

Rugby 101

What is Rugby?

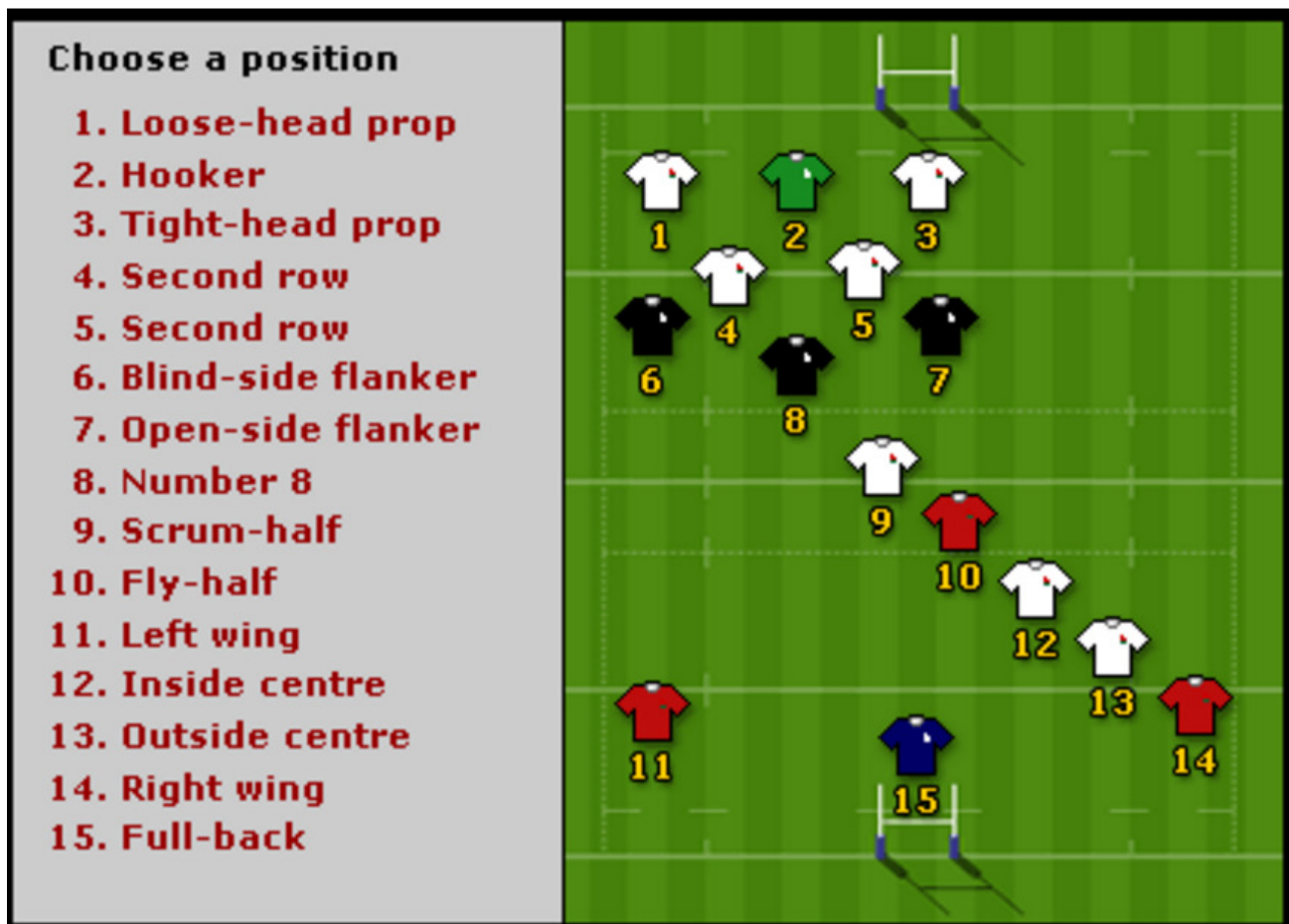
Here is the short story. Rugby evolved from Soccer (Futbol). American Football evolved from Rugby. You will see aspects in Rugby from Soccer and American Football.

Rugby like Soccer is continuous play. Players are constantly switching between offense and defense.

Rugby like American Football has tackling and the goal is to score a touchdown like thing called a Try. However, when a tackle takes place, the play does not end; the ball is recycled or lost and play continues.

Now let's focus on Rugby!

The Positions



Position Description

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#1) Loose-head Prop - Supports the hooker in scrums & the jumpers in lineouts. They are called loose-head because in scrums his head is outside that of the opposing prop.

