

## 4 UNDER 9 & UNDER 10 MINI RUGBY (STAGE 2)

This Section contains the rules of play, regulations and recommendations (including modifications to the IRB Laws of the Game) which apply to players in the Under 9 and Under 10 age grades.

### RULES OF PLAY

Players and match officials must endeavour to ensure the IRB Laws of the Game, modified by the following playing rules, are observed when playing rugby at Under 9 and Under 10:

#### 4.1 OBJECT:

The object of the game is to score a try (5 points). *A penalty try will be awarded if a try would probably have been scored but for foul play by the defending team.*

#### 4.2 TEAMS:

The game is played between teams having a maximum of nine players, three of whom will be forwards and form the scrum, with the remaining players forming the back line. Positions should be interchangeable and coaches are encouraged to rotate players around the positions so they all get experience in different roles. Each side can have an agreed number of substitutes. Substituted players can be re-used at any time. Substitutions may only take place when the ball is 'dead' or at half time and always with the referee's knowledge.

#### 4.3 STARTS:

- (a) The match is started or restarted from the centre of the field or after a penalty with a free pass. The starter's team must be behind the ball (i.e. nearer their own try line than the starter). Before the pass is taken, the opposing team must be 7 metres away, nearer their own goal-line. On penalty restarts, a quickly taken free pass whilst the opponents are retiring is not permitted. If the place for the free pass is given within 7 metres of the goal-line, the free pass is to be taken at or behind the mark on a line through the mark at least 7 metres from the goal-line.
- (b) At the free pass, the ball is held in two hands, off the ground and is passed through the air to a team member. The referee is to ensure that the opposition are 7 metres back before indicating that play is to commence. The receiver of the free pass must start from a line which is no more than 2 metres behind the passer. The passer must not run with the ball or dummy pass. Normal play resumes as the ball leaves the hand of the passer.
- (c) Following an infringement for:
  - (1) offside;
  - (2) high or late tackle;
  - (3) hand off/fend off (*a hand off being the placing of an open palmed hand by the ball carrier against an opponent's face or body while a fend off is an outstretched arm by the ball carrier towards an opponent to discourage that person making a tackle*);
  - (4) kicking (including fly-hacking ie kicking a loose ball on the ground); or
  - (5) obstruction;

the game is restarted at the point at which the infringement occurred with a free pass to the non-offending team. Note that players should be encouraged to carry the ball in two hands to reduce the temptation to hand-off/fend off with a free hand.

- (d) After any stoppage not covered elsewhere in this Section (eg following an injury), the match restarts with a scrum to the team moving forward or, if neither team was moving forward, to the team last in possession of the ball.

#### 4.4 GENERAL PLAY:

- (a) In general play, the ball can only be passed sideways or backwards - defined as 'towards the player's own try line'. If the ball is passed forward or knocked on, a scrum is awarded to the opposition unless the referee plays advantage to the non-offending team.
- (b) Offside in general play is penalised in accordance with the IRB Laws of the Game. A player offside in general play is to be penalised for being offside unless that player is making an obvious attempt to return to an onside position. **Penalty:** A free pass restart to the non-offending side.
- (c) If a player carrying the ball goes to ground in general play or if a player goes to ground to gather the ball in general play, the player must immediately do one of three things (or he will be penalised):
  - (1) get up with the ball;
  - (2) pass the ball to another player; or
  - (3) release the ball for another player to pick up.

Note, however, that if a player releases the ball by placing it on the ground and his team mates drive over the ball to prevent the opposition gaining possession, a ruck will generally be formed and in this case the ball may not be picked up by hand until the ball has left the ruck, as described in Section 4.7. **Penalty:** free pass.

#### 4.5 TACKLING:

- (a) Any player who has the ball and is on their feet (except in a maul) can be tackled. Following a tackle:
  - (1) The tackler must immediately release the tackled player and get up or move away from the tackled player and the ball. The tackler must get up before playing the ball.

**Note 1:** Any tackle level with or above the armpit is to be considered a high tackle.

**Note 2:** The scrag-type tackle (i.e. swinging the player round by the shirt) must be considered dangerous play and must be penalised.
  - (2) The tackled player must immediately pass or release the ball and must get up or move away from the ball. The tackled player may put the ball on the ground in any direction, or may push the ball along the ground in any direction except forward (towards the opposition try line), providing this is done immediately.
  - (3) At a tackle, or near to a tackle, players other than the tackler(s) or tackled player who play the ball must do so from behind the ball and from behind the tackled player, or the tackler closest to those players' goal-line.

