

Second Edition

# *Rugby*

## STEPS TO SUCCESS



No. 1  
SPORTS  
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SERIES

**Tony Biscombe • Peter Drewett**

Foreword by Ian McGeechan, OBE

Second Edition

# *Rugby*

## STEPS TO SUCCESS

Tony Biscombe  
Peter Drewett



橄榄球：成功之道

Rugby: Steps to success



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Second Edition

# *Rugby*

**STEPS TO SUCCESS**

# Foreword

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Rugby has been a big part of my life. In my playing career, which lasted 15 years, I was lucky enough to play top-class rugby against the best nations in the world. I earned 32 caps for Scotland (9 as captain) and 8 for the British and Irish Lions during the 1974 and 1977 tours. These experiences continued to fuel my enthusiasm for the game and drove me on to coach the British and Irish Lions, Scotland, Northampton and the London Wasps.

When coaching my players, I try to share my passion and appreciation of rugby. It is not simply about a group of talented individuals; rather, it is a wonderfully strategic game that requires exceptional discipline, competitiveness, skill, spatial awareness, tactical understanding and strategic execution by a cohesive unit of players aiming to outperform the opposition.

For a team to work as the ultimate unit, it must contain individuals who are able to execute the fundamental techniques of rugby to a high standard. Each player must be able to use these techniques within the mini-units that make up the team. Finally, every player must be familiar with key team tactics and strategies for defence and attack.

Anybody coming to *Rugby: Steps to Success* will find everything needed to gain an excellent understanding of how to execute and develop the fundamental skills of rugby and to then apply them in game situations.

The characteristic of *Rugby: Steps to Success* that most impressed me was how it introduces each technique and tactical concept. The practices and drills that follow offer players the opportunity to fully exploit their potential with achievable targets, which can then lead to more challenging ones. The scoring system is a great way for players to check their progress and gauge whether they are ready to further develop their rugby skills by moving to the next step.

I have known the authors for many years, and I have always been impressed by their level of rugby knowledge and their ability to communicate their ideas to the players they are coaching. *Rugby: Steps to Success* superbly reflects their coaching philosophy and delivery. Any player will benefit from the coaching advice of Tony Biscombe and Peter Drewett.

I look forward to seeing the stars of tomorrow playing great rugby using many of the techniques and tactics described in *Rugby: Steps to Success*.

*Ian McGeechan, OBE*



# Climbing the Steps to Rugby Success

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What attracts us to the game of Rugby Union? Why do we have lifelong club members who go from playing to coaching or administration, and all for no reward? What excites people about the game at all levels? The answer is simple—rugby is a game for all shapes, sizes, abilities, ambitions, fitness levels and backgrounds. It is a game for life. The strict disciplines the game engenders and those specific rules that are required to play it successfully have a carry-over into everyday life. The Laws of the game and those of society are there to be obeyed, administered and respected. Without such discipline, there would be no game.

There have been three great occasions in the history of Rugby Football. The first was the split in 1895 when players who needed time off work to play rugby on a Saturday were at a financial disadvantage because it was a ‘no work, no pay’ society. The outcome was the game of Rugby League, which was originally played semiprofessionally to compensate those who needed to take time off to play. Both sports have lived, sometimes uneasily, side by side in a few countries around the world since then. League has enjoyed a resurgence of interest following the creation of the Super League in England in 1996. Although initially solely played in the north of England, it is currently nurturing professional teams in Wales, London and France. The dominant force in the game is still Australia, but New Zealand and Great Britain are close seconds, and New Zealand’s defeat of Australia in the Rugby League World Cup of 2008 is indicative of the narrowing of the gap in performance.

The second great occasion for Rugby Union was the formation of a Rugby World Cup (RWC) in 1987. This competition has grown into a truly worldwide occasion. The effect of the global TV coverage of the RWC should not be underestimated; 86 nations from five continents contested the 2007 RWC, and 191 qualification games prior

to the finals in France took just over two and a half years to complete.

The colour, pace and excitement of rugby during these tournaments attracts many new players in clubs, schools and institutions and is an ideal tool for those involved in the promotion of and recruitment to the game. Currently, more than three million people worldwide play Rugby Union, and more are doing so every day.

Globally, the television audience and attendances at games are also increasing. The Rugby World Cup is now the world’s third-largest sporting event, and the 2007 tournament in France broke all previous attendance and broadcast records with just over 2.25 million spectators and a cumulative worldwide television audience of 4.2 billion. In England alone, 17 million viewers watched the final, which was the most-watched event in the whole of 2007. The growing global appeal of the game is indicated by enhanced coverage of the Rugby World Cup in the existing markets of Spain, Portugal, Italy and the Asian continent as well as the emerging countries of India, Russia, Canada and the United States.

