

RUGBY CONTINUUM 2007/08

The Rugby Continuum is the structured progression to cover the introduction, teaching, playing and coaching of the **Game** in three incremental stages of Under 7-8, Under 9-10, and Under 11-12.

1 Definition

For the purposes of these Continuum Regulations, the definitions set out in the section marked “Definitions” shall apply.

Definitions

Game

rugby football played in accordance with the Laws of the Game

Constituent Body

an association or combination of Clubs or Schools.

CBRDP

Constituent Body Rugby Development Partnership

scrum

Law 20 - Scrum. This happens when players from each team come together in scrum formation so that play can be started by throwing the ball into the scrum.

2 Values

- 2.1 All Clubs are encouraged to provide facilities for the playing of youth rugby. Special care must be taken to honour the RFU/RFUW Policy and Procedures for the welfare of young people in Rugby Union. It is recognised that youth rugby costs money and that, inevitably, much burden will fall on clubs. The RFU will do all in its power to assist. It is hoped Constituent Bodies will strive to do the same and that every opportunity will be taken to seek assistance from Sports and Local Government Councils and other sources of revenue, income or funding that are available. However, the youth and Mini section of a Club must at all times be the responsibility of the Club and under the close supervision of the Club Committee. Care should be taken over under-age drinking and gambling on fruit machines.

- 2.2 Through the RFU Continuum, the RFU wishes to promote the ‘spirit of rugby’. This means the enjoyment of learning a challenging team sport that values effort as much as achievement. In the past, some adults involved in developing Mini- Midi Rugby promoted a ‘win at any cost’ culture to the exclusion of the wider values of the game including enjoyment, teamwork and respect for the efforts of others. The Continuum includes Codes specifically designed to overcome such negative attitudes for the greater good of the game.

Status

- 3.1 In addition to the playing rules for each age grade, the RFU Continuum contains 'Regulations' and 'Recommendations'. Failure by Schools/Clubs, their match officials and coaches to observe the 'Regulations' may invalidate the insurance cover provided by the RFU. In contrast 'Recommendations' represent best practice and Schools and Clubs must endeavour to follow these.
- 3.2 The RFU Continuum includes a limited number of permitted exceptions to certain regulations (referred to as 'dispensations'). Applications for additional dispensations must be made to the Director, Tournaments & Competitions Department at Twickenham. Details of the dispensations sanctioned by the Continuum for IAPS schools are outlined in the IAPS Sports Handbook.

4 Child Protection

- 4.1 Each Club and School must comply with the RFU's Policy and Procedures for the Welfare of Young People in Rugby Union at Appendix 3. Failure to do so will be considered prejudicial to the interests of the RFU and may result in disciplinary action under RFU Rule 5.12.
- 4.2 Each Club and School must ensure:
 - 4.2.1 The Codes of Practice in the Policy and Procedures for the Welfare of Young People in Rugby Union at Appendix 3 are drawn to the attention of their coaches and match officials;
 - 4.2.2 The Codes of Conduct in Appendix 2 to these Continuum Regulations are circulated to the relevant persons involved with Mini-Midi Rugby at their Club or School;
 - 4.2.3 A Child Protection Policy, conforming to the RFU's recommendations, has been produced and communicated to all involved with Mini-Midi Rugby at their Club or School;
 - 4.2.4 Their child protection officer(s) complete the RFU's "Best Practice and Child Protection" distance learning course, which is available from the Community Pages of the RFU's website or by telephoning 020 8831 7454
 - 4.2.5 All adults at the Club or School involved in delivering Mini-Midi Rugby complete a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure Form.

5 Player Registration

- 5.1 Each Club must ensure all its Mini-Midi Rugby players complete and return registration forms to the Constituent Body's Youth Registration Official within 45 days of their first joining a Club.
- 5.2 Team managers may be required to produce for inspection registration cards for each player when participating in competitive matches. Registration records and copies of any special dispensations issued by the RFU should be taken to each match so the match officials and/or the coach of the opposing team can confirm the ages of players if requested.

6 Age Grades & Dispensations

6.1 Age Grades

6.1.1 The age grades are as follows:

- Under 7 and Under 8 (stage 1) - both age grades play Mini Tag Rugby to the same rules except that Under 8s can only be tagged a maximum number of times;
- Under 9 and Under 10 (stage 2) - both age grades play Mini Rugby to the same rules except Under 9s have uncontested scrums and line-outs and Under 10s have contested scrums and line-outs;
- Under 11 and Under 12 (stage 3) - both age grades play Midi Rugby to the same rules.

6.1.2 A player's age grade is determined by their age at midnight on 31 August at the beginning of each Season.

6.1.3 During the course of each Season, players may only play rugby with other players in their age grade unless they are permitted to play with players from a different age grade under a dispensation.

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

6.2 Dispensations

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

6.2.1 Team Dispensation

If Clubs or Schools do not have enough players to complete a squad, players may play down one age grade within each Continuum Stage only subject to the strict observance of the following qualifications:

- (a) the maximum number of players allowed to play down is two;
- no player will be allowed to play down two age grades in any circumstances; and
 - no Under 9 (or above) player may train or play with a player aged 6 in any circumstances.

A Club or School may complete multiple squads using this dispensation.

6.2.2 Training Dispensation

During internal Club or School training, players may train together and play internal training matches together in the following groups only:

- (a) Under 7 and Under 8 squads;
- (b) Under 9 and Under 10 squads, although no Under 10 player or above may play with an Under 8 player playing in an Under 9 team under a dispensation;
- (c) Under 11 and Under 12 squads, although no Under 13 player is permitted to train with an Under 11 or Under 12 squad in any circumstances.

6.2.3 RFU Special Dispensation

The vast majority of children, with correct coaching, can play in their correct age grades but in exception circumstances, where the safety of the child may be compromised due a developmental disability (physical or behavioural), application may be made to the RFU for an individual dispensation permitting a player to play down one age grade. Such dispensation will last for only one Season. Application for such dispensation should be submitted to the RFU Tournaments & Competitions Director and should be accompanied by documentary evidence or signed statements confirming the player's disability. For the avoidance of doubt, special dispensations to play outside of their true age grade will not be granted to players merely because they appear to have skills inferior or superior to their team mates.

6.2.4 6 Year Old Player Dispensation

To encourage recruitment, children may enter the Under 7 age grade immediately they attain their sixth birthday. Players aged 6 or over may not however take advantage of this dispensation if it will result in their training or playing with Under 9s playing in an Under 8 team under Continuum Regulation 7.5.1. Clubs and Schools are advised that the introduction of players under the age of 6 into Mini-Midi Rugby squads may invalidate the compulsory insurance cover provided by the RFU for players in those squads and for their coaches and/or match officials.

6.2.5 12 Year Old Player Dispensation

In addition to any Team Dispensation, where a School or Club does not have enough players to form an Under 12 squad, Under 12 players may play with an Under 13 side but only with written parental consent. A Club or School may use this dispensation if it has more Under 12 players than are required to complete a squad.

6.2.6 Special Dispensation for Clubs with Small Number of Players

(a) Dispensation:

- (i) To allow age bands rather than single age grades. i.e. U7s with U8s; U9s with U10s; U11s with U12s
- (ii) Dispensation to be for one season at a time.
- (iii) Teams to play in Continuum Rules of Play for the younger age grade. I.e. Under 7 Mini Tag; Under 9 Mini Rugby; Under 11 Midi Rugby
- (iv) No more than half the players on the pitch at any time in a game should be from the older age grade
- (v) Teams can play in friendly fixtures after advising the opposition and gaining their consent.

