



MAJOR LEAGUE  
RUGBY



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Almost 200 years ago, a boy named William Webb Ellis of Rugby, England decided he had enough of playing normal football (soccer) and picked up the ball and ran with it. 30 years later - rules were formed and a new sport evolved. Today a game that was created in a school yard is one of the most popular sports in the world.

Through its traditions and unique values, rugby's culture has grown to be unlike any other sport. Built on a foundation of discipline and sportsmanship, the key factor that defines the rugby culture is respect -- respect for the team, the opponents, the referee, the fans, the laws, and the sport. This tradition of respect combined with the exiting tempo of the game is what continues to attract both fans and athletes alike.

To join in this culture though, it is critical to know the rules of the game. Fortunately, the basics of rugby are not only easy, but fun to learn. Rugby is a combination of the best parts of the world's most popular sports you already know, only better. A rugby match consists of two 40 minute halves packed with full contact and exciting plays. It is a sport all about quick thinking, toughness, and grit; there are no time outs, no downs, no rolling substitutions, and no room for the faint-hearted.

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

Similar to American football, the objective of rugby is to advance the ball forward by running up the field. This may seem simple, but there's a catch. The ball can only be transferred from teammate to teammate by passing the ball backward or by kicking it.

Rugby is full contact, but the ball carrier is the only one that can be tackled. When a player gets tackled, the play does not stop. The ball is still in play and the team continues to work to create and manipulate space until a mistake is made or a try is scored.

# INTRODUCTION

# HOW TO SCORE

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**TRY (5 Points):** Similar to a touchdown in American football, it is the main method of scoring. A player must place the ball on the ground with *downward pressure* in the in-goal area between the goal-line and up to the dead ball line.

**CONVERSION (2 Points):** After a team scores a try, they are given a 60 second opportunity to convert it by kicking the ball through the goalposts. The conversion kick takes place in line with where the try was scored.

**TRY BOX (7 Points):** Team is awarded 7 points for any try scored directly under the posts, specifically in between the drawn lines perpendicular to the try line and in line with the posts.

**PENALTY KICK (3 Points):** A team can choose to kick for points when the opposition commits an infringement. The kick will take place from where the penalty occurred, it is kicked off of a tee, and must go through the goal posts.

**DROP GOAL (3 Points):** A very difficult and rare kick that is taken in live play. A player drops the ball to the ground, and kicks it through the goal posts.



# WHO IS ON THE FIELD?

Unlike many other sports, the number on the back of a rugby jersey is owned by the position, not an individual player. Numbers 1-15 are starters with 1-8 being forwards and 9-15 being backs. Numbers 16-23 are reserve players, who come onto the field later in the game as substitutes. Each individual player plays a special role in the game, but all rugby players must be strong, fearless, and incredibly resilient. Short and tall, brawny and lean, you'll see all shapes and sizes of athletes on a rugby pitch.

## PROPS



Props are very strong and powerful and are used to support the hooker during the scrum. They also secure the ball after a teammate is tackled and lift the jumper during a lineout.

## HOOKER



Named for their primary role on the field. The hooker is located in the middle of the front row of the scrum and 'hooks' the ball back using their foot, gaining possession for their team. The hooker also usually throws the ball in during an attacking lineout.

## LOCKS



The duo that makes up the second row, which is where the power comes from in the scrum. They are also usually the main jumpers in lineouts. Locks need to be tall and powerful while also being strong ball carriers during open play.

## FLANKERS



Flankers make up part of the back row of the scrum, they bind onto the locks and provide stability on the sides of the scrum. Flankers are very versatile players, whose key role is to gain possession in the break down.

## NUMBER 8



A very explosive player with strong tackling and ball carrying skills. The No. 8 makes up the very back of the scrum and binds onto the hips of the two locks. This player can be used in lineouts and are the link between the forwards and the backs.

## SCRUM HALF



As the player who orchestrates the team's performance, the scrum half needs to make quick decisions to control the speed of the game and where the ball goes. A scrum half is often smaller in size but need to be very vocal and have a great pass.

## FLY HALF

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The fly half controls most of the attack by making decisions on when to pass the ball to the rest of the back line or when to kick for field position.

## CENTERS

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Positioned just outside the fly half, the centers need to be strong runners and have a good eye for gaps in the defense. They are usually adaptable players who use their creativity to manipulate the defense while also being able to hit hard on the other side of the ball.

