



mini tag & tag rugby

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE GAME AND ITS RULES

Coaches are advised to read this summary in conjunction with the detailed rules as laid down in 'The Rugby Continuum' and the coaching manual entitled 'Mini tag and tag rugby - How to play, how to coach and how to referee'.

What is tag rugby?

Tag rugby is a fast-moving, non-contact invasion game suitable for boys and girls to play together. Its safe, non-contact nature, combined with the fun and vibrance of the sport, has meant that mini tag is now the RFU's official version of rugby for under-7s and under-8s.

The interchangeable nature of possession, leading to rapid switching from attack to defence, means that a range of skills is cultivated and developed. Co-operation, integration and determination, along with individual and collective responsibility, are all key elements in the game of mini tag.



What is a tag belt?

The tag belt is a belt worn around the waist to which two 'ribbons' (tags) are attached by Velcro. One tag hangs down each side. The belt is worn on the outside of the clothing. Shirts should be tucked in, or, on a hot day, shirts can be worn outside the shorts with the tag belt on top of the shirt. Tags are positioned one on each hip and teams are distinguished by the colour of tags they wear.

Number of players

Mini tag rugby is played between teams of equal numbers of players. For competitive matches this is not more than seven, and not less than five players but for training games, this number can be varied to suit the pitch size or number of players available.

Each side can have an agreed number of substitutes. Substituted players can be re-used at any time. Substitutions may only be made when the ball is 'dead', or at half time, and must always be with the referee's knowledge.

Duration of play

A match is made up of two halves, each of ten minutes duration, with a two minute interval at half-time.

Dimensions of playing area

The recommended pitch size for competitive games is:

- Up to 60 metres in length and up to 30m in width.

For training and fun games, this size may be varied but the pitch should always be large enough to allow lots of space for running and evasion - the key elements of the game of mini tag.



The role of the coach

During the match, coaches (one per team) can direct and develop play, in a coaching sense, from on the field of play, ideally from behind their respective teams. Coaches should help to enforce the carrying of the ball in two hands and prompt players to pass when tagged. During the half-time interval, coaches should take time to talk to, encourage, coach and explain the game to the players.

Free pass

A free pass, from the centre of the pitch, is used to start the match at the beginning of each half and to restart the match after a try is scored. It is also used at the side of the pitch when the ball goes into touch

and from where the referee makes a mark when an infringement has taken place.



Free passes cannot take place nearer than 7m from the goal line. If an infringement takes place over the goal line or within 7m of the goal line, then the free pass should be awarded to the non-offending team 7m from the goal line. This gives more space for both the attacking and defending teams.

At a free pass, the player taking the pass should start with the ball in both hands and, when instructed by the referee (who will call "PLAY!"), pass the ball backwards, through the air, to a member of their team. For safety reasons, the receiver of the pass must start running from within two metres of the free pass mark. The player taking the free pass must pass the ball and cannot just run with the ball on the referee's call.

At free passes, opponents must be 7m back from the mark. They cannot start moving forward until the ball leaves the hands of the player taking the free pass.

Scoring a try

The object of the game is to score a try by placing the ball with downward pressure behind the opponents' goal line. A try is worth five points.



Where mini tag rugby is played indoors or in restricted areas, or on hard surfaces such as concrete or tarmac, a try can be scored by the ball carrier crossing the line of the goal line, without grounding the ball. This allows the player to keep his / her head up and be aware of their surroundings at all times.



For similar safety reasons, a player must not dive over the line to ground the ball. Mini tag is to be played by players on their feet.



The player must ground the ball with downward pressure. If the player drops the ball over the line, the try is not given.

