



**IRFU Age Grade Rugby  
Regulations for Mini and Leprechaun Rugby  
LTPD Stage 1 - "Growing from Six to Six Nations"**

**Mission Statement**

"The ethos of Mini and Leprechaun Rugby is to foster and develop young players (boys & girls) of all ability in the game of rugby in a safe, **\*non-competition**, enjoyable environment through activities which ensure progressive skill development for all participants in line with the IRFU LTPD (Long Term Player Development) pathway, Child Welfare Policy and Traditions of Rugby Union"

**\* non-competition meaning no leagues/cups and blitzes and or events resulting in play-off matches or finals.**

## Child Welfare

All volunteers involved with mini rugby (in any capacity) must read the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document and sign the Declaration of Intent. The signed copy of the Declaration must be handed to the Club Child Welfare Officer/ School Games Master for record keeping in the club or school. Clubs/ Schools are responsible to ensure that all their volunteers involved in age grade rugby adhere to all aspects of the IRFU policy on Child Welfare.

## Code of Conduct

All participants in Mini Rugby are to adhere to all aspects of the IRFU Code of Conduct for Players/ Coaches/ Parents/ Spectators and Referees

## Fixtures (possible link to website for Festival Guidelines)

Competitions (meaning leagues/ cups & blitzes ending with play-off matches or finals) **are not allowed** and Festivals / Events must be arranged according to the National Festival Day format. These must be registered with the respective Branch prior to taking place and all future Festivals/Events including matches involving teams from other Unions, must adhere to the IRFU Mini and Leprechaun Rugby regulations.

## Eligibility

- Date of eligibility is the 1<sup>st</sup> January.

### 1<sup>st</sup> July or 1<sup>st</sup> September

- To assist Branches to maximise participation and ensuring clubs/schools can field teams at various age levels, Branches agree the date of eligibility and age categories to apply in their province and formally apply to the IRFU Domestic Game Committee for approval.
- The date of eligibility and age categories must be discussed and agreed with the youth committee.
- Fixtures or competitions involving teams from other provinces or Unions must be played using the 1<sup>st</sup> January eligibility date.
- Mini Rugby is a participation sport
- Member of a club and or a pupil in the school.
- Where mini and leprechaun rugby is part of the school curriculum eligibility is based the year/ class the player is in.
- Leprechaun Rugby U7
- Mini Rugby U8/ U9/ U10/ U11 and U12

## Registration

It is the responsibility of Clubs/ Schools to ensure all their players are properly registered with the Club/ School, Branch and IRFU.

## Correspondence

Any correspondence regarding Mini Rugby must be directed to the Branch Mini Rugby Committee

## Maximum playing time

Consideration must be given to clubs/teams with small numbers and or no reserves to prevent/avoid exhaustion and or the risk of injuries.

## Date of eligibility categories from 2010 season onwards

<b>Age Groups</b>	<b>Season 2010/2011</b>	<b>Season 2011/2012</b>	<b>Season 2012/2013</b>	<b>Season 2013/2014</b>	<b>Season 2014/2015</b>
<b>Under 7</b>	<b>Born in: 2004</b>	<b>Born in: 2005</b>	<b>Born in: 2006</b>	<b>Born in: 2007</b>	<b>Born in: 2008</b>
<b>Under 8</b>	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Under 9</b>	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>Under 10</b>	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Under 11</b>	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>Under 12</b>	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>Under 13</b>	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
<b>Under 14</b>	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
<b>Under 15</b>	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<b>Under 16</b>	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<b>Under 17</b>	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
<b>Under 18</b>	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
<b>Under 19</b>	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996

## Regulations and Laws regarding Mini Rugby

Due to variations in the physical, mental, social and emotional developments of young children, **U7 players are not allowed to play full contact** games. Children in this age group should be introduced to Rugby Union through the non-contact games of Leprechaun Rugby.

Mini and Leprechaun Rugby has been broken down into distinct stages which progressively introduce and develop the fundamental skills of Rugby Football.

