

INTRODUCTION TO THE RUGBY CONTINUUM

MINI/MIDI RUGBY – CONTINUUM REGULATIONS FOR 2003/2004 SEASON

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RULES OF PLAY – WITH EFFECT FROM 1st SEPTEMBER 2003

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TECHNICAL DETAILS

FAIR PLAY CODES OF CONDUCT

THE GOOD COACH'S CODE.

THE GOOD PARENT'S CODE.

THE GOOD PLAYER'S CODE.

THE GOOD SPECTATOR'S CODE

THE GOOD MATCH OFFICIAL'S CODE.

INTRODUCTION TO THE RUGBY CONTINUUM

1. Except where the following Regulations and/or Rules of Play amend or adapt the Laws of the Game to suit the development of young players, the Laws of the Game shall apply.
2. In response to the Education Reform Act 1988 and the establishment of the National Curriculum for Physical Education (September 1992) in Schools, the Rugby Football Union has included notification of the appropriate Key Stages for each age group.
3. **The Continuum and Schools.** 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 young 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.

The RFU currently has a dispensation in place for Under 12's in Schools and Clubs that allows parental permission to be given to enable them to play 15-a-side rugby alongside the Under 13's.

The RFU also recognises that within Schools the game may be taught by those in possession of a Teachers' Certificate of Education and who, having completed their probationary year, are fully qualified teachers. However, it recommends that each School has a close regard to health and safety issues and carries out any necessary risk assessments in relation to its safe and competent teaching of the game.

In addition the new RFU coach education courses for Tag and Mini/Midi Rugby have been designed specifically to give individuals (whether in Schools or in Clubs) the opportunity to gain an understanding of coaching at those levels so that those in their charge are coached safely.

4. **Age Grading.** The RFU, whilst wishing to maximise the enjoyment of young players, also places importance on their safety, and any Club or Constituent Body in providing rugby opportunities to young players should do so having considered carefully the issue of safety. For this reason the Continuum regulations provide that players should not be permitted to play up an age grade unless the Continuum contains a dispensation. Clubs and Constituent Bodies should therefore apply strict age grading.
5. Should you wish to suggest Rule or Law changes, please contact The RFU National Referee Centre of Excellence, Castlecroft Road, Castlecroft, Wolverhampton, WV3 8NA, or approach your local Rugby Development Officer.

MINI/MIDI RUGBY – CONTINUUM REGULATIONS FOR 2003/2004 SEASON

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & OBJECTIVES

The Rugby Football Union and the Rugby Football Union for Women (RFUW) are most grateful to the many volunteers who are organising and encouraging the game of Mini/Midi Rugby in England. The Unions are also anxious to emphasise that this game is intended to be a means of coaching and encouraging children with the objective of their playing 15-a-side rugby at the age of Under 13. In order to achieve this objective, and the correct balance between coaching and competition along the way, the Rugby Football Union sets out below its intentions for the organisation and control of this aspect of the game.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE CONTINUUM

The Rugby Continuum must be viewed as a coaching pathway through which each youngster acquires, by gradual degrees, those skills required to participate in the full 15-a-side game by the age of under 13. The emphasis must be geared towards the improvement of individual skills through purposeful and enjoyable activity. In order to allow for the testing of these skills in match situations, a limited number of competitive fixtures and festivals/tournaments may be introduced.

In order to achieve the correct balance between coaching and competition, the maximum number of fixtures and festivals are listed for each age grade.

A game format is introduced at each age grade in order that young players may progress towards the 15-a-side game, through clearly defined Stages that are compatible with the development of their physical and conceptual abilities. It therefore must be made clear that Mini and Midi Rugby are not shortened versions of the adult game.

3. THE CONTINUUM STAGES

There are three Stages of the Continuum covering the six different age grades.

STAGE 1

The Under 7 age grade will play Mini Tag Rugby to the standard set of rules. The Under 8 age grade will also play Mini Tag Rugby with a single variation concerning the number of Tags allowed

STAGE 2

The Under 9 and Under 10 age grades will both play Mini Contact Rugby to the same standard set of rules; except Under 9s will have uncontested scrums and line-outs and Under 10s contested scrums and line-outs.

STAGE 3

The Under 11 and Under 12 age grades will both play Midi Contact rugby to the same standard set of rules

4. AGE GRADES

The age grading of all Continuum players must be determined by their age at midnight on 31st August/1st September at the beginning of the season in which matches are to be played.

All teams must play in their individual age grades, e.g. Under 9 equals one age grade, and Under 10 equals one age grade.

Age grades may be combined ONLY if Clubs do NOT have enough players to form a team. The maximum numbers of players allowed to play ‘down’ an age grade is TWO.

Specifically players may only play ‘down’ an age grade as follows:

Under 7s and Under 8s may play together, utilising the Mini Tag format. No Under 7 or Under 8 child may play with Under 9 children or above in any circumstances.

Under 9s and Under 10s may play together, utilising the Under 9 Mini Contact format. No Under 9s may play with Under 11s or above in any circumstances.

Under 10s and Under 11s may play together utilising the Under 10 Mini Contact format. No Under 10 children may play with Under 12s or above in any circumstances.

Under 11s and Under 12s may play together utilising the Midi Contact game format.

Under 13s and above cannot play down into the Continuum.

Players must not play ‘up’ an age grade in any circumstances.

Players that have not reached their 6th birthday. Clubs must not select to play in interclub organised team matches any child that has not reached his/her 6th birthday. This does not preclude Clubs safely involving players who have not reached their 6th birthday in their internal Club activities.

Note: Although children may play competitive Under 7 Mini Tag Rugby immediately they reach 6 years of age (i.e. they do not have to comply with the 1st September ruling) the following season they must comply and remain in the Under 7 age grade.

Under 12 Dispensation. Where a Club or School does not have an Under 12 side, Under 12s may play with an Under 13 side but only with parental consent. No Under 11 player or below can play in an Under 13 side.

5. COACHING THE CONTINUUM

It is strongly recommended that all coaches attend the appropriate Rugby Football Union (RFU) coach education course as soon as possible. (Note: These courses now include a refereeing module). Please contact your Constituent Body or Rugby Development Officer.

Clubs must endeavour to ensure that qualified coaches supervise all persons who are not accredited or qualified to coach.

In order to qualify coaches to lead youngsters through the three Stages of Mini/Midi rugby a number of RFU coach education courses are readily available. Constituent Bodies, Clubs and Schools must encourage all helpers to attend these courses in order to acquire a greater understanding of how they must introduce all aspects of the game, including safety and equity, to players. This will ensure that all concerned enjoy the game. These coach education courses now include:

- Mini Tag course (<half-day) where all attendees will receive a certificate of attendance and supporting resources. This course qualifies attendees to coach Mini Tag unsupervised.
- Mini/Midi Coaching course (2 days) leading to a qualification.
- Level 1 coaching course (2 days) leading to a qualification.

The month of September is solely for coach education courses and for the coaching of players Under 7 to Under 12 age grade players. Coaching and training may take place but no matches or festivals are to be played during this month.

The month of January is also for coach education courses and must be used by coaches as a “window of opportunity” to, if necessary, qualify them to coach their current age grade, or to prepare for coaching another age grade the following season. During this month Club coaches must give priority to their own development, accreditation or qualification by attending the appropriate coach education course. If sufficient coaches are already qualified or accredited and/or no further coach education is necessary then coaching sessions and/or matches may continue to be organised.

On match days against outside opposition, a coaching session should always precede the match. All matches must be used as an extension of the coaching session, with the emphasis being on the quality of performance rather than the result. Mismatches can be avoided by talking to the Coach in charge of the opposition before the game.

6. CHILD PROTECTION

Young people are the future of Rugby Union. Every young player who participates in Rugby Union must be able to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment. The RFU places the highest priority on their SAFETY and ENJOYMENT and recognises that it has a "Duty of Care" towards young people within the sport and that any Club or Constituent Body providing rugby opportunities must do so with the highest possible care

ALL adults who come in to contact with young people in the rugby union MUST be familiar with the following publications:

- Codes of Good Practice for coaches and officials as defined in the RFU/W Policies and Procedures for the Welfare of Young People in Rugby Union.
- RFU Fair Play Codes (Guidelines for people involved in Mini/Youth rugby).
- RFU Child Protection Guidance leaflet.

