

Chambersburg Rugby Club



RUGBY 101

What is Rugby

Rugby is a more than a sport. It's a passion. It's a disease you catch that infects your very core. People will tell you it's a cross between soccer and football, but that doesn't *really* prepare you for rugby. There is *nothing* like it on or off the field.

How did rugby, the father of American football, originate? There is that tired, hackneyed legend of the young and ever-so rebellious William Webb Ellis, who one day, during a soccer match at Rugby School in England, decided to pick up the ball and run with it. However, most sports historians postulate that back in the day it was considered amusement for one town to try and carry a somewhat startled young pig to another town's village square. They would employ various methods of dodging, dashing, passing, or just plowing through en masse to achieve this. These primitive contests became refined over time and emerged as rugby and soccer.

To the casual observer of a rugby match today, rugby seems remarkably close to that version of its roots than some picked up soccer ball. Well, wherever it came from, today's rugby is, at its best, a blend of strategy, strength, speed, and instinct. At the least, it is organized and glorious mayhem. **The object is to score more points than the other team by carrying, passing, and kicking the ball.**

Simple enough . . .

Pitch, Kit and New Meanings for Words You Already Know

We play on a **pitch**. It looks like a field. And it is a field. But we call it a pitch. It is preferably grassy and level, but we take what we can get.

As you can see from the diagram below, the pitch is 100 meters (110 yards) long and 70 meters (75 yards) wide.

The Kit:

Your rugby kit is simply what you wear to the pitch. It consists of:

- Sturdy rugby jersey
- Pair of rugby shorts
- Matching socks
- Cleats (called a **rugby boot**) and
- Mouth guard

If you need help getting your kit together, consult a club member.

A tip for rookies: leave your jewelry at home. Literally thousands of earrings, rings and necklaces have been lost forever.

You'll also need a ball - a **rugby ball**, of course! It looks like a fat football with more rounded ends. Get your own ball for practice away from practice. You'll be glad you did. All gear is available at local and online vendors.

Okay, got the pitch and kit down. So how do you play this game?

The Basics of a Match

Begin with a Kick-Off

Teams usually line up for cleat inspection before the match, but the action begins with a kick-off. This is taken at the halfway line.

Like soccer, rugby is a continuous play game. The clock does not stop! A regulation match is divided into **two 40 minutes halves totaling 80 minutes for a full match**.

Unlike American football, there is no stopping to set up plays. **The only time play stops is because a penalty or injury has occurred.** Any time taken for injury is added on to the half in which it occurs.

The halftime break lasts no more than 10 minutes.

There is also a limitation of the number of player substitutions each team can make in any one match. Substitutions may only be made when the ball is dead and with the permission of the referee. If a player is substituted, that player can't return and play in that match even to replace an injured player unless his substitution was caused by injury.

The object of the game, of course, is to rack up as many points as possible in those 80 minutes. Usually scoring a **try** (the equivalent of a touchdown in American football terms) does this nicely, but there are other ways. We'll talk more about scoring later.

Playing Rugby

Boiled down to basics, playing rugby is about getting the ball and using the ball while maintaining possession.

Let's say the other team just kicked-off to your team. Any player who is on side may take the ball and run with it.

Let's say you caught the ball. You have options:

- *You can pass the ball.* But here's the rub: **the ball may only be passed backward or laterally (side-ways)**. If you pass it forward, it's a penalty (called straightforwardly enough, a forward pass). This is another big difference between rugby and American football.
- *You can kick the ball forward*, either on the ground like a soccer ball or in the air. Unlike American football, in rugby, kicking is often an excellent strategic move.
- *You can hand off the ball to another player.* You don't have to pass the ball to get it to another player.
- *You can run with the ball* - preferably towards the other team's goal line.

Let's say you passed the ball and the other team intercepted it - you can regain possession (and your dignity) by:

- *Tackling the opponent with the ball.* Once you've tackled the guy, the guy must release the ball on the ground (usually placing it towards his teammates). As the tackler you've got to release the guy you tackled, too. **The tackle does not stop play in rugby.** In fact, the whole point of the player releasing the ball is to allow play to continue. Once the ball is released on the ground, it's fair game to be picked up by anyone. Even as the tackler you can pick it up as well. but only *if you are on your feet*. If you try to pick up the released ball before you are on both feet, it's a penalty call (playing the ball on the ground).

