



# Phoenix Rugby Club & The Game of Rugby for Football Players

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Phoenix Rugby

Marketing & Membership Development

# Phoenix Rugby



- Founded 2006
- Middle School, JV and Varsity Teams (U14, U16, U19)
- Training: 8:00-10:00 pm, Tuesday & Thursday, Alpharetta North Park (Cogburn Road)
- 8 High School State Championships: 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018
- 3 JV and MS State Championships: 2016, 2017, 2018
- 3 Invitations to the US National High School Championships (most recently in 2018)
- Experienced Coaches for all ages from Ireland, England, South Africa, Argentina, and USA
- Alumni have played at D1 Collegiate level and professionally in England and Australia

# A Little Rugby History



- Rugby is played in over 100 countries around the world
- There are two 'Codes' of Rugby: Rugby Union and Rugby League.
  - Phoenix is a Rugby Union club
- There are several variations of Rugby Union, all of which are played on a full sized field:
  - Rugby 7's – seven players a side, an Olympic Sport
  - Rugby 10's – ten players a side
  - Rugby 15's – fifteen players a side
  - Phoenix plays Rugby 7's and full 15's
- American Football originated when Walter Camp made changes to the laws of rugby, leading to 'America's Game'
- Until 2016, the USA was the reigning Olympic Rugby Gold Medal Champions – having won the Gold in the 1924 Paris Games.

# Why Play Rugby?



- Football players can specifically benefit from rugby in a number of ways:
  - Improved fitness – rugby is a continuous play game, like soccer; in a standard match, a rugby player will often run up to 5 miles, sometimes more, but engage in extreme physical contact like football players
  - Improving tackling technique and skill – players do not wear pads or helmets, ‘forcing’ good tackling technique; further, rugby tackling coaches are now common in the NFL
  - Improved hand-eye coordination – every player handles the ball, runs, tackles and will be called on to participate in every phase of the game; good hand-eye coordination is required to play at a basic level.
  - Improved situational awareness – once a match starts, coaches’ influence on the game is minimal; all players are required to think on their feet, switch from attack to defense in a split second, maintain focus, and manage the game. Rugby players make hundreds of decisions every minute, for very long stretches.

# Why Play Rugby?

## It's the Life Lessons



- World Rugby - the international governing body for the game – states that developing character is an explicit goal of the game: Integrity, Passion, Solidarity, Discipline, and Respect
- Phoenix's goal is to develop young men of character who have the following traits:
  - Perseverance in the face of adversity
  - Patience to work toward long term goals
  - Integrity – doing the right thing, even when no one is looking
  - Respect for the laws of the game, officials, coaches, and opponents
  - Physical and mental toughness
  - The ability to think on your feet
  - Grace in both victory and defeat
  - Commitment to a healthy lifestyle

# Work With Phoenix



## What we don't want:

- We do not want to 'steal' your athletes away
- We do not want to diminish their love of football or commitment to your team in any way

## What Phoenix want:

- We want to be your partner in
  - Developing young men of character
  - Developing athletes to their utmost potential
- We want to give them back to you better than we found them
  - Better athletes
  - Better tacklers
  - Better fitness
- We want to support your program in any way we can

# How to Partner?



- Phoenix can help arrange rugby tackling clinics for your teams if you want
- We will look for other ways to help, but we need to have the conversation!
- What we would like is for coaches to identify 8-10 players that would benefit most from playing rugby in the off-season... and encourage them to join Phoenix.
  - We'll give them back, we promise!



# About Rugby

In a football context

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# Basic Concepts

## Like football...



- Like football, Rugby is a team 'invasion' contact sport with high levels of controlled physicality
- Like football, the objective is to get the rugby ball past the opponent's goal line ('try line') and touch the ball down to score a try, or kick it through the uprights – while stopping the opposition from doing so
- Like football, good rugby players are **not just** excellent athletes – they are intelligent, quick thinking, and focused
- Like football, rugby is seen as a way to develop young men of character and integrity
- Like football, rugby values players with physical talent and skill: tackling, evasion, running, speed, good hands, quick thinking, etc...
- Like football, rugby is a full-contact sport that values physicality and controlled aggression

# Basic Concepts

Unlike Football... it's all in the details



- Continuous play – no downs, very few set plays, and the ball is always live and in play
- Once a match starts, **coaches play a minimal role during play**; rugby is considered to be a true '**players' game**', where players coach themselves on the field
- **No forward passes** (back or lateral passes only) – forward passes are a penalty
- Players on the field **play both offense and defense**, and **no blocking** is allowed. Blocking or obstruction is a penalty
- Required protective gear: **mouthguard**. No mouthguard, no play.