- (vi) Teams cannot take part in competitive Festivals (unless they comply with the existing Continuum age grade regulations)
- (vii) The Continuum Age Grade Dispensations 6.2.1 & 6.2.2 are not applicable to those granted this Special Dispensation.

(b) Approval:

To be granted by the RFU Tournaments & Competitions Director upon receipt of:-

- (i) Application from the Club Secretary with a signed declaration showing numbers of players in each age grade
- (ii) This to be certified by **CBRDP** (7-18 Chair) / RDO.
- (iii) A declaration by each age group Coach that the children in the proposed age grouping are capable of playing in the proposed amalgamated two year age banding.

(c) Conditions:

- (i) The age group Coach should be qualified and have completed a recognised Child Protection course
- (ii) The coach must discuss with the parents, the differences in physical development of all the children in the proposed age band and how it affects their child before obtaining their consent.
- (iii) The parents must be fully briefed by the coach concerned on how their child could cope with the differences in physical development between the children in their two year age band.
- (iv) Players must be registered on the RFU Youth Registration System.

7 Season

The Mini-Midi Rugby season starts on 1 September each year. Fixtures and Festivals may only take place during the period commencing on the 5th Sunday of the season and ending on the Mayday Bank Holiday Monday. Outside this period, players may only participate in training and recruitment initiatives.

8 Fixtures & Festivals

8.1 Fixtures and Festivals must comply with these Continuum Regulations.

8.2 Festival organisers may impose additional conditions on participations including maximum squad sizes which should not be less than:

- (a) Under 7 and Under 8 – 10 players;
- (b) Under 9 and Under 10 – 13 players;
- (c) Under 11 and Under 12 – 17 players.

Teams are not prevented from participating with less than this number should they wish.

8.3 Festival organisers may not exclude players who would be permitted to play down an age grade in accordance with a valid dispensation.

8.4 Each player is limited to playing in not more than:

- (a) 17 Club Fixtures and/or Festivals during a season in addition to any Fixtures and/or Festivals played by them for their Schools;
- (b) 17 School Fixtures and/or Festivals during a season in addition to any Fixtures and/or Festivals played by them for their Club; and
- (c) 1 Festival during the same weekend, during which teams are only permitted to play in a maximum of 5 games.

- 8.5 Clubs and Schools must maintain a record of how many Fixtures and Festivals are played by each player to ensure they are not exceeding these limits.
- 8.6 Where Clubs or Schools have large squads, additional Fixtures and/or Festivals may be arranged, provided no player plays in more than the maximum number referred to in Continuum Regulation 8.4 above.

9 Duration of Matches and Sessions

9.1 Matches

- 9.1.1 A match is made up of two halves, with half-time lasting not less than 2 minutes.
- 9.1.2 Matches are limited to the following durations:
- (a) Under 7 and Under 8:
 - Fixture (2 Clubs or Schools are present): 10 minutes each way, 1 **game** = 20 minutes
 - Fixture (3 Clubs or Schools are present): 7 minutes each way, 2 games = 30 minutes
 - Festival: 5 minutes each way, maximum of 5 games = 50 minutes
 - (b) Under 9 and Under 10:
 - Fixture (2 Clubs or Schools are present): 15 minutes each way, 1 **game** = 30 minutes
 - Fixture (3 Clubs or Schools are present): 10 minutes each way, 2 games = 40 minutes
 - Festival: 6 minutes each way, maximum of 5 games = 60 minutes
 - (c) Under 11 and Under 12:
 - Fixture (2 Clubs or Schools are present): 20 minutes each way, 1 **game** = 40 minutes
 - Fixture (3 Clubs or Schools are present): 15 minutes each way, 2 games = 60 minutes
 - Festival: 7 minutes each way, maximum of 5 games = 70 minutes
- 9.1.3 No extra time is permitted in any match except that added for injury time.
- 9.1.4 Matches must be brought to an end if the points difference rises to more than 30.

9.2 Sessions

Festivals, fixtures, coaching and training sessions (including time devoted to match play) must last no longer than the following:

- (a) Under 7 and Under 8: 60 minutes;
- (b) Under 9 and Under 10: 90 minutes;
- (c) Under 11 and Under 12: 120 minutes.

10 Pitches

- 10.1 The maximum pitch size is
- (a) Under 7 and Under 8 – 60 metres by 30 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area.
 - (b) Under 9 and Under 10 – 60 metres by 35 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area.
 - (c) Under 11 and Under 12 – 60 metres by 43 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area. Provision should be made to indicate the position of the line 15 metres out from each goal line, serving a similar purpose to the 22 metre line in the IRB Laws of the Game.
- 10.2 Reduced pitch sizes are acceptable provided this is agreed between the officiating referee and coaches, and the smaller pitches do not materially increase the risk of injury to players.
- 10.3 Adjacent pitches should be no closer than 5 metres

11 Equipment

- 11.1 The following size ball shall be used by the following age grades:
- (a) Under 7, Under 8, Under 9 – size 3
 - (b) Under 10, Under 11, Under 12 – size 4
- 11.2 Players may only use studs and other clothing during training and matches that are in accordance with the IRB Laws of the Game.
- 11.3 Players may wear specially designed and manufactured “goggles” provided the child’s optician certifies that:
- (a) They only allow the player to have properly corrected vision and do not substantially restrict any normal field of vision.
 - (b) They do not constitute a physical danger to the wearer or other players.

12 Administration

Every School and Club providing Mini-Midi Rugby is responsible for its proper administration in accordance with the Rugby Continuum. The administration of Mini-Midi Rugby is overseen by Constituent Bodies and County Schools’ Unions which are required to ensure that affiliated Schools and Clubs adhere to the RFU Continuum.

13 Discipline

- 13.1 If the referee decides that a player must cease to participate in a match, they must stop the match, call the individual player aside from the other players and invite the coach of that player on to the field. The referee must explain to the coach and the player why they feel the player’s behaviour is unacceptable and instruct the coach to provide a substitute player. That player is to take no further part in that Fixture or Festival. It is the responsibility of the coach to speak to and educate the player as to why such actions was taken.
- 13.2 Clubs and Schools will have a Child Protection Policy (which conforms to the RFU’s recommendations) and a player disciplinary procedure. Whilst player indiscipline (including physical and verbal abuse and actions contravening the RFU Continuum) will in most cases be dealt with in accordance with the player disciplinary procedure, it should be recognised that there will be some

instances where the relevant actions also fall within the scope of the Child Protection Policy.

- 13.3 In the case of actions on the part of adults involved in Mini and Midi Rugby which contravene the Codes of Practices in Appendix 2, the recommended procedure is as follows:
- (a) the match or training session should be stopped and the match officials and coaches should confer and agree on a course of action appropriate to the circumstances. This may include the match officials and relevant coach warning the adult concerned or requesting the relevant adult to vacate the vicinity of the pitch before recommencing the match or training. In extreme cases or where the adult refuses to cooperate, the match or training should be abandoned;
 - (b) the match officials and coaches should notify the incident to the Chairmen of the Mini-Midi Sections of their respective Clubs or the Head of Games in the case of Schools for further consideration. In extreme cases this may include banning the relevant adult from attending matches and/or training sessions for a period and/or submission of a complaint to the relevant Constituent Body;
 - (c) where relevant actions fall within the Child Protection Policy, Clubs and Schools should also institute the procedures contained in such policy.
- 13.4 In all cases where a disciplinary matter has been referred to a **Constituent Body**, the **Constituent Body** may require either Club or School to provide additional information on the incident including confirmation of the action taken and may in exception cases refer the matter to the RFU for further consideration and sanctions.