- *Ripping the ball from the opponent with the ball.* Hey, it isn't pretty, but it works. One thing that confuses rookies is that they think that once the ball is dropped, the ball is dead. It isn't!! **The ball is always alive, even when it's on the ground.** If the ball is on the ground, anyone can pick it up and play it. The only time the ball is dead is when it goes into touch (out of bounds).

Any player may tackle, hold or shove an opponent **holding the ball**. This "holding the ball" bit is important. Unlike American football, if you shove, tackle, hold or block any person who does not have the ball, it's a penalty called **obstruction** and it is *cheating*. You should never cheat.

As you can see, players have a lot of leeway on the field.

Regardless, whatever a player does, it must be in accordance with the Laws of the Game.

Laws? Oh yeah, the rules of the game are called Laws. And just like laws in real life, they are subject to the strict or loose interpretation of those who enforce them. In rugby, that person is the referee.

The Officials

There is one referee and two touch judges in every match who enforce the Laws. The ref is the sole arbiter of the Laws of the Game. His (or her) word is final. There is no appeal. The touch judges are there to call where a player or a ball goes in touch (out of bounds).

The important thing to remember is that there is only one referee. It may seem impossible (or at least improbable) that one lonely ref can see the actions of thirty other people on a huge pitch, but you'd be surprised what a good ref can see.

The important thing to remember with refs is that you can't talk back to them. Not even the coach can talk to the ref. The only folks authorized to talk to the ref during a game are the captains of each team. This includes foul language. You can be penalized if the ref hears you!

Smart players (and teams) learn to play to the ref. They figure out how the ref is going to call certain offenses and adjust their play to the ref's style. This is particularly true when it comes to how strictly the ref is enforcing the "on-side" laws.

The Concept of "Onside"

Anybody may play the ball. Let's repeat that. **ANYBODY** can play the ball. You may run with it, pass it, kick it, or tackle an opponent who has it - provided that you are **onside**.

Perhaps the most confusing aspect about rugby for players and observers alike is the concept of being on side - which is unfortunate because it's very simple, generally speaking.

Rookies, this is key: if you are *behind the ball* you are **onside**. If you are *in front of the ball* you are **offside**. And being offside is a big no-no.

You won't be in trouble if you're 50 meters away tying your shoe, or even if you are in 10 meters away. But if you influence play in any way from an offside position or attempt to participate in the game (attempt to get the ball, tackle someone with the ball, etc.), this is BAD, BAD, BAD. We're talking Penalty City, kids. DON'T DO IT.

The French term for offside is *hors jeu*; literally, out of the game. That's a good way to think of it. When you are offside, you are a "non-player" until you get back onside.

For now, keep these examples in mind:

- Say your teammate has the ball and wants to pass it to you. As he's getting ready to pass, you move ahead of him. Now he can't pass it to you because you are ahead of the ball (not behind it) and offside. Besides, if he threw the ball to you, it will be a forward pass.

- Say your teammate has the ball, and wants to pass it to you. He completes the pass to you. Can you throw it back to him? No, not until he's behind the ball again.

Okay, so now you have the basics of the game under your belt.

Let's look at who all gets to play in this mess.

Have We Got a Position for YOU!

To describe the individual positions in rugby, we'll talk about them in the context of one of the unique fixtures of rugby, the **scrum**. A scrum is the name of the formal conglomeration of players who bind together in specific positions when a **scrum down** is called. It is one of the basic set formations (or **set pieces** or **set plays** in rigger talk) of rugby. We'll talk about the other set formations later.

You can tell a lot about a rigger from his position in the scrum. A **prop** is *usually* a stocky guy, a **lock** a tall one, a **wing** a smaller and faster one.

A **scrum** occurs after various minor infringements of the law, such as when the ball becomes tied up, and other times you'll learn about later. It is a face-off of sorts, where each team is contesting to get the ball, and a favorite among forwards. Form and timing are more important than brute strength (we'll take some brute strength too).

Every position on the team has a specific function. The team is generally divided into **forwards** and **backs**.