- (4) Any player who first gains possession of the ball at the tackle or near to it may be tackled by an opposition player, providing that player does so from behind the ball and from behind the tackled player or tackler nearest that player's goal-line.

Infringement of any of the above will result in a free pass being awarded to the non-infringing team.

- (b) If, after a tackle, the ball becomes unplayable, a scrum is awarded. The scrum is awarded to the team that was moving forward immediately prior to the tackle or, if no team was moving forward, to the attacking team (the team in the opponents' half of the pitch).
- (c) No player shall use the technique known or referred to as 'Squeezeball' and no person involved in the teaching or coaching of Mini Rugby may teach or coach or encourage Under 9 or Under 10 players to use the 'Squeezeball' technique. **Penalty:** Free pass.

**Note:** 'Squeezeball' is a technique where the ball carrier goes to ground, head forward (touching or close to the ground), irrespective of immediate contact with opponents, usually keeping parallel to the touchline, holding and protecting the ball close to the chest and, when on the ground, pushes the ball back between the legs.

- (d) It is illegal for any player to voluntarily fall on or over a player lying on the ground with the ball in his possession or to voluntarily fall on or over players lying on the ground with the ball between them or near them. **Penalty:** Free pass.

**Note:**

- (1) no advantage shall be played;
- (2) a player is assumed to have fallen voluntarily unless the referee is absolutely certain the fall was accidental;
- (3) in the very rare instances when the fall is accidental, play must be stopped and a scrum awarded to the side previously in possession.

The object is to keep players on their feet and to prevent them from falling to the ground, thus removing a dangerous area of play. This will create proper rucks and mauls through encouraging players from each team to remain on their feet.

#### **4.6 MAULS:**

- (a) A maul occurs when a player carrying the ball is held by one or more opponents and one or more of the ball-carrier's team-mates bind on to the ball-carrier. It is helpful if the referee calls 'maul formed'. All the players involved are on their feet.
- (b) Once a maul is formed, other players may only join the maul from behind the foot of their hindmost team-mate in the maul. Players joining the maul from in front of this leg from the side are offside and should be penalised. **Penalty:** Free pass.
- (c) A maul ends successfully when either the ball or a player with the ball leaves the maul or the ball is on the ground or the maul is on or over the goal line (when the ball may be grounded for a try or touch-down as the case may be).
- (d) A maul ends unsuccessfully if the ball becomes unplayable or the maul collapses (not as a result of foul play) and a scrum is awarded. Should a maul collapse, the referee must immediately blow the whistle to stop play, to prevent a pile-up from developing.

- (e) When a maul remains stationary or has stopped moving forwards for more than 5 seconds, but the ball is being moved and the referee can see it, a reasonable time is allowed for the ball to emerge. If it does not emerge within a reasonable time, a scrum is ordered. It is helpful in all maul situations if the referee calls “use it or lose it” prior to awarding a scrum.
- (f) When a maul has stopped moving forward it may start moving forward again providing it does so within 5 seconds. If the maul stops moving forward for a second time, and if the ball is being moved and the referee can see it, a reasonable time is allowed for the ball to emerge. A scrum is awarded if it does not emerge within a reasonable time.
- (g) In the case of a scrum following a maul, the team not in possession of the ball when the maul began will throw the ball in at the subsequent scrum. If the referee cannot decide which team had possession, the team moving forward before the maul stopped throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward, the attacking team throws in the ball.
- (h) Any player at any stage in a maul who has or causes an opponent to have his shoulders lower than his hip joint must immediately be penalised by awarding a free pass. The object of this rule is to prevent the collapse of a maul. It is to help the coach to teach good technique and the referee to penalise bad technique. Any player who has his shoulders lower than his hip joint can only move downwards unless he has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forwards and upwards; all players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile-up and possible injury.

