



MESSAGE FROM THE
CHAIRMAN OF DISCIPLINE AND GOVERNANCE - ARMY RUGBY UNION
PLAYERS UNDER THE AGE OF 18

For the attention of all Army Rugby Union management, administrative, and coaching staff who may be fielding players who are under 18 years of age playing in Army(Unit/Corps etc) adult teams

A recent Serious Accident Safety Notice letter to the chain of command stated:

- *A learning account into a injury sustained by a young soldier during a Rugby match, recorded that the individual injured his neck whilst playing in the front row of a scrum. The injury occurred when the player stood up during the engagement phase of the scrum. He received neck injuries as a result and was treated on the pitch whilst the game remained in progress. He was fortunate that a senior trauma nurse from Frimley happened to be watching the game and assisted in his treatment whilst the referee secured an ambulance to attend.*
- *The learning account further identified that the injured player was aged 17 and therefore under RFU rule 15.1.1 (Age Grade Rugby), supported by IRB guideline 2.1, is not permitted to play in the front row in adult games. This is not a well publicised ruling by the governing bodies within the Tri-Service Rugby community and is an area commonly overlooked by Services rugby.*
- *In this instance the injured player was treated well and in quick time and is unlikely to have any long lasting damage, however, this should be treated as a near miss incident and serve as a warning for the future.*
- *It is imperative that those involved in the control of the sport issue such instructions as are necessary to prevent a recurrence and that as a minimum routine orders reflect the additional duty of care owed to young persons.*

All should note:

<http://www.rfu.com/TheGame/Regulations/>

I have cut and paste some of the second link - which is on Page 190 of Regulation 15 of the RFU Regulations.

http://www.rfu.com/TheGame/Regulations/~/_media/Files/2011/ManagingRugby/LegalAndAdmin/RFU%20Regulation%2015%20pdf.ashx

Players may not play adult rugby, or train with other adults, until they have reached their eighteenth birthday unless they comply with one of the following exceptions:

(a) players who are aged 17 may play adult (including Under 20) rugby and train with adults provided they have been assessed as capable of playing with adults and the RFU's playing adult rugby form has been duly completed and signed. This exception does not apply to playing in the front row of the scrum during contested or uncontested scrummages either during training or in a match, where (subject to (b) and (c) below) there is an absolute prohibition on players under the age of 18 playing in adult rugby;

(b) players who are aged 17 who are England Academy Players may play and train in the front row of the scrum during contested or uncontested scrummages when playing adult rugby if the RFU Head of Elite Player Development has given his specific written consent. Such consent must be given for playing or training;

(c) players playing up one or two age grades pursuant to Regulation 15.1.4.2 (a) or (c) are permitted to play in the front row of the scrum even if they have not reached the age of 18 notwithstanding the fact that at U18 and U19 age grade rugby they may be playing with or against players who have reached the age of 18;

(d) players of all sexes and of any age may train or play together in noncontact variations of rugby, providing the organizer has assessed the session as safe for all players:

(e) players who are 16 who are England Academy Players may play adult rugby if the RFU Head of Elite Player Development has given his specific written consent. Such consent must be given for playing or training.

15.1.4.5 Permission to play must be obtained, and recorded in the RFU's playing adult rugby form (a copy of which must be kept), from either the player's parent, guardian or head teacher before any person under the age of 18 plays adult rugby or plays with players who are not in the same annual age banding. When assessing whether a player under 18 is capable of playing adult rugby, those responsible for making the decision must take account of the guidelines at paragraphs 1.1 – 1.5 below. Breach of RFU Regulation 15.1.4.4 and/or 15.1.4.5 will be regarded very seriously by the RFU, the sanctions for which are set out in Appendix 2 of RFU Regulation 19.

15.1.4.6 The RFU playing adult rugby form must be retained by the Club, County or other rugby body for whom he plays and sent to the RFU, or as it directs, immediately upon request by the RFU.

Also note the sanctions:

http://www.rfu.com/TheGame/Regulations/~media/Files/2011/The_Game/Regulations/RFU_Regulation_19_Appendix_2.ashx

Could I please ask that all management, administrative and coaching staffs ensure that the correct procedures are carried out when contemplating playing an individual who is under 18 years of age. In the case listed above, we are very lucky that this did not end up being a very serious injury.

**Col MCH Underhill OBE
Chairman of Discipline/Governance Army Rugby Union
28 October 2011**