

A
Quick 20 Step Guide
to
the Youth Rules
(up to 16 years of age)



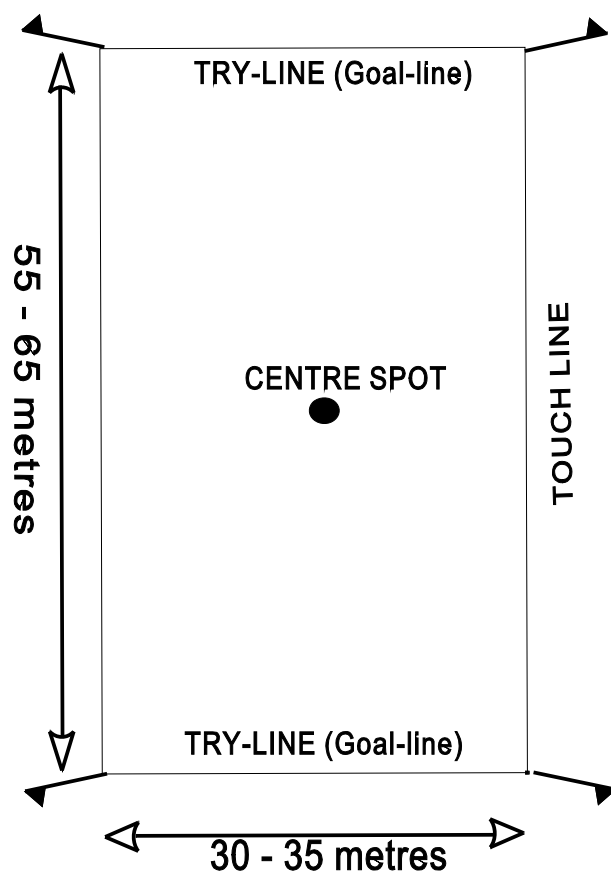
Compiled by Nick Leonard

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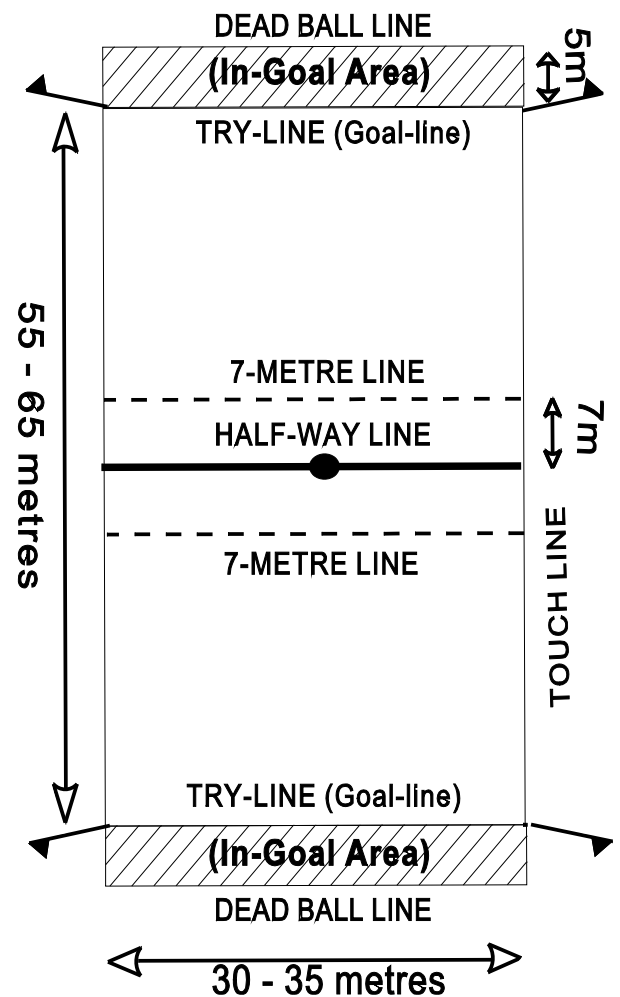
The Playing Area for Youth Tag Rugby

For recreational games of Tag Rugby it is by no means essential to have available a fully marked pitch, as shown in diagram B below. Such games can easily be played on a pitch marked out as a simple rectangle showing only the location of the two touch-lines and try-lines, as in diagram A.

