of the goal line at either end.