#2) Hook - heels the ball back in scrums; throws the ball into lineouts. By far the most confusing position name in the sport... :)

#3) Tight-head Prop - Similar duties as the loose-head prop. They are called tight-head because in scrums his head fits between the opposing loose-head prop & hooker.

#4) Second Row (Lock) - Provides the main drive in scrums & wins the ball in lineouts. They are usually the tallest players on the field. Also known as "second row".

#5) Lock ... See #4

#6) Blind Side Flanker - Pursues the ball in loose play & supports the jumpers in lineouts. Some teams designate a right & left flanker, while others designate one to always play closest to the touch side (blindside) and the other to always play the opposite side (open-side); also known as "wing forward".

#7) Flanker ... See #6.

#8) Number 8 - Provides the scrum-half with clean ball from the base of the scrums & attacks from the same position; also known as "8 man".

#9) Scrum Half - Passes the ball out from scrums & rucks, thus requiring good hands and sharp decision-making abilities.

#10) Fly Half - A play-maker who elects to pass the ball to the backs, kick for position, or charge up the field. He is often the team's designated kicker at goal.

#11) Left Wing - A speed demon whose job is to get the ball on the outside & outrun the opposition to the try line.

#12) Inside Centre - A physical back who can advance the ball in traffic, creating holes for his mates to exploit.

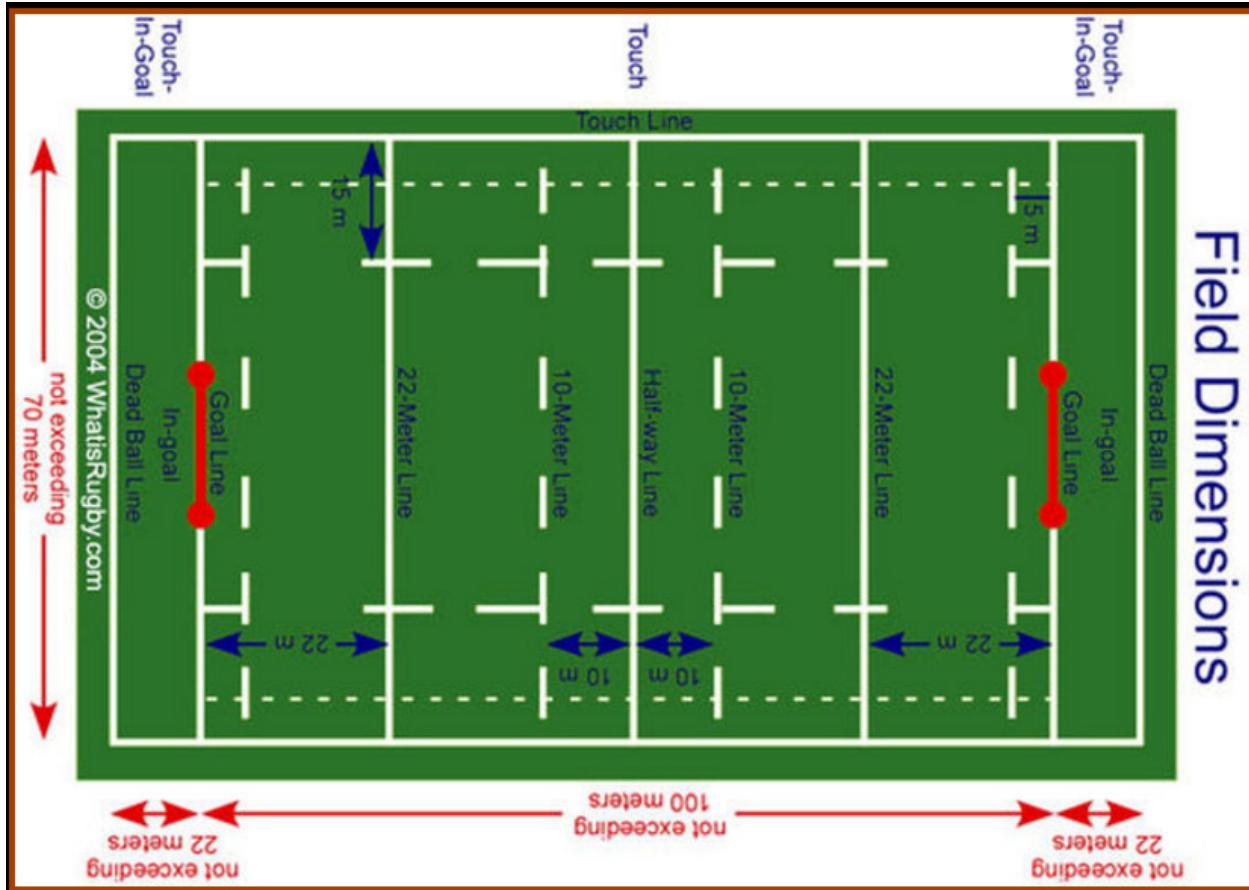
#13) Outside Centre - Similar to the inside centre, but with more focus on speed vs. power.