#### 4.7 RUCKS:

- (a) A ruck occurs where one or more players from each team who are on their feet, in physical contact, close over the ball on the ground. It is helpful if the referee calls “ruck formed”. Players are rucking when they are in a ruck and using their feet to try to win or keep possession of the ball, without being guilty of foul play. Players must not stand on any part of another player’s body in a ruck - **Penalty:** free pass.
- (b) Once a ruck is formed, other players may only join the ruck from behind the foot of their hindmost team-mate in the ruck. A player may join alongside this hindmost player. Players joining the ruck from in front of this eg from the side are offside and should be penalised. **Penalty:** Free pass.
- (c) Players must not use their hands to pick up the ball while it is still in the ruck. **Penalty:** free pass.
- (d) A ruck ends successfully when the ball leaves the ruck, or when the ball is on or over the goal-line (when the ball may be grounded for a try or a touch-down as the case may be).
- (e) A ruck ends unsuccessfully when the ball becomes unplayable and a scrum is awarded. Should a ruck collapse, the referee must immediately blow the whistle to stop play, to prevent a pile-up from developing.
- (f) Scrum following ruck: The team that was moving forward immediately before the ball became unplayable in the ruck throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward, or if the referee cannot decide which team was moving forward before the ball became unplayable in the ruck, the team that was moving forward before the ruck began throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward, then the attacking team throws in the ball. Before the referee blows the whistle for a scrum, the referee allows a reasonable amount of time for the ball to emerge. If the ruck stops moving or if the referee decides that the ball will probably not emerge within a reasonable time, the referee must order a scrum.

- (g) Any player at any stage in a ruck who has or causes an opponent to have his shoulders lower than his hip joint must immediately be penalised by awarding a free pass. The object of this rule is to prevent the collapse of a ruck. It is to help the coach to teach good technique and the referee to penalise bad technique. Any player who has his shoulders lower than his hip joint can only move downwards unless he has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forwards and upwards; all players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile-up and possible injury.

#### 4.8 SCRUMS

- (a) The scrum will be made up of one row of three players from each team, i.e. a prop on either side of the hooker.
- (b) At Under 9, the scrum is uncontested by both sides: the team awarded the scrum will throw the ball into the scrum and must be allowed to win it without contest. Opponents cannot push or strike for the ball. If they do, a free pass restart is awarded to the team throwing the ball into the scrum.
- (c) At Under 10, the scrum is contested by both sides: the team awarded the scrum will throw the ball into the scrum and the players in the scrum may contest the ball. Although scrums are contested at Under 10, under no circumstances is the scrum to be:
- (1) pushed or pulled more than 1.5 metres towards either try line. **Penalty:** A free pass at the original spot against the side that has pushed or pulled the scrum;
  - (2) wheeled more than 45 degrees. **Penalty:** If a team intentionally wheels a scrum, a free pass will be awarded against that side. If the scrum is wheeled more than 45 degrees without a free pass award, the scrum will be reset with the same team throwing the ball in.

A non-contested scrum, as described in Section 4.8(b) above, must replace a contested scrum in any of the following circumstances (on safety grounds):

- (1) if a player in a scrum has to be replaced and there is no adequate replacement;
  - (2) if players involved in a scrum have not been properly trained;
  - (3) if one side is obviously stronger and more experienced than the other and the referee has been unable to get the stronger side to reduce their push to take this into account.
- (d) The players from each team will bind together approximately half a metre apart. Each prop will touch the upper arm of his opponent and then pause before the engagement. The referee will talk the players through the engagement procedure in the sequence **Crouch, Touch, Pause and Engage**. On the grounds of safety, it is important that the referee manages the engagement of every scrum in this way.
- (e) Front rows must not be allowed to charge at each other. If they start to engage too close together and with necks and backs bent, they must be stopped and the scrum reformed. Props' body positions must be parallel to the touchline (not boring in). There must be no downward pressure exerted by hands or arms. Shoulders must always be above the level of the hips.
- (f) If the scrum collapses, the whistle must immediately be blown and the appropriate penalty awarded or the scrum reset. If a player is persistently involved in collapsing or illegal binding they must be replaced. If a player's lack of technique or strength is a danger then they must be replaced. All players involved in scrums, including

replacements, should be suitably trained and experienced.

- (g) Any player at any stage in a scrum who has or causes an opponent to have his shoulders lower than his hip joint must immediately be penalised by awarding a free pass. The object of this rule is to prevent the collapse of a scrum. It is to help the coach to teach good technique and the referee to penalise bad technique. Any player who has his shoulders lower than his hip joint can only move downwards unless he has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forwards and upwards; all players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile-up and possible injury.
- (h) The back line of the team **NOT** putting the ball into the scrum must remain 7 metres behind the scrum until the ball emerges or the opposing scrum-half places his hands on it. Until this happens, their scrum-half must remain directly behind his scrum, in the pocket edged by the two props.
- (i) The back line of the team putting the ball into the scrum must remain behind a line through the rear-most foot of their props/hooker until the ball emerges or the scrum-half places his hands on it. If the team putting the ball into the scrum loses possession in the scrum, their scrum-half must retire directly behind his scrum, in the pocket edged by the two props, until the ball emerges or the opposing scrum-half places his hands on it.
- (j) If a scrum is awarded within 5 metres of the goal-line, the scrum is to be taken at a mark such that the middle line of the scrum is 5 metres from the goal-line. In this case the defending backs must stay on or behind the goal line
- (k) Referees should pay particular attention to ensure that the scrum-half putting the ball into the scrum is not "feeding" his own players: the scrum-half must hold the ball with both hands, with its major axis parallel to the ground/the touchline, midway between his knees and ankles. The scrum-half must release the ball from outside the tunnel so that it lands mid-way between the two front rows and beyond the width of the nearer prop's shoulders.

