

# 1 UNDER 7 & UNDER 8 MINI TAG RUGBY (STAGE 1)

This Section contains the rules of play, regulations and recommendations (including modifications to the IRB Laws of the Game) for Mini Tag Rugby, as played by the Under 7 and Under 8 age grades. Note in particular that the Under 7 age grade is the entry level for players participating in rugby and the emphasis at all times (including during any matches) must be on enjoyment and learning, not on winning.

## RULES OF PLAY

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

### 1.1 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. 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. 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.

### 1.2 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.

### 1.3 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.

### 1.4 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 7 metres back from the mark. They cannot start moving forward until the ball leaves the hands of the passer. At a free pass, the player must start with the ball in both hands and, when instructed by the referee who

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

- (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.

## 1.5 THE TAG:

- (a) All players wear 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 38cms in length by 5cms in width although slight variations of a few millimetres should not be cause for concern. They should be made of a flexible plastic or plastic/canvas material. Tags are generally provided in red, blue, green and yellow. Colours should be chosen so that they stand out against the players' strip, e.g. teams with yellow shirts or shorts should not use yellow tags. 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.
  - (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 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.
  - (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 the ball will only be allowed to be tagged a maximum of 6 times before scoring a try. At the 7th tag, the referee will stop the game and give the ball to the other side by awarding a free pass at the point that the tag took place. If the 7th tag takes place one step from the try line and the ball is grounded, the try will be disallowed and the opposition will be given the ball for a free pass 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.*

## **1.6 OFFSIDE:**

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

## **1.7 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 **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.

#### **1.8 KICKING:**

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

#### **1.9 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 defending 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.

#### **1.10 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.

#### **1.11 PROHIBITED PLAY:**

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

#### **1.12 COACHING:**

- (a) The RFU recommends that at a Fixture, a coaching session precedes each match.
- (b) All matches should be used as an extension of the coaching session with the emphasis being on the quality of performance rather than the result.
- (c) During the match, coaches can direct and develop play, in a coaching sense, from on the field of play, ideally from behind their teams. Coaches must help to encourage the carrying of the ball in two hands and prompt players to pass when tagged. Coaches must not have any contact with players of either side while on the pitch.
- (d) The emphasis must be on enjoyment and the players must be encouraged to enjoy the physical skills of running, passing and evasion.
- (e) During the half-time interval, coaches must take time to talk to, encourage, coach and explain the game to the players.
- (f) Mismatches can be avoided by talking to the coach in charge of the opposition before the game.

### **REGULATIONS**

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

#### **1.13 FIXTURES & FESTIVALS:**

In the Rugby Continuum:

- (a) A Fixture is the playing of Mini Tag Rugby between teams of different Schools or Clubs, not more than three Schools or Clubs being involved together on any one day. Where three Clubs or Schools are involved, these are sometimes referred to as "Triangular Fixtures".
- (b) A Festival is the playing of Mini Tag Rugby between more than three teams of different Schools or Clubs, normally to establish a winner, all matches being part of one event.
- (c) A Tour is considered to be a Fixture or Festival according to the number of teams involved.
- (d) Fixtures and Festivals must all comply with the regulations contained in the Rugby Continuum, however, Festival organisers may impose additional conditions on participation including maximum squad sizes which should not be less than 10

players (although this should not prevent teams from participating with less than this number should they so wish).

#### **1.14 THE SEASON:**

The Mini Tag Rugby season starts on 1<sup>st</sup> September each year. Fixtures and Festivals for Under 7's and Under 8's may only take place during the period 1<sup>st</sup> October to 30<sup>th</sup> April each season unless a special dispensation has been granted by the RFU. Outside this period players may only participate in training and recruitment initiatives. Applications for special dispensations should be submitted to the RFU Community Rugby & Operations Director.

#### **1.15 UNDER 7 AGE GRADES:**

- (a) A player's age grade is determined by their age on 1<sup>st</sup> September at the beginning of the season. An Under 7 player will therefore only turn 7 during the course of the season.
- (b) During the course of a season players may only play rugby with other Under 7 players unless they are permitted to play with players from a different age grade under a dispensation referred to in Section 3.16.
- (c) When participating in Fixtures or Festivals, the Club/School must inform the coaches and match officials of opposing teams of any dispensation being applied and identify each player concerned.

