



Lisle Junior High Rookie Rugby

April 2016

Rugby Facts

Rugby was first played in 1823 at a school in England called Rugby. They were playing soccer when William Webb Ellis supposedly picked up the ball and ran with it.

Rugby started in the USA and Canada in the 1870s. The earliest record of women's rugby is in 1887 in Ireland. Rugby is now played in over 100 countries worldwide both as a professional and amateur sport.

There are two main variations of the game – 7 a side and 15 a side. There is also a popular beach rugby league in Australia.

The USA men's and woman's teams are called the Eagles.

The first Rugby World Cup was held in 1987 and takes place every four years with the winner receiving the Webb Ellis Cup. New Zealand won the recent World Cup in England. USA qualified for the tournament.

Rugby was an Olympic sport (15 a-side version) in the early 1900s and the USA won the last gold medal. Rugby is returning to the Olympics in 2016 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil with the 7 a-side version of the game. Both of the USA teams have qualified and will be in Rio.

USA Rugby www.usarugby.org was founded in 1975 and is the national governing body. They are a Full Sport Member of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and World Rugby.

Headquartered in Boulder, Colorado, USA Rugby is charged with developing the game on all levels and has over 115,000 active members. USA Rugby oversees four national teams, multiple collegiate and high school All-American sides, and an emerging Olympic development pathway for elite athletes.

Rugby Illinois www.rugbyillinois.us was established in 2007 to support and promote youth rugby here in Illinois. Mirroring the rest of the USA, Rugby Illinois has seen a huge growth in the in the number

of clubs, teams and players over recent years. Rugby Illinois supports all levels of youth rugby including elementary school, middle school, high school, All State teams for both boys and girls, after school and community clubs and many different outreach programs such as the national organization Becoming a Man.

The main playing season in Illinois is in the Spring. This season there were nearly 20 Middle School teams and approximately 70 High School teams all competing for their respective State Finals.

The Middle School league is split into two age groups: 4th/5th/6th graders and 7th/8th graders. Teams are co-ed and play full contact rugby with some modified rules. The two All State teams compete in Indiana at the end of the season.

The High School Boy's league has 6 divisions: Division 1 Varsity, Division 1 JV, Division 2, Division 3, Catholic Schools and Fresh/Soph. The boys have two very competitive All State teams who travel across the USA and to Europe. The Girls play in a separate league and also have their own All State team.

Rookie Rugby - *What is it?*

Rookie Rugby is a USA Rugby initiative to introduce non-contact rugby here in the USA. It can be played by girls or boys or by coed teams, either inside or outside, from about 6 years old and up. Non-contact rugby is played around the world and is often used as an introduction to the game but is also played at a competitive level. It is often used as a warm up game or training exercise for those playing full-contact rugby.

Rookie Rugby is also referred to as "touch rugby" or when played using flag belts as "flag rugby" or where I come from as "tag rugby".

USA Rugby has a dedicated website for Rookie Rugby www.rookierugby.com
Here you will find a lot of drills, games, videos and information as well as PE lesson plans for elementary, middle and high school.

Drills and Skills

Whether playing Rookie Rugby or contact rugby we are looking to teach players skills in the following areas:

- Communication
- Ball Handling
- Running with the Ball
- Passing the Ball
- Tackling – the non-contact version for Rookie Rugby
- Positioning on the field of play
- Rules of the Game

Demonstrations

Demonstrations are obviously important.

- Position the demonstration so that all players can clearly see and hear you.
- Gain the players' attention before starting.
- Focus on only one or two specific coaching points.

- Do the demonstration and repeat it several times.
- If necessary separate out specific elements.
- Check for understanding and invite questions

Circle Drills

Approximately 6-8 players in a circle with a 4-5ft gap between each other.

The goal of Circle Drills is to teach short accurate passing. Make sure that the passer always looks at the receiver before passing to them, that the receiver is ready and has their hands out presenting a target and that the receiver communicates by calling for the ball. Passes should be flat and made with both hands on the ball.