14 Playing Rules

- 14.1 The Rugby Continuum includes playing rules for Mini-Midi Rugby at each age grade in Appendix 1.
- 14.2 Both players and match officials should endeavour to follow these playing rules, which include various modifications to the IRB Laws of the Game. These modifications are gradually reduced as a player progresses through each age grade. Where no modifications have been made, the IRB Laws of the Game should be followed.

15 Health & Safety

- 15.1 Each Club and School should have close regard to its health and safety responsibilities, and carry out and record formal risk assessments each season to ensure the safe and competent coaching of rugby. Further guidance on the provision of a safe rugby environment can be obtained from the RFU via email at communityrugby@rfu.com
- 15.2 The RFU strongly recommends that Clubs and Schools have suitably qualified first aiders present to provide immediate assistance to any player who is injured, whether during training sessions or during competitive play outside opposition.
- 15.3 The RFU strongly recommends the wearing of mouth guards (ideally custom made from a dental impression of the teeth) in case of accidental collision as well as shin guards.
- 15.4 If a player appears injured, the referee must blow the whistle and stop play immediately. Obviously the referee must use judgment – players don't want to

stop for every slight knock – but it is usually possible to tell when a player is hurt. Where possible, invite the player to get up. If it hurts them to move, let them stay where they are (if this will not worsen their injury) and send for expert help. In all cases it is essential that other people/players are stopped from rushing in and hauling the player to their feet. They may mean well, but they could make the damage even worse. In summary, take no chances: act fast but act with caution.

- 15.5 If referees find themselves in an injury situation, they must concentrate on vital things. If there is difficulty breathing remove the player's mouthguard. If they seem stunned, they may be concussed: if so, they must leave the field and have a medical examination. If there is any bleeding, the player must leave the field for treatment unless to do so would worsen their injury.
- 15.6 Through the Rugby Continuum, the RFU has established a framework within which those involved with rugby can provide playing opportunities for players. In doing so the responsibility to try and ensure the safety of both players and those providing such opportunities must not be overlooked and any School, Club or **Constituent Body** providing rugby opportunities to young players should only do so having considered carefully the issue of safety. This means avoiding exposure of players, coaches and match officials to situations that are too risky for the particular circumstances. Coach education courses for Mini/Midi Rugby have therefore been designed specifically to give individuals (whether in Schools or in Clubs) the opportunity to gain an understanding of coaching young players safely. Further guidance on the provision of a safe rugby environment can be obtained from www.community-rugby.com
- 15.7 The development of all contact (contested or uncontested scrums and line outs) must be introduced using the techniques contained in current RFU coaching manuals. Tackling is a skill that needs to be taught and must be introduced progressively as shown in the current RFU Coaching Course materials. Similarly, the formation of the **scrum** must be introduced in a progressive way following the stages described in current RFU Coaching Course materials.
- 15.8 Dangerous play can cause injury; coaches and match officials must be particularly vigilant to prevent it. There will always be knocks and bumps in 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 to the team that had been in possession of the ball immediately prior to the stoppage.

16 Coaching Education

- 16.1 The RFU strongly recommends that Clubs and Schools ensure their coaches acquire and develop coaching skills which are appropriate for the age grades they are coaching. This ensures improved playing standards throughout the game, reduces the risk of players suffering injury, increases consistency in the development of youth rugby and adds to the enjoyment for players.
- 16.2 Coaching training comprises a combination of attending RFU-approved coach education courses (leading to a qualification), supplemented by attendance at coaching seminars and regular reading of coaching materials and viewing of coaching videos and DVDs. For further information on up-to-date products email coachingyoungplayers@rfu.com, visit the RFU's website or telephone 0800 834551.

- 16.3 Clubs and Schools are strongly advised that qualified coaches supervise all persons who do not hold current coaching qualifications appropriate to the age grades they are coaching. Details of RFU-approved coach education courses can be obtained from your **Constituent Body** or Rugby Development Officer.
- 16.4 The RFU recommends that the months of September and January are used by Clubs and Schools to help coaches develop their coaching skills and, as appropriate, to qualify themselves to coach their current age grade or to prepare for coaching another age grade the following season. While team coaching/training sessions and competitive matches may continue to take place in January, this should not prevent coaches from engaging in such education activities and Clubs and Schools should give priority to coaches' education during these months.
- 16.5 The RFU also makes the following recommendations:
- (a) at a fixture, a coaching session should precede each match;
 - (b) all matches should be used as an extension of the coaching session with the emphasis being on the quality of performance rather than the result;
 - (c) during matches, coaches can direct and develop play in a coaching sense on the field of play from behind their teams;
 - (d) at Under 7 and Under 8 age grade, coaches must help to encourage the carrying of the ball in two hands and prompt players to pass when tagged but should avoid interfering with the flow of the game and must not have any contact with players of either side while on the pitch;
 - (e) the emphasis must be on enjoyment and players must be encouraged to enjoy the physical skills of running, passing and evasion;
 - (f) during half-time intervals, coaches must take time to talk to, encourage, coach and explain the game to the players;
 - (g) mismatches can be avoided by talking to the coach in charge of the opposition before the game.

17 Changes

In preparing the RFU Continuum, the RFU has made great efforts to ensure that the regulations and recommendations reflect the way Mini-Midi Rugby is played in practice whilst also establishing a framework that will promote the development of a positive rugby culture. This is a constantly evolving process driven by the Rugby Continuum Review Group which welcomes constructive suggestions as to how the RFU Continuum can be further improved. Any suggestions should be sent to the Chairman of the Continuum Review Group at the RFU and, if agreed and adopted, will become part of the RFU Continuum.

18 Forum

A Rugby Continuum Forum can be found in the Forum/Chat section of the RFU website (www.rfu.com). It provides information, promotes discussions and advises on a range of coaching and refereeing topics. Mini-Midi coaches, parents and others can use the Forum to ask questions, seek advice, share ideas and express their views. Andy Dixon, an experienced coach, hosts the Forum.

(A) Stage 1 Mini Tag Rugby (U7 & U8)

Players and match officials must endeavour to ensure the IRB Law of the Game, modified by the following playing rules, are observed when playing rugby at Under 7 and Under 8:

1. Object:

The object of the game is to score a try (5 points) by placing the ball with a downward pressure on or behind the opponents' goal line. A penalty try will be awarded if a try would probably have been scored but for foul play by the defending team.

For the sake of safety, the ball carrier must remain on their feet at all times and they are not allowed to score a try by diving over the goal-line. If a player grounds the ball while on their knees, the try should be allowed but, afterwards, all players should be reminded that they should stay on their feet. A player may not be prevented from grounding the ball by any physical contact (including placing a hand between ball and ground).

For safety reasons, where Mini 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.

2. Teams:

Mini 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. Each side can have an agreed number of substitutes. Substituted players can be re-used at any time. Substitutions can only take place when the ball is "dead" or at half time and always with the referee's knowledge.

3. Passing:

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

4. Free Passes:

- (a) 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 at the point where the ball went out of play and from where the referee makes a mark when an infringement has taken place.
- (b) At a free pass, the opposition must be 8 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, no player may run until the pass is made. The player taking the free pass must pass the ball when the referee calls "PLAY".

- (c) If an infringement takes place or the ball goes into touch 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.

5. The Tag:

- (a) All players wearing a Tag belt around their waist with two tags attached to it by Velcro 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.
- (b) The standard dimensions for a Tag are 38 cms in length by 5 cms 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 player's strip et teams with yellow shirts or shorts should not use yellow tags. 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 Rugby games can continue to be played with Tags that do not comply with these guidelines but, for fairness, in such case both teams should be wearing the same design of tag belt and tags.