Regulation	Leprechaun	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Notes
Age group (s) - Age on 1 <sup>st</sup> January	U 7s	U 8's	U 9/U 10	U11/ U12	
Ball size	3	3	3	4	Must be adhered to.
Maximum time per half – single match.	15 min	15 min	15 min	20 min	No injury or extra time allowed
Maximum time per half – blitz days	7 min	7 min	7 min	7 min	No injury or extra time allowed
Maximum time a squad/ team is allowed to play per day/ event	60 min.	70 min.	70 min.	70 min.	No injury or extra time allowed
Minimum time allowed for half time	1 min	1 min	1min	1 min	
Max no of players per team	8 Recommended	8	8	10	Equal numbers on both teams – emphasis on participation & enjoyment.
No of forwards	NA	NA	3	5	
No of backs	NA	NA	5	5	
Safety zone between pitches	6 m	6 m	6 m	6 m	
Tackle height	Touch on shorts or pull tag	Waist high	Waist high	Waist high	Swinging tackle/high tackle to be penalised immediately & player warned!

Hand off	Not allowed	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Below shoulder	Players should carry the ball in two hands.
Time allowed for rucks & mauls	NA	5 sec	5 sec	5 sec	The 5 seconds use it or lose it rule applies. This starts from the moment ruck/maul is formed. <b>It is illegal to collapse a maul.</b>
No of players allowed in rucks & mauls per side	N/A	3	3	5	
Kicking	No	No	No	Defence zone only	
Start match	Pass off	Pass off	Pass off	As per 15-a-side	Pass-off must be off the ground and after the referees whistle
Method of scoring	Try	Try	Try	Try	
Line out	NA	No	3 Man	5 Man	All forwards must be involved in lineout. No lift
Scrum	NA	No	3 Man No contest	5 Man Strike & 1 step allowed	Players must stay bound until scrum is over

- **Coaches are responsible for compliance with the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document**
- **No limit on number of players to play in club days or events – with emphasis on enjoyment and participation for all.**
- **For safety reasons players should play within their own age groups.**
- **Players cannot play for a lower age group.**
- **Leprechaun & Stage 1 Mini Rugby – only one coach per team allowed on the pitch, coach must stay behind players.**

## **Start of match and/or restarts**

### **Stages 1 & 2**

All starts and restarts are by pass off (from the ground) and must be on the referee's whistle. The opposition must retire 10m from the ball and can only move once the scrum half/passer passes the ball. The first receiver must start no more than 2m back from the scrum half/passer.

At the start of both halves and after a try, the pass off from the centre of the pitch, will be used to restart the game.

### **Stage 3**

Starts as per the 15-a-side game and must be after the referees whistle.

In dead ball situations the restarts to take place 10m from try-line (kicking zone)

## **Penalties – No quick tap penalties allowed**

### **Stage 1 & 2**

Penalties are taken by a pass off (from the ground) and on the whistle, the opposition being 10m back from the mark (or behind the goal line). Penalties must be taken through the mark. To play the ball, it must be first tapped with the foot before being passed off the ground.

### **Stage 3**

Penalties must be taken through the mark designated by the referee. A scrum to be awarded to the opposition if persistently done incorrectly.

Opposition must be 10 m back or behind the goal line. To play the ball, it must be first tapped with the foot before being passed off the ground.

Defensive penalties from within the Kicking Zone as per the 15 a side game i.e. team awarded the penalty may kick directly to touch and are awarded throw in.

## **Kicking**

### **Stage 1 & 2**

Not allowed

### **Stage 3**

It is not permitted to kick the ball outside the "defensive zone" (10m from own goal line). If the offence is unintentional, a scrum is awarded to the opposition and if intentional a penalty to the opposition.

Pass back into kicking zone rule (as per 15-a-side) to apply

Players in front of the kicker must be brought onside before they can take part in play

## **Hand Off**

### **Stage 1 & 2**

Not allowed

### **Stage 3**

No hand off to the head or neck area. Penalty awarded if this offence is committed.