#### **4.9 LINE-OUTS:**

- (a) If the ball or player carrying the ball goes out of play, a line-out will take place at the point at which the ball or player crossed the touchline. If a line-out is awarded within 5 metres of the goal-line, the line-out is to be taken at a mark 5 metres out from the goal-line. The opponents of the team who carried or last touched the ball before it went into touch throw the ball in. A quick throw-in is not permitted.
- (b) The line-out will be made up of two players from each team (who stand between 2 and 7 metres from the touchline) plus the player throwing the ball in and an immediate opponent (who must stand within 2 metres of the player throwing the ball in) and one player from either side in a position to receive the ball (i.e. scrum-half). Both the thrower-in and his immediate opponent are able to take an active role in the line-out as soon as the ball has been touched by one of the players in the line-out. Players not taking part in the line-out must stay behind the offside line until the line-out ends.
- (c) The offside line for all players not participating in the line-out (all players other than those described under Section 4.9(b)) is 7 metres back from the line of touch, parallel to the goal-line, and they must remain behind that offside line until the line-out has ended. If the line-out is closer than 7 metres to the touchline, the goal-line is the offside line.
- (d) At Under 9, the line-outs are uncontested by both sides and the team throwing the ball in must be allowed to catch and win the ball without any interference from the opposition. The uncontested phase of the line-out continues until the line-out has ended and the catcher is therefore protected from contact from the opposition unless he/she decides to

instigate it.

- (e) At Under 10, the line-out is contested by both sides.
- (f) In both contested and uncontested line-outs, the ball must be thrown into the line-out (i.e. between 2 and 7 metres) and not beyond it, i.e. the ball must be played by one of the players within the line-out. Should the ball be thrown beyond 7 metres without contact, the opposition will be awarded the throw. Should the opposition then throw beyond 7 metres without contact, a scrum will be awarded to the side originally throwing in. No advantage is to be played in any of these circumstances.
- (g) The line-out begins when the ball leaves the hands of the player throwing it in. The line-out ends when the ball or a player carrying it leaves the line-out. This includes the following:
  - (1) when the ball is thrown or knocked out of the line-out;
  - (2) when a line-out player hands the ball to a player who is peeling close to and parallel to the line - **Note:** *“peeling” occurs when a player leaves the line-out (after the ball has been thrown in) to catch the ball knocked or passed back by a team mate;*
  - (3) when a ruck or maul develops in a line-out and both feet of all the players in the ruck or maul move beyond the line-of-touch; and
  - (4) the ball has been passed or carried out of the line-out or if the catcher decides to drive through the line-out.
- (h) When the ball becomes unplayable in a line-out, play restarts with a scrum to the team moving forward or, if neither team was moving forward, to the team last in possession of the ball. The scrum will take place 7 metres in from the touchline opposite the point where the line-out took place.
- (i) All ‘peeling off’ movements must be close to and parallel with the line-out. Players must keep moving. Lifting/supporting is prohibited at this level (i.e. a player may not bind to a jumper until they return to the ground). The player designated to receive the ball (i.e. the scrum half) may not enter the line-out to compete for the ball.

#### **4.10 IN-GOAL:**

- (a) *The in-goal area includes the goal-line (ie the try-line) but not the touch-in-goal line, the dead ball line or the corner posts.*
- (b) *If the attacking team grounds the ball in the in-goal without having committed an offence then a try is awarded. A ball is grounded by applying downward pressure by hand or chest when the ball is in contact with the ground.*
- (c) *If the attacking team is unable to ground the ball for a try because the ball is not in contact with the ground (eg a hand or body is in between) or the attacking player is unable to apply downward pressure, a scrum is awarded to the attacking team 5 metres out from the goal-line.*
- (d) *If the defending team grounds the ball in the in-goal or the ball becomes “dead” by going or being carried into touch then:*
  - (i) *If the attacking team carried the ball into the in-goal or last touched the ball before it went into the in-goal, a free-pass is awarded to the defending team 7*

*metres out from the goal-line;*

- (ii) *If the defending team carried the ball into the in-goal or last touched the ball before it went into the in-goal, a scrum is awarded to the attacking team 5 metres out from the goal line.*