It is also STRONGLY RECOMMENDED that ALL adults who come into contact with young people:

- Complete the RFU "Best Practice and Child Protection" Distance Learning Course. This is available via the RFU website www.rfu.com (Community Rugby pages) or by ringing Twickenham (0208 831 7454).
- Complete a Criminal Records Bureau (CSB) Disclosure Form when requested by a Club official.

7. THE CONTINUUM SEASON

- (a) The season runs from 1st September to 30th April inclusive. The playing of Mini/Midi rugby matches in England by, or between, Clubs outside the season (as defined by these dates) is expressly forbidden. Only R.F.U. approved or organised festivals/tournaments may take place in May. Applications for such approval must be made through Constituent Bodies (CBs) to the Community Rugby and Operations Department at Twickenham by February 1st of each year. *Note: Tag Rugby can continue to played by a wide range of participants as a fun game at any time.*
- (b) The first Sunday in September should be player registration day.
- (c) There must be no fixtures during September. September is solely for coach education and for coaching of players. No matches or festivals may be played in this month. Fixtures may commence on the first Sunday in October.

- (d) Coach education must take priority over the playing of fixtures in January.

8. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of these Regulations, the following definitions apply:

- (a) Fixture/Triangular Fixture: The playing of Mini/Midi Rugby between teams of different Schools/Clubs, not more than three Schools/Clubs being involved together on any one day.
- (b) Festival/Tournament: The playing of Mini/Midi Rugby between more than three teams of different Schools/Clubs on a league basis, normally to establish a winner, all games taking place being part of one event.

9. FESTIVALS

At all festivals players must always play within their individual age grade unless Festival rules allow combined age grades to play but they may do so only as defined in Age Grade Regulations above. At all festivals no player is to play in more than 5 games.

- (a) For festivals for Under 7/8 a team shall consist of a maximum of 7 players with a squad containing a maximum of 12 players.
- (b) For festivals for Under 9/10 a team shall consist of a maximum of 9 players with a squad containing a maximum of 14 players.
- (c) For Festivals for Under 11/12 a team shall consist of a maximum of 12 players with a squad containing maximum of 18 players.

10. NUMBERS OF FIXTURES/FESTIVALS/TOURNAMENTS PER SEASON

- (a) Players must be limited to playing in not more than:
- Under 7/8 12 fixtures and 3 festivals/tournaments
 - Under 9/10 12 fixtures and 3 festivals/tournaments
 - Under 11/12 14 fixtures and 3 festivals/tournaments.
- (b) During the season Clubs must not enter the same team in more than one festival at a weekend.

Tours are defined as fixtures or festivals according to the number of teams involved, and must be counted with the restriction as stated in 10(a) and (b) above.

11. MATCH DURATIONS

The maximum number of minutes to be played at each Stage of the Continuum is:

Stage 3 Under 11/12

Fixture: 20 minutes each way • 1 match = 40 minutes

Triangular: 15 minutes each way • 2 matches = 60 minutes

Festival/tournament: 7 minutes each way • Maximum of 5 matches = 70 minutes

No extra time is permitted in any match, except that added for injury time.

Stage 2 Under 9/10

Fixture: 15 minutes each way • 1 match = 30 minutes

Triangular: 10 minutes each way • 2 matches = 40 minutes

Festival/tournament: 6 minutes each way • Maximum of 5 matches = 60 minutes

No extra time is permitted in any match, except that added for injury time.

Stage 1 Under 7/8

Fixture: 10 minutes each way • 1 match = 20 minutes

Triangular: 7 1/2 minutes each way • 2 matches = 30 minutes

Festival/tournament: 5 minutes each way • Maximum of 5 matches = 50 minutes.

No extra time is permitted in any match, except that added for injury time.

Note 1: Where Clubs have large squads, additional fixtures/festivals may be arranged, provided that no player plays in more than the maximum number of matches.

Note 2: Matches must be shortened if one side is scoring too freely (i.e. if the points difference rises to more than 30).

Note 3: In all cases, these regulations cover maximum numbers. These numbers must not be exceeded. Where Clubs have limited numbers, space and time available, fewer matches involving reduced numbers of players must be considered, the emphasis always being on the gradual development of skill.

Note 4: Clubs must maintain records giving details of how many matches each Mini/Midi team plays over a season, together with information on how many matches are played by each player, to ensure that individual players are not exceeding the Rugby Continuum limits.

12. CONTROL

- (a) **Administration:** Constituent Bodies and County Schools' Unions must oversee the administration of Mini/Midi Rugby and ensure that all affiliated Clubs and Schools comply with the Continuum Rules of Play, Regulations and playing restrictions and Child Protection guidelines published by the RFU.

- (b) **Rugby for children:** Every Club and School, which plays non-contact rugby, Mini Rugby or Midi Rugby, must accept full responsibility for its proper administration. It must comply with the Rules of Play, Regulations, playing restrictions and the RFU/RFUW Policy and Procedures for the welfare of Young People in Rugby Union. It is strongly recommended that all adults who coach young players attend the appropriate RFU coach education course as soon as possible.
- (c) **Health and Safety:** Every Club and School must also have close regard to health and safety issues and carry out necessary risk assessments particularly where there is contact between players, etc.

13. **PLAYER REGISTRATION**

Registration for all youth players was made mandatory in 1998. Clubs must ensure that all Mini/Midi players complete and return registration forms to the Constituent Body Youth Registration Official. Team managers may be required to produce, for inspection, registration cards for each player when participating in fixtures and festivals.

14. **SAFETY**

Before starting play, referees should check that the home club has provided a qualified First Aider, ambulance access has not been prejudiced and that appropriate equipment is available along with someone trained in its use. If a player appears injured, the referee must stop play immediately. He/she must not wait for the ball to go dead, or for anything else. The whistle must be blown at once. It's better to be safe than sorry! Obviously the referee must use judgement - players don't want to stop for every slight knock - but it is usually possible to tell when a child is hurt. Take no chances. Act fast - but act with caution. An injured player must not be moved. Essentially, other people/players must be stopped from rushing in and hauling the player to his/her feet. They may mean well, but they could make the damage even worse.

If referees find themselves in an injury situation, he/she must concentrate on the vital things. Is there difficulty in breathing? Remove mouth guard to aid breathing. If so, ensure the player hasn't swallowed their tongue. If they have, hook it out at once. Do they seem stunned? They may be concussed - if so, they must leave the field and have a medical examination. Is there bleeding? If so, the player must leave the field for treatment. But still do not move the player. Invite him/her to get up. If it hurts them to move, let them stay where they are and send for expert help.

15. **DANGEROUS PLAY**

Dangerous play can cause injury. Coaches and referees must be particularly vigilant to prevent it.

- High tackling (level with or above the armpit) is dangerous - penalise it!
- Collapsing a ruck or maul is dangerous - penalise it!
- Sloppy scrums leads to collapsed scrums - keep the heads no lower than hips
- Hand-offs and fend-offs are dangerous - penalise them!
- Tripping with the foot is dangerous - penalise it!
- Hanging onto the ball while lying on the ground is dangerous (to the holder) - penalise it!

There will always be knocks and bumps in Mini/Midi Rugby, but if dangerous play is eliminated, then many serious injuries will never happen. After a stoppage for injury, restart play with a free pass or a scrum to the team that had possession of the ball immediately prior to the stoppage.

16. MEDICAL PROVISION

The RFU strongly recommends that Clubs have suitably qualified first aiders present to provide immediate assistance to any young player who is injured, whether during training sessions or during competitive play against outside opposition.