#14) Right Wing ... See #11

#15) Fullback - Provides a last line of defense against running attacks & tactical kicks from the other team. Also rushes in to provide an extra attacker when the situation is right.

Field Dimensions

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Basic Rules & Penalties

Despite its appearance as a chaotic game, rugby has many rules, which are known as “laws”. Here are a few which truly shape the game:

- Any player ahead of the ball (i.e., between the ball and his own goal line), may not participate or influence the game. This is known as “offside”. From this law are derived several others:
 - No forward passes, as the receiver is by definition offside. The ball may only be advanced forward by run or kick.
 - No blocking or “obstruction” by the same logic
- When the ball is kicked, any player ahead of the kick is immediately offside until they get behind either the kicker or someone who was behind the kicker at the kick.
- Dropping or fumbling the ball forward is called a knock-on and is also prohibited.

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- Only the ball carrier may be tackled:

-When tackled to the ground, the ball carrier must release the ball.

-Likewise, the tackler must release the ball carrier.

The full updated laws of rugby union can be found at the International Rugby Board website by clicking [here](#). The IRB is the governing body for rugby union.

A single referee runs on the field following the ball to enforce the laws. The referee is also responsible for tracking game time, stopping the game for injuries, signaling scores, and various other duties. Two “touch judges” working from the sidelines assist the referee by marking where the ball goes out of bounds (“out of touch”), which team controls the subsequent lineouts, the success (or failure) of goal kicks, and other procedural matters.

Minor infractions, such as knock-ons or forward passes, result in a scrum awarded to the other team. The referee, however, may elect not to stop the game if the non-offending team has the ball in a favorable situation at that moment. This is known as playing with “advantage”. The referee may elect to halt play & call the scrum when it appears the advantage is over.

Serious infractions, such as offside & violent/dangerous play, result in a penalty. The referee will indicate a “mark” where the penalty occurred & the offending team must immediately retreat 10 meters. The non-penalized team now has several ways in which to take advantage of the penalty:

- If the mark is within the team kicker’s range, the kicker may attempt an uncontested place kick. If successful this scores 3 points and play is restarted in the same manner as any other score. If unsuccessful, the penalized team must still give the ball back to the other team by a drop kick from behind its own 22-meter line. This is known as a “22-meter dropout”.
 - They may “tap kick” the ball through the mark & then immediately hand it off to one of their team, usually one of a charging pack of forwards.
 - They may kick the ball out of touch & receive the ball for the subsequent lineout.
- Penalties involving violent or dangerous play can earn a more serious punishment: the referee may send the offending player off the field for a time (the “sin bin” - during which his team must play short-handed), or he may eject the player from the game altogether.

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Playing the Game

Game Start: The game begins with one team kicking off to the other. The ball is kicked from the 50-meter line & must travel at least 10 meters & land in bounds. From that point, the game is continuous & will restart as soon as possible after any stoppage of play. There are no timeouts in rugby and there are two 40 minute halves (35 min halves at the High School level).

Halftime: at the end of the first half, the referee stops the game for a 5-minute break. The teams switch sides and the team that received the ball to start the game kicks off to start the second half.

Scoring: there are only 2 ways to score in rugby: by carrying the ball across the goal line & touching it to the ground (known as a “try”) and by kicking the ball through the goal posts.

- A try is worth 5 points, and the scoring team is allowed to attempt a conversion kick after the try for an additional 2 points. The conversion kick is made from the 22-meter line (see pitch diagram) from a point perpendicular to where the ball was touched down. Therefore the total scoring potential from a try is 7 points.
- Any other kick (whether by drop kick or penalty kick) through the posts is worth 3 points.
- After a score, the scored-upon team kicks the ball off to the scoring team (except in seven's matches).

Rucks & Mauls: as the ball carrier runs up field, he will likely be tackled fairly quickly. At the point of tackle either a ruck or a maul will develop as one or more players from each team attempt to push the other team back & keep or gain possession of the ball. The primary difference between the two situations is whether the ball is on the ground (ruck) or off the ground (maul). Ideally, a team's forwards will do most of the rucking & mauling, freeing the backs up to establish an attack line or a defensive line against the other team's backs. However, as noted above, both forwards & backs must be skilled in rucking & mauling.