Forwards (also known as the pack, numbered 1-8) tend to be big and strong.

Backs (Numbered 9-15) tend to be fast and agile.

Forwards win the ball for the backs to use to score.



- Starting on the left side of the scrum, the scrumhalf (No. 9) puts the ball straight into the scrum, between the two opposing front rows.
- The hookers (No. 2) from each team try to win the ball, using their feet to kick the ball back. No hands allowed.
- The ball is then channeled back to the Number Eight who lets it out to the scrumhalf (who has already moved to the back of the scrum).
- The scrumhalf passes the ball out to the fly half (No. 10), who, along with the other backs (No. 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15) will implement some play to try to score.

Let's take a closer look at each of the mini-units:

The Tight Five

The Tight Five consists of the two props, the hooker and the two locks. These players are primarily ball winners.

Props: There are two props (also called *prop forwards*) in each scrum. In the scrum the props' main role is to provide a solid platform and support the hooker. The loose-head prop (No. 1) plays on the left-hand side (loose head=left hand), and the tight head prop (No. 3) plays on the right-hand side. Props are usually short to average height, stocky and strong, usually with a short neck and broad shoulders. These are guys that typically enjoy contact.

Hooker: One of the most important roles on the team, the hooker (No. 2) is the main ball winner on the team. In the scrum, the hooker wins the ball by striking it back to the No. 8. We'll spare you the mechanics of how this happens. Players in this position can be almost any shape or size, but generally, he's short to average height, stocky and has long arms.

Lock: The locks (No. 4 and No. 5) are the engine of the scrum, providing a stable source of power for the front row. Typically, they are noted for their height (typically above 6.2) and their power. Players in this position are usually the tallest and strongest guys on the team, and possess superior leg strength.

The Back Row

The Back row consists of the two flankers and the No. 8.

Flankers: The flankers (No. 6 and No. 7) are the most aggressive guys on the team. Typically flankers (also called *wing forwards*) are relentless attackers. Flankers tend to be average height and tend to have an athletic build. Flankers have to have superior cardiovascular fitness. Flankers also have to be good ball handlers because they often find themselves supporting the backs.

No. 8: The No. 8 is a key position on the team. His primary duty in the scrum is to keep the ball at his foot until the scrumhalf is ready to pass it out. The No. 8 has the option to break off the scrum and pick up the ball and run it, so he also has to be a tactician, constantly reading the defense. His physical attributes are similar to those of a flanker: average to tall height, athletic build, superior cardiovascular fitness, and good ball handling skills.

The Halfbacks

The halfbacks are the scrumhalf, and fly half. This duo comprises the two most important positions on the team. These two provide the crucial link between the forwards and the backs. They are typically the most skilled persons on the field.

Scrumhalf: The scrumhalf (No. 9) is the second most important position on the team. As the link between forwards and backs, he is the pivot around which the majority of the attacks take place. He has to be a quick decision-maker (pass? kick? run?), and the quality of that decision will affect the entire team. The scrumhalf is also one of the most skilled positions on the team. He has to know a variety of passes, kicks and other techniques that no one else on the team has to master. Physically, he is typically one of the smallest guys on the team, usually short to average height. He's also very fit, as the game demands the scrumhalf do a lot of running.

Fly half: The fly half (No. 10) is **the** most important position on the team. A team with a good fly half is blessed because they are hard to find and even harder to mold. Typically, he's very calm, very clear thinking and very skillful. His position requires him to be able to read the game and anticipate holes in the defense. He has to be a superior tactician. Like the scrumhalf, he has to be excellent at many skills, particularly handling and passing, managing contact and tackles and kicking. The fly half determines alignment for the rest of the backs. With the help of the inside center, he also creates space for the threequarters to maneuver in. Typically he is average to tall height, athletic build, very fit and likes contact. He gets tackled a lot.

The Threequarters

The threequarters are also known as the finishers. Once the forwards have won the ball, and the halfbacks have distributed it, it is up to the threequarters to keep the ball alive until there is a try. The threequarters are the two centers, two wings and the fullback.