## Scrum

### Stage 2: (3 man)

1. All players stay bound until ball has emerged.
2. No push or contesting allowed, ball must be put in straight.
3. Opposition scrum half behind his forwards – no follow around allowed.
4. Scrum is over when ball is in the hands of the attacking scrum half.
5. Scrum half must pass the ball – no break allowed.
6. Both back lines 5m back to allow attack.
7. Always 10m from touch line and 5m from goal line.

### Stage 3: (5 man)

1. All players stay bound until ball has emerged.
2. Scrum may not move further than 1 step from the mid-point of original scrum. Only strike can be contested (hooker v hooker).
3. Scrum half to feed the ball into the scrum with two hands and straight.
4. No forward allowed to pick up the ball from the scrum.
5. Opposition scrum half behind his 2nd Rows – no follow around allowed.
6. Both back lines 5m from scrum to allow attacks.
7. Always 10m from touchline and 5m from goal line.
8. Scrum is over when referee calls “scrum over” or when the ball is in the hands of the scrum half who may break.

## Line out - No Lifting or Quick throw allowed

### Stage 2: (2 man)

1. Line out 2m from touch line.
2. No contest.
3. Line out is over when the scrum half passes the ball.
4. Both hookers must be at the front of the line-out and both scrum halves behind their forwards.
5. Scrum halves must pass the ball. No break allowed.
6. Both back lines 5m back to allow attack.
7. Ball must be thrown straight into the line-out – no over throw.
8. No catch and drive allowed.

### **Stage 3: (5 man)**

1. 2m from touch line.
2. Only the jump can be contested.
3. A space of one metre (arms length) between all players in the line-out
4. Both hookers must be at the front of the line-out and both scrum halves behind their forwards.
5. Both back lines 5m back to allow attack.
6. Hookers must throw to players (2m.), no over throw allowed and must be straight.
7. Line out is over when the scrum half passes the ball/ makes a break or when team catching the ball – catch & drive (5 seconds – “use it or lose it”) to apply.

### **Rucks and mauls**

Referees to talk players through it and after 5 seconds “use it or lose it.” The 5 seconds starts from the time the ruck or maul is formed NOT when the maul stops moving.

For safety reasons it is **ILLEGAL to COLLAPSE** a maul and the **CLEANING OUT OF OPPOSITION PLAYERS IS NOT ALLOWED.**

### **Discipline**

No sending off in Mini Rugby only compulsory substitutions to ensure same numbers on the pitch at all times.

### **Dangerous Tackles: High /Swing and Dump Tackles**

Player to receive 1 (one) verbal warning from the referee. If the player offends again compulsory substitution to be made by coach on request by the referee. Player allowed to participate in next match/ rest of the day’s event unless there is a repeat of the offence.

### **Punching/ kicking of an opponent**

No warning – immediate compulsory substitution and the player is not allowed to participate in next match or rest of the day’s event

### **Squeeze ball and Bridging**

Not allowed

### **Ball in one hand**

If carrying the ball in one hand (*which should be discouraged*)

The free hand must not be used to fend off another player or prevent the tackle other than when used properly to hand off in stage 3.

## Reminder for Coaches and Referees

### **Dangerous Tackles - Safety is the prime concern – penalise early (with explanation)**

Prior to the start of a match referees and coaches must ensure that players are made aware of the dangers of these types of tackles & the fact that it could lead to compulsory substitution.

- “Dump Tackle” is becoming more prevalent in our game i.e. lifting a player during a tackle and dropping or dumping him/her on to the ground.
- “Swing Tackle” – grabbing the jersey or an arm and swing the player to the ground.
- “High Tackle” – using one or both arms to grab a player on or above the shoulders.

**Rucks/ Mauls** – to assist continuity at this level the follow to apply

### **The cleaning out of opposition players is not allowed**

Once maul starts (normally) from a line out the use it or lose it 5 second rule/count starts immediately.

Similarly in the ruck situation resulting from a tackle the use it or lose it 5 second rule/count starts immediately.

## **Scrum**

Forwards must stay properly bound with arms and heads in the correct position until the ball has been used by the scrum-half – safety & continuity.

## **Line out**

The ball must be thrown into the line out – no overthrow allowed.

All forwards must be involved in the line out.