17. DISCIPLINE

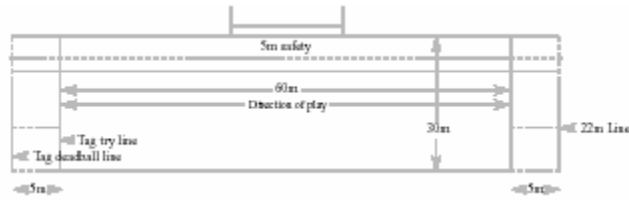
If the referee decides to send a player off, he/she must stop the match, call the individual player aside from the other players and invite the coach of that player on to the field. The referee must explain to the coach and the player why he/she feels that the player's behaviour is unacceptable, and instruct the coach to provide a substitute. That player is to take no further part in that tournament or festival. It is the responsibility of the coach to speak to and educate the player as to why he/she was sent off. Clubs and Schools must take action in line with the RFU Disciplinary Procedures for School and Club Youth Players. There are no formal reporting procedures to the RFU but individual CB's have the authority to ask for a formal report.

18. PITCH SIZES

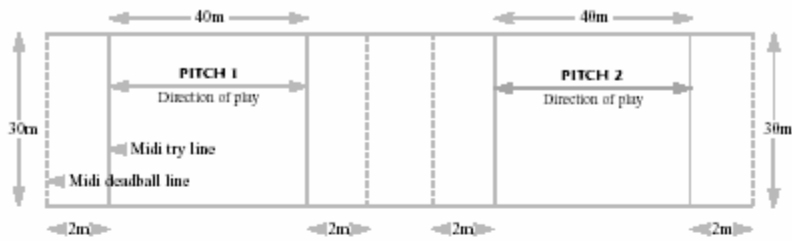
The maximum pitch size for Under-7s and Under-8s (Mini Tag) is 60 metres x 30 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area.

The maximum pitch size for Under - 9s and Under-10s is 60 metres x 35 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area.

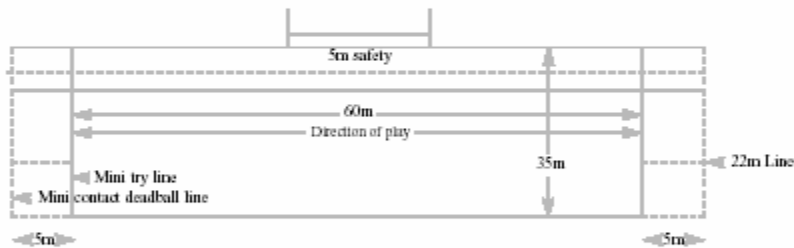
The maximum pitch size for Under- 11s and Under - 12s is 60 metres x 43 metres,
Plus 5 metres for each in-goal area.



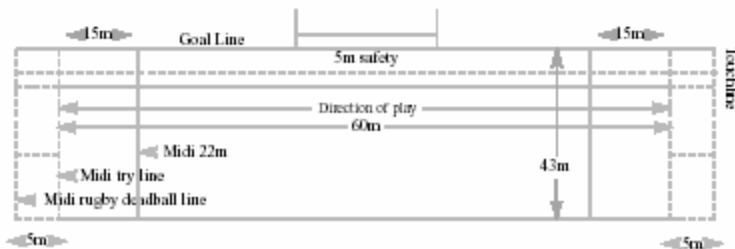
The maximum pitch size for under-8s (touch) is 40 metres x 30 metres, plus 2 metres for each in-goal area.



The maximum pitch size for under-9s and under-10s is 60 metres x 35 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area.



The maximum pitch size for under-11s and under-12s is 60 metres x 43 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area.



RULES OF PLAY - WITH EFFECT FROM 1ST SEPTEMBER 2003

STAGE 1 MINI TAG UNDER 7

S1.1 The object of the game is to score a try (5 points) by placing the ball with a downward pressure behind the opponents' goal-line. For the sake of safety, the ball carrier must remain on his/her feet at all times and is not allowed to score a try by diving over the goal-line. For safety reasons, where Tag Rugby is played indoors or in restricted areas, a try can be scored by the ball carrier crossing the vertical plane of the goal-line without grounding the ball. This allows players to have their head up and be aware of their surroundings at all times. When a try is scored, the game is restarted by a free pass from the centre of the pitch by the non-scoring team.

S1.2 Tag Rugby is played between teams of equal numbers of players, each team containing not more than seven players and not less than five players. The maximum pitch size is 60 metres x 30 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area.

Each side can have an agreed number of substitutes. Substituted players can be re-used at any time. All substitutions will be when the 'ball is dead' or at half time and with the referee's knowledge.

S1.3 The ball can only be passed sideways or backwards through the air, not handed to another player. If the ball is handed to another player or passed or knocked forwards (towards the opponents goal-line) then a free pass is awarded to the non-offending side, unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side.

NOTE In order to keep the game flowing, referees should apply advantage wherever possible.

S1.4 THE FREE PASS

A free pass is used to start the match at the beginning of each half from the centre of the pitch, from the side of the pitch when the ball goes into touch and from where the referee makes a mark when an infringement has taken place.

At a free pass, the opposition must be 7 metres back from the mark. They cannot start moving forward until the ball leaves the hands of the passer.

At a free pass, the player must start with the ball in both hands and, when instructed by the referee who will call "PLAY", pass the ball backwards, through the air, to a member of their team. For safety reasons, the receiver of the pass must not start more than 2 metres from the free pass mark. The player taking the free pass **must** pass the ball and cannot just run with the ball when the referee calls "PLAY".

If an infringement takes place over the goal-line or within 7 metres of the goal-line, then the free pass must be awarded to the non-offending side 7 metres from

the goal-line. This gives more space for both attacking and defending teams to play in.

S1.5 THE TAG

All players wear a Tag belt, around their waist, with two tags attached to it by Velcro, which are to be positioned over each hip. Tag belts are to be securely fastened and any excess belt is to be tucked away so that this cannot be pulled by mistake. Tag belts are to be worn outside of shirts and not obscured in any way. Referees are to be watchful for tags being wrapped around the belt preventing them from being pulled off. Tags are of various colours and can be used to identify teams if they do not have shirts.

A 'TAG' is the removal of one of the two tags from the ball carriers belt. Only the ball carrier can be tagged. The ball carrier can run and dodge potential taggers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball and cannot guard or shield their tags in any way. The ball cannot be pulled out of the ball carrier's hands at any time.

If a player does not have two tags on their belt, they will be penalised if they become a ball carrier or if they tag an opponent.

Penalty: Free pass to non-offending side.

Actions by the ball carrier:

When the ball carrier is tagged the ball must be passed to a team mate within 3 seconds, this includes stopping time. The ball carrier must attempt to stop as soon as possible, within 3 strides is a reasonable guide for referees, but the ball can be passed in the act of stopping.

After the ball has been passed, the player must go to the tagger, retrieve their tag and place it back on their belt before re-joining play. If the player continues to play and influences the game without collecting their tag, they must be penalised and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.

- Players are however only allowed one step to score a try after being tagged and must stay on their feet.
- If the ball carrier is tagged whilst standing inside the goal area they must immediately ground the ball to score.
- Diving to score a try is unsafe and must be penalised.

Actions by the tagger:

When a tag is made, the tagger must stop running, hold the tag above their head and shout, "TAG". At this stage the referee must shout, "TAG - PASS".

If the ball carrier stops running within 1 metre of the tagger, the tagger must move back towards their own goal-line, at least 1 metre, to allow room for the ball to be passed.

Once the ball has been passed, the tagger must hand back the tag to the player and cannot re-join the match until this has been done. If a tagger continues to play and influences the match with an opponent's tag in their hand, or throws it to the floor, they must be penalised and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.

S1.6 OFFSIDE

Offside only occurs immediately at the TAG where the offside line is through the centre of the ball. When a TAG is made, all players from the tagger's team must attempt to retire towards their own goal-line until they are behind the ball. If a player, in an offside position, intercepts, prevents or slows down a pass from the tagged player to a teammate, a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side.

A player can, however, run from an onside position to intercept a floated pass before it reaches the intended receiver.

S1.7 When the ball is carried into touch, the game is restarted with a free pass awarded to the non-offending side. As with all free passes, opponents must be 7m back from the mark. Free passes from the touchline cannot take place closer than 7 metres from the goal-line. The place for taking the free pass is on the touchline at the point where the ball went out of play.