Centers: There are two centers. The inside center (No. 12) typically works with the scrumhalf and fly half to create the platform on which the rest of the backs will score. The outside center (No. 13) will usually work more with the wings and the fullback. In both cases, their main job is to create space for the remaining backs to score in. Both centers are usually average height and lean to athletic build with very strong shoulders and lower bodies, the bigger and stronger center being the inside center, and the leaner and faster being the outside center. They have superior handling and passing skills, and have excellent tackling skills. Centers also have good peripheral vision, and excellent catching and kicking skills.

Wings: The wings (No. 11 and No. 14) are the fastest men on the field. They are usually the guys that score the tries. Wings (a.k.a., wingers, wingmen) must have excellent timing and constantly read the other team's attacks for hints of counter attack. There are two types of wings, blind-side wing and open side wing, and wings will play both during a game, depending on where the scrum is positioned on the pitch (don't worry about figuring it out now). Wingers come in all shapes and sizes, but he is typically on the lean side, but strong in the shoulders and lower body. Speed and agility are the main physical requirements for a wingman. They also have superior passing and handling skills.

Fullback: Another key position on the team, the fullback (No. 15) is the last line of defense. In the modern game, he has become the surprise element, unpredictably entering the backline to help penetrate the defense. A fullback needs many qualities and skills. He has to be brave because he'll take most tackles at full speed. He also has to be able to catch the high kick while under intense pressure. It is usually the fullback who catches/retrieves kicks. The fullback is usually the best kicker on the team. He is also very fast. Also, like centers, he has superior passing and handling skills. Physically, fullbacks are many shapes, but typically he is short to average, athletic build. He needs strong shoulders and lower body.

That's it for the positions. As you can see, there's a practically a place for every type of person on the pitch. Don't worry if you read a description, and it sounded like you, except for one or two things. The great thing about rugby is that if you try out a position and it's not good for you, there are fourteen others just waiting for you!

Next up, we'll get a little bit more into the nuts and bolts of the game.

Rucks and Mauls

It would be a perfect world if after every scrum you automatically scored. But there's that little pesky thing called defense that usually keeps you from scoring.

Defense is a whole other subject, but suffice it to say that there are three types of defense.

- **man-to-man defense**, where each player is responsible for guarding one particular guy.
- **zone defense**, where each player is responsible for a certain area of the field.
- **drift defense**, where the defensive line shifts as the ball moves out towards the other team's wing.

So let's assume your team got the ball out to the inside center (No. 12). He's burning up the field, but unfortunately he got tackled. The inside center is forced to release the ball. (**Remember!**: If you get tackled you must release the ball.) Fortunately, the outside center (No. 13) is nearby. The outside center sees he can pick up the ball. He also sees that a couple of your team's forwards will arrive soon. Unfortunately, there's a wall of defenders that will arrive at the same time. If he picks up the ball, he'll only gain a foot. And, the tackler is starting to get on his feet. What should the outside center do?

He's got two smart options: He can form a **ruck** or he can initiate a **maul**.

A **ruck** is formed when one player from each team in the field of play (both on their feet) shoving each other with the ball *on the ground*. This is what a ruck looks like:



So, you see, a ruck is simply a stripped down version of a scrum. Instead of 8-on-8, it's more like 2-on-2 or 3-on-3.

A couple of things about rucks:

If a player joins a ruck, he must bind on to a teammate.
And if teammates join in, they must do so from behind the hindmost player.
Also, just like in scrums, **no hands allowed**.

Our outside center in our example above could have also picked up the ball, ran straight into the defender and hope that his teammates came in after him and formed a maul.
A **maul** happens when at least one player from each team binds around-a *player standing up with the ball* in his possession.



Rucks and mauls basically give everyone a chance to collect himself or herself and rally the troops for the next play. In American football speak, it's sort of like a huddle, only the game is still going on while you're planning your next attack.

Both backs and forwards need to know how to ruck and maul.

One more significant no-no. Once a ruck or maul forms, players not participating (by being fully bound - with at least one whole arm) **must remain behind the last person's foot**. This gives players not involved some time and space in which to set up and look for defensive holes.

A really great team will be able to do this so quickly that their opponents will be caught off-guard defensively.

Skills You'll Know and Love

Backs and forwards alike need to develop certain rugby-specific abilities. These skills are the foundation of all play, simple and complex. **You must never, never, never neglect them.**

The basic skills are passing, handling, catching, kicking, running, tackling, and managing contact.