- (c) A "TAG" is the removal of one of the two tags from the ball carrier's 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.
- (d) If a player does not have two tags on their belt, one on each hip, they will be penalised if they become a ball carrier or if they tag an opponent and a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.
- (e) Actions by the ball carrier:
 - (1) 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. If the pass takes longer than 3 seconds or the player takes more than 3 strides they must be penalised and a free pass awarded to the non offending side at the place where the tag occurred.

- (2) 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.
- (3) Players are however only allowed one step to score a try after being tagged.
- (4) If the ball carrier is tagged whilst standing inside the goal area they must ground the ball immediately in order to score. Referees should help this part of the game along by advising the ball carrier "Touch the ball down and I'll award the try", or similar.
- (5) If the ball carrier dives to ground to score a try it will be disallowed and a free pass will be awarded to the defending side 7 metres out from the goal-line.

(f) Actions by the tagger:

- (1) 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".
- (2) 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. If the tagger fails to retire at least 1 metre before rejoining the game, they are to be considered "offside" and a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.
- (3) 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.

(g) MINI TAG RUGBY VARIATION (UNDER 8 ONLY). 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 a 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 7 metres out from the goal line, in line with the point the goal line was crossed.

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.

6. Offside:

Offside only occurs at the time of the Tag where the offside line is through the centre of the ball except for the tagger for whom it is 1 metre further back, as described in Section 5(f) above. When a Tag is made, all the other 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 team mate, 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.

7. Obstruction:

- (a) 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.
- (b) Similarly, the ball carrier or a potential tagger must not deliberately make contact with an opponent.
- (c) 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.
- (d) If the ball is pulled from the ball carrier's grasp, a free pass is awarded to the ball carrier's side.

8. Kicking:

There is no kicking of any kind in Mini Tag Rugby.

9. Ball on the Ground:

Players play Mini Tag Rugby on their feet, with the ball in hand. If the ball goes to ground, players can pick it up but they must not dive to the floor to recover the ball.

Penalty: free pass to non-offending side and the following rules will apply:

- (a) If the ball was lost forward, a free pass is awarded to the non-offending side unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side.
- (b) If the ball carrier falls to the ground with the ball then a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side.
- (c) 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.

10. No Contact:

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 and the players concerned reminded of the rules.

11. Prohibited Play:

In Mini Tag Rugby, there is 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 Rugby there is:

- (a) no tackling;
- (b) no scrummage;
- (c) no line-out;
- (d) no kicking;
- (e) no hand off/fend off (a hand off being the placing of an open palmed hand by the ball carrier against an opponent's face or body while a fend off is an outstretched arm by the ball carrier towards an opponent to discourage that person making a tag);
- (f) no going to ground; and
- (g) no ripping of the ball.

(B) Stage 2 Mini Rugby (U9 & U10)

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

1. Object:

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

2. Teams:

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

3. Starts:

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

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

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

4. General Play:

- (a) In general play, the ball can only be passed sideways or backwards – defined as “towards the player’s own try line”. If the ball is passed forward or knocked on, a **scrum** is awarded to the opposition unless the referee plays advantage to the non-offending team.
- (b) Offside in general play is penalised in accordance with the IRB Laws of the Game. A player offside in general play is to be penalised for being offside unless that player is making an obvious attempt to return to an onside position.

Penalty: A free pass restart to the non-offending side.

- (c) If a player carrying the ball goes to ground in general play or if a player goes to ground to gather the ball in general play, the player must immediately do one of three things (or he will be penalised);
- (1) get up with the ball;
 - (2) pass the ball to another player; or
 - (3) release the ball for another player to pick up.

Note: however, if a player releases the ball by placing it on the ground and his team mates drive over the ball to prevent the opposition gaining possession, a ruck will generally be formed and in this case the ball may not be picked up by hand until the ball has left the ruck, as described in Section 7.

Penalty: Free pass.

5. Tackling:

- (a) Any player who has the ball and is on their feet (except in a maul) can be tackled.

Following a tackle:

- (1) The tackler must immediately release the tackled player and get up or move away from the tackled player and the ball. The tackler must get up before playing the ball.

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

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

- (2) The tackled player must immediately pass or release the ball and must get up or move away from the ball. The tackled player may put the ball on the ground in any direction, or may push the ball along the ground in any direction except forward (towards the opposition), providing this is done immediately.
- (3) At a tackle, or near to a tackle, players other than the tackler(s) or tackled player who play the ball must do so from behind the ball and from behind the tackled player, or the tackler closest to those players’ goal-line.

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

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

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

Penalty: Free pass.

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

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

Penalty: Free pass.

Note:

(1) no advantage shall be played;

(2) a player is assumed to have fallen voluntarily unless the referee is absolutely certain the fall was accidental;

*(3) in the very rare instances when the fall is accidental, play must be stopped and a **scrum** awarded to the side previously in possession.*

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

6. Mauls:

- (a) A maul occurs when a player carrying the ball is held by one or more opponents and one or more of the ball-carrier's team-mates bind on to the ball-carrier. It is helpful if the referee calls "maul formed". All the players involved are on their feet.
- (b) Once a maul is formed, other players may only join the maul from behind the foot of their hindmost team-mate in the maul. Players joining the maul from in front of this e.g. from the side are offside and should be penalised. **Penalty:** Free pass.
- (c) A maul ends successfully when either the ball or a player with the ball leaves the maul or the ball is on the ground or the maul is on or over the goal line (when the ball may be grounded for a try or touch down as the case may be).

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

7. Rucks:

- (a) A ruck occurs where one or more players from each team who are on their feet, in physical contact, close over the ball on the ground. It is helpful if the referee calls “ruck formed”. Players are rucking when they are in a ruck and using their feet to try to win or keep possession of the ball, without being guilty of foul play.

Players must not stand on any part of another player’s body in a ruck –

Penalty: Free pass.

- (b) Once a ruck is formed, other players may only join the ruck from behind the foot of their hindmost team mate in the ruck. A player may join alongside this hindmost player. Players joining the ruck from in front of this eg from the side are offside and should be penalised. **Penalty:** Free pass.
- (c) Players must not use their hands to pick up the ball while it is still in the ruck.

Penalty: Free pass.

- (d) A ruck ends successfully when the ball leaves the ruck, or when the ball is on or over the goal line (when the ball may be grounded for a try or a touch down as the case may be).

- (e) A ruck ends successfully when the ball becomes playable and a **scrum** is awarded. Should ruck collapse, the referee must immediately blow the whistle to stop play, to prevent a pile up from developing.
- (f) **Scrum** following ruck: The team that was moving forward immediately before the ball became unplayable in the ruck throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward, or if the referee cannot decide which team was moving forward before the ball became unplayable in the ruck, the team that was moving forward before the ruck began throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward, then the attacking team throws in the ball. Before the referee blows the whistle for a **scrum**, the referee allows a reasonable amount of time for the ball to emerge. If the ruck stops moving or if the referee decides that the ball will probably not emerge within a reasonable time, the referee must order a **scrum**.
- (g) Any player at any stage in a ruck who has or causes an opponent to have his shoulder lower than his hip joint must immediately be penalised by awarding a free pass. The object of this rule is to prevent the collapse of a ruck. It is to help the coach to teach good technique and the referee to penalise bad technique. Any player who has his shoulders lower than his hip joint can only move downwards unless he has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forward and upwards; all players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile up and possible injury.