Finally, the game went professional in Europe in 1995, thus ending accusations of shamateurism aimed at many clubs and players. The eventual formation of the Premiership League in England, the Leagues for the Scottish and Welsh district teams and an enhanced Super 14 and Tri Nations moved the game rapidly forward with access to a global television audience of billions.

This surge in attendance and awareness is also reflected in other major cup and league competitions around the world; the Heineken Cup in Europe, the Currie Cup in South Africa, the Top 14 in France and the Air New Zealand Cup are just some examples of major competitions that enjoy bumper crowds and global television audiences. These, in turn, have generated massive increases in the numbers of players, coaches and referees. It is this huge foundation group of players that the



professional game is built upon. Comparatively few players can earn a living playing the game, but at both the amateur and professional levels, the learning, teaching and coaching processes remain the same; only the intensity, attitude, fitness level and skill level of the players differ.

The modern game demands players who are not only bigger, faster and stronger than those of the past, but also play with vision and understanding and have excellent decision-making skills. These skills, which test both players and coaches alike, have often been neglected in the early learning environment of previous generations of players. *Rugby: Steps to Success* reflects current practices in preparing rugby players for the demands of the modern game, a game for life.

The staircase to success in Rugby Union branches off in many directions, leading to a variety of achievement levels. It is up to you to choose the direction in which you wish to continue to climb.

On the first few steps up the staircase, you will learn the skills important for all players and how to practise them so that you improve. You should familiarise yourself with these first sections before you begin to specialise and climb any staircase of technical skills.

Follow the same sequence on each step of the staircase. Start by practising with no pressure and gradually increase until your technique, performed against full opposition, becomes a skill. At the same time you must be aware of and follow the information given to you on essential protective and safety equipment and how to prepare your body to play a contact sport.

Here is the learning sequence for success:

1. Read the explanations of what the step covers, why the step is important and how to execute the step's focus, which might be a basic skill, concept, tactic or combination of all three.
2. Check your technique against the photographs, which show exactly how to position your body to execute each basic skill successfully. There are three general parts to each skill description: preparation (getting into the right position), execution (performing the skill that is the focus of the step) and follow-through (finishing correctly).

3. Look over the common errors that might occur and recommendations for how to correct them.
4. Read the instructions, the Success Check items for each drill, and the drill scoring. Practise accordingly and record your scores and note any improvement. Drills are arranged in an easy-to-difficult progression. This sequence of drills is designed specifically to help you achieve continued success. Pace yourself by adjusting the drills to either increase or decrease their difficulty, depending on your skill level.
5. At the end of each step, have a qualified observer, such as your teacher, coach or training partner, evaluate your basic skill technique. This provides a qualitative, subjective evaluation. By focusing on correct technique, you can enhance your performance. Ask your observer to suggest improvements.

When learning a new skill, check the numbered photographs at the beginning of each step. You might ask a teammate or coach to observe your early attempts at the skill and check your positioning, foot position or body movement, for example, against the photographs and explanations of the technique. Some of the advanced technical skills require a very experienced observer to help you achieve success in these early stages. As you progress up the staircase, you will find that achieving success becomes easier because you have been constantly refining your skills.

As with most staircases, the rugby steps to success are climbed many times in a lifetime. The time you spend revisiting the first few steps will never be wasted in Rugby Union. Even the most successful international rugby players climb the steps of basic skills three or four times each week. These skills are the foundation on which all else is built, and you must climb the staircase regularly to improve.

By planning your journey up the staircase carefully, you will learn new skills that you can take to the game of Rugby Union. The most successful teams are often those that involve all 15 players in a journey up a staircase of success, which ultimately leads to open, exciting, skilful and successful Rugby Union.

# Acknowledgments

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Many people have influenced the content of this book. Our roles in the Performance Department of the Rugby Football Union (RFU), especially between 1997 and 2008, allowed us to work side by side with some of the best coaches, medical staff and administrators in the world. In particular, the influence on us of Sir Clive Woodward, Andy Robinson and Phil Larder from 1997 to 2005

honed our specific knowledge of the game and taught us how to achieve success through elite practice and performance.

It would have been impossible to give complete attention to any writing without full support from our families, and in this regard we are indebted to Lorraine and Jenny and our respective children for their continued interest in this project.