S1.8 The ball carrier can run and dodge potential taggers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball and cannot guard or shield their tags in any way. The ball carrier **must not** deliberately make contact with an opponent. If such contact is made the game must be stopped, the offender spoken to, reminded of the non-contact rules of tag and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side.

S1.9 There is no kicking of any kind in Tag Rugby.

S1.10 Players play Tag Rugby on their feet, with the ball in hand. If the ball goes to ground, players must not dive to the floor to recover the ball.

Penalty: free pass to non-offending side. The following rules will apply.

1. If the ball was lost forward, a free pass is awarded to the non-offending side unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side.
2. If the ball carrier falls to the ground with the ball then a free pass will be awarded to the non-ball carrying side.
3. If the ball is passed other than forward and goes to ground play will continue and either side may pick up the ball. If the passed ball rolls into touch a free pass will commence from the touchline to the non-passing side.

4. If the ball is pulled from the ball carriers grasp, a free pass is awarded to the ball carrier's side.
5. If the ball carrier dives to ground to score a try it will be disallowed and free pass will be awarded to the defending side 5m out from the goal-line.

S1.11 The only contact allowed between the two teams is the removal of a tag from the belt of the ball carrier. Any other type of contact on the ball carrier, such as shirt pulling, running in front of or barging the ball carrier, forcing the ball carrier into touch, etc must be penalised with a free pass.

S1.12 The match is made up of two halves, each of ten minutes duration. During the 2 minute half-time interval, coaches must take time to talk to, encourage, coach and explain the game to the players. During the match, coaches can direct and develop play, in a coaching sense, from on the field of play, ideally from behind their teams. Coaches must help to enforce the carrying of the ball in two hands and prompt players to pass when tagged.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

1. A size 3 ball should be used.
2. The standard dimensions for a Tag are 38cms in length by 5cms in width although slight variations of a few millimetres should not be cause for concern. They should be made of a flexible plastic or plastic/canvas material. Tags are generally provided in red, blue, green and yellow. Colours should be chosen so that they stand out against the players' strip, e.g., teams with yellow shirts or shorts should not use yellow tags. The Tag specification is the same for U7 and U8 age grades. Coaches are reminded that the tags are to be positioned on the hips, not at the front or back, which may require the belt to be adjusted slightly for players with particularly small waists. Placing a knot in between the two Velcro pieces on the belt often brings the tags into the correct position.

NOTE: These dimensions and colours are only guidelines to try and achieve uniformity. Mini Tag games can continue to be played with Tags that do not comply with these guidelines.

3. Players may play a maximum of twelve fixtures and not more than three festivals (at least one in the Constituent Body and two others) in any one season. The emphasis must be on providing the children with an enjoyable introduction to the skills of the game. Competition is of secondary importance.
4. Where Clubs have large squads, additional fixtures/festivals may be arranged, provided that no player plays in more than the maximum number.
5. At festivals no player is to play in more than 5 games.

Under 7 match durations

Fixture: 10 minutes each way • 1 game = 20 minutes

Triangular: 7 1/2 minutes each way • 2 games = 30 minutes

Festival/tournament: 5 minutes each way • Maximum of 5 games = 50 minutes

No extra time is permitted in any match, except that added for injury time.

6. Games must be shortened if one side is scoring too freely (i.e. if the points difference rises to more than 30).
7. The emphasis must be on enjoyment. The children must be encouraged to enjoy the physical skills of running, passing and evasion, and they must be coached according to material available in the Mini Tag Coaching Course.
8. **On match days against outside opposition, a coaching session should always precede the match. All matches must be used as an extension of the coaching session, with the emphasis being on the quality of performance rather than the result. Mismatches can be avoided by talking to the Coach in charge of the opposition before the game.**
9. A coaching session must last no longer than 60 minutes with the addition of no more than 20 minutes devoted to match play against outside opposition.
10. Although Tag Rugby is a completely non-contact game 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.
11. For safety reasons coaches and referees must check that studs and other approved clothing before training sessions, games and tournaments are in accordance with the Laws of the Game.
12. In the Mini Tag version of the game there is a total emphasis on running with the ball, evasion, running in support of the ball carrier, passing and running to tag the ball carrier. In Mini Tag there is:
 - NO TACKLING
 - NO SCRUMMAGE
 - NO LINE-OUT
 - NO KICKING
 - NO HAND-OFF/FEND-OFF

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STAGE 1 MINI TAG UNDER 8

From the season 2003/2004, the Under 8 age grade will play Mini Tag as played by the U7's and published in the Under 7 section of the Rugby Continuum.

S1.13 Under 8 Variation

During their time in the U7 age grade, players may have become so good at passing and catching, that few mistakes are made and there are few natural turnovers of the ball and, a team may score every time they gain possession. When players move up to the Under 8 age grade, they will continue to play Mini Tag but with one variation. To reward good defence and to promote the attacking side keeping the ball alive by passing the ball before being tagged, the side in possession of the ball will only be allowed to be tagged a maximum of 6 times before scoring a try.

At the 7th tag, the referee will stop the game and give the ball to the other side by awarding a free pass at the point that the tag took place. If the 7th tag takes place one step from the try line and the ball is grounded, the try will be disallowed and the opposition will be given the ball for a free pass 7m out from the goal line, in line with the point the goal line was crossed.

Referees are to amend their calls to add the number of the tag as well, so instead of calling "TAG - PASS", they should call, e.g., "TAG - PASS -THREE". On the 6th tag, referees should call "TAG - PASS - SIX and LAST" to help players remember the rule. No hand signals are to be used.

Note: Coaches of the teams may agree to reduce the maximum number of allowable tags to provide more of a challenge to their players, both in attack and defence. If coaches cannot agree then the 7th tag ruling must be enforced.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

- 1** A size 3 ball should be used.
- 2** The standard dimensions for a Tag are 38cms in length by 5cms in width although slight variations of a few millimetres should not be cause for concern. They should be made of a flexible plastic or plastic/canvas material. Tags are generally provided in red, blue, green and yellow. Colours should be chosen so that they stand out against the players' strip, e.g., teams with yellow shirts or shorts should not use yellow tags. The Tag specification is the same for U7 and U8 age grades. Coaches are reminded that the tags are to be positioned on the hips, not at the front or back, which may require the belt to be adjusted slightly for players with particularly small waists. Placing a knot in between the two Velcro pieces on the belt often brings the tags into the correct position.

NOTE: *These dimensions and colours are only guidelines to try and achieve uniformity. Mini Tag games can continue to be played with Tags that do not comply exactly with these guidelines.*

- 3 Players must play a maximum of twelve fixtures and not more than three festivals (at least one in the Constituent Body and two others) in any one season. The emphasis must be on providing the children with an enjoyable introduction to the skills of the game. Competition is of secondary importance.
- 4 Where clubs have large squads, additional fixtures / festivals may be arranged, provided that no player plays in more than the maximum number.
- 5 At festivals no player is to play in more than 5 games.

Under 8 match durations

Fixture: 10 minutes each way • 1 game = 20 minutes

Triangular: 7 1/2 minutes each way • 2 games = 30 minutes

Festival / tournament: 5 minutes each way • Maximum of 5 games = 50 minutes

No extra time is permitted in any match, except that added for injury time.

- 6 Games must be shortened if one side is scoring too freely (i.e. if the points difference rises to more than 30).

The emphasis must be on enjoyment. The children must be encouraged to enjoy the physical skills of running, passing and evasion and they must be coached according to the RFU coaching course material.

- 7 **On match days against outside opposition, a coaching session should always precede the match. All matches must be used as an extension of the coaching session, with the emphasis being on the quality of performance rather than the result. Mismatches can be avoided by talking to the Coach in charge of the opposition before the game.**
- 8 A coaching session must last no longer than 60 minutes with the addition of no more than 20 minutes devoted to match play against outside opposition.
- 9 Although Mini Tag Rugby is a completely non-contact game 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.
- 10 For safety reasons coaches and referees must check that studs and other approved clothing before training sessions, games and tournament are in accordance with the Laws of the Game.