# Basic Concepts

Unlike Football... it's all in the details



- **Illegal tackles** – high tackles (above the shoulders), deliberate use of the head, shoulder charges, and spear tackles/dump tackles – often result in **expulsion** from the match
- **Carrying the ball out of bounds results in a turnover** – the opposition is awarded a 'line out' to throw the ball in... but... **lineouts are contested** so there is no guarantee they will retain possession
- When a team scores, they **receive the ball** on the subsequent kick-off; as a result, allowing a score is a significant disadvantage to a defending team
- While rugby is a contact sport, **it is not a collision sport**. Lacking pads and helmets (scrum caps protect the ears, not the head), players must use proper tackling technique; further, the prohibition on blocking means that players are not exposed to unexpected hits

# Game Time and Referees

## Rugby Union 15's

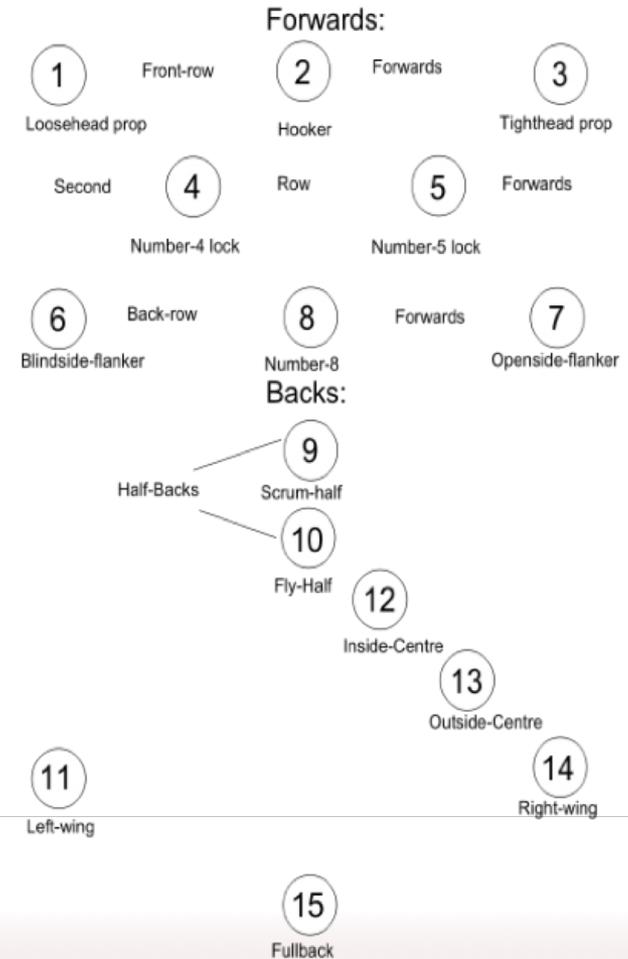


- 2 Halves of 40 minutes each – **continuous clock, no timeouts**
  - At the end of either half, play may continue until the ball goes out of play
- Each team fields **15 players**, all of whom play both offense and defense
- Normally only 3 referees: 1 field ref, 2 line judges (professional and international matches will have a video referee that advises the field referee)
  - The referee is a neutral and impartial judge of fair play on the field – and has the last word...
  - **Arguing or back-talk is NOT allowed**, even when he clearly gets it wrong; the referee is always addressed as 'Sir'
  - The referee is expected to communicate constantly and clearly with the players on the field, and players are expected to listen and obey his instructions
  - A properly managed game is one where both referees and players exhibit mutual respect
- Excessive celebration, showboating of any kind, 'Look-at-me' behavior, and playing to the crowd is not only **actively discouraged** but may be penalized at the referee's discretion

# Positions



- A rugby team is roughly divided into two groups: Forwards, and Backs. Sometimes the forwards are further divided into two groups:
  - The 'tight five': #1-#5 (Props, Hooker, and Locks)
  - The 'loose forwards': #6-8 (Flankers & #8)
- Forwards are typically bigger and stronger; modern backs tend to be big as well, but are chosen for quickness and speed
  - The joke is, that forwards care about winning, while backs care about their hair.
  - While forwards are normally the bigger, stronger players – but they must also be extremely fit given their role in protecting possession & winning the ball back in defense
- There is a numbering convention that is used, so players will often refer to themselves and others by their number, rather than a position
  - For example the starting open-side flanker is always #7, and can be referred to as the Open-side Flanker or, simply, #7
  - Likewise, a starting fly-half is often referred to as the #10, and a fullback is often referred to as the #15.