1. Simply pass the ball around the circle. Run the drill in both directions so that players get used to passing in both directions. The change in direction can be called by the Coach to add surprise to the drill.
2. Add a second or possibly third ball to the circle and play chase to add speed to the drill. Players now have to concentrate on not just their pass but also on the next ball and where it is in the circle.
3. After the first pass the passer then leaves the circle and runs around the outside trying to beat the ball back to the start position. If done properly the ball should arrive back at the start before the runner and demonstrates that passing is quicker than running. It is also a good warm up drill.
4. Randomly number the players in the circle where no consecutive numbers are standing next to each other. Then 1 passes to 2, 2 passes to 3, ... etc. Good communication is required.

Square Drills

Use 4 cones and set up a square of approximately 15 – 20 feet.

These drills use a confined space to promote agility, awareness of the playing area, accurate quick passing but most importantly communication.

- 1. “Keep-away / Stuck in the Mud”. Two attackers try to keep the ball away from one defender. The player with the ball is not allowed to move but they can pivot on one foot. Passes to their team mate must be below shoulder height. If the defender intercepts a pass they swap and become an attacker. This can be played in other number configurations i.e. 3v2 or 4v3.**

This is a great warm up drill when players first arrive. Set up multiple squares and as players arrive put three into a square. They don't have to stand around and wait for all the players to arrive.

2. Three, four or five pairs of players, each pair with their own ball have to keep moving in the square while passing to each other. Again communication is key here together with agility.

3. “Snake”. Approximately 6 - 8 players with one ball run around inside the square in a snake following the leader. The ball starts at the front. There are many possible variations including; scoring a try, passing the ball around the waist, passing to the left/right, throwing the ball over the head etc. Once the player at the front has done the “move” they run and join the back of the line. The front player “steers” the snake. This is also a good warm up drill.

Relays & Races

Each team should have approximately 6–10 players.

These drills, as well as teaching skills, can be used to introduce a fun competitive element to training sessions. They teach speed, agility, ball handling and that an accurate completed pass is important and will win them the game.

1. Have each team stand behind a cone in a line. Set up a second cone approximately 40 feet away and have a simple running relay around the cone. The running player must make a short accurate pop-pass to the waiting player.
2. Put down/Pick up. The ball carrier runs out and places (i.e. scores a try) at the cone and runs back and tags the next runner who runs out and picks up the ball and brings it back passing it to the next waiting player.
3. Use 4 offset cones to create a slalom. The ball carrier has to weave around the cones and then runs straight back to the next waiting player. Try to promote good side stepping around the cones as if beating a defender in a game but still facing forward. Use flag posts (i.e. soccer) if they are available as they better represent a defender.
4. Use 3 cones at 20, 40 and 60 feet from each team. The first runner takes the ball and places it (i.e. scores a try – does NOT drop it or throw it to the ground) at the first cone and then runs back and tags the next waiting player. The second runner picks up the ball and places it at the second cone and then runs back. The third runner picks up the ball and places it at the third cone and then runs back. The fourth runner picks up the ball up and brings it home passing it to a waiting player who starts off at the first cone again.

Now split each team into two and have them face each other approximately 40-50 feet apart.

5. A simple running relay from one side to the other with a short pop pass. The receiver stands still to receive the ball.
6. Place a cone at the midway point. The first runner places the ball at the cone and then runs and tags the waiting runner who then runs out and picks up the ball, runs and then passes it to the third runner.

A number of these relays can be combined together to vary the drill. Speed is important to win the race but so is accuracy.

Passing Square Drills

Use 4 cones and set up a square of approximately 20-30 feet with 3-4 players at each cone.

They are playing as a team with the players diagonally opposite themselves. Each team needs one ball i.e. 2 in total. These drills are primarily about passing but players have to be alert and concentrate to avoid collision.

1. The player with the ball runs diagonally across the square and passes to their team mate with a short pop pass and then joins the back of that line. Both teams are running at the same time and must avoid any collision in the middle.
2. This is the same drill, but this time a coach (or player) stands in the middle as a defender forcing the ball carriers to avoid being “tackled” and to be even more aware of their run.
3. This time the receiver leaves their cone and meets the ball carrier in the middle of the square. The ball should be passed while both players are moving.

