

UNDER 8 MINI FLAG RUGBY (STAGE 1)

This Section contains the rules of play, regulations and recommendations (including modifications to the IRB Laws of the Game) for Mini Flag Rugby, as played by the Under 8 age grades. Note in particular that the Under 8 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 8

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 Flag 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 Flag 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 meters 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 meters 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 meters of the goal line, then the free pass must be awarded to the non-offending side 7 meters from the goal line. This gives more space for both attacking and defending teams to play in.

1.5 THE FLAG: (a) All players wear a FLAG belt around their waist with two tags attached to it by Velcro positioned over each hip. Flag belts are to be securely fastened and any excess belt is to be tucked away so that this cannot be pulled by mistake. Flag belts are to be worn outside of shirts and not obscured in any way. Referees are to be watchful for flags being wrapped around the belt preventing them from being pulled off. (b) The standard dimensions for a FLAG 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. Flags are generally available or 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 flags 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 Flag Rugby games can continue to be played with Flags that do not comply with these guidelines but, for fairness, in such case both teams should be wearing the same design of FLAG belt and tags.

(c) A 'FLAG/TACKLE' is the removal of one of the two flags from the ball carrier's belt. Only the ball carrier can be flagged/tackled. The ball carrier can run and dodge potential tacklers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball and cannot guard or shield their flags 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 flags on their belt, one on each hip, they will be penalized if they become a ball carrier or if they tackle 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 flagged/tackled the ball must be passed to a team mate within 3 seconds, this includes stopping time (this time can be modified with the approval of referee/coaches based on the skill level and ability of the children). 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 flagger, retrieve their flag and place it back on their belt before re-joining play. If the player continues to play and influences the game without collecting their FLAG, they must be penalized 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 flagged.

(4) If the ball carrier is flagged 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 meters out from the goal-line.

(f) Actions by the flagger/tackler:

(1) When a FLAG is made, the flagger must stop running, hold the FLAG above their head and shout, "TACKLE". At this stage the referee must shout, "TACKLE - PASS".

(2) If the ball carrier stops running within 1 meter of the flagger, the flagger must move back towards their own goal-line, at least 1 meter, to allow room for the ball to be passed.

(3) Once the ball has been passed, the flagger must hand back the flag to the player and cannot re-join the match until this has been done. If a flagger continues to play and influences the match with an opponent's flag in their hand, or throws it to the floor, they must be penalized and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.

1.6 OFFSIDE: Offside only occurs at the time of the FLAG where the offside line is through the centre of the ball. When a FLAG is made, all players from the flagger'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 flagged 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 flaggers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball and cannot guard or shield their flags 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 and reminded of the non-contact rules of flag 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 Flag Rugby.

1.9 BALL ON THE GROUND: Players play Mini Flag 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 flag 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 penalized with a free pass and the players concerned reminded of the rules.

1.11 PROHIBITED PLAY: In Mini Flag Rugby, there is a total emphasis on running with the ball, evasion, running in support of the ball carrier, passing and running to FLAG the ball carrier.

In Mini Flag Rugby there is:

(a) NO CONTACT TACKLING

(b) No Scrummage;

(c) No lineout;

(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 flag);

(f) No going to ground; and

(g) No ripping of the ball.

UNDER 8 AGE GRADE DISPENSATIONS

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; and
- (2) **NO Under 9 players or above may play in an Under 8 team 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 field a further Under 8 team.

(b) Training Dispensation: During internal Club/School training, players permitted by the RUGBY CANADA Continuum to play in Under 8 and Under 9 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 physical developmental or disability (physical or behavioral)*** an application must be made to the provincial union's developmental manager for an individual dispensation permitting a player to play down one age grade. Such dispensation will only last for one season. This application should be accompanied by documentary evidence and/or signed statements confirming the player's situation. For the avoidance of doubt, special Rugby Canada 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 teammates.

1.1 LIMITATIONS ON FIXTURES:

(a) Each player in the Under 8 age grade 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 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,

1.2 MATCH DURATIONS:

A match is made up of two 10-minute halves with half-time lasting 2 minutes. Matches are limited to the following durations:

1.3 DURATION OF COACHING OR TRAINING SESSIONS:

Fixtures, coaching and training sessions must last no longer than **90 Minutes**, inclusive of time devoted to match play. At a Festival, time spent on training and matches must not total more than **90 minutes**.

1.4 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. Eye-glasses may not be worn during training or in matches.

1.5 COACHING:

(a) RUGBY CANADA 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.

RECOMMENDED FIELD SIZE FOR UNDER 8 MINI RUGBY:

30-35m

Size of field

Four games of 4 -7 a-side can be played on a typical school rugby/soccer pitch using dimensions of 30-35m x 15-20m.

If the amount of space available permits the playing area may be increased to a maximum of 60m x 30m, plus up to a maximum of 5m for each in-goal area.

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15-20m

Direction of play