## **REGULATIONS**

Failure by Clubs or Schools, their match officials and coaches to observe the following regulations may invalidate their insurance cover :

### **4.11 FIXTURES & FESTIVALS:**

In this Section of the Rugby Continuum:

- (a) A Fixture is the playing of Mini Rugby between teams from different Schools or Clubs, not more than three Schools or Clubs being involved together on any one day. Where three Clubs or Schools are involved, these are sometimes referred to as "Triangular Fixtures".
- (b) A Festival is the playing of Mini Rugby between teams from more than three different Schools or Clubs, normally to establish a winner, all matches being part of one event.
- (c) Fixtures and Festivals must all comply with the regulations contained in the Rugby Continuum, however, Festival organisers may impose additional conditions on participation including maximum squad sizes which should not be less than 13 players (although this should not prevent teams from participating with less than this number should they so wish). Festival Organisers may not, however, exclude players who would be permitted to play down in accordance with a valid age dispensation.
- (d) No extra time is permitted in any match (whether a Fixture or a Festival) except that added for injury time. Matches must be brought to an end if the points difference rises to more than 30.

### **4.12 THE SEASON:**

The Mini-Midi Rugby season starts on 1<sup>st</sup> September each year. Fixtures and Festivals for Under 9's and Under 10's may only take place during the period 1<sup>st</sup> October to the May Day Bank holiday each season (7th May in 2007). Outside this period players may only participate in training and recruitment initiatives.

### **4.13 UNDER 9 AGE GRADES:**

- (a) A player's age grade is determined by their age at Midnight on 31<sup>st</sup> August at the beginning of the season. An Under 9 player will therefore only turn 9 during the course of the season.
- (b) During the course of a season players may only play rugby with other Under 9 players unless they are permitted to play with players from a different age grade under a dispensation referred to in Section 4.14.
- (c) When participating in Fixtures or Festivals, the Club/School must inform the coaches and match officials of opposing teams of any dispensation being applied and identify each player concerned.

### **4.14 UNDER 9 AGE GRADE DISPENSATIONS:**

The following general dispensations apply as exceptions to the age grade rules contained in Section 4.13. Particular attention is drawn to the need to ensure that player safety is not compromised when applying any of these dispensations since players of different age grades and development will be playing together and the duty of care owed to players means it may not always be appropriate to allow a player to take advantage of a dispensation.

- (a) **Team Dispensation:** Under 10 players may play down in an Under 9 team if Clubs or Schools do not have enough players to complete an Under 9 squad (of upto 13 players) , however, this dispensation is subject to strict observance of the following qualifications:
- (1) the maximum numbers of players allowed to play down is two;
  - (2) no Under 11 players or above may play in an Under 9 team in any circumstances; and
  - (3) no Under 10 player playing down under this general dispensation may play with any Under 8 player playing in an Under 9 team under a dispensation.

A Club or School may complete multiple Under 9 squads using this dispensation, for example it could complete two Under 9 squads, each comprising upto eleven Under 9 players plus two Under 10 players.

- (b) **Training Dispensation:** During internal Club/School training, players permitted by the Rugby Continuum to play in Under 9 and Under 10 squads may train together and play internal training matches together, however, no Under 10 player or above may play with an Under 8 player playing in an Under 9 team under a dispensation.
- (c) **Special Dispensation:** The vast majority of children, with correct coaching, can play in their correct age grades but in exceptional cases, where child safety may be compromised due to a developmental disability (physical or behavioural), application to the RFU may be made for an individual dispensation permitting a player to play down one age grade. Such dispensation will only last for one season. Application for such a dispensation should be submitted to the RFU Community Rugby Director and should be accompanied by documentary evidence or signed statements confirming the player's disability. For the avoidance of doubt, special RFU dispensations to play outside of their true age grade will not be granted to players merely because they appear to have skills inferior or superior to their team mates.
- (d) **Schools Dispensation:** The RFU recognises that boys and girls in some Schools, particularly in Independent and Preparatory Schools, are introduced to many different sports from an early age. It is not uncommon to find players having rugby lessons five afternoons a week. Children having the benefit of this level of exposure to the game are likely to have a greater knowledge and experience of the game than those meeting once a week (i.e. on a Sunday), even though their physiques may be similar. Taking these considerations into account, Independent and Preparatory Schools which do not have enough pupils in the Under 9 age group to form a team may complete an Under 9 team using Under 8 players.