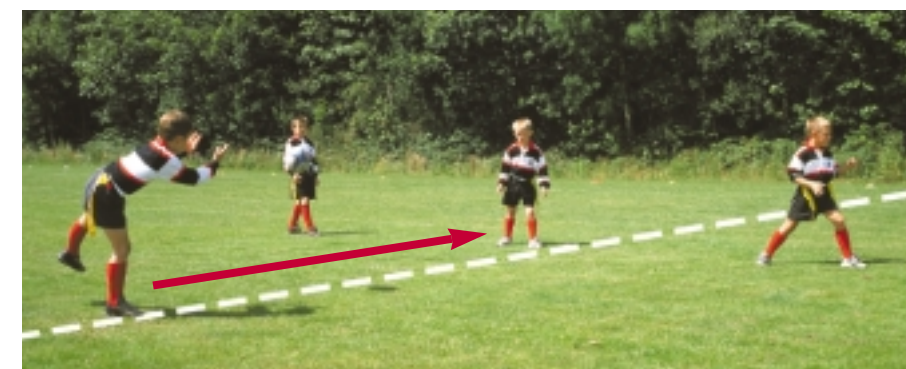
This is a knock-on and a free pass should be awarded to the non-offending team seven metres from the goal line.

Passing the ball

The ball can be passed only sideways or backwards through air, not handed to another player.



Backward pass
LEGAL



Level pass
LEGAL



Forward pass
ILLEGAL

If the ball is handed to another player or passed or knocked forwards to the ground ('forwards' meaning towards the opponents' goal line) then a free pass is awarded to the non-offending team. If the ball is pulled from the ball carrier's grasp, a free pass is awarded to the ball carrier's team.



The tag

A tag is the removal of one of the two tags from the ball carrier's belt. Only the ball carrier can be tagged. The ball carrier can run and dodge potential taggers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball, and cannot guard or shield their tags in any way. The ball cannot be pulled or wrestled from the ball carrier's hands at any time.

Players must always have two tags affixed to their belt whilst taking part in the game. If a player has one or both tags missing, and they become the ball carrier or tag an opponent, then a free pass will immediately be awarded against them unless advantage can be played.

Actions by the ball carrier

When the ball carrier is tagged, the ball must be passed to a team mate within three seconds (including stopping time). The ball carrier should attempt to stop as soon as possible - within three strides is a reasonable guide for referees, but the ball can be passed in the act of stopping. Players are, however, only allowed one step to score a try after being tagged.

After the ball has been passed, the player must go to the tagger, retrieve his / her tag and place it back on his / her belt before rejoining play. If the player continues to play and influences the game without first collecting and re-fixing their tag, they should be penalised and a free pass awarded against them at the place of the infringement.



1 Tag taken



2 Tag returned



3 Tag replaced

Actions by the tagger

When a tag is made, the tagger should stop running, hold the tag above his / her head and shout "TAG!". At this stage the referee should shout "TAG - PASS!" to help prompt the required actions.

If the ball carrier stops running within one metre of the tagger, the tagger should move back towards his / her own goal line, at least one metre, to allow space for the ball to be passed.

Once the ball has been passed, the tagger must hand the tag back to the player from whom it was removed and cannot re-join play until this has been done. If a tagger continues to play and influences the game with an opponent's tag in their hand, or throws the tag to the ground, they should be penalised and a free pass awarded against them at the place of the infringement.