# Positions Overview

## Forwards



- **Hooker (#2):** The hooker is positioned between the two props in the scrum and generally throws the ball into the line-out. In the scrum, the hooker uses his feet to “hook” the ball back and win possession for their team. Hookers generally have a shorter, powerful build.
- **Props (#1, #3):** The props “prop up” the hooker in the scrum. They form part of the front row of the scrum and push against the opposition’s props. The loose-head prop is positioned to the left of the hooker; the tight-head is to the right of the hooker. The prop’s main role is to provide stability at the scrum and support the hooker in quickly winning the ball. At the line-out, the prop’s role is to support the jumper as they compete for the ball. Props have to handle immense pressure from the locks and loose forwards pushing from behind and the opposition pushing against them, so they are often among the strongest players in a team.
- **Locks (#4, #5):** The two locks form the second row of the scrum, pushing against the front row during the scrum. They provide much of the power and are commonly known as the team’s engine room. They are almost always the tallest players on the team and are the primary targets when the ball is thrown in at line-outs; they must have good catching and tackling ability. In scrums, the two locks bind tightly together and put their heads between a prop and the hooker. They compete for the kick-offs and are involved in securing the ball in rucks and mauls.
- **Flankers (#6, #7):** The flanker’s role is to tackle the opposition and try to steal the ball. They bind loosely to the side of the scrum, and should be the first forward to a breakdown from a scrum or line-out, and are expected to link with the backline or secure the ball at the tackle. Both positions have a high work-rate, meaning the players need to be fit, fast and good at reading the opposition’s attacking plays, and hard tacklers. Flankers and the #8 are often called ‘loose forwards’, reflecting the flexible nature of the position.
- **#8:** The Number 8 binds between the locks at the scrum, providing extra weight at the push. #8’s interact with the scrum-half at the back of the scrum to control and provide clean ball for the backs. They can also pick the ball from the back of the scrum and run with it or flick it to the scrum-half. #8’s have to be strong ball carriers and tacklers. Along with the Flankers, it is considered one of the most versatile and athletic positions on the field.