Passing

We will begin with the **pass**. You already know that you can't pass forward. Lateral passing is OK, but a close call. What's left? You guessed it, we pass *backwards*. This explains the odd diagonal line-up of the backs. Technique may vary, but the important concept here is *catchability*.

You should lead the receiver so that he is bursting on to it and thus gaining yardage even though he starts behind you. Aim for the chest.

The distance between passer and receiver varies depending on how skilled they are, the particular play, and the weather. But generally speaking, a distance of about five meters is usual.

The receiver stays at an angle sufficiently deep to receive the ball running at top speed.

The passer should always turn his body toward the receiver and *pass the ball a little in front of the receiver* so that he will catch the ball while accelerating onto it.

Don't pass until you see the whites of his eyes!

We'll practice passing plenty; so don't worry if it seems awkward or confusing now.

Handling

All rugby players need good ball-handling skills to cope with the different demands of the attacking game: running with the ball, passing and catching at pace (at actual game speed). Great teams have players who can take the fullest advantage of attacking situations. To do this they must keep possession of the ball. To truly succeed as a rugby player, you must be skillful in executing the basic ball-handling techniques.

During play the ball may arrive at different angles, heights, speeds and forces. A ball that arrives at a difficult angle may affect your ability to keep possession. Becoming used to the unique shape of the ball early on will give you the confidence to cope with the unexpected when it happens - such as a ball bouncing wildly off the turf or a pass thrown too high or away from you.

It is to your own advantage whenever possible to carry the ball in two hands. This allows you to either pass or keep the ball safe when a tackler grabs hold of you. It also allows you to make a more accurate passes in open play.

When holding or moving the ball around your body, you must grab the ball firmly in your hands with the fingers spread across the seams.

The seams will help you maintain your grip. *Use fingers to control the ball not the palms.*

You will often see a ball carrier will hold the ball along his or her forearm or tuck it into the ribs near the elbow when running in the open field. This is a safe carrying style and allows players to run more quickly because they can pump their arms with a running motion. However, by tucking the ball, your players will make it difficult to readjust the ball in order to pass. When running with the ball tucked in, you must always be prepared to readjust your grip to pass the ball with two hands on the ball.

Kicking

Kicking is another standard staple of this game. Rookies, in general, take awhile to incorporate this aspect into their game; so don't feel retarded if it takes you awhile to get

the hang of it. But it does open up a world of options to you, so we'll briefly explain the range of fancy footwork.

- **pop kick** is a popular item. It is a short up-in-the air kick that you can field yourself. If some menacing hulk is barreling down on you, why take the hit? If there is no one to pass to, you can just pop it over him and run right past the defender to catch your own kick. You've got the momentum - he'll have to turn around to chase it and you. And remember, he cannot touch you if you don't have the ball.
- **grub kick** is like a hot grounder past the shortstop or a soccer dribble. You punch it along the ground with your foot and, as always, *pursue* it. Because of the shape of the ball, the grub kick will take some weird hops, making it hard to handle.

All kicking should be done *strategically* and not in a panic. It is important to place kicks in a spot where your team can regain possession.

Longer kicks may be used too, where the ball is kicked to a part of the field that your teammates can get to first or make life miserable for an opponent who does. The ball may also **be punted into touch** (out-of-bounds) for long yardage. We'll explain later what happens after the ball leaves the field, but for now remember this:

If you are BEHIND YOUR OWN 22 METER line and kick it directly to touch (out-of-bounds) on a fly, the ball is brought back in at THE POINT THAT IT CROSSES THE LINE. This is a common strategy that can get you out of hot water when the opposition is breathing down your goal line. This is also true when you have been awarded a penalty kick anywhere on the field.

However, if you kick it directly out when you are AHEAD OF YOUR 22, the ball comes back in from the POINT IT WAS KICKED - meaning no yardage gained.

You can dribble the ball or give it a good whack with your foot anytime it's loose on the ground, but possession is 9/10th of the law in rugby. It's always best to secure the ball for your side.