8. Scrums:

- (a) The **scrum** will be made up of one row of three players from each team, i.e. a prop on either side of the hooker.
- (b) At Under 9, the **scrum** is uncontested by both sides: the team awarded the **scrum** will throw the ball into the **scrum** and must be allowed to win it without contest. Opponents cannot push or strike for the ball. If they do, a free pass restart is awarded to the team throwing the ball into the **scrum**.
- (c) At Under 10, the **scrum** is contested by both sides: the team awarded the **scrum** will throw the ball into the **scrum** and the players in the **scrum** may contest the ball. Although scrums are contested at Under 10, under no circumstances is the **scrum** to be:

- (1) pushed or pulled more than 1.5 metres towards either try line.

Penalty: a free pass at the original spot against the side that has pushed or pulled the **scrum**;

- (2) wheeled more than 45 degrees. Penalty: If a team intentionally wheels a **scrum**, a free pass will be awarded against that side. If the **scrum** is wheeled more than 45 degrees without a free pass award, the **scrum** will be reset with the same team throwing the ball in.

A non-contested **scrum**, as described in Section 8(b) above, must replace a contested **scrum** in any of the following circumstances (on safety grounds):

- (1) if a player in a **scrum** has to be replaced and there is no adequate replacement;

- (2) if players involved in a **scrum** have not been properly trained;
- (3) if one side is obviously stronger and more experienced than the other and the referee has been unable to get the stronger side to reduce their push to take this into account.
- (d) The players from each team will bind together approximately half a metre apart. Each prop will touch the upper arm of his opponent and then pause before the engagement. The referee will talk the players through the engagement procedure in the sequence Crouch, Touch, Pause and Engage. On the grounds of safety, it is important that the referee manages the engagement of every **scrum** in this way.
- (e) Front rows must not be allowed to charge at each other. If they start to engage too close together and with their necks and backs bent, they must be stopped and the **scrum** reformed. Props' body positions must be parallel to the touchline (not boring in). There must be no downward pressure exerted by hands or arms. Shoulders must always be above the level of the hips.
- (f) If the **scrum** collapses, the whistle must immediately be blown and the appropriate penalty awarded or the **scrum** reset. If a player is persistently involved in collapsing or illegal binding they must be replaced. If a player's lack of technique or strength is a danger then they must be replaced. All players involved in scrums, including replacements, should be suitably trained and experienced.
- (g) Any player at any stage in a **scrum** who has or causes an opponent to have his shoulders lower than his hip joint must immediately be penalised by awarding a free pass. The object of this rule is to prevent the collapse of a **scrum**. It is to help the coach to teach good technique and the referee to penalise bad technique. Any player who has his shoulders lower than his hip joint can only move downwards unless he has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forwards and upwards; all players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile up and possible injury.
- (h) The back line of the team NOT putting the ball into the **scrum** must remain 7 metres behind the **scrum** until the ball emerges or the opposing **scrum** half places his hand on it. Until this happens, their **scrum** half must remain directly behind his **scrum**, in the pocket edged by the two props.
- (i) The back line of the team putting the ball into the **scrum** must remain behind a line through the rear most foot of their props/hooker until the ball emerges or the **scrum** half places his hands on it. If the team putting the ball into the **scrum** loses possession in the **scrum**, their **scrum** half must retire directly behind his **scrum**, in the pocket edged by the two props, until the ball emerges or the opposing **scrum** half places his hands on it.
- (j) If a **scrum** is awarded within 5 metres of the goal line, the **scrum** is to be taken at a mark such that the middle line of the **scrum** is 5 metres from the goal line. In this case the defending backs must stay on or behind the goal line.

- (k) Referees should pay particular attention to ensure that the **scrum** half putting the ball into the **scrum** is not “feeding” his own players: the **scrum** half must hold the ball with both hands, with his major axis parallel to the ground/the touchline, midway between his knees and ankles. The **scrum** half must release the ball from outside the tunnel so that it lands midway between the two front rows and beyond the width of the nearer prop’s shoulders.

9. Line Outs:

- (a) If the ball or player carrying the ball goes out of play, a line out will take place at the point at which the ball or player crossed the touchline. If a line out is awarded within 5 metres of the goal line, the line out is to be taken at a mark 5 metres out from the goal line. The opponents of the team who carried or last touched the ball before it went into touch throw the ball in. A quick throw in is not permitted.
- (b) The line out will be made up of two players from each team (who stand between 2 and 7 metres from the touchline) plus the player throwing the ball in and an immediate opponent (who must stand within 2 metres of the player throwing the ball in) and one player from either side in a position to receive the ball (ie **scrum** half). Both the thrower in and his immediate opponent are able to take an active role in the line out as soon as the ball has been touched by one of the players in the line out. Players not taking part in the line out must stay behind the offside line until the line out ends.
- (c) The offside line for all players not participating in the line out (all players other than those described under Section 9(b)) is 7 metres back from the line of touch, parallel to the goal line, and they must remain behind that offside line until the line out has ended. If the line out is closer than 7 metres to the touchline, the goal line is the offside line.
- (d) At Under 9, the line outs are uncontested by both sides and the team throwing the ball in must be allowed to catch and win the ball without any interference from the opposition. The uncontested phase of the line out continues until the line out has ended and the catcher is therefore protected from contact from the opposition unless he/she decides to instigate it.
- (e) At Under 10, the line out is contested by both sides.
- (f) In both contested and uncontested line outs, the ball must be thrown into the lineout (i.e. between 2 and 7 metres) and not beyond it, i.e. the ball must be played by one of the players within the line out. Should the ball be thrown beyond 7 metres without contact, the opposition will be awarded the throw. Should the opposition then throw beyond 7 metres without contact; a **scrum** will be awarded to the side originally thrown in. No advantage is to be played in any of these circumstances.

- (g) The line out begins when the ball leaves the hands of the player throwing it in. The line out ends when the ball or player carrying it leaves the line out. This includes the following:
 - (1) when the ball is thrown or knocked out of the line out;
 - (2) when a line out player hands the ball to a player who is peeling close to and parallel to the line – Note: “peeling” occurs when a player leaves the line out (after the ball has been thrown in) to catch the ball knocked or passed back by a team mate;
 - (3) when a ruck or maul develops in line out and both feet of all the players in the ruck or maul move beyond the line of touch; and
 - (4) the ball has been passed or carried out of the line out or if the catcher decides to drive through the line out.
- (h) When the ball becomes unplayable in a line out, play restarts with a **scrum** to the team moving forward or, if neither team was moving forward, to the team last in possession of the ball. The **scrum** will take place 7 metres in from the touchline opposite the point where the line out took place.
- (i) All “peeling off” movements must be close to and parallel with the line out. Players must keep moving. Lifting/supporting is prohibited at this level (i.e. a player may not bind to a jumper until they return to the ground). The player designated to receive the ball (i.e. the scrum half) may not enter the line out to compete for the ball.

10. In-Goal:

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

(C) Stage 3 Midi Rugby (U11 & U12)

Players and match officials must endeavour to ensure the IRB Laws of the **game**, modified by the following playing rules, are observed when playing Midi Rugby at Under 11 and Under 12:

1. Object:

The object of the **game** is to score a try (5 points) and conversion (2 points). A penalty try will be awarded if a try would probably have been scored but for foul play by the defending team.

2. Teams:

- a) At Under 11- The **game** is played between teams having a maximum of twelve players, five of whom will be forwards and form the **scrum**, with the remaining players forming the back line. Each side can have an agreed number of substitutes. Substituted players can be re-used at any time. Substitutions may only take place when the ball is 'dead' or at half time and always with the referee's knowledge.
- b) At Under 12 -The **game** is played between teams having a maximum of thirteen players, six of whom will be forwards and form the **scrum**, with the remaining players forming the back line. Each side can have an agreed number of substitutes. Substituted players can be re-used at any time. Substitutions may only take place when the ball is 'dead' or at half time and always with the referee's knowledge.