With either a ruck or maul, an imaginary offside line is created behind the last player from either team in the ruck/maul. Any player who is not already bound into the ruck/maul may only enter the play from behind this line. Failure to observe this rule results in a penalty awarded to the other team.

Lineouts: the lineout procedure is used only when the ball travels out of touch. Once again, it's a play for the forwards. They line up in two rows perpendicular to the touch line at about an arm's reach apart. The number of players in the lineout may vary. Once the lines are established, the hooker from the team who did not take the ball out of touch controls the lineout. He will call a signal indicating which person on his team is his target. Then he throws the ball overhand straight down the tunnel between the two lines. Once the ball is in the air, both lines will jump for it.

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Back Play: so what do the backs do while the forwards scrum, lineout, ruck & maul? Relax, get some water, chat...no, seriously, they set up for their next phase of play, which may be offensive or defensive depending on which team wins the ball.

In a defensive alignment, the backs form a straight line across the pitch with each man lined up across from an attacking back. When the ball is passed out from the forwards, the defending backs charge toward the attackers while maintaining the straight line. The idea is to shut down the attack as quickly as possible while avoiding the creation of any gaps in the defensive line that the attackers can exploit.

In an offensive alignment, the backs form a diagonal line across the pitch. The idea is that as the ball-carrying back runs up field, he will have mates running with him to whom he can pass the ball (remember, all passes are lateral or backward). Ball carriers & their teammates can also use stunts to advance the ball. The two most common stunts are the loop and the switch. In a loop, the ball carrier passes the ball & then immediately runs behind & around the receiver in order to receive another pass himself. In a switch, the receiver makes a hard cut toward & behind the passer, effectively reversing the flow of play. Both plays attempt to catch the defenders off-guard & create a gap in the defensive line.

Kicking: We know from reading earlier that the game calls for a kick in certain situations, such as the start of the game & after tries. The team will designate a kicker for these situations. However, rugby also permits kicking in open play – and by any player! Here are a few examples:

Grubber – the ball carrier will kick the ball forward on the ground past the defenders who are rushing toward him. Remember, he can't be tackled without the ball! After the kick, he & his mates will attempt to outrun the defenders to recover the ball. Since the attackers have forward momentum when kicking, this is sometimes an effective way to break through the defensive line.

Chip – this has the same tactical purpose as a grubber, but the kick is booted in the air over the defenders instead of on the ground. The kicker will attempt to catch the ball before it hits the ground or on a bounce so that he can maintain full forward momentum.

Up & Under – the ball carrier will kick the ball high into the air but not very far. This puts a great deal of pressure on the defenders to catch & hold the ball in the face of the onrushing kicking team.

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Defensive kick – if the ball carrier is within his own 22-meter line, his team is obviously in a tight spot. Therefore, the ball carrier may kick the ball away to lessen the pressure. If the ball goes out of touch without contact from any players, the other team will get a lineout at the point that it went out. So a kick from behind the 22-meter line will turn the ball over to the other team, but hopefully at some distance away (analogous to the punt in American football). The same play can be made anywhere on the field, but if it's done ahead of the 22-meter line & goes out of touch without contacting the ground or another player, the other team is awarded the line-out at the point of kick, thus negating any advantage from the kick.

Drop kick at goal – a ball carrier may attempt to drop kick the ball through the goal posts while running (a drop kick means the ball must hit the ground before the kicker's foot touches it). If successful, this scores 3 points. However, this is difficult to do and is rarely attempted in the amateur game.

After the Game

Despite its intense & competitive nature on the field, rugby is a very friendly & social game off the field. Any hostilities developed during the game are left on the field. In amateur rugby, it's traditional for the home team to host the visitors for food & drinks after the game. During this post-game social event, players rehash the game and coaches recognize individuals for outstanding play.

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The Equipment

A mouth guard and a pair of cleats are really all that are required. The cleats can be molded or screw in soccer style cleats. Players can also wear an optional scrum cap. Of course we will have jersey's shorts and socks that all match. We will provide the jerseys but the players will need to purchase the shorts and socks. We will bulk order to reduce cost.

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The Typical Practice

15 minutes warm up and stretching. Players play two hand touch rugby or practice kicking until the team does a warm up jog and stretching.

15 minutes of passing drills

15 minutes of tackling drills

15 minutes of rucking/mauling drills

15 minutes of practicing “set pieces”

15 minutes wrap up