# The Sport of Rugby Union

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In the early years of rugby in the 19th century, the game was played primarily by the great public schools, who played it for recreation. Many schools had their own sets of rules, but in nearly every case the ball was both handled and kicked, and only the method of scoring changed from place to place.

By 1845 the game was already very well established, and the first set of 'Laws of Football' was produced at Rugby School in England. In those days, the game was far less complicated than it is today. It had many differences from the modern game but also some similarities, and a number of modern terms already existed—for example, *offside*, *knock on*, *try* and *touch*.

In those days, no player was allowed to play until he had been awarded his cap, and this is thought to have been the precedent for the awarding of caps at the international level. The length of the match varied, but a match could have been played for a number of afternoons over an extended period of time, with over 50 players on unequal sides. Eventually, numbers were reduced to 20 a side, and ultimately to 15.

The rugby game played now was developed largely from the actions of a schoolboy named William Webb Ellis. He died in 1872, the year after the formation of the Rugby Football Union (RFU) and the adoption of the Laws of Rugby School. He is buried in Menton, France, and local rugby enthusiasts care for his grave. Little could Webb Ellis have known that his actions would ultimately create an organised worldwide game enjoyed by thousands of players and watched by

huge numbers of spectators at live matches and on television. A stone has been erected at Rugby School to honour Webb Ellis; it reads: 'This stone commemorates the exploit of William Webb Ellis, who, with a fine disregard for the rules of football as played in his time, first took the ball in his arms and ran with it, thus originating the distinctive feature of the rugby game. AD 1823'. The Rugby World Cup (RWC) trophy has been named the Webb Ellis Trophy in recognition of the schoolboy from Rugby School.

The original rugby ball was a pig's bladder inside a leather casing. When inflated, the bladder formed an oval shape. Nowadays, ball manufacturers using modern materials reproduce this shape, and many improvements to the technology of the ball have been introduced. The tiny pimples on the surface for better handling, the aerodynamics of the shape for better flight and the ball casing material for better weatherproofing are just some of the advances that science has brought to the game.

Rugby has become a way of life for many people throughout the world. The Rugby World Cup competition every four years has given rugby an even greater international identity, and the number of people playing the game continues to increase. The International Rugby Board (IRB) has appointed a number of officials to oversee the funding and development of rugby in emerging nations. According to the International Rugby Board, men and women of all ages play Rugby Union in over 100 countries spanning six continents, and most of those have an IRB rugby team.

Most unions offer women's rugby, encouraging women and girls to take up the game. Indeed, women's rugby is one of the fastest growing sports in many countries. Every four years, usually in the year preceding the Rugby World Cup, 12 teams contest the Women's Rugby World Cup.

As the world governing body, the IRB controls the Rugby World Cup, the Women's Rugby World Cup, Rugby World Cup Sevens, IRB Sevens World Series, Junior World Championship, Junior World Trophy, Nations Cup and the Pacific Nations Cup. It lobbies the member countries for votes

to decide where all of these events shall be held, except in the case of the Sevens World Series. For that competition, the IRB contracts with several national unions to hold individual events.

The success of the Rugby World Cup has attracted new audiences to Rugby Union around the world. The number of spectators and participants has multiplied annually. Many innovations have been adopted to make the game accessible to all. For example, spectators at Rugby Union matches are entertained not only by the play on the field but by prematch and half-time events as well.