#### 4.15 UNDER 10 AGE GRADES:

- (a) A player's age grade is determined by their age at Midnight on 31<sup>st</sup> August at the beginning of the season. An Under 10 player will therefore only turn 10 during the course of the season.
- (b) During the course of a season players may only play rugby with other Under 10 players

unless they are permitted to play with players from a different age grade under a dispensation referred to in Section 4.16.

- (c) When participating in Fixtures or Festivals, the Club/School must inform the coaches and match officials of opposing teams of any dispensation being applied and identify each player concerned.

#### **4.16 UNDER 10 AGE GRADE DISPENSATIONS:**

The following general dispensations apply as exceptions to the age grade rules contained in Section 4.15. Particular attention is drawn to the need to ensure that player safety is not compromised when applying any of these dispensations since players of different age grades and development will be playing together and the duty of care owed to players means it may not always be appropriate to allow a player to take advantage of a dispensation.

- (a) **Team Dispensation:** Under 11 players may play down in an Under 10 team if Clubs or Schools do not have enough players to complete an Under 10 squad (of upto 13 players) I, however, this dispensation is subject to strict observance of the following qualifications:
  - (1) the maximum numbers of players allowed to play down is two; and
  - (2) no Under 12 players or above may play in an Under 10 team in any circumstances.

A Club or School may complete multiple Under 10 squads using this dispensation, for example it could complete two Under 10 squads, each comprising upto eleven Under 10 players plus two Under 11 players.

- (b) **Training Dispensation:** During internal Club/School training, players permitted by the Rugby Continuum to play in Under 9 and Under 10 squads may train together and play internal training matches together, however, no Under 10 squad player may play with any Under 8 player playing in an Under 9 team under a dispensation.
- (c) **Special Dispensation:** The vast majority of children, with correct coaching, can play in their correct age grades but in exceptional cases, where child safety may be compromised due to a developmental disability (physical or behavioural), application to the RFU may be made for an individual dispensation permitting a player to play down one age grade. Such dispensation will only last for one season. Application for such a dispensation should be submitted to the RFU Community Rugby Director and should be accompanied by documentary evidence or signed statements confirming the player's disability. For the avoidance of doubt, special RFU dispensations to play outside of their true age grade will not be granted to players merely because they appear to have skills inferior or superior to their team mates.

#### **4.17 LIMITATIONS ON FIXTURES:**

- (a) Each player in the Under 9 and Under 10 age grades is limited to playing in not more than:
  - (1) 17 Club Fixtures and/or Festivals during a season in addition to any Fixtures and/or Festivals played by them for their Schools;
  - (2) 17 School Fixtures and/or Festivals during a season in addition to any Fixtures and/or Festivals played by them for their Club;
  - (3) one Festival during the same weekend; and

At a Festival teams are only permitted to play a maximum of 5 games.

- (b) Clubs and Schools must maintain a record of how many Fixtures and Festivals are played by each Under 9 and each Under 10 player during a season to ensure they are not exceeding these limits.
- (c) Where Clubs or Schools have large squads, additional Fixtures/Festivals may be arranged, provided that no player plays in more than the maximum number referred to in Section 4.17(a).

#### **4.18 MATCH DURATIONS:**

A match is made up of two-halves with half-time lasting not less than 2 minutes. Matches are limited to the following durations:

- (a) Fixture (2 Clubs or Schools present): 15 minutes each way, 1 game = 30 minutes.
- (b) Fixture (3 Clubs or Schools present): 10 minutes each way, 2 games = 40 minutes.
- (c) Festival: 6 minutes each way, Maximum of 5 games = 60 minutes.

**No extra time is permitted in any match except that added for injury time.** Matches must be brought to an end if the points difference rises to more than 30.

#### **4.19 DURATION OF COACHING OR TRAINING SESSIONS:**

Fixtures, coaching and training sessions must last no longer than 90 minutes, inclusive of time devoted to match play. At a Festival, time spent on training and matches must not total more than 90 minutes.

#### **4.20 EQUIPMENT:**

- (a) A size 3 ball should be used for Under 9s and a size 4 ball for Under 10s.
- (b) Players may only use studs and other clothing during training sessions and matches that are in accordance with the IRB Laws of the Game. Players may wear specially designed and manufactured goggles.

#### **4.21 PITCH SIZES:**

The maximum pitch size for Under 9s and Under 10s is 60 metres x 35 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area. Reduced pitch sizes are acceptable provided this is agreed between the officiating referee and coaches and the smaller pitches will not materially increase the risk of injury to players. Adjacent pitches should be no closer than 5 metres.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations represent best practice and Clubs, Schools, their match officials and coaches must endeavour to follow these:

#### **4.22 COACHING:**

- (a) The RFU recommends that at a Fixture, a coaching session precedes each match.
- (b) All matches should be used as an extension of the coaching session with the emphasis

being on the quality of performance rather than the result.