#### **1.16 UNDER 7 AGE GRADE DISPENSATIONS**

The following general dispensations apply as exceptions to the age grade rules contained in Section 3.15. Particular attention is drawn to the need to ensure that player safety is not compromised when applying any of these dispensations since players of different age grades and development will be playing together and the duty of care owed to players means it may not always be appropriate to allow a player to take advantage of a dispensation.

- (a) **Team Dispensation:** Under 8 players may play down in an Under 7 team if Clubs or Schools do not have enough players to complete an Under 7 team, however, this dispensation is subject to strict observance of the following qualifications:
  - (1) the maximum numbers of players allowed to play down is two; and
  - (2) no Under 9 players or above may play in an Under 7 team in any circumstances.

This dispensation will also apply if a Club or School does have one or more full Under 7 teams, but needs extra players to field a further Under 7 team.

- (b) **Training Dispensation:** During internal Club/School training, players permitted by the Rugby Continuum to play in Under 7 and Under 8 squads may train together and play internal training matches together.
- (c) **Special Dispensation:** The vast majority of children, with correct coaching, can play in their correct age grades but in exceptional cases where child safety may be

compromised due to a developmental disability (physical or behavioural). Application to the RFU may be made for an individual dispensation permitting a player to play down one age grade. Such dispensation will only last for one season. Application for such a dispensation should be submitted to the RFU Community Rugby & Operations Director and should be accompanied by documentary evidence or signed statements confirming the player's disability. For the avoidance of doubt, special RFU dispensations to play outside of their true age grade will not be granted to players merely because they appear to have skills inferior or superior to their team mates.

- (d) **6 Year Old Player Dispensation:** To encourage recruitment children may enter the Under 7 age grade immediately they attain their 6<sup>th</sup> birthday. Players aged 6 may not, however, take advantage of this dispensation if it will result in their training/playing with Under 9s.

#### **1.17 UNDER 8 AGE GRADES:**

- (a) A player's age grade is determined by their age on 1<sup>st</sup> September at the beginning of the season. An Under 8 player will therefore only turn 8 during the course of the season.
- (b) During the course of a season players may only play rugby with other Under 8 players unless they are permitted to play with players from a different age grade under a dispensation referred to in Section 3.18.
- (c) When participating in Fixtures or Festivals, the Club/School must inform the coaches and match officials of opposing teams of any dispensation being applied and identify each player concerned.

#### **1.18 UNDER 8 AGE GRADE DISPENSATIONS:**

The following general dispensations apply as exceptions to the age grade rules contained in Section 3.17. Particular attention is drawn to the need to ensure that player safety is not compromised when applying any of these dispensations since players of different age grades and development will be playing together and the duty of care owed to players means it may not always be appropriate to allow a player to take advantage of a dispensation.

- (a) **Team Dispensation:** Under 9 players may play down in an Under 8 team if Clubs or Schools do not have enough players to complete an Under 8 team, however, this dispensation is subject to strict observance of the following qualifications:
  - (1) the maximum numbers of players allowed to play down is two;
  - (2) no Under 10 players or above may play in an Under 8 team in any circumstances; and
  - (3) no Under 9 players or above may train or play with a player aged 6 in any circumstances.

This dispensation will also apply if a Club or School does have one or more full Under 8 teams, but needs extra players to complete a further Under 8 team.

- (b) **Training Dispensation:** During internal Club/School training, players permitted by the Rugby Continuum to play in Under 7 and Under 8 squads may train together and play internal training matches together.
- (c) **Special Dispensation:** The vast majority of children, with correct coaching, can play in their correct age grades but in exceptional cases where child safety may be compromised due to a developmental disability (physical or behavioural). Application to the RFU may be made for an individual dispensation permitting a player to play down one age grade. Such dispensation will only last for one season. Application for such a dispensation should be submitted to the RFU Community Rugby & Operations Director and should be accompanied by documentary evidence or signed statements confirming the player's disability. For the avoidance of doubt, special RFU dispensations to play outside of their true age grade will not be granted to players merely because they appear to have skills inferior or superior to their team mates.