## **LAWS OF RUGBY UNION**

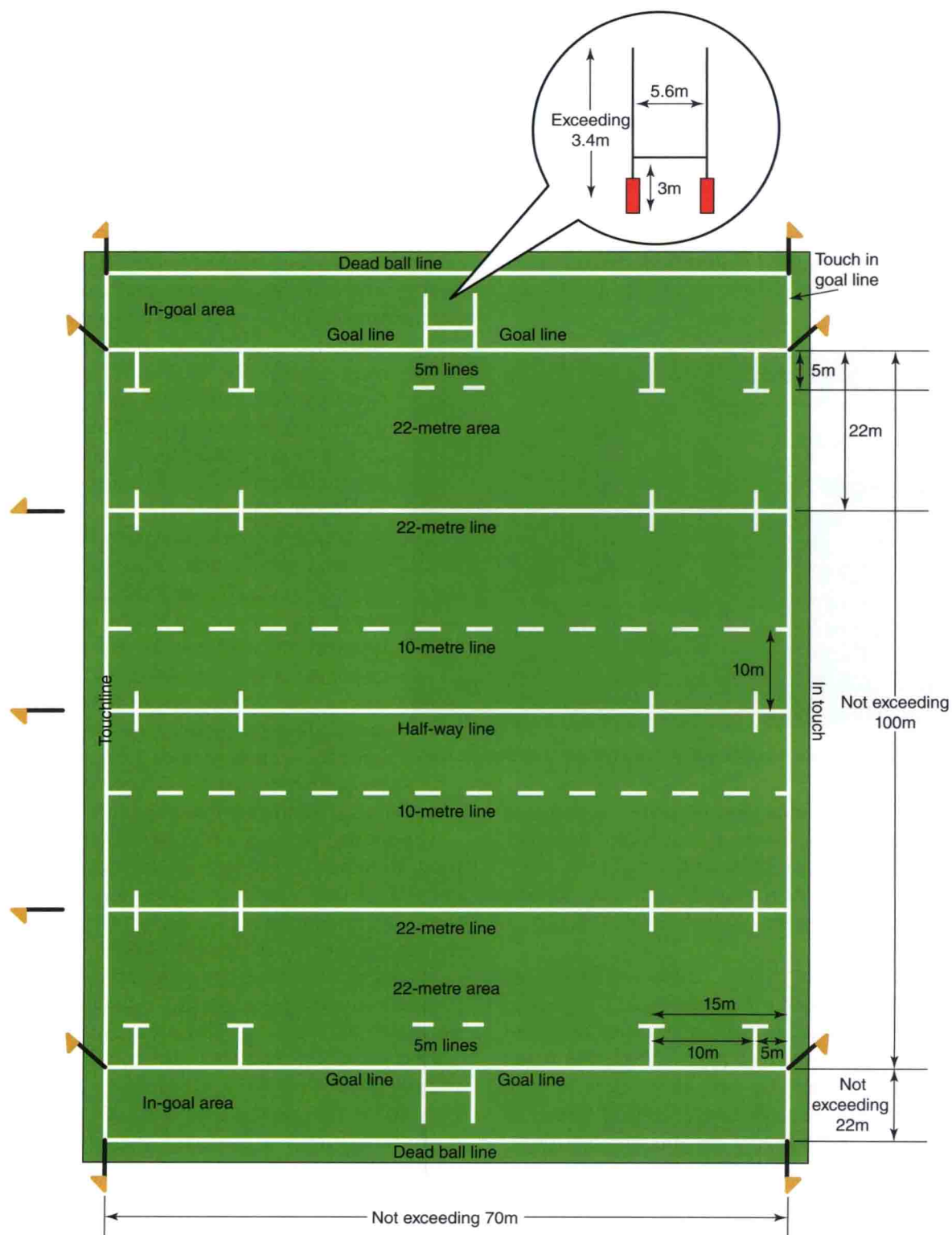
The Laws of the game of rugby football state: 'The objective of the game is that two teams of fifteen players each, observing fair play according to the Laws and a sporting spirit, should by carrying, passing, kicking and grounding the ball score as many points as possible, the team scoring the greater number of points to be the winner of the match'. Although this describes the game in a nutshell, there are many Laws, and it will take time for you to learn all of them. The Laws of rugby are amended and developed by the International Rugby Board (IRB). The IRB constantly reviews and, when necessary, changes Laws to help players enjoy a safer and more exciting game. These Laws are to be found in the Book of Laws produced by the International Rugby Board and the rugby unions of each playing member of the international community.

Before a game starts, the team captains meet to toss a coin, and the visiting captain calls. The winner of the toss can choose to kick off or to receive kick-off and defend a particular goal line for the first half. Captains often choose a particular end because of weather conditions; for example, the wind or bright sun might give a team an advantage. The game starts with a kick-off (drop kick) at the centre of the half-way

line, and the ball must reach the opponents' 10-metre line.

The players on the side that gains possession must attempt to work the ball down to their opponents' goal line by running, passing the ball laterally or backwards or kicking the ball. If one team manages to carry the ball over the goal line and place it down, a try, currently worth 5 points, is scored. That team then has the opportunity to kick a goal, currently worth 2 points, in line from where the try was scored. The game restarts back at the half-way line with a drop kick.