- (c) During the match, coaches can direct and develop play, in a coaching sense, from the touchline.
- (d) The emphasis must be on enjoyment and the players must be encouraged to enjoy the physical skills of running, passing and evasion.
- (e) During the half-time interval, coaches must take time to talk to, encourage, coach and explain the game to the players.
- (f) Mismatches can be avoided by talking to the coach in charge of the opposition before the game.

#### **4.23 DANGEROUS PLAY:**

- (a) Dangerous play can cause injury. Coaches and match officials must be particularly vigilant to prevent it.
- (b) There will always be knocks and bumps in rugby, but if dangerous play is eliminated, then many serious injuries will never happen.
- (c) After a stoppage for injury, restart play with a scrum to the team moving forward, or, if neither team was moving forward, to the team that was last in possession of the ball immediately prior to the stoppage.

#### **4.24 DISCIPLINE:**

- (a) If the referee decides that a player must cease to participate in a match, they must stop the match, call the individual player aside from the other players and invite the coach of that player on to the field. The referee must explain to the coach and the player why they feel the player's behaviour is unacceptable and instruct the coach to provide a substitute player. That player is to take no further part in that Festival or Fixture. It is the responsibility of the coach to speak to and educate the player as to why such action was taken.
- (b) Clubs and Schools complying with Section 2 of the Rugby Continuum will have both a Child Protection Policy (which conforms to the RFU's recommendations) and a player disciplinary procedure. While player indiscipline (including physical and verbal abuse and actions contravening the Rugby Continuum) will in most cases be dealt with in accordance with the player disciplinary procedure it should be recognized that there will be some instances where the relevant actions also fall within the scope of the Child Protection Policy.
- (c) In the case of actions on the part of adults involved in Mini-Midi Rugby which contravene the Codes of Practice (for parents, spectators, match officials or coaches) contained in the Rugby Continuum, the recommended procedure is as follows:
  - (1) The match or training session should be stopped and the match officials and coaches should confer and agree on a course of action appropriate to the circumstances. This may include the match officials and relevant coach warning the adult concerned or requesting the relevant adult to vacate the vicinity of the pitch before recommencing the match or training. In extreme cases or where the adult refuses to cooperate, the match or training should be abandoned.
  - (2) The match officials and coaches should notify the incident to the Chairmen of the Mini-Midi Sections of their respective Clubs or to the Head of Games in the case

of Schools for further consideration. In extreme cases this may include banning the relevant adult from attending matches and/or training sessions for a period and/or submission of a complaint to the relevant Constituent Body.

- (3) Where the relevant actions fall within the Child Protection Policy, Clubs and Schools should also institute the procedures contained in such policy.
- (d) In all cases where a disciplinary matter has been referred to a Constituent Body, the Constituent Body may require either Club or Schools to provide additional information on the incident including confirmation of the action taken and may in exceptional cases refer the matter to the RFU for further consideration and sanctions.

#### **4.25 SAFETY:**

- (a) The development of all contact (contested or uncontested scrums and line outs) must be introduced using the techniques contained in current RFU coaching manuals. Tackling is a skill that needs to be taught and must be introduced progressively as shown in the current RFU Coaching Course materials. Similarly, the formation of the scrum must be introduced in a progressive way following the stages described in current RFU Coaching Course materials.
- (b) The RFU strongly recommends the wearing of mouth guards in case of accidental collision. Ideally mouth guards should be custom made from a dental impression of the teeth. The RFU also strongly recommends the wearing of shin guards.
- (c) If a player appears injured, the referee must blow the whistle and stop play immediately. Obviously the referee must use judgment - players don't want to stop for every slight knock - but it is usually possible to tell when a player is hurt. Where possible, invite the player to get up. If it hurts them to move, let them stay where they are (if this will not worsen their injury) and send for expert help. In all cases it is essential that other people/players are stopped from rushing in and hauling the player to their feet. They may mean well, but they could make the damage even worse. In summary, take no chances: act fast but act with caution.
- (d) If referees find themselves in an injury situation, they must concentrate on the vital things. If there is difficulty breathing remove the player's mouthguard. If they seem stunned, they may be concussed: if so, they must leave the field and have a medical examination. If there is any bleeding, the player must leave the field for treatment unless to do so would worsen their injury.