## **Space between teams**

**These distances should be rigorously adhered to as they encourage handling.**

Scrum – 10m gap between backline (each backline 5m back)

Line out – 10m gap between backlines (each backline 5m back)

Pass-off (start/restart)	Mini rugby	opposition 10m back
	Leprechaun Rugby	opposition 5m back (depend on pitch size)

Pass-off first receiver must be no more than 2m back from passer (safety)

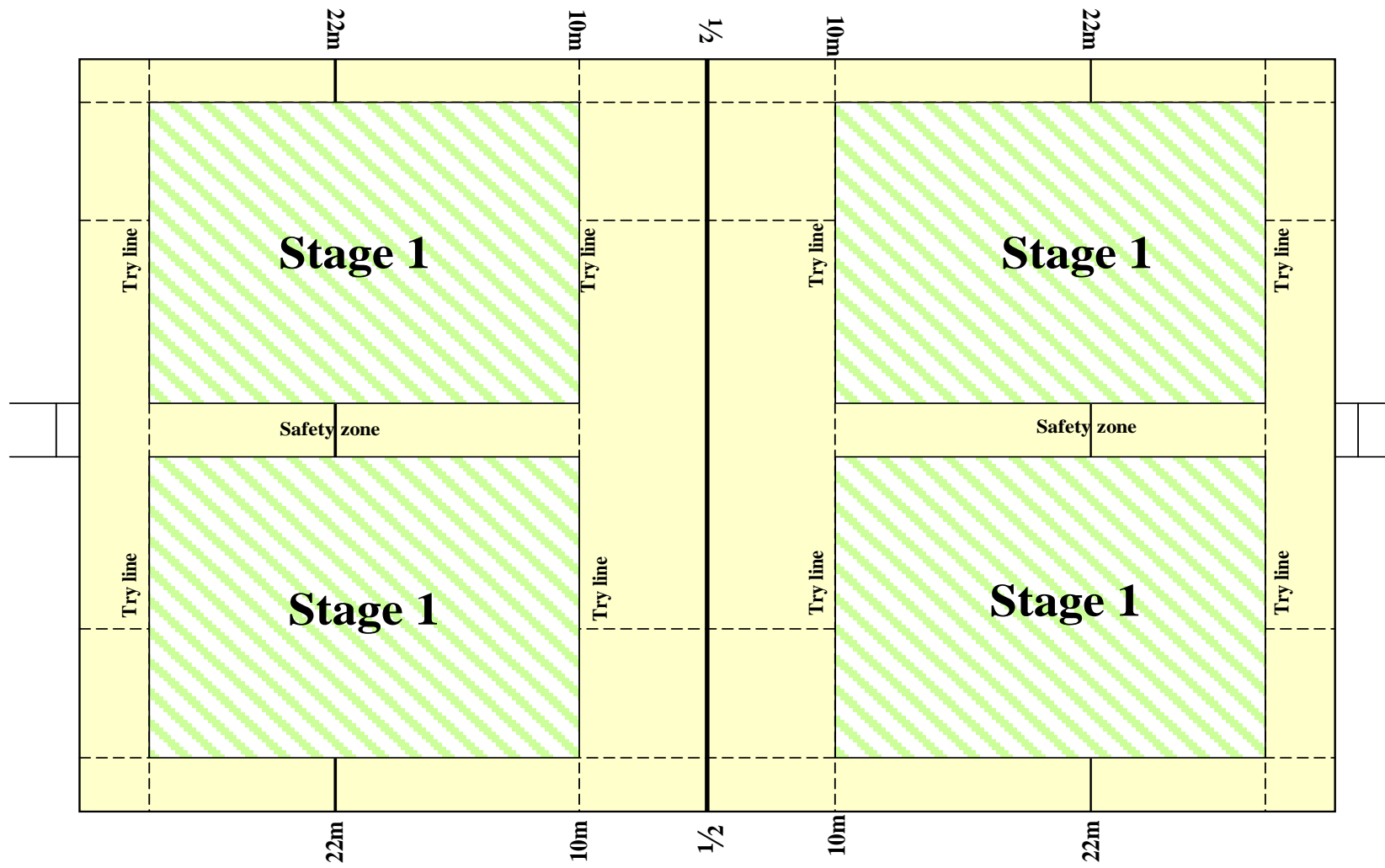
## **Restarts**

Must be on the referees whistle

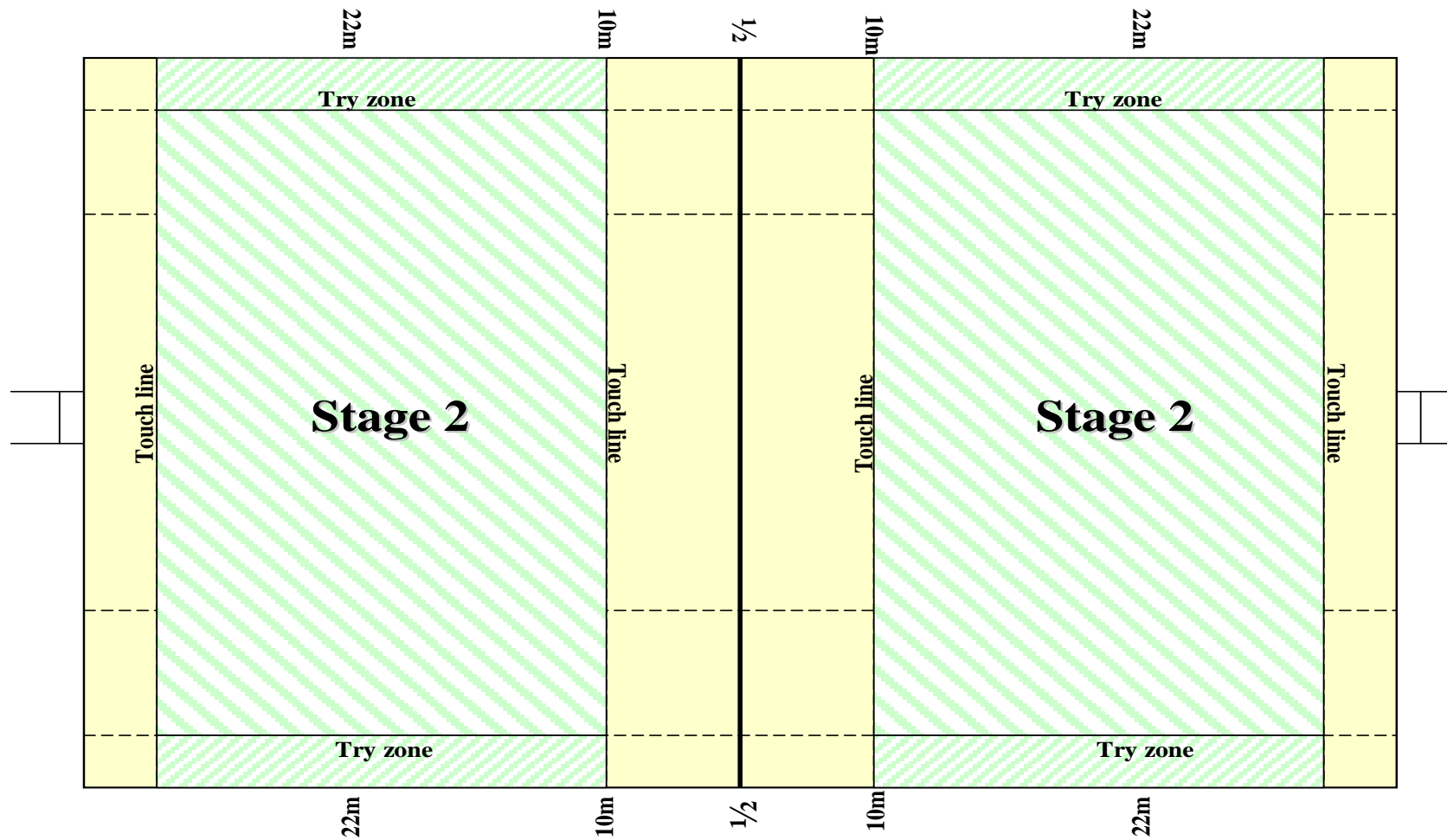
## **Penalties**

No quick “tap” penalties allowed and must be on the referees whistle

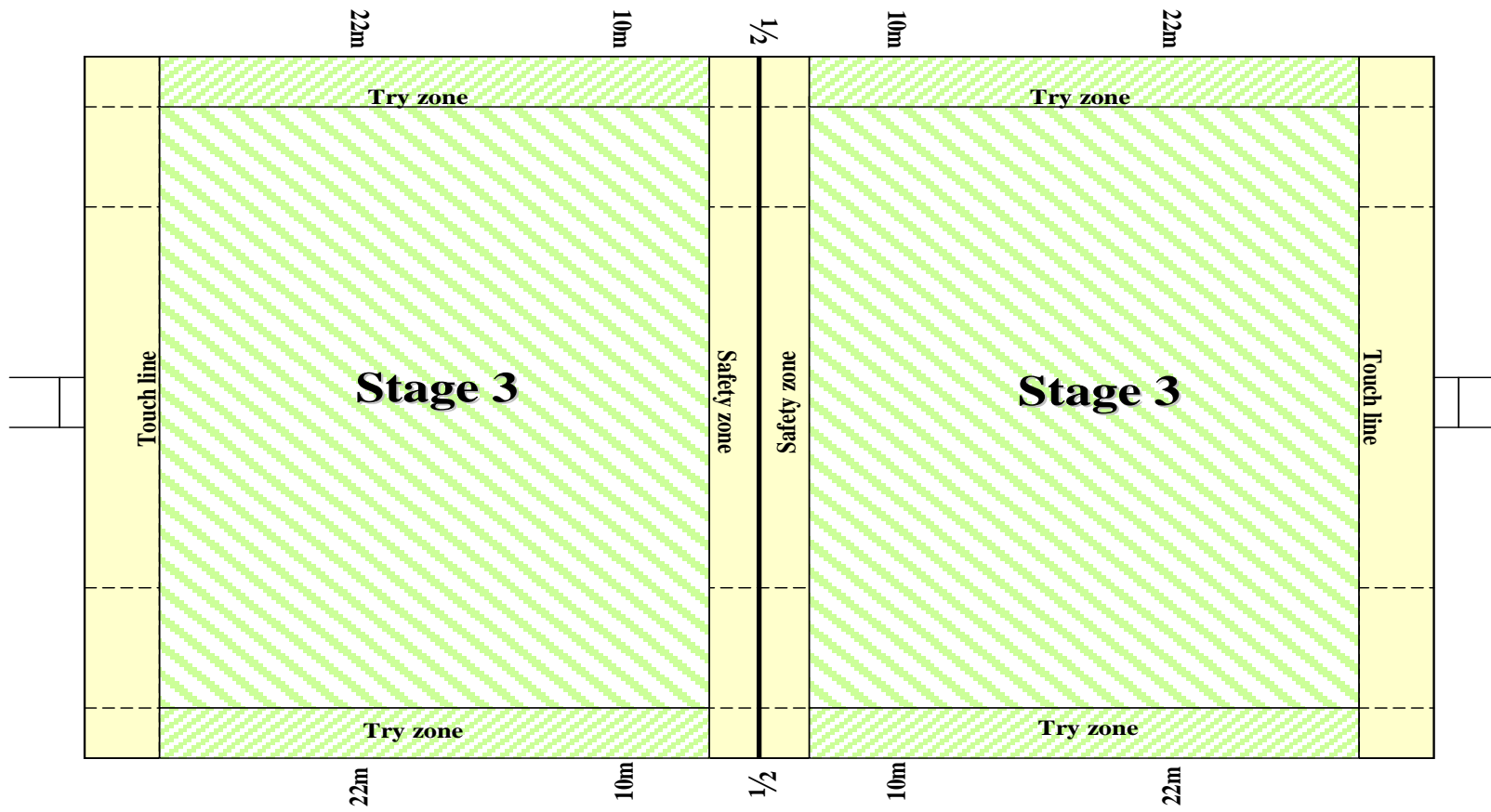
# Pitch regulations



# Pitch regulations



# Pitch regulations



## **Leprechaun Rugby**

Leprechaun Rugby has been developed to introduce the Game of Rugby Union to young players new to the Game. The non-tackling and soft contact nature of Leprechaun Rugby contains all the running and handling skills of Rugby Union. It is a game, which is designed to be FUN

### **Number of players**

Can vary from 4-a-side to 8-a-side and or 10-a-side games and the emphasis is on the introduction of the skills, inclusion of all participants; safety and enjoyment.