The Tackle

Please remember that this is Rookie Rugby and NOT full-contact rugby and can be played with or without flag belts.

Flag Rugby - all players should have their tops/t-shirts tucked into their shorts and be wearing a tag belt with two tags; one at each hip. A defender must grab a flag and then hold it in the air. The ball carrier can't hand-off or push away the defender, but only try to side step or out run them. The referee/coach will call “Tackle”. The ball carrier must then pass the ball within 3 seconds and/or 3 steps. The defender must return the flag to the player and not throw it on the floor. Both players can then re-join play.

Tag Rugby - to make a tackle the defender must place both hands on the hips of the ball carrier. The referee/coach will call “Tackle”. The ball carrier must then pass the ball within 3 seconds and/or 3 steps. It is important that no shoving or pushing happens and again the ball carrier can't hand-off or push away the defender, but only try to side step or out run them.

Flag Rugby v Touch Rugby

- o Equipment purchase/availability – belts are an extra cost and need to be looked after.
- o Flags present a definitive “tackle” – there is no arguing if a defender is holding up a flag.
- o Flags prevent pushing and high tackles
- o Flags are great in co-ed situations
- o Flags can slow the game down slightly – which can be a good thing, especially when new to the game.

Tackling Drills

These drills are to help teach safe good tackling, making players feel confident about the tackle

- 1. Use cones to set up a narrow channel of approximately 8 x 20 ft. The attacker, with a ball, enters the channel at one end while the defender/tackler enters from the other end. The**

attacker tries to avoid the tackle and score a try. The channel should be narrow enough so that the defender has a good chance of making a tackle. One versus one is less intimidating for new players and a good place to start.

2. Lengthen the channel so that 3 or 4 defenders can fit into it, with a gap of approximately 12 ft between them. Defenders are only allowed to move left and right. The advancing ball carrier now has to try and beat all of the defenders (one at a time) in order to score the try.
3. Now that players understand how to tackle and how to try and avoid a tackle, teamwork and passing should be added to the drill.

This time defenders and attackers start outside the channel but at the mid-way point and standing next to each other in two lines. At speed, two attackers enter at one end of the channel and one defender from the other end.

The attackers must learn when to pass, when to run, how to draw in a defender and the importance of always running forward towards the try line. The defender must close the space down and run at the attackers. If done correctly the attackers, with a one player advantage should always get past the defender and score a try.

As long as the attackers have a one player advantage then this drill can also be run as 3 v 2, 4 v 3 etc. Always limit the space to encourage passing between the attackers rather than just fast running.

4. “British Bulldog”. A larger coned area is needed for this game, something nearer to that of the actual playing field size. One or two defenders (plus a couple of coaches) wait in the middle of the area while the rest of the players wait at one end. Upon the whistle the runners (no balls are needed) try to get across to the other end without being tackled or running out of play. If they are tackled they then join the defenders in the middle. The game continues until only one runner is left and declared the winner.

This is mainly a fun game and a good way to finish a training session but defenders need to be taught about maintaining a good flat defensive line. They need to build a defensive wall. As the numbers of defenders grow they can see that working as a team rather than as individuals will prevent an attacker from getting through. If a defender breaks out of the defensive line then they will create a hole for an attacker to possibly get through. One defender should be the “captain” and call the line.

Passing Drills

These drills take passing onto the actual field of play rather than using a smaller coned off area and are about running with the ball, taking it forwards towards the try line and working as a team. Team mates must stay onside (i.e. behind the line of the ball carrier) and the ball must be passed backwards.

Teamwork is essential and all players need to keep a good attacking shape. Teams should attack in a diagonal line if the ball carrier is at one end of the line, or in a v shape if the ball carrier is in the middle of the line.

Back to Basics – remember the Circle Drills – the ball carrier must look before passing and does not blindly throw the ball over their shoulder – the waiting receiver should have their hands out showing that they are ready for the pass, as well as presenting a target, and should call for the ball.

