

What is the purpose of the Senior Rugby Policy?

- to protect the safety and welfare of players participating in a senior rugby competition at an age younger than 18 years by trying to ensure that participant's physical development and skill levels are broadly compatible with and against other participants in senior rugby.
- to outline the circumstances of an exception to the Policy that permits participation in a senior rugby competition to certain players younger than 18 years of age.
- to describe the potential risks to the player that he/she may face if they choose to participate in a senior rugby competition at an age younger than 18 years of age.
- to ensure that all involved in the decision to permit a player to participate in a senior rugby competition at an age younger than 18 years understand their respective responsibilities.

Can a player Under 18 years play Senior rugby?

- In exceptional cases, a player's physical development, skill level and experience may be such that he or she may be allowed to participate in senior rugby competitions at an age younger than 18 years of age.
- A player wishing to participate in a senior rugby competition at an age younger than eighteen years of age should carefully consider the information in Schedule A of the Senior Rugby Policy, complete the Consent Form including assessed by a Level 2 coach and submit to your Competition Manager.

Is there a minimum age to play Senior rugby?

- As per the Policy, in exceptional cases, a player's physical development, skill level and experience may be such that he or she may be allowed to participate in senior rugby competitions at an age younger than eighteen years of age. Applications need to be assessed based on the merit of each player against the criteria stipulated and ultimately the decision is up to those making the assessment of a particular individual.
- The ARU believes it would be unlikely for a player under the age of 17 to have the physical development and experience to meet the criteria, however we acknowledge there may be exceptions and therefore as noted above the decision needs to be made by those assessing a particular player.

Who makes the assessment of a player to participate in senior rugby at an age younger than eighteen years, and /or in an age grade competition above his or her age?

- The assessment of a player to participate in Senior Rugby at an age younger than eighteen years of age must be undertaken:
 - by a currently accredited level 2 coach,
 - with current SmartRugby qualification, and
 - registered on ARU's MyRugbyAdmin.

What is assessed when addressing the suitability of a player to participate above the two-year window and/or in Senior Rugby under 18 years of age?

The assessing coach should consider the following factors:

- What is the player's level of physical development (e.g. height, weight, build etc) when measured against potential playing colleagues? Is the player physically equipped to compete on an equal basis with players in the proposed age grade competition?
- Does the player have a high skill level; both specific to their playing position and in relation to the games fundamentals (e.g. tackle, pass, ruck, maul, scrum etc)? Will the player's skill level place the player on an equal basis with players in the proposed age grade competition?
- What is the player's level of experience? Is the player reasonably experienced and has the player gained that experience in a comparable standard of competition?
- What is the standard of competition in the proposed competition? Is it at a level in which the player can compete safely

How do I locate a Level 2 coach to undertake my assessment?

- Discuss with your club/school to ascertain coaches at the club/school who meet the necessary requirements. Additionally, contact your local affiliate or State/Territory Union to discuss options.

Why is there an additional exception process required to play in the Front Row (as an exception to the Senior Rugby Policy)?

- The objective of the Policy is to protect “at risk” athletes. The decision to protect front rowers is based on research which supports that the “front row” is in the highest risk group within Rugby. Relevant research includes:
- Fuller et al (2007) and (ii) Carmody et al (2005) support the notion that there is a greater risk of injury for players playing in the front row (prop or hooker),
- Fuller et al (2007): On an injury per event basis the scrum carries a sixty (60) percent greater risk of injury than the tackle.
- Carmody et al (2005) and more recently Bohu et al (2009): The majority of catastrophic injuries in Rugby occur to players playing in the Front Row.

If the tackle is the “most frequent cause of injury” why are there additional requirements pertaining to the “scrum”?

- This is true in some respects but when you look at “injuries per game event” the scrum is still the most injurious phase of the game. This is confirmed in a recent study by Fuller et al in 2007.
- This study confirmed that:
 1. the scrum is still a higher risk event with respect to injury in Rugby Union
 2. the tackle is responsible for the largest number of injuries but only because it is the most common event in the game
 3. scrums occur less frequently in the game than tackles but on an injury per event basis carry a sixty (60) percent greater risk of injury than the tackle.

The study that reported this was undertaken in England by the RFU - “Fuller et al: Contact events in Rugby Union and their propensity to cause injury. Br J. Sport Med. 2007”

Can a player Under 18 years play in the Front Row (prop/hooker) in Senior rugby?

- A player younger than eighteen years of age wishing to participate in a senior rugby competition in the Front Row (prop or hooker) must also apply for approval from the ARU prior to participation in rugby, as outlined in Schedule B - Exception for Front Row.
- A player must complete both Consent Form and Submission Form and must submit to the ARU for consideration of this exception. The player may not play in the Front Row in senior rugby until ARU approval has been received.

Is it correct that I may have to undertake a scan prior to approval to play in Front Row?

- A decision on the necessity for an MRI or CT scan is at the discretion of the ARU, and applicants will be advised accordingly if this is necessary, prior to approving an exception for Front Row. The objective of the scan is to identify any structural issues that may increase this athlete’s propensity to injury. This is not a compulsory requirement!
- A referral for these investigations will be forwarded to you, if appropriate. The costs of these investigations must be borne by the player.

Is this scan covered by Medicare? How much will it cost?

- The requested MRI is a screening investigation and therefore not covered by Medicare.
- Discussions with a number of radiology practices suggests that a reduced fee (between \$150 – \$200) would be appropriate as this is a limited MRI study. The athlete will be responsible for settling this account.

Where do I undertake the scan?

- Should an MRI or CT scan be required, it can be undertaken at a radiology practice by appointment.
- It is recommended that you advise the radiology practice that this is a limited MRI study only, and provide a copy of the referral letter outlining requirements for scan. This should improve your chances of attaining scan sooner than later.

Where do you get a copy of the Policy documentation, and Consent/Submission Forms?

- Policy document, including Consent Forms and Submission Forms are available from www.rugby.com.au/policies.