Tackling

You've got to **tackle!!!!** When you do, your opponent has no choice but to release the ball, leaving it fair game for either side. No, the play does not stop, but he will.

Tackling well and decisively is vital--although we always keep in mind our lack of padding.

You should hit them low, squeeze their legs together, and twist them so you land on top. We will review this thoroughly in practices.

The technical definition of a tackle is when a player is held by an opposing player and *at least one knee* is touching the ground.

Tripping and falling down by yourself doesn't count.

Rookies: remember, if you are tackled you must release the ball, or its penalty time once again.

You may pick the ball up immediately upon gaining your feet.

You are allowed a split second to place the ball to your team's advantage when tackled.

The art of tackling is one of the more reluctantly embraced skills in rugby (even by the toughest of guys). But when done right, we promise it won't hurt at all. Seriously, execute a tackle right and you'll have hard time wiping a grin of smug satisfaction off your face.

Managing Contact

Managing contact is a key strategic skill. Why? It's about controlling the ball on our own terms. You will want to have a repertoire of skills you can call upon should you find yourself in a situation where you are tackled or restricted.

Managing contact allows us control over how play will develop after contact so that either (1) you can release the ball securely to a teammate and we can continue the attack, or (2) we can give up the ball in a manner that allows us to defend on our own terms. Making contact with either ground or player is a skill that requires what seems to be difficult and unpleasant work at first.

Few people enjoy it at first. For every rookie tackle jockey who thoroughly enjoys the rough and tumble of rugby, there are five rookie players who take a while to achieve a confidence in contact, which will stay with them for the rest of their rugby careers. It takes time to build up the courage to confidently take a hit and know what to do once it has happened. It takes courage to tackle someone coming at you at full speed.

Now you know about positions, skills and rules.

But we still haven't told you how you score. We'll go there next.

You Want To Win? You Have To "Try"

OK, so how do we pile up points? There are only two ways to score in rugby.

Method No. 1

Well, first in our hearts is the **try**. It has similarities to a touchdown in American football, but with a *significant* difference.

A **try** is accomplished by bringing the ball into your opponent's in-goal and touching it to the ground. Control, downward pressure, and simultaneous hand/ball/ground contact are essential. Woe to the rookie who gleefully gallops over the line and in his excitement forgets this key factor, and spikes the ball.

Sorry kids, this isn't the NFL; the try won't count that way.

A try is worth **5 points**. The priority is to get the ball over and down, but if possible, you want to *place it near the middle*. The reason for this is that after a try, you have a chance to make it 7 points by kicking the ball through the posts (uprights). This is called a **conversion**. Unlike the field goal kick in American football, the kick is made from *any distance back, but in line with where the ball was touched down*. It is far easier for a kicker to make a conversion when he is in front of the posts than at an angle. The kicker may use a **place kick** (where he uses a tee) or **drop kick** (where he holds the ball with both hands forward, drops the ball, and then kicks it on the rebound). After a try, the game starts up again with a kick off (a drop-kick) to the *team who has just scored*. In any case, it's back to the 50-meter line as quickly as the kicking team can collect itself. There is no official game stoppage.

Method No. 2

The other way to score is **by going for post** (kicking a field goal). This is worth **3 points**. Most commonly it is made when a **penalty** is called within the range of your team's best kicker. It may be place kicked or drop kicked from the point where the penalty was awarded (the **mark**). More rare in recreational-level rugby is a spontaneous drop kick through the posts during play. This is allowed at any time but is very difficult to do. Unless you're a retired NFL punter, we don't recommend rookies, or even seasoned players, do this.

If a team should touch the ball down in its OWN in-goal (better you than them), two things can happen.

1. If your team is responsible for bringing the ball in, a scrum 5 meters back from the try line, will be awarded to the other team (meaning their scrumhalf gets to put it in).
2. If the ball traveled into the in-goal on the other team's impetus, your team will be awarded a 22-meter **drop out**. A **drop out (a.k.a. 22-meter drop kick)** means that your team may drop kick the ball from any point behind the 22-meter line. The other team must *retreat immediately* to the other side of the 22.

Remember this retreating business when the drop out is against you. Also learn to run backwards. (you will hear the coaches refer to this as **TURN AND FACE!**) You should never take your eyes off the ball!