11 In the Mini Tag version of the game there is a total emphasis on running with the ball, evasion, running in support of the ball carrier, passing and running to tag the ball carrier. In Mini Tag there is:

- NO TACKLING
- NO SCRUMMAGE
- NO LINE-OUT
- NO KICKING
- NO HAND-OFF/FEND-OFF

12 **Introduction of the concept of the Uncontested Scrum.** As the end of the season approaches (but not before 1st February), the concept of the uncontested scrum may be introduced into training sessions but not into the game format until the next age grade (i.e. Under 9). All players should experience all positions starting with a three player uncontested scrum. The scrum should be made up of one row of three players from each team. The ball is thrown into the scrum as laid down in the Laws of the Game of Rugby Union Football. The centre player of the three in the non-offending team sweeps the ball back through the legs of the player on their left with the right foot. The players of the offending team in the scrum must not attempt to hook the ball or push their opponents backwards. The back line in the team not throwing the ball into the scrum must remain 7 metres behind the scrum until normal play restarts, with the exception of the scrum half, who must remain behind the rearmost foot of the scrum, until normal play restarts. Normal play will restart when the ball has emerged from the scrum. The formation of the scrum must be introduced in a progressive way following the stages described in current RFU Coaching Course materials.

13 **Introduction of the concept of the Uncontested Lineout.** As the end of the season approaches (but not before 1st February), the concept of the uncontested lineout may be introduced into training sessions but not into the game format until the next age grade (i.e. under 9). All players should experience all positions in the lineout.

The line-out will be made up of two players from each team, plus the player throwing the ball in and an immediate opponent, who must stand within the 2-metre area, 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 game as soon as the ball has been touched by one of the players in the line-out. In the uncontested line-out, the team throwing the ball in must be allowed to catch and win the ball without any interference from the opposition. The opposition are not allowed to compete for the ball until the line-out ends.

The line-out will extend from 2 to 7 metres from the touchline. The opponents of the team who carried or last touched the ball before it went into touch shall throw the ball in. 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, the opposition will be awarded the throw. Should the opposition then throw beyond 7 metres, a scrum

will be awarded to the side originally throwing in. 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 he/she returns to the ground). The formation of the lineout must be introduced in a progressive way following the stages described in current RFU Coaching Course materials.

- 14 Introduction of Tackling.** As the end of the season approaches (but not before 1st February), tackling may be introduced into training sessions but not into the game format until the next age grade (i.e. Under 9).

Tackling is a skill that needs to be taught and must be introduced progressively as shown in the current RFU Coaching Course materials.

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STAGE 2 MINI CONTACT RUGBY UNDER 9 & 10.

S2.1 The object of the game is to score a try (5 points) in accordance with the Laws of the Game.

S2.2 The game is played between teams of nine players, three (and no more) of whom will form the scrum, with the remaining six 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.

S2.3 Each side can have an agreed number of substitutes. Substituted players can be re-used at any time. All substitutions will be when the 'ball is dead' or at half time and with the referee's knowledge.

S2.4 The ball can only be passed sideways or backwards - defined as 'towards the player's own try line'.

S2.5 THE FREE PASS

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.

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.

Note: 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 no more than 2 metres behind the passer but may be at any distance laterally across the width of the field of play. The passer must not run with the ball or dummy pass. Normal play resumes as the ball leaves the hand of the passer.

S2.6 If the ball is passed forward or knocked on, a scrum is awarded to the opposition.

S2.7 FOLLOWING A TACKLE

Tackling is now permitted in all age groups from under 9 upwards.

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.

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.

At a tackle, or near to a tackle, other players 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.

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

Penalty: A free pass restart to the ball-carrier's team

Note 2: The scrag type tackle (i.e. swinging the player round by the shirt) must be considered dangerous play and must be penalised.

Penalty: A free pass to the ball-carrier's team.

On penalty restarts, a quickly taken free pass whilst the opponents are retiring is not permitted.

S2.8 SQUEEZE BALL

No player shall use the technique known or referred to as 'Squeezeball'.

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.

Penalty: Free pass.

LAW NOTES: DEFINITION

LAW 14 BALL ON THE GROUND and

LAW 15 TACKLE: BALL CARRIER BROUGHT TO THE GROUND.

It is illegal for any player to voluntarily fall on or over a player lying on the ground with the ball in his possession, to voluntarily fall on or over players lying on the ground with the ball between them, or near them.

Penalty: Free pass at the place of infringement.

Additional Notes to help interpret LAWS 14 and 15.

- (a) No advantage shall be played under this Law
- (b) A player is assumed to have fallen voluntarily unless the referee is absolutely certain the fall was accidental.
- (c) 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 of this change in interpretation in Law 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 defined as "players from each team on their feet" (Law 16, Ruck; Law 17, Maul). Should the correctly formed ruck or maul then collapse, the referee must immediately act to prevent a pile-up from developing.

LAW 17 – MAUL

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.
- A maul ends successfully when the ball or a player with the ball leaves the maul.
- A maul ends when the ball is on the ground, or is on or over the goal-line.
- 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.
- When a maul remains stationary or has stopped moving forward 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.
- 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.

Scrum following 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.

Summary

At least three players form the maul; the ball-carrier plus at least one player from each side in contact, all on their feet.

LAW 16 – RUCK

A ruck occurs where one or more players from each team, who are on their feet, in physical contact, close around the ball on the ground. 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.

- A ruck ends successfully when the ball leaves the ruck, or when the ball is on or over the goal-line.
- A ruck ends unsuccessfully when the ball becomes unplayable and a scrum is awarded.

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.

Summary

The ball is on the ground with at least one player from each team on their feet, close to the ball, and in physical contact. It is helpful if the referee calls “ruck formed”.

- S2.9** If, after a tackle or ruck, 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 ruck or, if no team was moving forward, to the attacking team (the team in the opponents’ half of the pitch).

S2.10 THE UNCONTESTED SCRUM (UNDER 9 ONLY)

The scrum will be made up of one row of three players (and no more) from each team, i.e. a prop on either side of the hooker. 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. With these exceptions, the Laws of the Game pertaining to the scrum will apply.

The players from each team will bind together approximately half a metre apart; each prop will then 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.

S2.11 THE CONTESTED SCRUM (UNDER 10 ONLY).

The scrum will be made up of one row of three players (and no more) from each team, i.e. a prop on either side of a hooker. With these exceptions, and those listed below, the Laws of the Game pertaining to the scrum will apply.

The players from each team will bind together approximately one metre apart, each prop will then touch the upper arm of his opponent, then pause before the engagement, the referee will talk the players through the engagement procedure of **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.

Under no circumstances is the scrum to be:

- Pushed more than 1.5 metres towards either try line
Penalty: A free pass at the original spot against the side that has pushed the scrum.
- 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.

S2.12 SCRUM SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR REFEREES AND COACHES

- 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
- 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 he/she must be replaced
- If a player's lack of technique or strength is a danger then he/she must be replaced. All players involved in scrums, including replacements, should be properly trained. If this is not the case at U10, the referee must order uncontested scrums.
- Shoulders must always be above the level of the hips.
- In contested scrums, if one side is obviously stronger and more experienced than the other, the referee must advise the stronger side to reduce their push to take this into account. If this cannot be done, the referee must order uncontested scrums in the interests of safety.
- Any player at any stage in a scrum, ruck or maul who has or causes an opponent to have, his shoulders lower than his hip joint must immediately be penalised by awarding a Free Kick. The object of this interpretation is to try to prevent a collapse of scrum, ruck or maul. It is

to help the coach to coach 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.

S2.13 The team awarded the scrum will throw the ball in. The back line of the team not throwing the ball into the scrum must remain 7 metres behind the scrum until the ball emerges or the scrum-half places his hands on it. Until this happens, the opposing scrum-half must remain directly behind his scrum

S2.14 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 players crossed the touchline. A quick throw-in is not permitted.