### **Playing area**

Depends on the number of participants and vary from 10m x 20m to 30m x 40m and or 50m x 70m.

### **Duration of games**

Depends on the time available and can vary from 5 min. each way to 10 min. or 15 min. each way. Young players (beginners) playing non-contact rugby can only play a maximum amount 30 min. of rugby per day.

### **Start of play**

The game starts by a pass-off with the referee indicating the mark. The opposition must be 5 to 10 m away depending on the size of the playing area and the size of the teams.

### **Attacking team**

The attacking team carries the ball downfield, running, passing (or handling) back to score try by placing the ball over or behind the opposition goal line. The ball can only be transferred to a player behind the ball carrier. No forward (handling) or passing allowed.

### **Defending team**

The defending team attempts to halt the running progress of the attacking team by tagging the ball carrier.

### **Tagging and ball take**

To tag a player must contact the ball carrier with two hands (one on each side of the hips). The ball carrier must then (immediately) pass backwards within a maximum of 3 steps. Any attempt to deliberately gain territory without trying to pass, will result in loss of possession.

OR

If the ball carrier can't see anyone to pass to he/she should (immediately) stop, turn and present the ball immediately to a support player. The support player must then take the ball and pass to another player without running.

### **Off-side**

Applies only to the pass-off and the ball take.

## **Gaining possession**

The defending team can gain possession as follows:

### **Intercepting the ball**

An opposition pass can be intercepted.

### **Gathering a dropped ball**

If the attacking team drops or throws the ball to the ground, the defending team can pick up the ball and play on.

### **Knock on**

If the attacking team knocks the ball on (dropping a pass forward) the defending team will restart with pass-off.

### **Forward pass**

Forward passes are not allowed and a pass-off is awarded to the non-offending team.

### **Ball in touch**

If the ball or attacking player carrying the ball crosses the touchline, play is restarted by a pass-off awarded to the non-offending team.

## **Penalties**

All penalties are taken with a pass-off. A player from the non-offending team taps the ball on the ground with his foot and then passes to a team mate. Opposing players must 5 to 10 m back depending on the size of the team and or the pitch.

### **Reasons for penalties**

- Ball carrier hands-off a player.
- Interference by a defending player not allowing a transfer, pass or ball take immediately after a tag.
- Ball carrier makes further ground after a tag without passing, transfer or ball take.
- A defending player takes the ball from the ball carrier.
- Deliberate obstruction of an opponent.
- A defending player is offside.
- In all instances the opposition must be 5 to 10m backs depending on the size of the teams or the pitch.

## **Code of Conduct for Players (Adopted from the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document)**

Play for enjoyment and become part of the rugby family.

Respect the “Game of Rugby” and play within the Laws of the Game.

Accept the referee’s decision and let your captain or coach ask any relevant questions.

Play with control. Do not lose your temper.

Always do your best and be committed to the game, your team and your club.

Be a “good sport”. Applaud all good play whether by your team or the opposition.

Respect your opponent. Treat all players as you would like to be treated. Do not “bully” or take advantage of any player.

Rugby is a team sport and make sure you co-operate with your coach; team mates and members of your club.

Remember that the goals of the game are to have fun, improve your skills and feel good.

At the end of the match thank your opponents and the referee for the match.

Always remember that you owe a duty of care to your opponents. Tackle hard but fairly, do not intend to hurt your opponent.

Winning and losing is part of sport: Win with humility – lose with dignity.

As part of the team it is important that you attend training regularly and listen to your coach and help your team.

As a team sport it is important to understand that all members are important to the team!

Remember you are representing your team, club, family and the Game of Rugby.