- 1. Players line up in groups of 4 or 5 across one end of the field with a gap of approximately 10 ft between each other. Players jog to the other end whilst passing the ball along the line. As skills improve increase the speed of running.**

To help promote straight running coned channels can be set up along the field. The ball must be passed backwards and the ball carrier should not stop jogging/running to make the pass.

- 2. Run the drill from both ends of the line i.e. start the ball from both the left and the right sides.**

- 3. To change this drill a coach can feed the ball into the line from opposite the line i.e. where the defenders would be. You can pass the ball in, roll it on the floor (to simulate a loose ball in open play) or throw it high in the air.**

The attacking line should start to run forwards before the ball is given to them. As soon as one player gets the ball all other players must drop back to be behind the ball.

- 4. Now introduce one or two defenders. These can be Coaches or players and they should try to disrupt the attacking line. Players now have to avoid defenders and think about when to run and when to pass.**

5. Miss pass, loop pass, scissors move etc. These more advanced attacking moves should not be introduced until the basics have been learnt, understood and mastered. Even in Rookie Rugby these moves can be incorporated into a game to great effect.

Positioning

Players need to learn good positioning and the difference in shape between an attacking and defensive line. In the early stages and especially with younger players they tend to be like “bees around the honey pot” and all chase the ball during a game.

Coaches need to show players an attacking diagonal line where all the receivers stay onside and behind the ball. A defensive line needs to be flat with all defenders advancing at the same time therefore maintaining a strong wall. It is useful for there to be a “captain” to call the defensive line.

Try drills where players start in a huddle and on the whistle have to run and form either an attacking or defensive line.

In Rookie Rugby all restarts are with a free pass. Players need to know how to position themselves when attacking and what to do when defending. No quickly taken passes are allowed at the restart but defenders should be drilled on retreating the required 7 meters, turning to face the opposition and advancing as a team as soon as the ball is passed.

Rookie Rugby Matches

Games can be competitive but should also be part of the learning process. In the beginning try to slow it down, use the whistle, keep talking to the players as a Coach rather than as a Referee and explain why you have blown the whistle.

- Referee and 2 coaches – if possible, as well as having a referee have a coach on the field with each team.
- Coaches need to help with player positioning and encourage running the ball forward – NOT sideways.
- Let the game flow, but do not completely ignore the rules – don't blow the whistle at every infringement but call out and let the players know what is wrong – play advantage where possible.
- Two whistle stop when all the “bees are around the honey pot” – let the players know that when they hear a two whistle blow to stand still where they are. Then use the stop to re-position them into better attacking and defending shapes rather than all crowding the ball.
- Re-balance the teams if necessary – don't let one team run away with the game.

Rookie Rugby Rules

- **5-7 players on each team with rolling substitutes.**
- **Ball passed backwards – NOT directly handed from one player to another.**
- **Free Pass for all re-starts – defending team must retreat 7 meters.**
- **Tackle – 2 flags to be worn – tackler must return the flag and not throw it away**
 - **A maximum of 3 steps/3 seconds after the tackle is made.**
 - **7th tag turnover option.**
- **Offside & Obstruction – there is no blocking in rugby. A player is offside if they are in front of the ball and interfering with play.**
- **NO Kicking, NO Contact, NO Ripping, NO hand-offs, NO Diving to the ground – Players must remain on their feet.**

A full set of rules are at the end of this document.

Free Pass Re-Start

A free pass is used to start the match from the center of the field, from the side of the field when the ball goes into touch (out of play) and from where an infringement (penalty) has taken place.

The defending team must be 7 meters back from the mark. They cannot start moving forward until the ball leaves the hands of the passer. The player must 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. No player may run until the pass is made.

If the re-start is within 7 meters of the try line (goal line) then the free pass must be brought back to 7 meters from the try line.

Local Teams & Clubs

Check the Rugby Illinois website www.rugbyillinois.us for up to date local clubs.

Glen Ellyn Stingers

<http://geyouthrugby.org/>

John McGurk

401.338.8821

Naperville Crusaders

John Chevalier

630.299.9938

Rookie Rugby Rules (Rugby Illinois edited version)

1. Object:

Score a try (5 points) by placing the ball on or behind the opponents' goal line. A penalty try will be awarded if a try would probably have been scored but for foul play by the defending team.