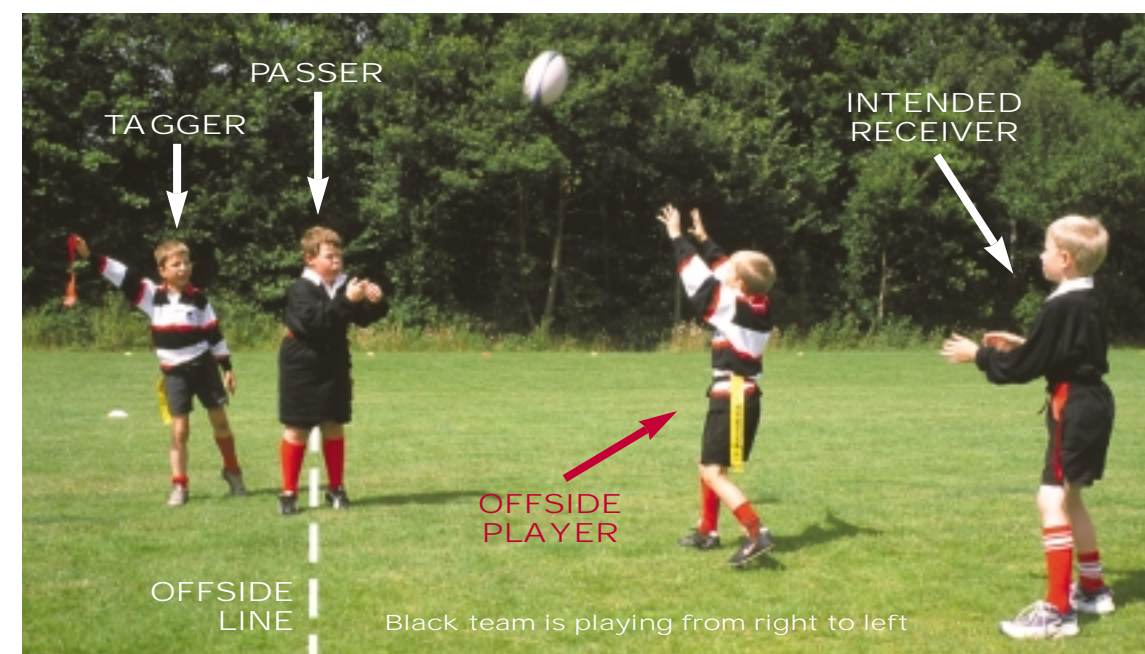
Knock-on

A knock-on occurs when a player, attempting to catch the ball, fumbles it and knocks it forwards to the ground towards the opponents' goal line. A free pass is awarded to the non-offending team unless advantage can be played.

Offside

Offside only occurs immediately at the tag where the offside line is through the centre of the ball. When a tag is made, all players from the tagger's team must attempt to retire towards their own goal line until they are behind the ball. If a player in an offside position (i.e. further forward than the ball) intercepts, prevents or slows down a pass from tagged player to a team mate, a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending team.

A player can, however, run from onside to intercept a floated pass before it reaches its intended recipient.



Principles of play



In attack, the ball carrier should run forward whenever possible with the other players in close support. He / she can dodge potential taggers but cannot fend them off or shield his / her tags. The ball carrier should hold the ball in both hands at all times, run at spaces between defenders and, if there are no spaces available, pass the ball to a team mate in a better position. The ball carrier must not deliberately make contact with an opponent - offenders must be spoken to and reminded of the non-contact rules of tag rugby and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side.



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Principles of play (cont'd)



In defence, players should also be looking to run forward so that they can reduce the space their opponents have to play in. Defenders cannot physically touch the ball carrier, as the only contact allowed between the two teams is the removal of a tag from the belt of the ball carrier. Any other type of contact on the ball carrier, such as shirt pulling, running in front of or barging the ball carrier, forcing the ball carrier into touch, wrestling the ball from the ball carrier, etc, should be penalised with a free pass to the non-offending side.

Going to ground

Players should play tag rugby on their feet, with ball in hand. If the ball goes to ground, players must not dive to the floor to recover the ball or a free pass will be awarded against them. To reinforce this important safety aspect, even if the ball carrier accidentally falls to the ground with the ball, a free pass will be awarded to the non-ball carrying team.

If the ball is legally passed but goes to ground, play will continue and either team may pick up the ball. If the passed ball rolls into touch, a free pass will commence from the touchline to the non-passing team.

Kicking

There is no kicking of any kind in tag rugby.

Advantage

Instead of stopping the game every time an infringement occurs, referees should allow 'advantage' to the non-offending team if there is a chance that they may gain a tactical or territorial advantage. Advantage should not be played in the event of dangerous play or if a suspected injury occurs.

Safety



Although mini tag rugby is a completely non-contact game, the RFU strongly recommends the wearing of mouth guards in case of accidental collision. Ideally mouth guards should be custom made from a dental impression of the teeth. Individuals may choose also to wear shin guards.

Coaches, referees and teachers are advised to check that studs and other clothing are IRB approved before training sessions, games and tournaments in accordance with the laws of the game.

Coaches, parents and guardians are strongly advised to attend a mini tag coaching course. Contact your Rugby Development Officer for details of courses in your area.

RFU Coaching Development, Twickenham TW1 1DS
Tel: 020 8831 6711 Fax: 020 8892 9816
Email: communityrugbyinfo@rfu.com Web: www.rfu.com



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