A. Simple pitch markings



B. Fully marked pitch



Note: One large adult step is roughly equal to one metre. A Tag Rugby pitch is more or less half the size of a normal rugby pitch, playing across the pitch, using the touch-lines on the rugby pitch as the try-lines for a Tag Rugby match.

Introduction

Tag Rugby is a fun and exciting form of non-contact rugby suitable for males and females of all ages and abilities. There are no scrums and line-outs and tackling is not allowed. The game was first pioneered in this country by Nick Leonard in 1991 as a way of introducing youngsters to the game of rugby. Since then Tag Rugby has had phenomenal growth in popularity and has now spread to countries throughout the world. Initially it was only really played by youngsters but increasingly so men and women of all ages and ability are taking up the game and Tag Rugby is now being recognised as not only a way of introducing young players to contact rugby but as a game in its own right.

This set of rules has been compiled by Nick Leonard and are based on his own experiences of almost twenty years of teaching, coaching, refereeing and playing Tag Rugby.

The Object of the Game

The object of the game is to score tries. This is achieved by placing the ball with downward pressure on, or behind, the opponents' *try-line*. The player in possession of the ball (*attacker*) may run or pass the ball to achieve this but is not allowed to kick it. The ball may only be passed either sideways or backwards and not forwards to the opponents' *try-line*. It is the object of the team without the ball (*defensive team*) to prevent progress of the attacking team by removing a tag (ribbon) from the ball carrier. The attacking team have four (4) "*tags*" or "*plays*" to score. If a fifth (5th) *tag* is made a *changeover* occurs and the defending team is given possession of the ball and then becomes the attacking team.

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1. **How many players in a team?** - There is a maximum of seven (7) players per team on the field at any one time. In mixed games there must be a minimum of three (3) players of the opposite sex (subject to local rules) on the pitch at all times. Rolling subs are allowed at any time during the game

but in mixed games the appropriate number of each sex must be maintained. Squads are normally made up of twelve (12) players (subject to local rules).

2. **How long is a match?** - This is subject to local rules but the normal duration of a single game is two halves of twenty (20) minutes each, with a five (5) minute interval for half time. For festival type events games normally consist of two seven (7) minute halves with one (1) minute for half time, or simply ten (10) minutes one way with no half time.
3. **Players clothing** - All players wear either a Tag Rugby belt or, Official Tag Rugby match shorts. **Shirts should be tucked in at all times.** The tags (ribbons) must be properly positioned on either side of the hips. No player can participate in the game without both tags being properly in place. Players are not allowed to wear anything that might prove dangerous to other players, e.g. any jewellery or watches.
4. **What about the coloured tags (ribbons)?** - The referee should normally issue each team with seven (7) sets of identical tags (identical except for their colour) prior to the commencement of the match. If a player is replaced during the game he/she gives his/her tags to the new player coming on. If using Tag belts rather than Tag shorts, a replacement is allowed to wear the velcro belt itself but must not have any tags attached to it until he/she is given them by the player he/she is replacing. A team may not use any other tags during the game.
Note: Playing to this rule means a team can never have more than seven players involved in the game at any one time.
5. **How do players score in Tag Rugby?** - There is only one way of scoring in Tag Rugby and that is by scoring tries. A *try* is awarded to the attacking team when the ball is placed with downward pressure on, or behind, the opponents' *try-line*. A *try* is worth one (1) point but to encourage more

team play in mixed games a *try* is worth two (2) points if scored by a female.

Note: For safety, when playing on hard surfaces or in restricted areas, a try can be scored by the ball carrier crossing the vertical plane of the try-line and holding the ball above their head and shouting "TRY". They do not have to touch the ball on the floor.

