

EQUIPMENT

The Ball

► THE match ball is oval and is made from four panels of leather or suitable synthetic material. Its dimensions must be 280-300mm in length, have an end to end circumference of 740 – 770 mm and be 580 – 620mm in circumference at the widest point. It must weigh between 410 and 460 grams.

The Player's Kit

► RUGBY players traditionally wear a jersey in their team colours. A different jersey may be worn for away matches. The back of the player's jersey has the positional number on it and usually a team sponsor's logo. Shorts, long socks and boots are also part of the kit. The boots worn have studs made from aluminium or hard plastic and must conform to set regulations. All players' boots are checked before a game to ensure they meet the standards, eliminating the potential of injury.

Safety gear

► THE physical nature of rugby means that protective gear is increasingly being worn. All players must wear a mouth-guard to protect their teeth and gums and stop players from biting their tongues. Body protection is not compulsory but is popular. Shoulder padding protects the bony parts of the shoulder and clavicle. Some players also wear head-gear to help prevent cuts and abrasions to their ears and head and reduce the pain that occurs from accidental contact in play. All safety gear must be made from soft, thin material to minimize injury to other players.



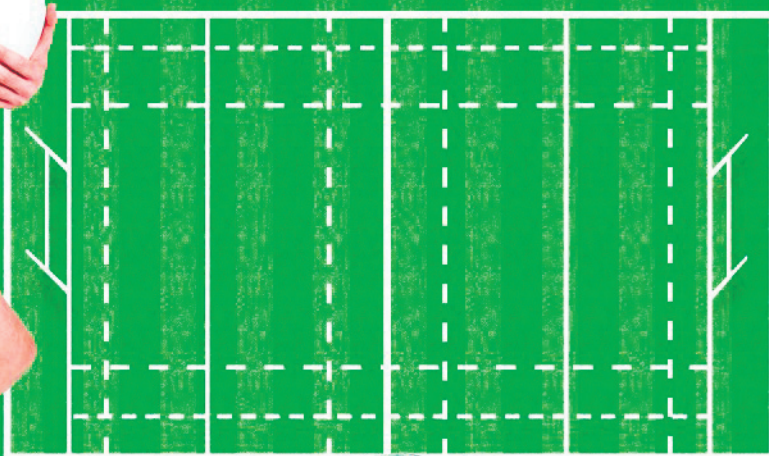
THE FIELD

THE game of rugby union is played on a field or pitch. The playing area must not exceed 70 metres in width and 100 metres in length. The in-goal area behind each tryline must be between 10 and 22 metres. Solid lines mark the sides (touchlines), the rear of the in-goal area (dead-ball lines), the goal/try line, the half-way line and lines 22 metres from each goal-line. Broken lines mark 10 metre lines either side of the half way line and five metre lines parallel to the goal lines. Dash lines are also used to mark five metres and 15 metres infield from the touch lines.

At each end of the field are 'H' shaped goal posts placed in the middle of the goal line. The vertical posts are placed 5.6 metres apart and are connected by a bar three metres above the ground. Flag posts are placed at the four corners of the field of play and corners of the in-goal area. Flags are positioned in line with the 22 metre and halfway lines on each side of the pitch but outside the playing area.

CHALLENGE

LABEL this diagram of a rugby pitch using the description of the field to help you.



CONTROLLING THE GAME

A GAME of rugby is controlled by one referee on the field of play, two touch judges, and at professional level, a television match official or video referee.

The whistle blower, the referee, is at the heart of the action making the majority of calls and decisions based on the laws or rules of the game. The two touch judges on either side of the field assist the referee by indicating when and where the ball goes into touch and any other matters the referee requires. The touch judges also give a ruling on the success or otherwise of goal kicks. The television match official use television replays to rule on whether points have been scored but can only rule on exactly what the referee asks them.

RULE OF THE DAY

IF YOU are a rugby novice some of the rules of the game can be confusing. Each day we focus on one rule and try to explain it so it's a little clearer. Today's rule is – Offside

Different phases of the game have specific off-side laws.

► In general play, a player is off-side when they are in front of a teammate in possession of the ball, or in front of a teammate who last played the ball or kicked it and actively tries to play the ball, does not retreat within 10m of an opponent who is waiting for the ball, or moves towards the opponents or the place where the ball lands without first coming back onside.

► Most offside decisions in rugby union happen at rucks and mauls. An imaginary line is drawn through the hind most foot of the last player in the ruck or maul. Players must either join the ruck or maul or retreat behind the off-side line.

► Only the forwards and the scrum-half are allowed in the area 10m either side of the line out until the ball has been thrown in, touched a player or the ground. There is also an off-side line one metre between the two sets of forwards. Players must not encroach within this gap unless they are jumping for the ball. In a scrum there is an imaginary line drawn through the hind most foot of the last player in the scrum. No player other than the forwards and scrum-half is allowed within this area. Scrum-halves cannot go beyond the line of the ball fed into the scrum and must wait until the ball is out before making a tackle.

TOMORROW: Rollin' Rugby Part 3