If the ball goes over the sidelines (touch lines), the game is restarted with a line-out (refer to steps 8 and 9). For handling infringements, a scrum (refer to step 8) brings the ball into play, and for offences against an opponent, the referee may award either a free kick or a penalty. Points may be scored from penalties by kicking the ball over the crossbar of the posts, currently worth 3 points. Anyone in position on the field may also drop kick the ball over the crossbar to score 3 points. Usually, the game is played outdoors on grass, although it may be played on clay or sand if it is not dangerous. Figure 1 shows the markings and dimensions of the playing area for the 15-per-side adult game.

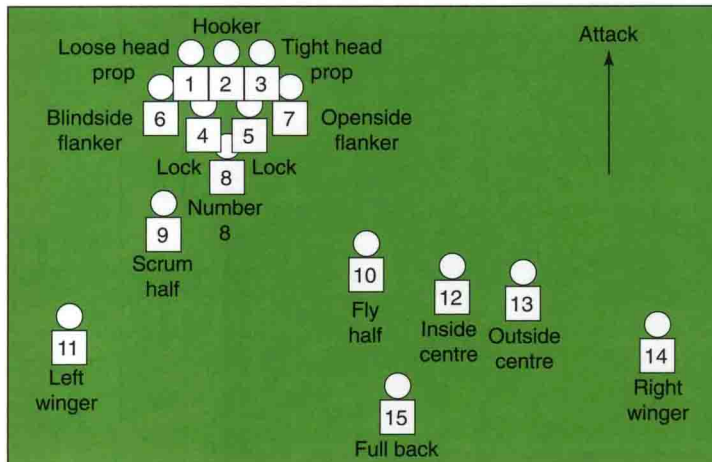


**Figure 1** Markings and dimensions of the playing area for the 15-per-side game.



Once the ball is in play, each player has a part to play. Everyone should be a good ball handler, tackler and runner. Although most positions have a specialist role when the game is restarted, the best teams contain individuals who have excellent overall skills.

The IRB recommends names and shirt numbers for each player position. Different countries, however, have a variety of names for playing positions (see glossary). Figure 2 shows the numbers and playing positions of a team at a scrum situation.



**Figure 2** Numbers and playing positions of a team at a scrum situation.

At senior and international levels, a game of rugby lasts for 80 minutes. It is split into two playing periods of 40 minutes, with a half-time interval of 5 or, more normally, 10 minutes. During the interval players rest, have a drink, talk tactics and change ends.

One of the best rugby Laws, which makes rugby different from other games, is advantage, which can override a number of other Laws but not those that cover foul play. 'When the result of an infringement by one team is that their opponents gain an advantage, the referee shall not whistle immediately for the infringement.' The purpose of the advantage Law is to make play more continuous as a result of fewer stoppages for transgressions. You should encourage your team to 'play to the whistle' despite infringements by your opponents, because this often results in your team scoring. The advantage can be tactical (a good attacking opportunity) or territorial (a gain in ground).

When rugby first began to be played, captains acted as referees and made decisions during the game. There has always been a great emphasis on fair play in rugby. Perhaps that is why you can travel the world and always receive a fine welcome in any rugby club. You will make a lot of lifelong friends playing rugby. You are now part of the ever-increasing rugby family.

Rugby is a game for the whole family. It is played by people of both sexes and all ages, sizes, shapes and abilities. Tournaments and matches are arranged for 6-year-olds to veterans, with

certain Law variations to help everyone play safely. For example, noncontact, two-handed touch rugby or tag rugby (in which the removal of a ribbon signals a tackle) can be played by people of all ages for recreational fun or competitively in organised leagues.

It has long been recognised that a complicated game such as rugby needed to be broken down into manageable pieces for young players to learn. Many major unions have worked hard to introduce the game safely and at a level and pace commensurate with the physical development and abilities of children. Coach and player education programmes around the world recognise the need for young players to learn in a safe and caring environment.

For young players to learn effectively, they must experience the techniques and skills in a controlled way and with repetition. For many, this is impossible in a 15-a-side game that can be dominated by one or two big players. It has been recognised that those learning the game should play on smaller pitches with reduced numbers per team and with players their own age. Also, young players should learn the techniques prior to taking the field for a game, even a modified one. Some unions regulate the ratio of practice sessions to matches played to encourage regular training and preparation time.

Young players should learn the game in a progressive way and at a pace that suits their age group. Tackling and contact are removed from the game for the youngest players, who are encouraged to run and play with the ball without fear of injury. The size of the pitch and number of players per team are modified. Most countries now have



## Substitutes and Replacements

Due to the contact nature of rugby, it is common for at least one player to leave the field as a precaution after receiving a soft tissue injury or after becoming very tired by his exertions during the match. The Laws allow a team to make up to seven substitutions in the game. However, once substituted a player may not return to the field unless he is a front-row player who is taking the place of an injured front-row player.

