



WORLD RUGBY *Putting players first*

Age Guideline - Under 18s Playing Adult Rugby

Introduction

This guideline aims to protect the safety and welfare of Age Grade Rugby Players wishing to play Adult Rugby at both Elite and Participation/Community levels by trying to ensure that participants with broadly compatible physical development and skill levels play with and against each other.

World Rugby recognizes the inherent differences across Unions world-wide and seeks to provide direction in the management of this issue for Member Unions. Member Unions will be responsible for the development of their Union specific Policy.

This Guideline differentiates between Elite Adult Rugby and Community/Participation Rugby because of:

- The intensity of Elite Rugby;
- The physicality and fitness associated with Elite Rugby;
- The ability to monitor regulations and protocols specific to Elite Rugby;
- The expert professional advice and support normally available to Elite Rugby Players; and
- The disparity between Community Rugby played in different Unions making the setting of common guidelines inappropriate.

Application

This guideline applies to all Under 18 Rugby Players who are eligible to play at a lower age grade and who wish to play Adult Rugby.

Guideline for Elite Adult Rugby

Best practise is for Under 18 Age grade Rugby Players not to play Elite Adult Rugby.

Acceptable practise is for players who are eligible to play at Under 18 level, and who are not eligible to play at any lower Age Grade, to play Elite Adult Rugby at any position other than the front row (excluding Rugby Sevens). In such circumstances, the following should be considered for inclusion within a Union's Policy:

- a. Written agreement from the Under 18 player to play Elite Adult Rugby and acceptance of the associated risk with playing with Adults who may be stronger and more physically developed than them;
- b. Parental or legal guardian's consent in writing;



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- c. Written confirmation from a medical practitioner with an understanding of the demands of Elite Rugby to whom the player is known that the player is in a physical condition to play Elite Adult Rugby and that this view is supported by a musculo-skeletal evaluation and/or other appropriate assessments;
- d. Written agreement from a medical officer with an understanding of the demands of Elite Rugby employed or retained by the player's home union that the player is in a physical condition to play Elite Adult Rugby and that this view is supported by musculo-skeletal evaluation and/or other appropriate assessments;
- e. Written confirmation from a coach with an appropriate understanding of the physical attributes required and of the risks to players in Elite Adult Rugby and to whom the player is known that the player has the requisite skills and experience to play Elite Adult Rugby; and
- f. Such other consents, agreements or confirmations (if any) as may be required by the player's home Union or to comply with the local jurisdiction.

Acceptable practice is for Under 19 players but not Under 18 players to play Elite Adult Rugby in any position including the front row. In such circumstances, the following should be considered for inclusion within a Union's Policy:

- a. Written agreement from the player in writing to play Elite Adult Rugby in the front row and acceptance of any associated risk of playing with Adults who may be stronger and more physically developed than them.
- b. Written confirmation from a medical practitioner with an understanding of the demands of Elite Rugby to whom the player is known that the player is in a physical condition to play Elite Adult Rugby in the front row and that this view is supported by a musculo-skeletal evaluation and/or other appropriate assessments;
- c. Written agreement from a medical officer with an understanding of the demands of Elite Rugby employed or retained by the player's home union that the player is in a physical condition to play Elite Adult Rugby in the front row and that this view is supported by musculo-skeletal evaluation and/or other appropriate assessments;
- d. Written confirmation from a coach with an appropriate understanding of the physical attributes required and of the risks to players in Elite Adult Rugby and to whom the player is known that the player has the requisite skills and experience to play Elite Adult Rugby in the front row; and
- e. It is recognized that the front row (prop and hooker) in Rugby potentially carries an increased risk of injury with respect to the scrum. It is therefore recommended that a more rigid process and criteria for these positions be applied in this situation. It is possible that Unions may introduce some form of strength assessment and or investigation into physical capacity of players in this situation.
- f. Such other consents, agreements or confirmations (if any) as may be required by the player's home Union or to comply with the local jurisdiction.

A player should not, under any circumstances, play Elite Adult Rugby in the front row if they are eligible to play Under 18 Age Grade Rugby.



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Best practice in the event that an Under 18 player has been cleared to play Elite Adult Rugby (and also in the case of an Under 19 being cleared to play in the front row) is for the following to be kept:

- a. A full permanent record of the process undertaken and the consents, confirmations and agreements sought and obtained in relation to each player; and
- b. If so reasonably required by World Rugby (or if required by the organiser of a competition in which the player is to take part) to provide certification or evidence of the process that has been undertaken and the consents agreements and confirmations obtained in accordance with the recommendations set down in the acceptable practice above.

Guideline for Participation/Community Adult Rugby

The Union having jurisdiction over the Community Game in its territory shall decide having regard to safety, player welfare and local conditions and circumstances on the policy, regulations and/or guidelines applicable if Under 18 players are to be permitted to play Participation/Community Adult Rugby.
