

Are you ready to play rugby?

Scottish Rugby launched the 'Are you ready to play rugby?' campaign to review all areas of the game, to ensure that a consistent approach to player safety is being adopted by all coaches, teachers, referees and volunteers across Scotland.

Scottish Rugby, as the governing body for the sport, believes that player safety is paramount and will continue to proactively review and refine the game to ensure it remains a fun, safe and enjoyable sport for all.

At the beginning of February a consultation paper was circulated to all clubs, schools and other stakeholders. A series of regional presentations were also organised to give people the opportunity to discuss the proposals with Scottish Rugby staff. Stakeholders were encouraged to give feedback both at the presentations and also in writing. Almost 300 people attended the presentations and around 50 written responses were received from across the country. Further details on the consultation presentations and groups are listed at the end of the paper.

Scottish Rugby would like to thank all those within the rugby community who gave up their time to contribute to this important piece of work. Your feedback has been invaluable in developing the following policy changes which will further reduce the risk of serious injury in our game. Scottish Rugby would also like to thank the SCOT group of Orthopaedic Consultants who have contributed significantly to this process.

Although recent research* shows that the risk of catastrophic injury in rugby union is extremely rare, Scottish Rugby takes its responsibility to player safety very seriously and, as a result, the following policies have been introduced to further reduce the risk of serious injury, for the start of season 2009/10. It is critical to the future of our sport that the following policies are universally adopted by the whole rugby community for the start of next season.

* Dr Colin Fuller, Centre for Sports Medicine, University of Nottingham – Catastrophic Injuries in Rugby Union: An assessment of risk (July 2007)

Age Banding

1. U16 players in U18 rugby

Male players U16 should not play U18 school or club rugby.

This policy must be followed unless exceptional cases can be demonstrated where a player's physical maturity, skill level and experience are of a comparable standard to that of the game / competition that they will play in.

- Front row players (props & hooker) will not be eligible.
- Clubs and schools who have a player that they wish to put forward for exception will need to follow procedures detailed in the U16 Players in U18 Rugby policy. This consists of an application form to be submitted to Scottish Rugby followed by a physical maturity assessment at a Scottish Rugby assessment centre.
- Player completes online rugby ready course

2. U18 players in senior rugby

Male players U18 should not play senior/adult rugby.

This policy must be followed unless exceptional cases can be demonstrated where a player's physical maturity, skill level and experience are of a comparable standard to that of the game /competition that they will play in.

- Front row players (props & hooker) will be eligible for exception if they complete a further level of assessment.
- Clubs and schools who have a player that they wish to put forward for exception will need to follow the procedures detailed in the U18 Players in Senior Rugby policy. This consists of submitting a consent form and additional front row exemption form, if relevant, to Scottish Rugby.
- Player completes online rugby ready course.

3. U18 cut-off date for local / regional competition

- A review of research literature into this area shows that the determining factor in increasing risk occurs when playing physically immature players against physical mature players i.e. U16 player playing U18 rugby. There is no evidence to suggest that boys 16 – 18 year old playing together increases the risk to 16 year olds.
- Schools & clubs have the flexibility to agree age eligibility date for U18 school and club players prior to competition/game
- Scottish Rugby will continue to adopt the 1st January age date for all national age grade club and school competitions and representative squads. This is in line with IRB competition age date & Scottish Education school entry date.

4. Scottish Rugby school & club competitions

For next season the following national competitions will be in place:

School

- U18 Schools Cup
- U15 Schools Cup

Club

- U18 Cup
- U16 Cup
- U15 Cup

5. SWRU Age Banding

Scottish Rugby will work with SWRU to ensure that the same principles are adopted for the women's and girls' game.

Law Variations

1. Age grade law variations

All clubs and schools to follow age grade law variations for season 2009/10. This policy must be followed with the exception that schools who currently play larger sided teams can continue to do so – if in line with exception below – as long as both teams agree and the law variations out with player numbers are applied.

- S1 age grade law variation 13-a-side, exception up to 15
- P7 age grade law variation 10-a-side, exception up to 13 (6 forwards, 7 backs)
- P6 age grade law variation 8-a-side, exception up to 13 (6 forwards, 7 backs)

2. Long Term Player Development sub group

A group consisting of coaches, teachers, referees and Scottish Rugby staff will be set up to review current age grade law variations and produce recommendations for season 2010/11.

Minimum Standards for Coaching & Refereeing

1. The IRB online rugby ready course will be the minimum criteria for all teachers and coaches in Scotland for season 2009/10. Scottish Rugby will monitor schools and clubs for their 'rugby ready' status.
2. Scottish Rugby to design an annual mandatory update course for coaches and teachers, with associated network of tutors, for introduction at start of season 2010/11.
3. Scottish Rugby to investigate the introduction of a coaching licence as part of the UK Coaching Framework by 2012.

Refereeing

1. All licensed referees to complete IRB online rugby ready course prior to start of season 2009/10.
2. Referee re-licensing process to be reviewed during season 2009/10.

Injury Management

1. Basic minimum standards of pitch-side care to be established and communicated to all clubs and schools prior to season 2009/10.
2. A rugby first aid qualification to be developed and put in place prior to start of season 2010/11.
3. All team managers are encouraged to take the IRB online rugby ready course.

Injury Reporting

1. Pilot new injury reporting form and process with schools who enter schools cup.
2. Circulate and raise profile of existing forms and process for injury recording for season 2009/10.
3. Set up group to monitor and evaluate injury trends in season 2009/10.

Injury Prevention

1. Develop information on basic physical preparation and skill development prior to playing rugby for all coaches, teachers and referees for start of season 2009/10.
2. All players from the age of 15 to be encouraged to complete IRB online rugby ready course. Compulsory for all U16 in U18 rugby and U18 in senior rugby.

Risk Assessment

1. Scottish Rugby to create template risk assessments for all areas of development, coaching and performance work.
2. Scottish Rugby to produce Game Management Guidelines – including pre match protocol – for all youth coaches, teachers and referees to use prior to games, to reduce any areas of potential increased risk.

Insurance

1. Scottish Rugby to widely circulate insurance guidelines for season 2009/10 to all schools and clubs.
2. Scottish Rugby to update insurance company to changes in policy.

Consultation Details

External groups consulted

- All clubs & schools
- 32 local authorities
- **sportscotland**
- Scottish Government
- Referee societies
- Association for PE Scotland
- Association of Directors of Education Scotland
- School Sport Federation
- SCOT Group – Orthopaedic Consultants
- SWRU Board & member clubs

Regional presentations

Highland & Islands -Highland Council HQ - Wed 4th March 5.30pm for 6pm

Grampian -Gordonians, Seafield Club - Mon 2nd March 6.30pm for 7pm

Tayside & Fife - Bells Sports Centre, Perth - Wed 18th February 6.30pm for 7pm

Central & West Lothian - Castle Suite, Forthbank, Stadium, Stirling - Mon 2nd March 7pm

Edinburgh & Mid Lothian - 1925, Murrayfield Stadium - Mon 23rd Feb 7pm

Scottish Borders - The Greenyards, Melrose - Wed 18th Feb 7pm

East Lothian - Ross High RFC - Mon 2nd Mar 7pm

Dumfries & Galloway - Stewartry RFC - Tues 17 February - 7pm

Argyll & Bute - Oban Lorne RFC – Fri 20th Feb – 7pm

Glasgow North & South – Hughenden – Wed 25th Feb – 7pm

School presentations

- Wed 28th Jan - Murrayfield
- Mon 2nd March – Murrayfield
- Mon 23rd Feb – High School of Glasgow