Players who are bleeding may be replaced temporarily and may return once any blood has been removed, any contaminated playing kit exchanged and the blood flow stopped.

The IRB nominates certain shirt numbers for specific positions and by Law each team must have suitably trained players on the substitutes' bench to play at prop and hooker. Certain age groups also recommend eight substitutes or replacements so that a full front row can be included on the team bench. Substitute regulations vary depending on the age group and also the country in which the game is being played. For example, in 2009 the RFU required a full replacement front row on the substitutes' bench, increasing the number of substitutes from seven to eight.

Apart from the front-row players, the composition of the rest of the substitutes' bench is at the discretion of the team coach. The coach decides on a four-to-three or five-to-two split between forwards and backs. Normally the positions and shirt numbers are as follows: 16 hooker, 17 prop, 18 prop or lock, 19 lock or back row, 20 back row, 21 scrum half, and 22 back (normally a fly half, centre or full back or a utility player). In a four-to-three split, the scrum half wears 20 and the two extra backs wear 21 and 22.

If sufficient front-row players are lost to injury during the game, so that the team cannot field a fully fit and trained front row, then noncontested scrums come into play. This means anyone can go into the front row. No pushing is allowed, and the team putting the ball into the scrum must win it.

Substitutions can be made for a variety of other reasons. For example, a team might have different kinds of players on the bench compared to those on the field, players who might be able to change the nature of the attack or defence to the team's advantage. This is known as an *impact bench*. Often these players are used when the team needs to change its tactics.

rules and regulations governing the game from under 6 or under 7 upwards.

For example, in New Zealand players at the under 7 level play on a full-sized pitch between the 10-metre line and the goal line. Each team has seven players. Two-handed touch is used instead of tackling. Games are played to a maximum of 20 minutes in one direction and then, after halftime, 20 minutes in the other direction. In England, young players are introduced to the game through tag rugby. Pitches are about 60 by 30 metres plus 5 metres for in-goal areas. Games are played for 10 minutes each way. In most countries, young players use smaller rugby balls.

As players progress through the levels, the game modifications change. For example, young players in England, New Zealand and Australia move from noncontact rugby through mini rugby to midi rugby by their early teens. Contact is controlled and gradually introduced to players and

then into games. The number of players on a team is gradually increased, playing areas increase in size and the intensity develops as tournaments and matches become more important.

Rugby-playing countries have developed their own kinds of noncontact rugby. In England, they play tag rugby. Players in New Zealand have Rippa rugby; in Australia, they play Walla rugby. These games are suitable for introducing the game and also for girls and boys to play with and against each other. In early developmental stages, boys and girls play together. However, once tackling and contact become the norm, mixed-sex rugby is discouraged beyond a certain age, which varies from country to country.

Experience has taught the major rugby-playing nations that going straight from a 7-, 8-, or 9-a-side game to a 15-a-side game requires a steep learning curve. Although young players may have experienced simple scrums and reduced-number



line-outs, this is scant preparation for the 15-a-side game. Consequently, many countries transition players to a 12-a-side game in which more realistic units can be introduced. The strategies and tactics used in a 15-a-side game are more easily learned with 12 players on each side and

full contact. This midway point—midi rugby—is an ideal transitional vehicle in the lives of young players. Players taught this way often find it easier to step into 15-a-side rugby because they understand how to play the game effectively and have already learned its integral parts.

## A Game for All

The rise of sport for players with disabilities has had a profound worldwide effect on the major sports. The magnificent spectacle of the Para Olympics has made people realise that sports shouldn't exclude anyone.

In recent years, the rise in popularity of wheelchair rugby has been phenomenal, providing opportunities for those in wheelchairs to take part in a contact sport. Most rugby unions take some responsibility for wheelchair rugby, and addresses and contact information can be found at the union's Web site.

Likewise, players with learning disabilities also can take part in modified games and can be encouraged to play to at least tag rugby level. With careful coaching, some players may be able to play the full game. For players with severe learning disabilities that affect their spatial awareness, exercising and practising with groups of similar abilities and using different-shaped and -coloured balls can provide a great deal of enjoyment. A sympathetic and stimulating environment such as modified rugby can be a wonderful tool for those who care for these individuals and are looking for new learning situations and experiences.