3. Starts:

- (a) A drop kick from the centre line 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.
- (b) If, from the kick off, the ball is kicked directly into touch, the opposition has the choice of:
 - (1) the kick off being taken again; or
 - (2) their put in to a **scrum** at the centre spot; or
 - (3) accepting the kick and contesting a line out at the half way line.
- (c) If from the kick off the ball is kicked into the in goal, without having touched or been touched by a player, 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:
 - (1) the kick off to be taken again; or
 - (2) their put in to a **scrum** at the centre of the half way line.
- (d) Following an infringement for:
 - (1) offside;
 - (2) high or late tackle;
 - (3) hand off/fend off (a hand off being the placing of an open palmed hand by the ball carrier against an opponent's face or body while a fend off is an outstretched arm by the ball carrier towards an opponent to discourage that person making a tackle);

- (4) kicking (including fly-hacking ie kicking a loose ball on the ground); or
 - (5) obstruction; the **game** is restarted at the point at which the infringement occurred with a penalty kick to the non-offending team. Note that players should be encouraged to carry the ball in two hands to reduce the temptation to hand-off/fend off with a free hand.
- (e) After any stoppage not covered elsewhere in this section (e.g. an injury), the match restarts with a **scrum** to the team moving forward or, if neither team was moving forward, to the team last in possession of the ball.

4. General Play:

- (a) In general play, the ball can only be passed sideways or backwards – defined as “towards the player’s own try line”. If the ball is passed forward or knocked on, a **scrum** is awarded to the opposition unless the referee plays advantage to the non-offending team.
- (b) Offside in general play is penalised in accordance with the iRB Laws of the **Game**. A player offside in general play is to be penalised for being offside unless that player is making an obvious attempt to return to an onside position.

Penalty: A penalty kick restarts to the non-offending side.

- (c) If a player carrying the ball goes to ground in general play or if a player goes to ground to gather the ball in general play, the player must immediately do one of three things (or he will be penalised):
 - (1) get up with the ball;
 - (2) pass the ball to another player; or
 - (3) release the ball for another player to pick up.

Note: however, that if a player releases the ball by placing it on the ground and his team mates drive over the ball to prevent the opposition gaining possession, a ruck will generally be formed and in this case the ball may not be picked up by hand until the ball has left the ruck, as described in Section 7.

Penalty: Penalty kick.

5. Tackling:

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

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

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

- (2) The tackled player must immediately pass or release the ball and must get up or move away from the ball. The tackled player may put the ball on the ground in any direction, or may push the ball along the ground in any direction except forward (towards the opposition try line), providing this is done immediately.

- (3) At a tackle, or near to a tackle, players other than the tackler(s) or tackled player who play the ball must do so from behind the ball and from behind the tackled player, or the tackler closest to those players' goal line.
 - (4) Any player who first gains possession of the ball at the tackle or near to it may be tackled by an opposition player, providing that player does so from behind the ball and from behind the tackled player or tackler nearest that player's goal line. Infringement of any of the above will result in penalty kick being awarded to the non-infringing team.
- (b) If, after a tackle, the ball become unplayable, a scrum is awarded. The **scrum** is awarded to the team that was moving forward immediately prior to the tackle or, if no team was moving forward, to the attacking team (the team in the opponents' half of the pitch).
 - (c) No player shall use the technique known or referred to as "Squeezeball" and no person involved in the teaching or coaching of Mini-Midi Rugby may teach or coach to encourage Under 11 or Under 12 players to use the "Squeezeball" technique.

Penalty: penalty kick.

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

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

Note:

(1) no advantage shall be played;

(2) a player is assumed to have fallen voluntarily unless the referee is absolutely certain the fall was accidental.

*(3) in the very rare instances when the fall is accidental, play must be stopped and a **scrum** awarded to the side previously in possession. The object is to keep players on their feet and to prevent them from falling to the ground, thus removing a dangerous area of play. This will create proper rucks and mauls through encouraging players from each team to remain on their feet.*

6. Mauls:

- (a) A maul occurs when a player carrying the ball is held by one or more opponents and one or more of the ball-carrier's team-mates bind on to the ball-carrier. It is helpful if the referee calls "maul formed". All the players involved are on their feet.
- (b) Once a maul is formed, other players may only join the maul from behind the foot of their hindmost team mate in the maul. Players joining the maul from in front of this e.g. from the side are offside and should be penalised.

Penalty: Penalty kick.

- (c) A maul ends successfully when either the ball or a player with the ball leaves the maul or the ball is on the ground or the maul is on or over the goal line (when the ball may be grounded for a try or touch down as the case may be).
- (d) A maul ends unsuccessfully if the ball becomes unplayable or the maul collapses (not as a result of foul play) and a **scrum** is awarded. Should a maul collapse, the referee must immediately blow the whistle to stop play, to prevent a pile up from developing.
- (e) When a maul remains stationary or has stopped moving 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**.
- (f) When a maul has stopped moving forward it may start moving forward again providing it does so within 5 seconds. If the maul stops moving forward for a second time, and if the ball is being moved and the referee can see it, a reasonable time is allowed for the ball to emerge. A **scrum** is awarded if it does not emerge within a reasonable time.
- (g) In the case of a **scrum** following a maul the team in possession of the ball when the maul began will throw the ball in at the subsequent **scrum**. If the referee cannot decide which team had possession, the team moving forward before the maul stopped throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward, the attacking team throws in the ball.
- (h) Any player at any stage in a maul who has or causes an opponent to have, his shoulders lower than his hip joint must immediately be penalised by awarding a penalty kick. The object of this rule is to prevent the collapse of a maul. It is to help the coach to teach good technique and the referee to penalise bad technique. Any player who has his shoulders lower than his hip joint can only move downwards unless he has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forwards and upwards; all players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile up and possible injury.

7. Rucks

- (a) A ruck occurs when one or more players from each team, who are on their feet, in physical contact, close over the ball on the ground. It is helpful if the referee calls “ruck formed”. Players are rucking when they are in a ruck and using their feet to try to win or keep possession of the ball, without being guilty of foul play. Players must not stand on any part of another player’s body in a ruck.
Penalty: penalty kick.
- (b) Once a ruck is formed, other players may only join the ruck from behind the foot of their hindmost team mate in the ruck. A player may join alongside this hindmost player. Players joining the ruck from in front of this (eg from the side) are offside and should be penalised.
Penalty: penalty kick.
- (c) Players must not use their hands to pick up the ball while it is still in the ruck.
Penalty: penalty kick.

- (d) A ruck ends successfully when the ball leaves the ruck, or when the ball is on or over the goal line (when the ball may be grounded for a try or touch down as the case may be).
- (e) A ruck ends unsuccessfully when the ball becomes unplayable and a **scrum** is awarded. Should a ruck collapse, the referee must immediately blow the whistle to stop play, to prevent a pile up from developing.
- (f) **Scrum** following ruck: The team that was moving forward immediately before the ball became unplayable in the ruck throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward, or if the referee cannot decide which team was moving forward before the ball became unplayable in the ruck, the team that was moving forward before the ruck began throws in the ball. Before the referee blows the whistle for a **scrum**, the referee allows a reasonable amount of time for the ball to emerge. If the ruck stops moving or if the referee decides that the ball will probably not emerge within a reasonable time, the referee must order a **scrum**.
- (g) Any player at any stage in a ruck who has or causes an opponent to have, his shoulders lower than his hip joint must be penalised by awarding a penalty kick. The object of this rule is to prevent the collapse of a maul. It is to help the coach to teach good technique and the referee to penalise bad technique. Any player who has his shoulders lower than his hip joint can only move downwards unless he has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forwards and upwards; all players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile up and possible injury.