## **Code of Conduct for Coaches (Adopted from the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document)**

Remember that as a coach of an “age-grade team” you are acting “in loco parentis” and that you have a duty of care to all your players.

Lead by example - young people needs a coach they can respect as a Role Model.

Be generous with your praise and never ridicule or shout at players for making mistakes or losing a match.

Teach your players that the Laws of the Game are mutual agreements which no one should evade or break.

Ensure that you are appropriately qualified by gaining the relevant coaching accreditation for your particular level.

Be reasonable in your demands on the players’ time, energy and enthusiasm.

Encourage respect for all participants – team mates and opponents, as well as match officials.

Create a safe and enjoyable environment in which to train and play.

Always follow professional medical advice in determining when an injured player is ready to play again.

Develop policies for your club / team to agree procedures regarding discipline, injury prevention and treatment, team selection etc.

Be responsible and ensure you uphold the ethos of the game and the IRFU.

Support the IRFU Child Welfare Policy and all policies regarding Children in Sport.

## **Code of Conduct for Parents (Adopted from the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document)**

Remember, young people play rugby for their enjoyment, not only yours.

Encourage your child always to play by the Laws of the Game.

Teach young children that honest endeavour is as important as winning, so that the result of each game is accepted without disappointment.

Help young people to work towards skill improvement and good sportsmanship.

Set a good example by applauding good play on both sides.

Never ridicule, humiliate or shout at young players for making a mistake or losing a match.

Do not place emphasis on winning at all costs.

Do not force an unwilling child to participate in the playing of rugby. If the child is to play, he/she will do so in good time through your encouragement.

Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from rugby.

As a spectator do not use profane language or harass referees, coaches or players.

Do not publicly question the referee's judgement and never their honesty.

Recognise the value and importance of volunteer referees and coaches.

Identify and acknowledge the good qualities of the Game of Rugby and uphold these values.

Remember you and your child's contribution to the Game of Rugby are very important to the IRFU and be proud of your contribution.

Understand the value of team sport and its importance.

## **Code of Conduct for Spectators (Adopted from the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document)**

Remember that although young people play organised rugby they are not “miniature internationals”.

Be on your best behaviour and lead by example. Do not use profane language or harass referees, players or coaches.

Applaud good play by the visiting team as well as your own.

Show respect for your team’s opponents. Without them there would not be a match.

Condemn the use of violence in all forms at every opportunity.

Verbal abuse of players or referees cannot be accepted in any shape or form.

Players or referees are not fair targets for ignorant behaviour.

Encourage young players to play by the Laws of the Game.

Spectators can contribute to the enjoyment of the event and all involved.

Be proud of your club and the Game of Rugby.

## **Conduct for Referees (Adopted from the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document)**

Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every child and treat everyone equally, regardless of gender, disability, ethnic origin, religion, etc.

All referees (youth rugby -15-a-side) must be a member of their Branch Referees Association. Mini Rugby Referees to attend and complete mini rugby coaching course.

Act as a role model and promote the positive aspects of rugby and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct.

Be responsible for monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with players.

Avoid being alone with underage persons.

Never deal with injuries unless qualified to do so.

Encourage coaches/parents to act responsibly and to be responsible for the behaviour and performance of players.

Ensure that safety is paramount in all games.

Follow agreed protocols regarding shower arrangements after matches.

Agree appropriate times for entry to changing rooms to deal with match preparation and ensure members of the team management are present.

Be punctual, prepared and well presented.

Ensure players and officials comply with the Laws of the Game.

Never criticise individual players and or coaches or parents.

Adhere to all rules and procedures as agreed by the Branch Referees Association

## INFORMATION

If you would like more information about Mini Rugby or would like information on coaching courses, refereeing, or additional coaching material, please contact your Provincial Rugby Development Department.

### Connacht

IRFU Connacht Branch,  
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College Road,  
Galway.

Tel: 091 – 561-568

Fax: 091 – 560-097

Email: [info@cbirfu.com](mailto:info@cbirfu.com)

### Leinster

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### Munster Branch:

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### Ulster Branch

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### IRFU

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