#### **4.26 THE GOOD MATCH OFFICIAL'S CODE:**

Match Officials should:

- (a) Recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when officiating players.
- (b) Provide positive verbal feedback in a constructive and encouraging manner during games.
- (c) Emphasise the spirit of the game.
- (d) Appreciate the needs of the players before the needs of the sport.
- (e) Understand the physical and behavioural development of players.
- (f) Be a positive role model. Set an example, and as such, comments should be positive and supportive.

- (g) Look to self-improvement e.g. participation in training courses.
- (h) Recognise that the safety of players is paramount.
- (i) Explain decisions - all players are still learning and parents will understand the game better.
- (j) Always penalise foul play.
- (k) Play advantage whenever possible in order to let the game flow.
- (l) Show empathy for the age and ability of players.
- (m) Be consistent and objective.
- (n) Be familiar with the Good Spectators Code and ensure that verbal abuse from players, coaches or spectators is not tolerated and is dealt with by club officials immediately.
- (o) Be aware of, and abide by, the RFU Child Protection Guidance policies and procedures.
- (p) Officiate to the rules laid down in the Rugby Continuum and keep themselves updated on rule changes.
- (q) Check that the home Club or School has provided a qualified first aider, ambulance access has not been obstructed and that appropriate equipment is available along with someone trained in its use before starting play.
- (r) Before training sessions and matches check that studs and other clothing are in accordance with the IRB Laws of the Game.

#### **4.27 THE GOOD COACHES' CODE:**

Coaches of players should:

- (a) Recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when coaching players.
- (b) Understand that most learning is achieved through doing.
- (c) Appreciate the needs of the players before the needs of the sport.
- (d) Be a positive role model - think what this implies.
- (e) Keep winning and losing in perspective - encourage players to behave with dignity in all circumstances.
- (f) Respect all referees and the decisions they make, even if they appear to make a mistake, (remember it could be you refereeing next week) and ensure that the players recognise that they must do the same.
- (g) Provide positive verbal feedback in a constructive and encouraging manner to all players, both during coaching sessions and matches.
- (h) Provide rugby experiences which are matched to the players' ages and abilities, as well as their physical and behavioural development.
- (i) Ensure all players are coached in a safe environment, with adequate first aid readily to

hand.

- (j) Avoid the overplaying of the best players by using a squad system which gives everybody a satisfactory amount of playing time.
- (k) Never allow a player to train or play when injured.
- (l) Ensure good supervision of players, both on and off the field.
- (m) Recognise that players should never be exposed to extremes of heat, cold or unacceptable risk of injury.
- (n) Develop an awareness of nutrition as part of an overall education in lifestyle management.
- (o) Recognise that it is illegal for players under 18 to drink alcohol and those under 16 to smoke. Coaches should actively discourage both..
- (p) Ensure that their knowledge and coaching strategies are up to date and in line with RFU philosophy.
- (q) Be aware of, and abide by, the RFU recommended procedures for taking young people on residential tours at home and abroad.
- (r) Be aware of and abide by the policies and procedures outlined in the Policy and Procedures for the Welfare of Young People in Rugby Union.
- (s) Coach to the rules laid down in the Rugby Continuum and keep themselves updated on rule changes.

#### **4.28 THE GOOD PLAYER'S CODE:**

Players should be encouraged to:

- (a) Recognise and appreciate the efforts made by coaches, parents, match officials and administrators in providing the opportunity to play the game and enjoy the rugby environment.
- (b) Understand the values of loyalty and commitment to adults and team mates.
- (c) Recognise that every player has a right to expect their involvement in rugby to be safe and free from all types of abuse.
- (d) Understand that if an individual or group of players feel they are not being treated in a manner that is acceptable, then they should tell an adult either at the Club or School or outside of the game.
- (e) Play because they want to do so, not to please coaches or parents.
- (f) Remember that skill development, fun and enjoyment are the most important parts of the game.
- (g) Be attentive at all training and coaching sessions.
- (h) Work equally hard for themselves and their team - both will then benefit.
- (i) Recognise good play by all players on their team and by their opponents.

- (j) Be a sportsman - win with dignity, lose with grace.
- (k) Play to the IRB Laws of the Game and accept, without question, all referees' decisions even if they appear to make a mistake.
- (l) Control their emotions. Verbal or physical abuse of team mates, opponents, coaches, match officials or spectators is not acceptable.
- (m) Treat all players, as they would like to be treated themselves. Do not interfere with, bully or take advantage of any player.

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For further information on the interpretation of these rules, regulations and recommendations contact the Community Rugby and Operations Department at the RFU.