8. Scrums

(a)

- (i) At Under 11 the **scrum** will be made up of five players from each team – the front row (a row of three players, 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). Neither of the locks may unbind to pick up the ball at the rear of the **scrum** but must remain bound onto the **scrum** until the ball is carried or passed out by the scrum half.

Penalty: Penalty Kick.

- (ii) At Under 12 the **scrum** will be made up of six players from each team – the front row (a row of three players, i.e. a prop on either side of the hooker, two locks forming the second row and a back-row player who shall bind between the two locks (3-2-1 formation). 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 back row player must have their head between the hips of the second row bound with the arms around the hips (not between the legs) of the second row (locks). No player may unbind to pick up the ball at the rear of the **scrum** but must remain bound onto the **scrum** until the ball is carried or passed out by the scrum half.

Penalty: Penalty Kick

(b) 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 – the referee should check that each sides' locks are bound on to the front row before proceeding. 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.

(c) Although scrums are contested at Under 11 and Under 12, under no circumstances is the **scrum** to be:

(1) pushed or pulled more than 1.5 metres towards either try line.

Penalty: A penalty kick at the original spot against the side that has pushed or pulled the scrum;

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

(d) Front rows must not be allowed to charge at each other. If they start to engage too close together and with necks and backs bent, they must be stopped and the **scrum** reformed. Props' body positions must be parallel to the touchline (not boring in). There must be no downward pressure exerted by hands or arms. Shoulders must always be above the level of the hips.

(e) If the **scrum** collapses, the whistle must immediately be blown and the appropriate penalty awarded, or the **scrum** reset. If a player is persistently involved in collapsing or illegal binding they must be replaced. If a player's lack of technique or strength is a danger then they must be replaced.

(f) A non-contested **scrum** must replace a contested **scrum** in any of the following circumstances (on safety grounds):

(1) if a player in a **scrum** has to be replaced and there is no adequate replacement;

(2) if players involved in a **scrum** have not been properly trained;

(3) if one side is obviously stronger and more experienced than the other and the referee has been unable to get the stronger side to reduce their push to take this into account.

In a non-contested **scrum** the teams do not contest for the ball. The team putting the ball in must win it. Neither team is allowed to push the other team away from the mark.

(g) Any player at any stage in a **scrum** who has or causes an opponent to have, his shoulders lower than his hip joint must immediately be penalised by awarding a penalty kick. The object of this rule is to prevent the collapse of a **scrum**. It is to help the coach to teach good technique and the referee to penalise bad technique. Any player who has his shoulders lower than his hip joint can only move downwards

unless he has very great strength. The force through the shoulders should be directed forwards and upwards; all players should remain on their feet, thus preventing a pile up and possible injury.

- (h) The back lines of both teams must remain behind the hindmost foot of their respective scrums until the ball emerges or the scrum half places his hands on it. If a scrum is awarded within 5 metres of the goal line, the scrum is to be taken at a mark such that the middle line of the scrum is 5 metres from the goal line.
- (i) The scrum half not throwing the ball into the scrum may remain directly alongside his opponent, however, he/she must not move beyond the middle line of the scrum until the ball has emerged from the scrum or an opponent has placed their hands on the ball. In the event of a strike against the head (the side putting the ball in losing the ball in the scrum), the scrum half who has thrown the ball into the scrum is similarly restricted.
- (j) Referees should pay particular attention to ensure that the scrum half putting the ball into the scrum is not "feeding" his own players: the scrum half must hold the ball with both hands, with its major axis parallel to the ground/the touchline, midway between his knees and ankles. The scrum half must release the ball from outside the tunnel so that it lands midway between the two front rows and beyond the width of the nearer prop's shoulders.
- (k) In the interests of player safety, where a penalty is awarded for an infringement during a scrum, the penalty kick may not be taken quickly and players must wait until the referee signals that the kick may be taken.

9. Line-Outs

- (a) If the ball or player carrying the ball goes out of play, a contested line-out at the point at which the ball or player crossed the touchline will take place. If a lineout is awarded within 5 metres of the goal line, the line out is to be taken at a mark 5 metres out from the goal line. The opponents of the team who carried or last touched the ball before it went into touch throw the ball in. A quick throw in is not permitted.
- (b) The line out will be made up at Under 11 of four players from each team and at Under 12 of five players from each team (who stand between 2 and 10 metres from the touchline) plus the player throwing the ball in and an immediate opponent (who must stand within 2 metres of the player throwing the ball in) and one player from either side in a position to receive the ball (ie scrum half). Both the thrower in and his immediate opponent are able to take an active role in the line out as soon as the ball has been touched by one of the players in the line out. Players not taking part in the line out must stay behind the offside line until the line out ends.
- (c) The offside line for all players not participating in the line out (all players other than those described under Section 9(b)) is 10 metres back from the line of touch, parallel to the goal line, and they must remain behind that offside line until the line out has ended. If the line out is closer than 10 metres to the touchline, the goal line is the offside line.

- (d) The line out will extend from 2 to 10 metres from the touchline. Should the ball be thrown beyond 10 metres without contact, the opposition will be awarded the throw. Should the opposition then throw beyond 10 metres without contact, a scrum will be awarded to the side originally throwing in. The scrum will be formed 10 metres in from touch opposition the point where the ball went into touch. No advantage is to be played in any of these circumstances.
- (e) The line out begins when the ball leaves the hands of the player throwing it in. the line out ends when the ball or player carrying it leaves the line out. This includes the following:
 - (1) when the ball is thrown or knocked out of the line out;
 - (2) when a line out player hands the ball to a player who is peeling close to and parallel to the line – Note: “peeling” occurs when a player leaves the line out (after the ball has been thrown in) to catch the ball knocked or passed back by a team mate;
 - (3) when a ruck or maul develops in a line out, and both feet of all the players in the ruck or maul move beyond the line of touch; and
 - (4) the ball has been passed or carried out of the line out or it the catcher decides to drive through the line out.
- (f) When the ball becomes unplayable in a line out, play restarts with a scrum to the team moving forward or, if neither team was moving forward, to the team last in possession of the ball. The scrum will take place 10 metres in from the touchline opposite the point where the line out took place.
- (g) 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 (ie a player may not bind to a jumper until they return to the ground). The player designated to receive the ball (ie the scrum half) may not enter the line out to compete for the ball.

10. Kicking

- (a) All the iRB Laws of the Game pertaining to kicking in open play will apply, with the following exceptions:
 - (1) Players may only kick the ball out of their hands.
 - (2) On a kick, the offside zone is 7, rather than 10 metres: the kicker’s team mates must either be behind the kicker or behind a line 7 metres in front of the receiving opponent (or the place where the ball will land) or they are offside.
 - (3) Kicking a loose ball when it is on the ground (often called fly hacking) is not permitted – this includes a front row player kicking a ball out of the scrum. Penalty: A penalty kick
- (b) After a try has been scored, the team can attempt to convert the try with a goal. The kick at goal may take place from anywhere in front of the posts and may be by a place kick or a drop kick.

- (c) When an infringement occurs, a penalty or penalty kick will be awarded in accordance with the iRB Laws of the Game. 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 without interfering with the game until they are either 7 metres from the mark or 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 kick can be taken within 5 metres of the goal line.
- (d) 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 line out.
- (e) Drop goals are not permitted.