6. **Are there any scrums or line-outs?** - There are no scrums or line-outs in Tag Rugby.

7. **Can you bash into other players?** - There is strictly **NO CONTACT** allowed between players, the only 'contact' allowed between the two teams is the removal of a tag from the Tag belt/Tag shorts of the ball carrier. Both attackers and defenders have a responsibility to avoid each other at **ALL** times. The ball carrier is not allowed to run directly into defenders and defenders are not allowed to block the progress of the ball carrier. No hand-offs, or using your hand, elbow or ball to block or shield your tags in any way is allowed. No pulling of clothing or pulling/knocking the ball out of the ball carrier's hand is permitted. Any player that initiates contact should be penalised and the player(s) concerned reminded of the rules.

Remember:

"Run at spaces not faces"

8. **How do you 'tackle' (tag) in Tag Rugby?** - Only the ball carrier can be 'tackled' (tagged). A 'tackle' (*tag*) is simply the removal by a defender of one of the two tags (ribbons) from the ball carrier. The defender then holds the tag above his/her head and shouts "TAG" for all to hear.

Note: If playing with a referee, it is helpful at this stage if the referee shouts "TAG ONE,...PASS", TAG TWO,...PASS" etc as the tags are completed.

9. **What must the ball carrier (attacker) do after being tagged?** – In Youth Tag Rugby there is no actual stoppage in play when a *tag* is made, instead the player in possession of the ball, the ball carrier, must stop running and pass immediately. The ball carrier is allowed a maximum of three (3) steps and three (3) seconds to pass the ball. If they fail to do this then a *tap & pass* is awarded to the non-offending team at the place of the infringement.

10. **What must the *tagger* do after making a *tag*?** –The *tagger*, and other defenders, must back off at least one metre (1m) from the ball carrier (attacker), allowing space for the ball carrier to pass. After a *tag* has occurred and the attacker has passed the ball, both the attacker and the *tagger* are momentarily out of the game. The *tagger* can take no further part until they have, in a sporting manner, handed back the tag (ribbon) to the attacker (not thrown it on the floor) and the attacker, no further part until they have replaced their tag (ribbon) back on their Tag belt/Tag shorts.

11. **What is the rule about carrying the ball in two hands?** - To encourage more passing and to avoid the ball carrier deliberately, or instinctively, trying to protect his/her tags (ribbons), the ball carrier **MUST**, when they are within three metres (3m) of defenders, **HOLD THE BALL IN TWO HANDS**. If the ball carrier fails to do this it is helpful if the referee shouts a warning, “TWO HANDS”, if this is ignored the player should be penalised by awarding a *tap & pass* to the non offending team.

12. **What is a *tap & pass*?** - A *tap & pass* is used to start the game or restart it at the place the ball went out of play or an infringement or *changeover* took place. The ball may be placed on the ground or held in the hand and on the instruction “PLAY” by the referee, **and not before**, the attacker must tap the ball with the foot, or lower leg, and pass the ball. At a *tap & pass* the opposition players must retire back seven metres (7m) towards their own *try-line*, or until they have reached their own *try-line* if this is

nearer. Defenders are not allowed to move forward until the actual pass has been made.

Note: The referee should normally allow about five (5) seconds for defenders to get back before saying "PLAY". Defenders are not allowed to interfere with play until they have retired the required seven metres (7m).

13. **How quickly can a tap & pass be taken?** - A tap & pass cannot be taken quickly but only after the referee has given the defensive team time (about five (5) seconds) to retire the required seven metres (7m) and given the instruction "PLAY". Play must restart with a pass, players are not allowed to tap the ball and run themselves.

14. **What is off-side?** – Players can only ever be *off-side* immediately after a 'tackle' (*tag*) has been made and it is essentially only the defending players who can be penalised for being *off-side*. In simple terms, once a *tag* has been made there is an imaginary *off-side* line that runs through the ball and across the pitch, (except for the actual *tagger* for whom it is one metre (1m) further back as described in Rule 10 above). When a *tag* has been made all defenders must attempt to retire towards their own *try-line* until they are behind the ball (*off-side* line). Defenders in front of the ball at a *tag*, and therefore *off-side*, are not allowed to interfere with play in any way e.g. by blocking or intercepting the pass, marking up support players or immediately tagging the receiver of the pass.