#### **1.19 LIMITATIONS ON FIXTURES:**

- (a) Each player in the Under 7 and Under 8 age grades is limited to playing in not more than:
  - (1) 17 Club Fixtures and/or Festivals during a season in addition to any Fixtures and/or Festivals played by them for their Schools;
  - (2) 17 School Fixtures and/or Festivals during a season in addition to any Fixtures and/or Festivals played by them for their Club;
  - (3) one Festival during the same weekend; and
  - (4) 5 games at a Festival.
- (b) Clubs and Schools must maintain a record of how many Fixtures and Festivals are played by each Under 7 and each Under 8 player during a season to ensure they are not exceeding these limits.
- (c) Where Clubs or Schools have large squads, additional Fixtures/Festivals may be arranged, provided that no player plays in more than the maximum number referred to in Section 3.19(a).

#### **1.20 MATCH DURATIONS:**

A match is made up of two halves with half-time lasting 2 minutes. Matches are limited to the following durations:

- (a) Fixture (when 2 Clubs or Schools are present): 10 minutes each way, 1 game = 20 minutes.
- (b) Fixture (when 3 Clubs or Schools are present): 7 1/2 minutes each way, 2 games = 30 minutes.
- (c) Festival: 5 minutes each way, Maximum of 5 games = 50 minutes.

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

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

Fixtures, coaching and training sessions must last no longer than 60 minutes, inclusive of time devoted to match play. At a Festival, time spent on training and matches must not total more than 60 minutes.

### **1.22 EQUIPMENT:**

- (a) A size 3 ball should be used.
- (b) Players may only use studs and other clothing during training sessions and matches that are in accordance with the IRB Laws of the Game. Spectacles may not be worn during training or in matches.

### **1.23 PITCH SIZES:**

The maximum pitch size for Under 7s and Under 8s is 60 metres x 30 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area. Reduced pitch sizes are acceptable provided this is agreed between the officiating referee and coaches and the smaller pitches will not materially increase the risk of injury to players. Adjacent pitches should be no closer than 5 metres.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

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

Match Officials should:

- (a) Recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when officiating players.
- (b) Provide positive verbal feedback in a constructive and encouraging manner during games.
- (c) Emphasise the spirit of the game.
- (d) Appreciate the needs of the players before the needs of the sport.
- (e) Understand the physical and behavioural development of players.
- (f) Be a positive role model. Set an example, and as such, comments should be positive and supportive.
- (g) Look to self-improvement e.g. participation in training courses.
- (h) Recognise that the safety of players is paramount.
- (i) Explain decisions - all players are still learning and parents will understand the game better.

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

#### **1.25 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.

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

Players should be encouraged to:

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

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

**1.27 DANGEROUS PLAY:**

- (a) Dangerous play can cause injury. Coaches and match officials must be particularly vigilant to prevent it.
- (b) There will always be knocks and bumps in rugby, but if dangerous play is eliminated, then many serious injuries will never happen.
- (c) After a stoppage for injury, restart play with a free pass to the team that had possession of the ball immediately prior to the stoppage.

**1.28 DISCIPLINE:**

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

circumstances. This may include the match officials and relevant coach warning the adult concerned or requesting the relevant adult to vacate the vicinity of the pitch before recommencing the match or training. In extreme cases or where the adult refuses to cooperate, the match or training should be abandoned.

- (2) The match officials and coaches should notify the incident to the Chairmen of the Mini-Midi Sections of their respective Clubs or to the Head of Games in the case of Schools for further consideration. In extreme cases this may include banning the relevant adult from attending matches and/or training sessions for a period and/or submission of a complaint to the relevant Constituent Body.
  - (3) Where the relevant actions fall within the Child Protection Policy, Clubs and Schools should also institute the procedures contained in such policy.
- (d) In all cases where a disciplinary matter has been referred to a Constituent Body, the Constituent Body may require either Club or Schools to provide additional information on the incident including confirmation of the action taken and may in exceptional cases refer the matter to the RFU for further consideration and sanctions.

#### **1.29 SAFETY:**

- (a) The RFU strongly recommends the wearing of mouth guards in case of accidental collision. Ideally mouth guards should be custom made from a dental impression of the teeth. The RFU also strongly recommends the wearing of shin guards.
- (b) 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.
- (c) If referees find themselves in an injury situation, they must concentrate on the vital things. If there is difficulty breathing remove the player's mouthguard and ensure the player hasn't swallowed their tongue: if they have, hook it out at once. 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.

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