S2.15 THE UNCONTESTED LINE-OUT (UNDER 9 ONLY)

- The line-out will be made up of two players from each team, plus the player throwing the ball in and an immediate opponent, who must stand within the 2 metre area, 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 game as soon as the ball has been touched by one of the players in the line-out.
- In the uncontested line-out, the team throwing the ball in must be allowed to catch and win the ball without any interference from the opposition. If the ball is cleanly caught the opposition can compete for the ball when the catcher has landed, or when the line-out has ended as per law 19 (see below).
- The line-out will extend from 2 to 7 metres from the touchline.
- The opponents of the team who carried or last touched the ball before it went into touch shall throw the ball in.
- 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, the opposition will be awarded the throw. Should the opposition then throw beyond 7 metres, a scrum will be awarded to the side originally throwing in.
- 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 he/she returns to the ground).
- The player designated to receive the ball (i.e. the scrum half) may not enter the lineout to compete for the ball.

S2.16 THE CONTESTED LINE-OUT (UNDER 10 ONLY)

- The line-out will be made up of two players from each team, plus the player throwing the ball in and an immediate opponent, who must stand within the 2 metre area, 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 game as soon as the ball has been touched by one of the players contesting the line-out.
- The line-out will extend from 2 to 7 metres from the touchline.
- The opponents of the team who carried or last touched the ball before it went into touch shall throw the ball in.
- 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, the opposition will be awarded the throw. Should the opposition then throw beyond 7 metres, a scrum will be awarded to the side originally throwing in.
- 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 he/she returns to the ground).
- The player designated to receive the ball (i.e. the scrum half) may not enter the lineout to compete for the ball.

LAW 19 LINE - OUT

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:

- When the ball is thrown or knocked out of the line-out
- When a line-out player hands the ball to a player who is peeling close to and parallel to the line
- 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
- When the ball becomes unplayable in a line-out. Play restarts with a scrum.

S2.17 The offside line for all players not participating in the line-out (all players other than those described under Rules **S2.14** or **S2.15** above) will be 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.

S2.18 Offside in general play shall be penalised in accordance with the 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.

S2.19 A player must not hand-off or fend-off an opponent in any way. A hand or fend-off is defined as ‘any movement of the hand, arm or ball to ward off a would-be tackler’.

Penalty: A free pass restart to the opposition.

Players are recommended to carry the ball in two hands.

S2.20 After a try has been scored, the game restarts from the centre with a free pass (as in **S2.5** above). The restart shall not take place until the opponents have returned to a line 7 metres back from the centre, in the half they are defending.

S2.21 A player may not kick the ball. If this happens, possession goes to the non-offending team for a free pass restart at the point at which the ball was kicked.

S2.22 Following an infringement for:

- Offside
- High or late tackle
- Hand-off/fend-off
- Kicking
- Obstruction

The game is restarted with a free pass to the non-offending team. The offending team must retire 7 metres from the point of restart, towards their own goal-line.

S2.23 After any stoppage not covered in the Rules, the game shall restart with a scrum to the team moving forward, or, if neither team was moving forward, to the team who was last in possession of the ball.

S2.24 A match will be made up of two halves, each of not more than 15 minutes duration. During the interval, coaches must take adequate time to talk to, encourage, coach and explain the game to the players.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

1. Under 9s should use a size 3 ball. Under 10s should use a size 4 ball.
2. The development of all contact (contested or uncontested scrums and line - outs) must be introduced using current coaching manual.
3. Tackling is a skill that needs to be taught and must be introduced progressively as shown in the current RFU Coaching Course materials.
4. The formation of the scrum must be introduced in a progressive way following the stages described in current RFU Coaching Course materials.

No person involved in the teaching or coaching of the Game may teach or coach players involved in a match at any age level from U18 downwards or encourage

such players to use the technique known or referred to as 'Squeezeball'. *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.

5. Players must play a maximum of twelve fixtures and not more than three festivals (at least one in the Constituent Body and two others) in any one season. The emphasis must be on providing the children with an enjoyable introduction to the skills of the game. Competition is of secondary importance.
6. Where Clubs have large squads, additional fixtures/festivals may be arranged, provided that no player plays in more than the maximum number.
7. At festivals no player is to play in more than 5 games.

Under 9/under 10 match durations

Fixture: 15 minutes each way • 1 match = 30 minutes

Triangular: 10 minutes each way • 2 matches = 40 minutes

Festival/tournament: 6 minutes each way • Maximum of 5 matches = 60 minutes

No extra time is permitted in any match, except that added for injury time.

8. Games must be shortened if one side is scoring too freely (i.e. if the points difference rises to more than 30).
9. The emphasis must be on enjoyment. The children must be encouraged to enjoy the physical skills of running, passing and evasion, and they must be coached according to material available in the Mini/Midi Foundation or Level 1 coaching courses.
10. **On match days against outside opposition, a coaching session should always precede the match. All matches must be used as an extension of the coaching session, with the emphasis being on the quality of performance rather than the result. Mismatches can be avoided by talking to the Coach in charge of the opposition before the game.**
11. A coaching session must last no longer than 60 minutes with the addition of no more than 30 minutes devoted to match play.
12. For safety reasons coaches and referees must check that studs and other approved clothing before training sessions, games, festivals or tournaments are in accordance with the Laws of the Game.
13. The RFU strongly recommends the wearing of mouth guards. Ideally mouth guards should be custom made from a dental impression of the teeth. The RFU also strongly recommends the use of shin guards.

14. In this version of the game there is:

- NO KICKING
- NO HAND-OFF/FEND-OFF
- NO FLY HACKING (kicking a loose ball on the ground).

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STAGE 3 MIDI RUGBY UNDER 11 & 12.

- S3.1** The object of the game is to score a try (5 points) and conversion (2 points) in accordance with the Laws of the Game.
- S3.2** Teams will be made up of twelve players, five (and no more) of whom will be forwards, with the remaining seven forming the back line.
- S3.3** Each side can have an agreed number of substitutes. Substituted players can be re-used at any time. All substitutions will be when the ‘ball is dead’ or at half time and with the referees knowledge.
- S3.4** A drop kick will be used to start the game, the second half, and for all restarts after a score. The kicker’s team must be behind the ball until it has been kicked and the receiving team must be at least 7 metres back from the ball.

LAW 13 - KICK-OFF AND RESTART KICKS

If, from the kick-off, the ball is kicked directly into touch, the opposition has the choice of:

- The kick-off to be taken again
- Their throw-in to a scrum at the centre spot
- Accepting the kick and contesting a line-out at the half-way line.

- If, from the kick-off, the ball goes directly into in-goal and is then immediately touched down or made ‘dead’, or the ball goes into touch-in-goal, the opposition has the choice of:
 - The kick-off to be taken again
 - Their throw-in to a scrum at the centre of the half way line.

LAW 20 – SCRUM

The scrum will be made up of five players from each team - the front row (a row of three players, and no more, i.e. a prop on either side of the hooker) and two locks forming the second row. The locks must bind to each other using the inside arm, with the outside arm around the hips (not between the legs) of the front row (props).

The front rows from each team will bind together approximately half a metre apart, and the locks will bind to each other and to the props. Each prop will then 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.

SCRUM SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR REFEREES AND COACHES

- 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)
- Any player at any stage in a scrum, ruck or maul who has or causes an opponent to have, his shoulders lower than his hip joint must immediately be penalised by awarding a Free Kick. The object of this interpretation is to try to prevent a collapse of scrum, ruck or maul. It is to help the coach to coach 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.
- Locks must bind round the hips of the props - not through the props' legs
- There must be no downward pressure exerted by hands or arms
- 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 he must be replaced
- If a player's lack of technique or strength is a danger then he/she must be replaced. All players involved with scrums, including replacements are to be properly trained in their roles.
- In the absence of any adequate replacement, there is no choice (on safety grounds) other than to go to a non-contested scrum.

This applies at any age level. In a non-contested scrum the teams do not contest for the ball. The team throwing in the ball must win it. Neither team is allowed to push the other team away from the mark.

In all other situations, the Laws of the Game of Rugby Union Football apply with the following exceptions:

Under no circumstances is the scrum to be:

- Pushed more than 1.5 metres towards either try line

Penalty: A free kick against the side, which pushes the scrum at the original spot.