Note: There is no off-side in open play.

15. **When should players be penalised for being off-side?** - Players should only ever be penalised for *off-side* if they are **Off-SIDE AND INTERFERING WITH PLAY IMMEDIATELY AFTER A TAG**. If players find themselves in an *off-side* position at a *tag* they must make every effort to get back on side; but if they are in no way interfering with play, then they should **not** be penalised and play should be allowed to continue. Once the ball carrier has passed the ball away after being tagged and play has continued then this is regarded as Open Play and there is no longer an

off-side line in existence. Players who are *off-side* are temporarily out of the game.

Off-side is penalised by awarding a *tap & go* to the non-offending team.

16. **What is a *Knock-on*?** - A *knock-on* occurs when a player attempting to catch the ball fumbles it and knocks it forward and onto the ground in the direction of the opponents' *try-line*.

A *Knock-on* is penalised by awarding a *tap & pass* to the non-offending team.

17. **What happens when somebody does something wrong or a *try* has been scored?** - Whenever the Tag Rugby rules are broken, a *tap & pass* is awarded to the non-offending team at the place the infringement took place and the number of tags (*Tag Count*) starts back to zero. If the infringement took place over the *try-line*, or within five metres (5m) of it, the *tap & pass* is awarded five metres (5m) out from the *try-line* to create some space. When a *try* has been scored the non-scoring team then restart play in the centre of the pitch with a *tap & pass*.

18. **What happens if an attacking player is tagged just before the *try-line*?** - If an attacking player in possession of ball is tagged before crossing the opposing teams *try-line*, that player **must pass the ball** to a team-mate before a *try* can be awarded, even if their momentum has taken him/her on or over the *try-line*. The referee should help in this situation by advising the player to "PASS TO SCORE".

*Note: However, if an attacking player in possession of ball is tagged either **on**, or **after** crossing the opponent's *try-line*, then this player is allowed to ground the ball to score the *try*. This they must do within three (3) seconds. Referees should help in this situation by advising the ball carrier to "TOUCH THE BALL DOWN FOR THE TRY".*

19. **When should you play on after a mistake or an infringement has taken place?** - Except where safety is an issue, referees should play advantage wherever possible and allow the game to flow.

20. Things to Avoid - In the interest of safety and fair play players need to abide by the following rules:

- **No kicking** - No kicking is allowed in Tag Rugby.
- **No diving to score or diving to the floor to secure a ball which has gone to ground** - instead players must always remain on their feet when scoring or playing the ball off the floor.
- **No pulling or knocking the ball out of the ball carriers hands** – at any time.
- **No spinning/jumping** – ball carriers are not allowed to deliberately spin around or jump to avoid being tagged.
- **No player can participate in the game without both tags (ribbons) being properly in place** - one on either side of the hip.

If any of these rules are broken then a *tap & pass* is awarded to the non offending team.

Note: When dealing with beginners or players of low ability then, at the discretion of those in charge, players can be given longer than three (3) seconds to pass the ball after being tagged and/or the number of the *tags (Tag Count)* can be increased to more than five (5) before a *changeover* of possession is awarded. Similarly, with more able players, or when playing in a restricted area, the *Tag Count* can be reduced to less than five (5).

Code of conduct

All players and coaches will be expected to abide by the rules of the match/ tournament and decisions made by the officials and referees. They will be expected to play fairly and demonstrate good sportsmanship both on and off the pitch. In the event of misconduct and/or repeated and deliberate breaking of the rules or dangerous play, then the referee/tournament officials shall, at their discretion issue players with a yellow (sin binned) or red (sent off) card.

Note: For a more detailed description of the rules for Youth Tag Rugby then visit:

www.tagrugby.org