## PLAY PREPARATION AND RECOVERY

You may try to avoid contact as much as possible while you are playing, but nevertheless, at times you will collide with members of the opposition, members of your own team or the ground. Under no circumstances, therefore, should you take the field physically underprepared for these collisions.

Players in their late teenage years might consider using a weight-training schedule to gradually build up the strength and power required to play against bigger and older players. However, players in their early teenage years should exercise using only their own body weight as resistance.

Initially, an overall strengthening programme will be quite sufficient. However, different playing positions make different strength demands. For example, the strength required of a prop is not the same as that of a winger. To build up further strength in your body, you should take part in body-weight circuits. On occasions you may wish to use a partner's body weight as the resistance, but your own is often quite sufficient. You might also consider wrestling for the

ball against a partner or working with a heavy tackle bag that you repeatedly drive into, lift and throw to the ground. All these actions are very similar to those you perform in the game. As you move towards the senior game, you will begin to develop weight-training protocols for specific areas of the body. These will help protect you from injury and help you cope with the forces generated using the various techniques of the game. Your coach or fitness coach will help formulate these for you as you go through the age group teams in your club.

Because of the rough-and-tumble nature of the game, on occasion each of the joints of your body will come under extreme force and will be moved through a wide range of movement even if you do not want it to be. Therefore, you should follow a daily flexibility regime that stretches muscles and extends the range of your joints. However, before any exercise, including rugby practice, you must follow a warm-up and stretching routine to help prepare your body for exercise.



## Warm-Up

Warm-up is exactly what the name suggests: increasing the body's temperature to prepare it for vigorous exercise. Wear warm clothing at first. Begin by jogging for a short period of time to raise your body temperature, go into your routine of stretches and finish with a second jog to raise your temperature even further. If you feel any tightness in your muscles, stretch again after the second jog. Remember your sequence of stretches and follow it during warm-up.

Remember these golden rules when stretching.

It is better to stretch after you have raised the temperature of your body. This is not achieved by sitting next to a radiator, but by exercising gently for a short period of time. Under no circumstances should you bounce up and down in your stretch position. This kind of ballistic stretching can cause injury.

Apply all stretches firmly and gradually to the point of full stretch. Hold the fully stretched position for approximately 10 to 20 seconds. After 10 seconds you should find that the stretched muscles begin to automatically relax and any tension begins to disappear. At this point, begin to increase the range of movement in the area you are stretching. As you release the stretch, it often helps to shake the muscle gently to release any residual tension.

You should always follow a systematic stretching routine. Work from one end of the body to the other in sequence: for example, from ankles up to neck, or down the other way, or from the large abdominal muscles outwards.

## Cool-Down

After playing or training, it is a good idea to go through a number of cool-down stretches to help avoid stiffness in the muscles. Follow the same sequence as in your warm-up stretches.

It is widely accepted that sitting in a bath of ice and water after heavy exercise will speed up your recovery time. Your coach may require you to do this initially, but it should become part of your recovery regime. Drinking water or a sport drink immediately after the match to rehydrate and replenish your carbohydrate stocks is also strongly recommended. A banana is an ideal after-match or after-training snack, as bananas are packed with easily accessible carbohydrates. All of this will help you recover more quickly from strenuous activity.

Check to see if you have any lumps, bumps or grazes. Small lumps and bumps can be reduced easily by the application of ice, wrapped in a thin towel or inside a plastic bag. Clean any grazes or small cuts with an antiseptic, and apply dressings as required. Any severe swelling or pain in and around joints should be checked by the medical team. Make sure that any superficial injuries are seen and dealt with before you go into your ice bath.

Always bathe or shower after your recovery routines, not only for cleanliness, but also to invigorate you and help you relax and recover.

To avoid stiffness the next day and to fully recover from a game, perform some gentle exercise such as swimming or riding a bicycle. Refrain from any vigorous exercise for 24 to 48 hours during this recovery period. This will allow your body to recover, heal and adapt to the demands of the game at the level you are playing. Because tiredness can delay recovery when you are young, regularly monitor how you feel, the quality of your sleep and the length of time it takes for your stiffness to subside and your normal energy levels to return. If by two days following the game you are fine, then carry on with your regular regime. If not, then seek advice from your coach and explain how you feel so that someone else can monitor the amount of energy you are expending and the type, amount and quality of nutrition you are taking in.

## PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Many situations in training and playing can cause slight injury. Therefore, you should take the precaution of wearing the safety equipment allowed

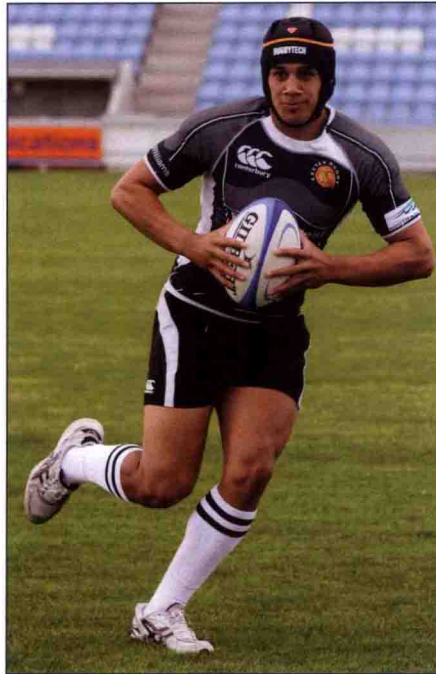
in Laws of the Game (see figure 3). You might consider wearing light shin guards to protect your legs from scrapes.

Wear only legal and well-fitting  
shoulder pads and head guards.

Make sure your gum shield  
is fitted by a dentist.

Warm up thoroughly  
before each game.

Wear shin guards for  
added protection.



Keep your tetanus  
protection up to date.

Wear only legal studs and  
have them inspected regularly.

Use a simple ankle strap  
for extra support.

**Figure 3** Safety equipment allowed in Laws of the Game.

Every player on your team should be fitted with a gum shield. This helps to protect your teeth and jaw and often prevents concussion if there is a clash of heads. Gum shields that are not fitted by a dentist should be avoided, as they are easily dislodged in contact.

Simple protective horseshoe strapping on your ankles prevents injury. No other strapping should be considered. If you need heavy strapping on any part of the body, you should not play. Playing with an injury risks making that injury much worse. An extra week away from the game is a far better option.

The Laws allow you to wear shoulder protection, and there are many protective vests on the market. Your personal preference will help you decide which one to wear. Choose one that gives the protection you need but also allows you to move freely so that you can play. It is common practice for many players to train and play wearing a head guard. Once again, your choice can be based on personal preference, but make sure

that the guard is legal in rugby Law, that it doesn't impair your field of vision and that it allows you to move freely.

- Make sure that you are up-to-date with a preventive course of tetanus injections to help prevent serious infections in even the slightest of wounds.

As you prepare for a match, you should adopt good habits. Always pack your kitbag the night before you are due to play. Make sure everything in your kit is clean, and check laces for fraying. Pack your tie-ups for your socks and your protective equipment. Check for any excessive wear on your studs and, if necessary, replace them with new ones. Make sure you understand all meeting arrangements for the pregame period so that you can arrive promptly. Lateness is a very bad habit and cuts down on the time you have to prepare mentally and physically for vigorous exercise.

Remember to clean your boots after the match if the ground was muddy, so they can dry out. This will help your feet to breathe during the next match.

## RESOURCES

The Web addresses noted here are starting points for anyone wishing to take up the game as a player or coach, research rugby history or view recent changes to the Laws.

The major rugby-playing nations have their own home Web addresses. Using a good search engine, you should be able to find information about local rugby in your community, women's and girls' rugby, wheelchair rugby and rugby for those with disabilities no matter where you live.

International Rugby Board (IRB): [www.irb.com](http://www.irb.com)

England: [www.rfu.com](http://www.rfu.com)

Ireland: [www.irishrugby.ie](http://www.irishrugby.ie)

Scotland: [www.scottishrugby.org](http://www.scottishrugby.org)

Wales: [www.wru.co.uk](http://www.wru.co.uk)

France: [www.ffr.fr](http://www.ffr.fr)

Italy: [www.federugby.it](http://www.federugby.it)

New Zealand: [www.nzrugby.com](http://www.nzrugby.com)

Australia: [www.rugby.com.au](http://www.rugby.com.au)

South Africa: [www.sarugby.net](http://www.sarugby.net)

Argentina: [www.uar.com.ar](http://www.uar.com.ar)

Canada: [www.rugbycanada.ca](http://www.rugbycanada.ca)

United States: [www.usarugby.org](http://www.usarugby.org)

To learn about some of the major international tournaments, go to [www.rbs6nations.com](http://www.rbs6nations.com) or [www.trinationsweb.com](http://www.trinationsweb.com). For general research about rugby, <http://sportsv1.com/rugby-union/> links features numerous links to a variety of rugby Web sites.