- Wheeled more than 45 degrees

Penalty: If a team intentionally wheels a scrum, a penalty kick will be awarded against that side. If the scrum is wheeled more than 45 degrees without a penalty kick, the scrum will be reset with the same team throwing the ball in.

The scrum-half not throwing the ball into the scrum may remain directly alongside his opponent. He must not move beyond the middle line of the scrum until the ball has emerged from the scrum or an opponent has placed his hands on the ball. In the event of a strike against the head, the scrum-half who has thrown the ball into the scrum is similarly restricted in not following the ball.

S3.5 THE LINEOUT

If the ball or player carrying the ball goes out of play, a contested line-out at the point at which the ball or players crossed the touchline will take place. A quick throw-in is not permitted.

- The line-out must always consist of four players from each team, plus the player throwing the ball in and an immediate opponent, who must stand within the 2 metre area, 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 game as soon as the ball has been touched by one of the players contesting the line-out.
- The line-out will extend from 2 to 10 metres from the touchline. Should the ball be thrown beyond 10 metres, the opposition will be awarded the throw. Should the opposition then throw beyond 10 metres, a scrum will be awarded to the side originally throwing in. 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 he/she has returned to the ground).
- The offside line for all players not participating in the line-out (all players other than those described in **S3.5** above) will be 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.
- The player designated to receive the ball (i.e. the scrum half) may not enter the lineout to compete for the ball.

LAW 19 - LINE-OUT

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:

- When the ball is thrown or knocked out of the line-out
- When a line-out player hands the ball to a player who is peeling close to and parallel to the line.
- 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

- When the ball becomes unplayable in a line-out. Play restarts with a scrum.

S3.6 FOLLOWING A TACKLE

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.

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. Any player who has the ball and is on their feet (except in a maul) can be tackled as laid down in Law 15 of the Laws of the Game.

At a tackle, or near to a tackle, other players 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.

S3.7 SQUEEZE BALL

No player involved shall use the technique known or referred to as 'Squeezeball'.

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.

Penalty: Penalty Kick

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.

Penalty: Penalty kick.

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

Penalty: Penalty kick to the ball carrier's team.

Note 2: **The scrag type tackle (i.e. swinging the player round by the shirt) must be considered dangerous play and must be penalised.**

Penalty: Penalty kick to the ball carrier's team.

LAW NOTES: DEFINITION

**LAW 14 BALL ON THE GROUND and
LAW 15 TACKLE: BALL CARRIER BROUGHT TO THE GROUND.**

It is illegal for any player to voluntarily fall on or over a player lying on the ground with the ball in his possession, to voluntarily fall on or over players lying on the ground with the ball between them, or near them.

Penalty: Penalty kick at the place of infringement.

Additional Notes to help interpret LAW 14 and LAW 15.

- (d) No advantage shall be played under this Law
- (e) A player is assumed to have fallen voluntarily unless the referee is absolutely certain the fall was accidental.
- (f) In the very rare instances when the fall is accidental, play must be stopped and a scrum awarded. The object of this change in interpretation in Law 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 defined as "players from each team on their feet" (Law 16, Ruck; Law 17, Maul). Should the correctly formed ruck or maul then collapse, the referee must immediately act to prevent a pile-up from developing.

LAW 17 – MAUL

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.
- A maul ends successfully when the ball or a player with the ball leaves the maul.
- A maul ends successfully when the ball is on the ground, or is on or over the goal-line.
- 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.
- When a maul remains stationary or has stopped moving forward 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.
- 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.

Scrum following maul

The team not in possession of the ball when the maul began put 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 puts in the ball.

Summary

At least three players form the maul, all on their feet; the ball-carrier and one player from each team.

LAW 16 – RUCK

A ruck occurs where one or more players from each team, who are on their feet, in physical contact, close around the ball on the ground. 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.

- A ruck ends successfully when the ball leaves the ruck, or when the ball is on or over the goal-line.
- A ruck ends unsuccessfully when the ball becomes unplayable and a scrum is awarded.

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.

Summary

The ball is on the ground with at least one player from each team on their feet, close to the ball, and in physical contact. It is helpful if the referee calls “ruck formed”.

S3.8 If, after a tackle, the ball becomes unplayable, a contested 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).

S3.9 A player must not hand-off or fend-off an opponent in any way. A hand-off or fend-off is defined as ‘any movement of the hand, arm or ball to ward off a would-be tackler’.

Penalty: A penalty kick to the opposition.

Note: Players are recommended to carry the ball in two hands.

S3.10 All the Laws of the Game pertaining to kicking in open play will apply, with the following exceptions:

- Players may only kick the ball out of their hands
- The offside zone ahead of the kicker is 7, rather than 10, metres.

Kicking a loose ball when it is on the ground (often called fly hacking) is not permitted.

Penalty: A penalty kick to the non-offending team.

S3.11 After a try has been scored, the team can attempt to convert the try into a goal. The kick at goal will take place from anywhere in front of the posts.

S3.12 After a try or goal has been scored, the game will restart with a drop kick from the centre of the half-way line.

S3.13 When an infringement occurs, as per the Laws of the Game, a penalty or free kick will be awarded. The referee will make a mark for the kick. The opposition will retire quickly to 7 metres from the mark. If the kick is taken so quickly that opponents have no opportunity to retire, they will not be penalised for this. However, they must continue to retire, until a team-mate who was standing 7 metres from the mark has run in front of them. The opposing team must not do anything to delay the penalty kick or obstruct the kicker. Any infringement by the opposing team results in a second penalty 7 metres in front of the mark for the first kick. On the second occasion the kick will not be taken until all opponents have retired 7 metres. No penalty or free kick can be taken within 7 metres of the goal-line.

S3.14 After any stoppage not covered in the Rules, the game shall restart with a scrum to the team who was moving forward, or, if neither team was moving forward, to the team who was last in possession of the ball.

S3.15 A match will be made up of two equal halves, each of not more than 20 minutes duration. During the interval, coaches must take adequate time to talk to, encourage, coach and explain the game to players.

S3.16 Following the award of a penalty, a kick at goal or drop goal is not permitted. Should the side awarded the penalty opt to kick to touch and do so directly they will be awarded the subsequent throw in at the lineout. No lineout is permitted to take place closer than 5m to the goal-line.

S3.17 Drop goals are not permitted.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

1. A size 4 ball should be used.

2. Tackling is a skill that needs to be taught and must be introduced progressively as shown in the current RFU Coaching Course materials.
3. The formation of the scrums must be introduced in a progressive way following the stages described in current RFU Coaching Course materials.

No person involved in the teaching or coaching of the Game may teach or coach players involved in a match at any age level from U18 downwards or encourage such players to use the technique known or referred to as 'Squeezeball'. *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.

4. In order to give a balance between coaching and playing, fixtures must be arranged to allow at least one Sunday coaching/training session between matches. At this age, players must play a maximum of fourteen fixtures and not more than three festivals (at least one in the Constituent Body and two others) in any season. The emphasis must remain on providing the children with an enjoyable introduction to the skills of the game. Competition is of secondary importance.
5. If there are an insufficient number of players to play Midi Rugby (12-a-side), they must play Mini Rugby (9-a-side) still in their under-12 age group. Where Clubs have large squads, additional fixtures/festivals may be arranged, provided that no individual player plays in more than the maximum number.
6. At festivals no player is to play in more than 5 games.

Under 11/under 12 match durations

Fixture: 20 minutes each way • 1 match = 40 minutes

Triangular: 15 minutes each way • 2 matches = 60 minutes

Festival/tournament: 7 minutes each way • Maximum of 5 matches = 70 minutes

No extra time is permitted in any match, except that added for injury time.

7. Games must be shortened if one side is scoring too freely (i.e. if the points difference rises to more than 30).
8. The emphasis must be on enjoyment. The children must be encouraged to enjoy the physical skills of running, passing and evasion, and they must be coached according to material available in the Mini/Midi Foundation or Level 1 coaching courses.
9. A practical coaching session that includes talks and videos, etc., must last no longer than two hours with a maximum of 40 minutes devoted to match play.

