



PREPARING YOURSELF FOR RUGBY

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Due to the nature of the game, contact is frequent. You will need to ensure that you condition your body to cope with the many demands of rugby. This includes attention to improving:

- Strength (developing your muscular bulk);
- Speed (developing movement of your limbs);
- Flexibility (developing the movement range of your joints);
- Stamina (increasing the amount or length of time your muscles work);
- Power (developing the explosive strength in your muscles).

You should ask your coach or PE teacher for advice on improving your fitness relative to your age and playing level.

WARM UP

Before any physical activity (match or training session), it is essential that your body is prepared for exercise.

Follow the tips below to help you perform to your ability and help keep you injury free:

- Wear warm clothing to start with;
- Begin with gentle jogging (preferably with a ball) to increase your body temperature;
- In between jogging, stretch all of your muscle groups;
- Ensure you hold the stretch for around 10-15 seconds before having another jog;
- Gradually increase the intensity of your jogging;
- Stretch and hold any muscles if they feel tight.

COOL DOWN

Cooling down your body after exercise is equally important as warming up. Gently reducing your heart rate towards normal and stretching your muscles again will help to keep you flexible and prevent your muscles becoming 'stiff' over the next couple of days.

You will also find that you may be

able to stretch further than you did in your warm up. This is because your muscles have been used and are warmer. It is a good idea to hold your stretches in a cool down for 15-20 seconds, so that you become more flexible, and less prone to injury.

KEY SKILLS FOR RUGBY

All players, whatever your position, should acquire competencies in the following skills:

- Ball delivery;
- Receiving;
- Tackling and defending;
- Contact;
- Running agility;
- Kicking.

In modern rugby, running agility is essential. You would benefit from undertaking following activities:



Quick step

Run through the ladder, putting both feet in every hole along ladder length.

Sidestep

Run sideways along the length of the ladder, putting both feet in every hole.



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PROP



POSITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

GENERAL

To scrummage, both props must be extremely strong in the neck, shoulders, upper body and legs. They should relish one-to-one contact. In the lineout, they should be able to support or lift the jumper (if allowed) to prevent the opposition winning the ball.

In today's game, props need to be able to handle the ball, deliver quality passes, support play and tackle well.

SCRUM

Loose-head - the player who wears number 1 and scrummages on the left hand side of the front row. His job is to ensure the scrum does not move backwards and support the hooker by holding up his opponent, which allows the hooker to see and strike the ball. He has to resist pressure from the opposition and have a stance that allows the ball to go to the back of the scrum from the strike.

Tight-head - the player who wears number 3 and scrummages on the right hand side of the front row. His job is to ensure the scrum is solid and does not move backwards, and support the hooker by holding a square-on position. With both shoulders in contact, he can provide additional pressure on the opposition's scrum.

PRACTICES

SCRUM

- Practise scrummaging (on a machine and against opposition) whilst supervised;
- Practices should include individual work, work with the hooker, and work as a front row.

LINEOUT

- Practise correct supporting technique for lineout jumpers (U16s and above);
- Practise blocking and binding techniques to protect the ball and jumper.

RUCK AND MAUL

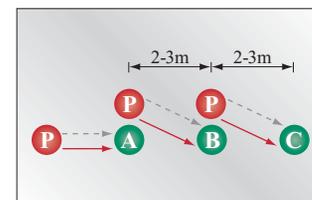
- Practise correct, low driving techniques - make an impact with you shoulders, drive powerfully from the legs through a series of short steps.

CONTACT

(opposed 1 v 1 in groups of 4)

Equipment: 1 ball

Aim: to practise diving and mauling



Prop, P, passes the ball to player A, who catches and holds the ball into his chest. P drives into A and should attempt to wrestle the ball off him. This should be repeated on players B and C. Ensure A, B and C stay high enough to allow the prop to adopt a lower position. The resistance provided by the opposition in the wrestling should be such that the prop has to work hard to win the ball but is able to secure it in a few seconds. Repeat as appropriate.

CONTACT (opposed 1 v 1)

Equipment: nil

Aim: to develop neck and shoulder strength



Player A should adopt a press-up position but on his knees. Player B should position himself in the fully extended press-up position with his arms bound around A.

- B tries to lift A by driving from his feet and lifting from his head.
- B tries to resist downward pressure by A.



HOOKER



POSITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

GENERAL

The hooker is a key team member; one of the spine of the team - 15, 10, 9, 8 and 2. He tends to be the co-ordinator at the scrum and lineout. The hooker can play a similar role to the flanker due to his role as thrower at the lineout. The lineout is a key area of possession, and if the hooker throws the ball in, he must ensure that it is accurate to enable his receiver to maintain possession.

SCRUM

The hooker grips his props under the armpits and pulls them towards him; the props should bind around the hooker to ensure that they act as one solid unit.

The hooker strikes for the ball (usually with his right foot) and propels it through the loose-head prop's legs at the right pace and direction (usually channel 1 or 2).

The hooker may also try to put pressure on his opponent when it is the opposition's put in; he does this by either driving on him, or striking for the ball - sometimes called 'a strike against the head'.

LINEOUT

The hooker is the team's flanker at the front of the lineout, who is able to clear up any spilled ball or attack with ball in hand.

PRACTICES

SCRUM

- Practise scrummaging (on a machine and against opposition) whilst supervised;
- Practices should include individual work, work with the props, and work with the scrum half on:
 - Timing of the strike of the ball, speed of the strike, and direction (channel 1 or 2);
 - Body position for the strike, and for the eight-man shove.

LINEOUT

- Practise accurate throwing (e.g. a torpedo throw);
- Always practise using a target (e.g. a rugby post, a mark on a wall, a player);
- Try and work under match conditions (e.g. three short shuttle runs, and throw the ball in and repeat);
- Key factors when throwing the ball are:
 - Hold ball in front of chest in two hands in a flat position;
 - The throwing hand supports the ball underneath on right hand side of the ball (if thrower is right handed);
 - Spread the fingers along the seam of the ball;
 - The non-throwing hand rests on top, on the left hand side of the ball;
 - Take the ball back over the head, with the right hand now at the back of the ball, and the left hand at the front;
 - Keep the eyes focused on the intended target;
 - Throw 'soccer style' with power derived from a quick action.

SPEED AND ANGLE OF STRIKE

Equipment: a support for the right arm

Aim: to practise striking quickly with the right leg and co-ordinating timing

- From a supported sitting position, with the right arm taking the weight of the body, the hooker should strike, on a given signal, towards the left as on his own put-in.
- With the scrum half putting the ball in as required, the hooker should vary his strike to channel the ball (use only the left prop, hooker and scrum half at this stage).
- Add additional front row players as necessary and emphasise the control needed on striking to channel the ball. Eventually, the opposition front row should apply weight at varying heights.