Confused? Don't Be!

You may be feeling a little saturated with rugby facts and figures at this point and as you might suspect, there is much, much more. Don't worry if it seems confusing or even ridiculous. Soon, with your attendance at practices - that light bulb will pop on, miscellaneous ideas will click and in spite of your best intentions, you'll be a rugby player.

Line Outs

Line Outs

If the ball is kicked, carried, or otherwise escorted into touch (out-of-bounds), its re-entry onto the field is by way of a **lineout**. A line out is kind of like the jump ball in basketball.

Here's how it works:

Two rows of forwards standing up (one column per team) line up 5 meters in from the touchline and perpendicular to it. A player from the team who *didn't* touch it last before it went onto touch gets to throw the ball in, down the tunnel.

The ball can be thrown any distance as long as it flies *straight* between the columns. Like catchers to pitchers in baseball, teams use signals to let their players know where the thrower intends to throw it.

Certain players in the line out are designated as **jumpers** (usually 2nd, 4th, and 6th in line). The rest support and protect them in a variety of ways that you will soon be learning. The ball may be thrown beyond the line out or drilled to the first person, but it must travel the initial 5 meters before it may be played.

The line out can extend out to 15 meters.

During a line out the backs line up in much the same way as during a scrum, with one notable exception. In a scrum they must only remain behind the Number Eights or last person's foot. In a line out they (or anyone not participating directly) must remain 10 METERS back until the line out is completely over.

No **creeping** (moving in before the line out is over) or it's another trip to Penalty City, kids.

The thrower from the team not throwing in and both scrumhalves (#9) stand where indicated on the diagram. There are short lineout's, quick lineout's, and other variations, but that's all for now, folks.

Penalties

Let's talk a little more about **penalties**.

For minor infractions of the law a simple scrum down will do. A forward pass is one such infringement. The infamous **knock on** is another minor infringement. A knock on is where you drop or bump the ball forward with any part of your upper body. The scrum is awarded to the non-offending team.

A scrum may also be called when a ruck or maul goes too long without the ball coming out, or if the referee judges it to be dangerous. There are other occasions for scrums, as you may have guessed, but later for those.

It might behoove you to learn (at some point) the signals a referee uses to indicate what he or she has called. After the whistle the ref will usually give the **mark** with his foot and indicate, with his arm angled *down* toward one team or the other, who gets to put the ball back into play. The hookers then usually line up at the mark and the rest of the pack comes in around them.

A **free kick** is awarded for slightly less secure infractions than a penalty kick (hooker striking too early for the ball, for instance). The difference is that you are not allowed to go for post. The referee indicates a free kick by extending a bent arm toward the team who gets to take it.

For a **penalty kick**, the referee extends his arm *upward* toward the team to whom he's awarding it. A penalty kick is commonly given for:

- obstruction (blocking someone who doesn't have the ball)
- offsides
- hands in a ruck
- play deemed dangerous by the referee

He'll also award it for any number of things that are extremely naughty. A penalty kick is awarded at the place the infraction occurs (usually). A mark will be given and that is the point through which the kick **MUST** be taken. To execute a penalty kick you must move the ball visibly through the mark with your foot. This could mean anything from a short tap (after which it may be picked up and moved in any legal way) to a long punt (the space directly above the mark counts as the mark).

The opposition must **RETREAT 10 meters** immediately when a penalty kick is awarded -- giving you quite an advantage. If you ever hear your teammates screaming at you to get "back 10" it is probable that the other team has just been awarded a penalty kick.

Remember: **(TURN AND FACE!!!)** keep facing the ball!

Advantage

Now we will briefly ponder the vast and murky gray area of **advantage**. In most other sports, when an infraction occurs, the flow of the game stops. In rugby, a referee does not have to call a penalty if he feels that the offending team gained no advantage or that the other team was able to capitalize on it.

For example: a referee may see a knock-on occur, but wait to blow the whistle until it becomes apparent who has made subsequent gains. If the NON-offending team scoops up the ball and gains 10 meters, the penalty won't be called at all. This is called "playing the advantage." The advantage law helps to keep the game flowing.