11. In-Goal

- (a) The in goal area includes the goal line (i.e. the try line) but not the touch in goal line, the dead ball line or the corner posts.
- (b) If the attacking team grounds the ball in the in goal without having committed an offence then a try is awarded. A ball is grounded by applying downward pressure by hand or chest when the ball is in contact with the ground.
- (c) If the attacking team is unable to ground the ball for a try because the ball is not in contact with the ground (eg a hand or body is in between) or the attacking player is unable to apply downward pressure, a scrum is awarded to the attacking team on a line 5 metres out from the goal line.
- (d) If the defending team grounds the ball in the in goal or the ball becomes "dead" by going or being carried into touch then:
 - (i) If the attacking team carried the ball into the in goal or last touched the ball before it went into the in goal, a drop out is awarded to the defending team on a line 15 metres out from the goal line;
 - (ii) If the defending team carried the ball into the in goal or last touched the ball before it went into the in goal, a scrum is awarded to the attacking team on a line 5 metres out from the goal line.

Code of Conducts

(A) THE GOOD MATCH OFFICIAL'S CODE

Match Officials should:

- a) Recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when officiating players.
- b) Provide positive verbal feedback in a constructive and encouraging manner during games.
- c) Emphasise the spirit of the game.
- d) Appreciate the needs of the players before the needs of the sport.
- e) Understand the physical and behavioural development of players.
- f) Be a positive role model. Set an example, and as such, comments should be positive and supportive.
- g) Look to self-improvement e.g. participation in training courses.
- h) Recognise that the safety of players is paramount.
- i) Explain decisions – all players are still learning and parents will understand the game better.
- j) Always penalise foul play.
- k) Play advantage whenever possible in order to let the game flow.
- l) Show empathy for the age and ability of players.
- m) Be consistent and objective.
- n) Be familiar with the Good Spectator's Code and ensure that verbal abuse from players, coaches or spectators is not tolerated and is dealt with by club officials immediately.
- o) Be aware of, and abide by, the RFU Child Protection Guidance policies and procedures.
- p) Officiate to the rules laid down in the Rugby Continuum and keep themselves updated on rule changes.
- q) Check that the home Club or School has provided a qualified first aider, ambulance access has not been obstructed and that appropriate equipment is available along with someone trained in its use before starting play.
- r) Before training sessions and matches check that studs and other clothing are in accordance with the IRB Laws of the Game.

(B) THE GOOD COACHES' CODE

Coaches of players should:

- a) Recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when coaching players.
- b) Understand that most learning is achieved through doing.
- c) Appreciate the needs of the players before the needs of the sport.
- d) Be a positive role model – think what this implies.
- e) Keep winning and losing in perspective – encourage players to behave with dignity in all circumstances.
- f) Respect all referees and the decisions they make, even if they appear to make a mistake, (remember it could be you refereeing next week) and ensure that the players recognise that they must do the same.
- g) Provide positive verbal feedback in a constructive and encouraging manner to all players, both during coaching sessions and matches.
- h) Provide rugby experiences which are matched to the players' ages and abilities, as well as their physical and behavioural development.
- i) Ensure all players are coached in a safe environment, with adequate first aid readily to hand.
- j) Avoid the overplaying of the best players by using a squad system which gives everybody a satisfactory amount of playing time.
- k) Never allow a player to train or play when injured.
- l) Ensure good supervision of players, both on and off the field.
- m) Recognise that players should never be exposed to extremes of heat, cold or unacceptable risk of injury.
- n) Develop an awareness of nutrition as part of an overall education in lifestyle management.
- o) Recognise that it is illegal for players under 18 to drink alcohol or for those under 16 to smoke. Coaches should actively discourage both.
- p) Ensure that their knowledge and coaching strategies are up to date and in line with RFU philosophy.
- q) Be aware of, and abide by, the RFU recommended procedures for taking young people on residential tours at home and abroad.
- r) Be aware of and abide by the policies and procedures outlined in the Policy and Procedures for the Welfare of Young People in Rugby Union.
- s) Coach to the rules laid down in the Rugby Continuum and keep themselves updated on rule changes.

(C) THE GOOD PLAYER'S CODE

Players should be encouraged to:

- (a) Recognise and appreciate the efforts made by coaches, parents, match officials and administration in providing the opportunity to play the game and enjoy the rugby environment.
- (b) Understand the values of loyalty and commitment to adults and team mates.
- (c) Recognise that every player has a right to expect their involvement in rugby to be safe and free from all types of abuse.
- (d) Understand that if an individual or group of players feel they are not being treated in a manner that is acceptable, then they should tell an adult either at the Club or School or outside of the game.
- (e) Play because they want to do so, not to please coaches or parent.
- (f) Remember that skill development, fun and enjoyment are the most important parts of the game.
- (g) Be attentive at all training and coaching sessions.
- (h) Work equally hard for themselves and their team – both will then benefit.
- (i) Recognise good play by all players on their team and by their opponents.
- (j) Be a sportsman – win with dignity, lose with grace.
- (k) Play to the iRB Laws of the Game and accept, without question, all referees' decision even if they appear to make a mistake.
- (l) Control their emotions. Verbal or physical abuse of team mates, opponents, coaches, match officials or spectators is not acceptable.
- (m) Treat all players, as they would like to be treated themselves. Do not interfere with, bully or take advantage of any player.

(D) THE GOOD PARENT'S CODE

Club and Schools should encourage parents and guardians to:

- (a) Be familiar with the coaching and training programme in order that they can ensure their child is fully involved and the coaches are aware of their availability.
- (b) Be familiar with the teaching and coaching methods used by observing the coaching and training sessions in which their child participates.
- (c) Be aware that the Club or School has a duty of care to ensure the safety of players and therefore, where appropriate, assist coaches with the supervision of the players, particularly where numbers are large and there is a need to transport players to away games.
- (d) Be involved with Club and School activities and share their expertise.
- (e) Share concerns, if they have them, with Club or School officials.
- (f) Be familiar with the Good Coaches' Code contained in the RFU Continuum. In particular, be aware that:
 - coaches should recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when coaching players; and
 - coaches should keep winning and losing in perspective – encourage players to behave with dignity in all circumstances.
- (g) Support coaches in installing these values.
- (h) Remember that young people play rugby for their own enjoyment not that of their parents.
- (i) Encourage young people to play – do not force them.
- (j) Focus on the players' efforts, rather than winning or losing.
- (k) Be realistic about the players' abilities; do not push them towards a level they are not capable of achieving.
- (l) Provide positive verbal feedback both in training and during the game.
- (m) Remember that persistent, negative messages will adversely affect the players' and referee's performance and attitude.
- (n) Always support the Club and School in their efforts to eradicate loud, coarse and abusive behaviour from the game.
- (o) Remember young people learn much by example.
- (p) Always show appreciation of good play by all players both from their own Club or School and the opposition.
- (q) Respect decisions made by the match officials, even if they appear to be a mistake, and encourage players to do likewise.

(E) THE GOOD SPECTATOR'S CODE

Club and Schools should encourage spectators to:

- (a) Act as positive role models to all players.
- (b) Be familiar with, and abide by, the RFU Child Protection Guidelines in relation to verbal and emotional abuse.
- (c) Respect guidance from the Club or School with regard to spectator behaviour.
- (d) Remember children play sport primarily for their own enjoyment, not for that of spectators.
- (e) Acknowledge good individual and team performance from all players irrespective of the team in which they play.
- (f) Respect match officials' decisions, even if they appear to be a mistake – remember, they are volunteers providing an opportunity for players to play rugby.
- (g) Never verbally abuse players, coaches, match officials or fellow spectators: such behaviour can create a negative environment for players and their behaviour will often reflect this.
- (h) Acknowledge effort and good performance rather than 'to win at all costs'.
- (i) Verbally encourage all players in a positive manner, shouting 'for' not 'at' the players.
- (j) Encourage all players irrespective of their ability – never ridicule any individual player, regardless of the team in which they play.