10. **On match days against outside opposition, a coaching session should always precede the match. All matches must be used as an extension of the coaching session, with the emphasis being on the quality of performance rather than the result. Mismatches can be avoided by talking to the Coach in charge of the opposition before the game.**
11. The RFU strongly recommends the wearing of mouth guards. Ideally mouth guards should be custom made from a dental impression of the teeth. The RFU also strongly recommends the wearing of shin guards.
12. For safety reasons coaches and referees must check that studs and other approved clothing before training sessions, games or tournaments are in accordance with the Laws of the Game.

In this version of the game, there is:

- NO HAND-OFF/FEND-OFF
- **NO FLY HACKING (kicking a loose ball on the ground).**

For further information on up to date products e mail refereeinfo@rfu.com or www.rfu.com or call free phone 0800 34551.

FAIR PLAY CODES

THE GOOD COACHES CODE

IN RUGBY UNION, COACHES OF YOUNG PLAYERS SHOULD:

- Recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when coaching young players.
- Understand that most learning is achieved through doing.
- Appreciate the needs of the players before the needs of the sport.
- Be a positive role model - think what this implies.
- Keep winning and losing in perspective - encourage young players to behave with dignity in all circumstances.
- Respect all referees and the decisions they make (remember it could be you refereeing next week) and ensure that the players recognise that they must do the same.

Provide positive verbal feedback in a constructive and encouraging manner, to all young players, both during coaching sessions and games.

IN RUGBY UNION, COACHES OF YOUNG PLAYERS MUST

- Provide experiences, which are matched to the young players' ages and abilities, as well as their physical and mental development.
- Ensure all youngsters are coached in a safe environment, with adequate first aid readily to hand.
- Avoid the overplaying of the best players, by using a squad system, which gives everybody a satisfactory amount of playing time.
- Never allow a player to train or play when injured.
- Ensure good supervision of young players, both on and off the field.
- Recognise that young players should never be exposed to extremes of heat, cold, or unacceptable risk of injury.
- Develop an awareness of nutrition as part of an overall education in lifestyle management.
- Recognise that it is illegal for young players under 18 to drink alcohol.
- Ensure that their knowledge and coaching strategies are up to date and in line with RFU philosophy.
- Be aware of, and abide by, the RFU recommended procedures for taking young people on residential tours at home and abroad.
- Be aware of, and abide by, the policies and procedures outlined in the RFU [Policies and Procedures for the welfare of young people in Rugby Union](#)

REMEMBER:

COACHES WORKING WITH YOUNG PLAYERS UP TO THE AGE OF 12 MUST FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES LAID DOWN BY RFU RUGBY CONTINUUM.

COACHES WORKING WITH YOUNG PLAYERS AGED 13+ MUST BE AWARE OF THE UNDER-15 AND UNDER-19 LAW VARIATIONS, INCLUDING THOSE THAT APPLY TO CROSS BORDER MATCHES.

FAIR PLAY CODES OF CONDUCT

THE GOOD PARENT'S CODE

PARENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO:

- Be familiar with the coaching and training programme in order that you can ensure that your child is fully involved and the coaches are aware of their availability.
- Be familiar with the teaching and coaching methods used by observing the sessions in which your child participates.
- Be aware that the club has a duty of care and therefore, where appropriate, assist coaches with the supervision of the young players, particularly where numbers are large and there is a need to transport youngsters to away games.
- Be involved with club activities and share your expertise.
- Share concerns, if you have them, with club officials.
- Be familiar with the Good Coaches Code. In particular:
- Coaches should recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when coaching young players.
- Coaches should keep winning and losing in perspective, encouraging young players to behave with dignity in all circumstances.
- It is important that parents support coaches in instilling these virtues.

PARENTS SHOULD:

- Remember that young people play rugby for their own enjoyment not that of their parents.
- Encourage young people to play - do not force them.
- Focus on the young players' efforts, rather than winning or losing.
- Be realistic about the young players' abilities; do not push them towards a level that they are not capable of achieving.
- Provide positive verbal feedback both in training and during the game.
- Remember that persistent, negative messages will adversely affect the players' and referee's performance and attitude.
- Always support the rugby club in their efforts to eradicate loud, coarse and abusive behaviour from the game.
- Remember young people learn much by example.
- Always show appreciation of good play by all young players both from your own club and the opposition.
- Respect decisions made by the match officials and encourage the young players to do likewise.

FAIR PLAY CODES OF CONDUCT

THE GOOD PLAYER'S CODE

PLAYERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO:

- Recognise and appreciate the efforts made by coaches, parents, match officials and administrators in providing the opportunity for you to play the game and enjoy the rugby environment.
- Understand the values of loyalty and commitment to adults and team mates.
- Recognise that every young player has a right to expect their involvement in rugby to be safe and free from all types of abuse.
- Understand that if an individual or group of young players feel they are not being treated in a manner that is acceptable, then you have a right to tell an adult either at the rugby club or outside of the game.

PLAYERS SHOULD:

- Play because you want to do so, not to please coaches or parents.
- Remember that skill development, fun and enjoyment are the most important parts of the game.
- Be attentive at all training and coaching sessions.
- Work equally hard for yourself and your team - both will then benefit.
- Recognise good play by all players on your team and by your opponents.
- Be a sportsman - win or lose.
- Play to the Laws of the Game and accept, without question, all referees' decisions.
- Control your emotions. Verbal or physical abuse of team mates, opponents, or match officials is not acceptable.
- Treat all players, as you would like to be treated. Do not interfere with, bully or take advantage of any player.

FAIR PLAY CODES OF CONDUCT

THE GOOD SPECTATOR'S CODE

SPECTATORS ARE ENCOURAGED TO:

- Act as positive role models to all young players.
- Be familiar with, and abide by, the RFU Child Protection Guidance in relation to verbal and emotional abuse.
- Respect the rugby club with regard to spectator behaviour.

SPECTATORS SHOULD:

- Remember children play sport for their enjoyment not yours.
- Acknowledge good individual and team performance from all youngsters irrespective of the team for whom they play.
- Respect match officials' decisions. Remember - they are volunteers providing an opportunity for youngsters to play rugby.
- Never verbally abuse young players, match officials, fellow spectators or coaches. Such behaviour can create a negative environment for young players and their behaviour will often reflect this.
- Acknowledge effort and good performance rather than the 'win at all costs' ethic.
- Verbally encourage all youngsters in a positive way. If you do want to shout make sure it is 'for', not 'at' the players.
- Encourage all youngsters irrespective of their ability - never ridicule any individual player, regardless of the team for whom they play.

FAIR PLAY CODES OF CONDUCT

THE GOOD MATCH OFFICIAL'S CODE

MATCH OFFICIALS SHOULD:

- Recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when officiating young players.
- Provide positive verbal feedback in a constructive and encouraging manner during games.
- Emphasise the spirit of the game.
- Appreciate the needs of the young players before the needs of the sport.
- Understand the physical, social and psychological development of young players.
- Be a positive role model. You set an example, and as such, comments you receive should be positive and supportive.
- Look to self-improvement e.g. participation in Mini/Midi or National 15-a-side courses.

MATCH OFFICIALS MUST:

- Recognise that the safety of young players is paramount.
- Explain decisions - all young players are still learning.
- Always penalise foul play.
- Play advantage whenever possible in order to let the game flow.
- Show empathy for the age and ability of young players.
- Be consistent and objective.
- Ensure that verbal abuse from players, coaches or spectators is not tolerated and is dealt with by club officials immediately.
- Be aware of, and abide by, the RFU Child Protection Guidance policies and procedures.

REMEMBER:

OFFICIALS WORKING WITH YOUNG PLAYERS UP TO THE AGE OF 12 MUST OFFICIATE TO THE RULES LAID DOWN IN THE RFU RUGBY CONTINUUM, AND MUST KEEP THEMSELVES UPDATED ON RULES CHANGES.

OFFICIALS WORKING WITH YOUNG PLAYERS AGED 13+ MUST OFFICIATE ACCORDING TO THE UNDER-15 AND UNDER-19 LAW VARIATIONS AND KEEP THEMSELVES UPDATED ON RELEVANT CHANGES.