File this for another day, but keep in mind that even if you do spot an infraction, **DO NOT STOP UNTIL YOU HEAR A WHISTLE!** The referee may not have seen it or may be playing the advantage.

The Referee

As long as we're on the subject, let's talk a bit more about the **referee**.

There is only one ref, and this is a very significant fact. With 30 people careening around the field, one person cannot possibly see everything and thus some unscrupulous players have been known to cheat.

Since you're new, it's wise to follow the rules. When the referee does call something, his word is **LAW**. He may as well be carrying two stone tablets in his hands. In fact, he cannot change a call once made. And it is no use arguing. In fact, you can even be penalized if you do. If you do need to make a comment to the referee, for any reason, do so through your captain.

Different referees have different styles. It is a smart rugby player who learns to "play the ref." Many calls in rugby are completely up to the referee's judgment -- especially those concerning foul play.

What exactly constitutes foul play? Alas, this may be the grayest area of all. Basically, there is a spirit of fair play that governs rugby. With all those people running around, you could do things that aren't nice and not get caught, **BUT DON'T!**

These things have a way of escalating in a game as physically intense as rugby and it's also distracting. If something gets out of hand, go to your captain who can speak to the referee.

A general rule about retaliation: If someone plays dirty with you, **DO NOT RETALIATE**. Chances are the ref will only see your retaliatory action, and not what instigated it.

Sin Bin and Ejection

The referee is the sole determiner of what constitutes foul play and a good one will keep things clean. Most refs do not put up with dirty play.

Dirty play comes in many malodorous shades. For a player that repeatedly violates the Law, after repeated warnings from the ref, the ref can yellow card him. This means he's out of the game for five minutes. His team has to play short for the duration of the five minutes. No substitute allowed.

A player can be given a red card and ejected from a game as the most severe resolution of a problem. Should this happen, his team **CAN'T** bring in a substitute, leaving them to play short for the rest of the game. If you get red carded, it is reported to the Potomac Rugby Union (our governing body) and you are not allowed to play for fourteen days.

Get red carded again, and you won't be allowed play for a year.

That's it for the basic mechanics of the game.

Rugby Fitness – Get your Butt in Shape Now!

You most certainly can play rugby even if you are not in physical shape to play rugby. However, your effectiveness of your play and your effectiveness as a contributor to your team directly correlates with how physically prepared you are to play the game. According to experts of the game of rugby, the priorities of training for rugby are as follows:

- ✎ **Aerobic Base** - the ability to sustain activity over time.
- ✎ **Anaerobic Endurance** - muscular exertion in the absence of oxygen.
- ✎ **Power** - the ability to recruit muscle fibers quickly and repetitively (force x distance per unit time).
- ✎ **Strength** - the ability to apply a maximum muscular effort (force x distance).

These components can be best thought of in the context of the game. For example:

- ✎ Power includes speed over a distance and also ability to gain jump height in the lineout.
- ✎ Strength includes the initial thrust in the pack when the ball is put in.
- ✎ Anaerobic Endurance is the ability to constantly repeat the two demands consistently for the duration of a game.

Effectively preparing for rugby goes well beyond attending every possible practice . it includes fitness work outside of practices.

A Game of Hooligans Played by Gentlemen – Welcome to the Turtleheads!

The characteristic that sets rugby apart from all other sports is the brotherhood and code of etiquette. There's real rugby on the pitch and rugby off the pitch. The players from each team have a common bond in their love for rugby and use the Third Half as a time to honor the traditions of their sport.

The players gather together, sing songs and celebrate beating the snot out of each other. The true essence of rugby lies in being gentlemen who take 90 minutes each weekend to become hooligans.

There is a spirit of camaraderie and sportsmanship among rugby players. After all, it is a weird sport -- nobody gets paid, you travel all around, and get bruises for your trouble.

You've GOT to have a passion for it and despite all rivalries, it is a passion shared by everyone who plays it. As the sport is unique and intense, so are its players. Meeting ruggers of all varieties, from all parts of the country, is one of rugby's greatest delights.

Rugby is a lot of things to a lot of people. It is challenging and playful, exuberant and exciting. There are always new things to learn and old limits to push aside. We know you will love it as much as we do.

So welcome to the club -- join us to learn, play, and excel at the greatest sport on earth!