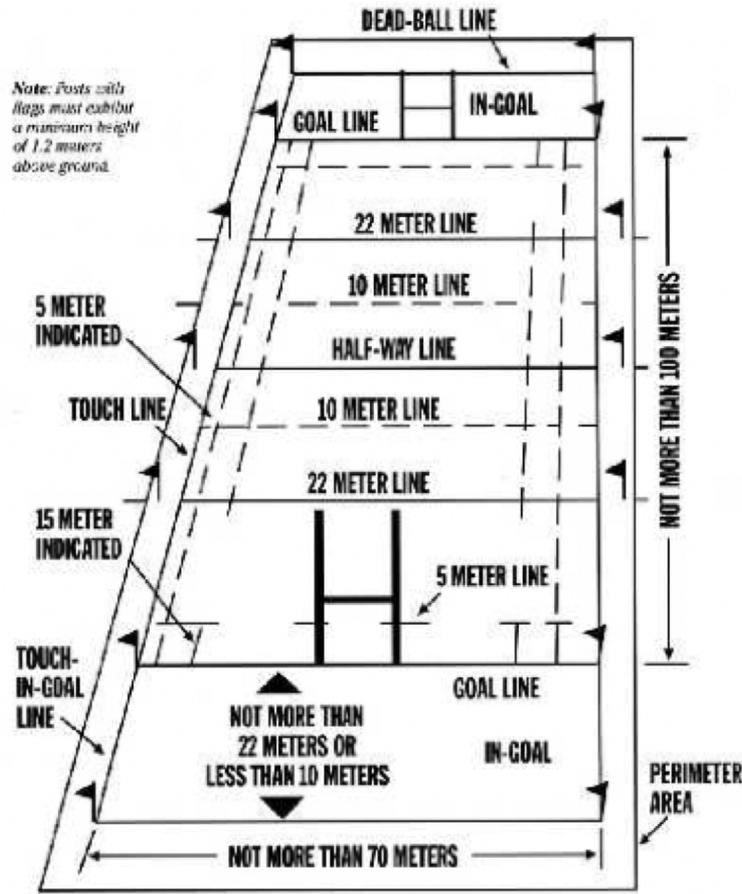
# Positions Overview

## Backs



- **Scrum Half (#9):** The scrum-half is the link between the forwards and the backs. They receive the ball from the line-out and remove the ball from the back of the scrum, usually passing it to the fly-half. They also feed the scrum. Along with the fly-half, they make many of the tactical decisions on the field. During general play, the scrum-half is generally the player who receives the ball from the forwards and passes it to the backs. They are good communicators, especially at directing the forwards around, and their aim is to provide the backs with clean ball. Good scrum-halves have an excellent pass, a good tactical kick and are deceptive runners. Historically they were the smallest player on the field, but this has changed in the modern game.
- **Fly Half (#10):** A fly-half is crucial to a team's game plan; they possess leadership and order the back line. They are usually the first to receive the ball from the scrum-half following a breakdown, line-out or scrum and need to be decisive with what actions to take and be effective at communicating with the outside backs. Good fly-halves are calm, clear thinking and have the vision to direct effective attacking plays. Fly-halves need good passing and kicking skills. From a football perspective, the Fly Half is most like a quarterback with kicking skills.
- **Centers (#12, #13):** Like the fly-half, Centers generally possess a good kicking game and are good at reading the play and directing the attack. The centers' main role is to provide space for the players outside them; in practice, they form a link between the forwards and backs, and in some ways their role is a blend of loose forward and back. Centers need to run good lines, be able to side step and swerve, and have good passing skills. When the ball is moved along the opposition backline, the centers are the first players to make the tackle; they need to be aggressive tacklers to knock their opponent down and seize the ball and be good at organizing the defensive lines.
- **Wingers (#11, #14):** As the name indicates, Wingers play wide; their primary function is to finish off moves and score tries. They are usually the fastest players in the team and are either elusive runners or, more recently, big, strong and able to break tackles.
- **Full-back (#15):** The fullback is usually positioned several meters behind the back line; they field any deep opposition kicks and are often the last line of defense should an opponent break through the back line. Three of the most important attributes of a good full-back are good catching ability under a high kick, the ability to punt the ball a long distance with accuracy and the speed, and skill to join in back line attacking moves, especially counter-attacks.

# The Field of Battle



- Playing area:
  - Maximum 100m long (328'/109 yards)
  - Maximum 70 m wide (230'/77 yards)
- Try area ("In Goal"):
  - Min. 10m / max 22m deep
  - Maximum 22m deep
- Goal posts:
  - 5.5 m wide (18'), lower bar 3m high (9'10"), regulation posts 16m (52') high
  - With the exception of recommended height, this is almost identical to football goal posts' dimensions
  - Bottom two meters of the post is normally padded to protect players
  - Placed on the goal line

# Continuous Play

The ball is never 'dead'... except when it is



- Play is continuous, stopping only for penalties, serious injuries, and when the ball goes out of bounds.
- There are no set plays in the course of play, and no distance requirement to retain possession of the ball
  - Set plays normally only occur in special situations: line-outs, and sometimes at scrums
- The ball is continuously contested, even after tackles
- Any player can carry the ball and score - in fact they are expected to do this!

# Continuous Play

The ball is never 'dead'... except when it is



- The ball may be kicked forward, but not passed; it may only be passed back or laterally; a forward pass – whether intentional or not - is a penalty
  - A 'knock-on' occurs when the ball is 'knocked' forward – dropped or mishandled forward
- Players may not block the opposition; only a player holding the ball may be tackled; blocking will result in a penalty (obstruction)
- After a player is tackled, he must release the ball backwards to his teammates – who must contest and recover it to retain possession.
  - Not releasing the ball is a penalty and the ball is turned over to the opposition

# Scoring



- **Try: 5 Points**
  - A try is scored when the ball is carried over the goal line and touched down in a controlled way in the “in-goal” area.
- **Conversion: 2 Points**
  - A conversion is a point after kick attempted after a try.
  - The ball is placed on a line horizontal to the point where the ball was touched down in the try area; as a result, players will often try to carry the ball the center of the try area to make the conversion easier to kick. Tries scored in wide areas result in conversions attempts from extreme angles and longer distances
- **Drop Goal / Drop Kick: 3 Points**
  - A drop goal or drop kick is scored by drop-kicking the ball through the posts from play; it must be a drop kick and cannot be a punt
- **Penalty Kick: 3 Points**
  - Penalties often result in a choice between a scrum and a free kick
  - The penalty kick is taken from a tee at the point of the penalty