## WINGS

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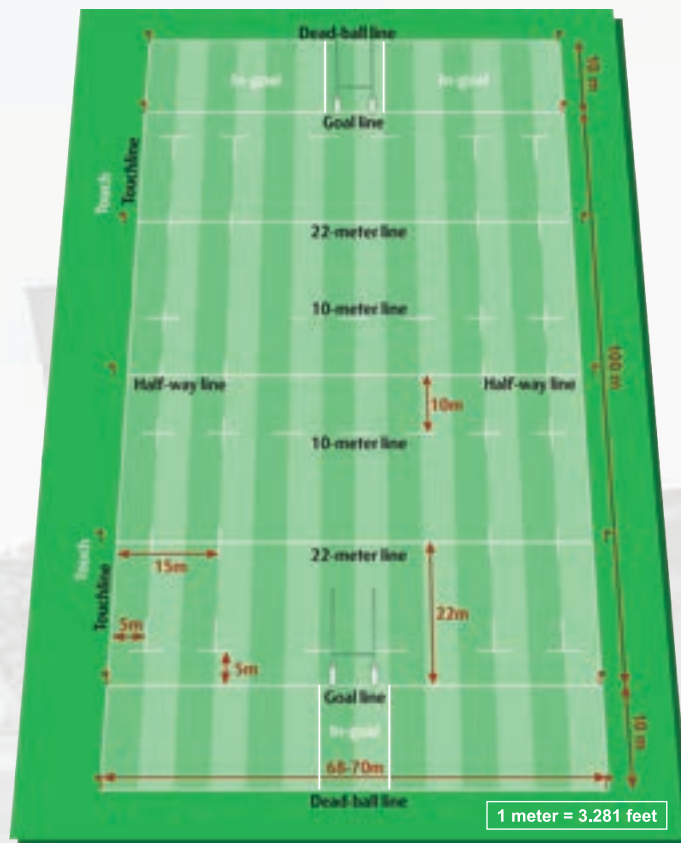
Wings are known for being the fastest on the team -- they need to turn their speed on at the drop of a hat. Their main role is to finish the job that the rest of the attacking team has started. Wings also need to be strong tacklers and be able to work with the fullback as the last line of defense.

## FULLBACK

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The fullback lines up behind the entire back line and catches many high kicks from the other team. They need to be comfortable under the high ball and have great vision as they act as decision makers during times of high pressure.

# PITCH



**TACKLE:** A tackle occurs when the ball carrier is brought to ground by one or more opponents even if it is just one knee on the ground. The opponents then must release the ball carrier and the ball carrier must release the ball for play to continue.

**RUCK:** A ruck occurs after a tackle. Once the player is tackled to the ground, the ball is fair game. Players from both teams compete for the ball by driving the opposition toward their goal line. Once a ruck is formed, players can't have their hands in the ruck trying to get the ball. They also must be stable and on their feet.

**MAUL:** A maul forms when a ball carrier is held up (but not tackled) by a player from their own team and a player from the other team. Players can join in the maul only from behind the last teammate. Anyone who comes in from the sides or deliberately collapses the maul will be penalized.

**KICKING:** In addition to running the ball up the field, a team may advance the ball by kicking it up the field and chasing after it. This can be done to gain a better field position, or to get the ball out of the opponent's red zone.

**KNOCK ON:** Dropping or hitting the ball forward after the ball has come in contact with a player above the waist results in a scrum to the other team.

**FORWARD PASS:** Passing from teammate to teammate in a forward direction results in a scrum to the other team.



# OPEN PLAY

# SET PIECE



Set piece is a way to restart the game after an infringement occurs, the ball goes out of bounds, or a team scores.

**SCRUM:** The eight forwards from each team bind together and push to drive the opposite team off the ball. The scrum-half from the team that was awarded advantage puts the ball into the center of the scrum and the hooker must hook the ball while the rest of the team drives forward. The ball comes out the back of the scrum and then is put into play by either the scrum half or the Number 8.

**LINE OUT:** When the ball is either kicked or carried into touch, the game is resumed by the ball being thrown back in bounds by other team. Both sets of forwards line up parallel with each other between the 5-meter and 15-meter lines facing the touch line. The hooker of the team with possession throws the ball back into the field of play. It must be thrown in straight down in the middle in between both teams. Lineout jumpers work to receive the ball. They can be lifted by their teammates below the waist, but for safety reasons they cannot be hit or pulled down by the opposition while in the air. Once the ball is received, the jumper puts the ball back in play by either passing to the scrum half or forming a maul.

**KICKOFF:** Similar to football, kickoffs occur after a team scores and at the start of each half. The only difference is the team that just scored is the team that will receive the kick off.

# PENALTIES

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There is one main referee and two assistant referees that are stationed on the side lines. The assistant referees help call the game by determining where balls go out of bounds, offsidess, and other common infringements.

There are times when an infringement occurs but instead of stopping play immediately, the referee can choose to give the non-infringing team advantage. However, if no gain is made after a while, the referee can bring the call back to where the initial infringement occurred.

When a penalty is called, the non-infringing team has the option of kicking to touch and having a lineout where the ball goes out, kicking for points, a tap and go to resume open play, or taking a scrum.

## COMMON INFRINGEMENTS INCLUDE:

**OBSTRUCTION:** This occurs when a player hits a player who does not have the ball. The most common example is when a player on attack hits a player on defense to protect the ball carrier (like blocking in football).

**HIGH TACKLE:** This occurs when a player tackles the ball carrier above the shoulders.

**OFFSIDES:** This occurs when a player is in front of a teammate who is carrying the ball or who last played it. An offside player must not interfere with play.

**FAILURE TO RELEASE:** After a tackle, the ball carrier must release the ball, and the tackler must release the ball carrier. If there is a failure to do either within a certain time frame the referee will call a penalty against the offending player.

**FAILURE TO ROLL AWAY:** Any player on the ground when a ruck or maul is formed must immediately roll away from the ball. If a player does not attempt to roll away and is interfering with the ball being played, a penalty will be called against them.

**JOINING FROM THE SIDE:** Players must join a ruck or a maul from behind. If someone enters from the side, a penalty will be awarded to the non-infringing team.

A serious or repeated infringement may result in a yellow card, at which time the player spends 10 minutes off the field, while his or her team plays a person down. If a player commits foul play, he or she may be given a red card and will be forced to immediately leave the field for the rest of the game.