# Tackling

## Elegant, controlled violence



- Only the ball carrier may be tackled; a tackle occurs when a player is held by one or more opponents and is brought to the ground
- Once a tackle is made, the tackler must release the ball carrier... holding on after a tackle is made is a penalty
- The classic tackling technique is simple:
  - Go low – aim for the waist or body mass
  - Use the shoulder – not arms, head or chest
  - Cheek-to-Cheek – head to the side, ideally against the butt-cheek of the ball carrier
  - Drive through – continue to drive through until the player is down
- Three types of tackles are explicitly not allowed since they are considered dangerous; if a player engages in this type of tackle, he may be ejected from the match:
  - Shoulder charging - not allowed; player must make a genuine attempt to 'wrap' in a tackle.
  - High tackles – tackling above the shoulders is not allowed
  - Spear tackles (dump tackles) – lifting a player so his head goes below his feet, then driving or dropping him to the ground.

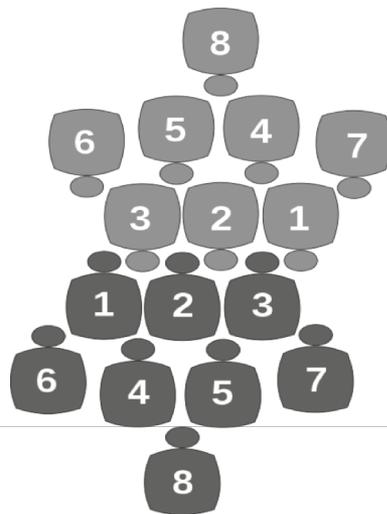
# Scrum

## Elegant, controlled violence



- A **scrum** (fore-runner of the term scrumage) is used to restart play after a penalty.
- Eight players (forwards) bind together in a pack and attempt to push the opposition pack off the ball.
- A scrumhalf rolls the ball into the scrum; his pack attempts to hook the ball to the back of the scrum with their feet, where the scrumhalf will pick it up to pass out into play.

Scrum Setup:



### Positions:

- 1: Prop
- 2: Hooker
- 3: Prop
- 4: Lock
- 5: Lock
- 6: Blind Side Flanker
- 7: Open Side Flanker
- 8: Number 8

# Rucks and Mauls

## Elegant, controlled violence



- A **ruck** is formed after a tackle; the ball must be on the ground, and one or more players from each side choose to contest for the ball.
  - Contesting players may pick up the ball if their feet are on the ground; once another part of their body touches the ground, they may no longer contest for ball.
  - Players may use their feet to move the ball back to their own team; they cannot use their hands to push the ball back.
  - Players may drive through the opposition to try to gain possession or protect possession.
  - Players may not enter a ruck from the side, but must return to an on-side position before
- A **maul** develops when the attacking team binds together in a pack to drive the ball forward towards the goal.
  - The ball must be off the ground
  - The ball can be handed backwards between players in the maul
  - A player at the front of the maul may turn out and return to the back of the pack, continuing the maul's momentum
  - Eventually, the ball should be either passed or carried out of the maul
  - Defensively, a counter-ruck aims to prevent forward progress

# Foul Play



- Foul play and misconduct – play that is considered dangerous, obstructive, deliberately against the rules or unfair – is harshly penalized.
- Penalties may be given for fouls or misconduct. A penalty usually results in a free kick – either for points or for field position.
- Serious misconduct often results in harsher sanctions:
  - A player receiving a Yellow Card is temporarily ejected from the game for 10 minutes. During this time, he cannot be substituted or replaced.
  - A player receiving a Red Card is permanently expelled from the match and cannot be replaced.
  - The referee may, in his discretion, award a penalty try (5 points) if the defending team has repeatedly committed infractions inside the 5 meter line (near the goal line) in order to prevent the opposition from scoring, or has engaged in serious misconduct in order to prevent a score. This usually also results in a Yellow Card for the offending player.

# Videos

- ["Best Final Minute Ever"](#)
  - Ireland vs. New Zealand, Aviva Stadium, 2013
- ["The Greatest Rugby Match Ever Played"](#)
  - Australia vs. New Zealand, Sydney, 2000
- [Richie McCaw Highlights](#)
- [All Blacks Haka](#)
- [Moments of Respect](#)
- [Rugby Overview Video](#)
- [Scrum Video](#) and [Scrum Video 2](#), [Ruck and Maul Video](#), [Tackle Video](#)