The ball carrier must remain on their feet at all times and is not allowed to dive over the goal line. If a player grounds the ball while on their knees, the try should be allowed but, afterwards all players should be reminded that they should stay on their feet. A player may not be prevented from grounding the ball by any physical contact, including placing a hand between ball and ground.

The game is restarted by a free pass from the center of the pitch by the non-scoring team.

2. Teams:

Teams of equal numbers of players, each containing not more than seven and not less than five. Each side can have an agreed number of substitutes. Substituted players can be re-used at any time. Substitutions can only take place when the ball is "dead" or at half time and always with the referee's knowledge.

3. Passing:

The ball can only be passed sideways or backwards through the air, not handed to another player. If the ball is handed to another player or passed or knocked forwards then a free pass is awarded, unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side. Referees should play advantage wherever possible.

4. Free Passes:

(a) A free pass is used to start the match from the center of the pitch, from the side of the pitch when the ball goes into touch and from where an infringement has taken place.

(b) The opposition must be 7 meters back from the mark. They cannot start moving forward until the ball leaves the hands of the passer. The player must 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. No player may run until the pass is made.

(c) If an infringement takes place or the ball goes into touch over the goal line or within 7 meters of the goal line, then the free pass must be awarded to the non-offending side 7 meters from the goal-line.

5. The Tackle:

(a) All players wear a Flag belt with two flags positioned over each hip. Belts are to be securely fastened and any excess belt is to be tucked away. Belts are to be worn outside of shirts and not obscured in any way.

(c) A “tackle” is the removal of one of the two flags from the ball carrier’s belt. Only the ball carrier can be tackled. The ball carrier cannot fend off using their hands or the ball and cannot guard or shield their flags in any way. The ball cannot be pulled out of the ball carrier’s hands at any time.

(d) If a player does not have two flags on their belt they will be penalized if they become a ball carrier or if they tackle an opponent. A free pass will be awarded.

(e) Actions by the ball carrier:

(1) When the ball carrier is tackled the ball must be passed to a team-mate within 3 seconds and must attempt to stop as soon as possible; within 3 strides is reasonable, but the ball can be passed in the act of stopping. If the pass takes longer than 3 seconds or the player takes more than 3 strides they must be penalized. A free pass awarded.

(2) After the ball has been passed, the player must go to the tackler, retrieve their flag and place it back on their belt before re-joining play. If the player continues to play and influences the game without collecting their flag, they must be penalized and a free pass awarded.

(3) Players are only allowed one step to score a try after being tackled.

(3) If the ball carrier is tackled whilst standing inside the goal area they must ground the ball immediately in order to score.

(4) If the ball carrier dives to ground to score a try it will be disallowed and a free pass will be awarded to the defending side 7 meters out from the goal line.

(f) Actions by the tackler:

(1) When a tackle is made, the tackler must stop running, hold the flag above their head and shout, “tackle”. The referee must shout, “Tackle - PASS”.

(2) If the ball carrier stops running within 1 meter of the tackler, the tackler must move back towards their own goal-line, at least 1 meter, to allow room for the ball to be passed. If the tackler fails to retire at least 1 meter before rejoining the game, they are to be considered “offside” and a free pass will be awarded.

(3) Once the ball has been passed, the tackler must hand back the flag to the player and cannot re-join the match until this has been done. If a tackler continues to play and influences the match with an opponent’s flag in their hand, or throws it to the floor, they must be penalized and a free pass awarded.

(g) The side in possession of the ball will only be allowed to be tackled a maximum of 6 times before scoring a try. At the 7th tackle, the referee will stop the game and give the ball to the other side by awarding a free pass. If the 7th tag takes place one step from the try line and the ball is grounded, the try will be disallowed.

Note: Coaches of the teams may agree to reduce the maximum number of allowable tackles.

6. Offside:

Offside only occurs at the time of the tackle where the offside line is through the center of the ball except for the tackler for whom it is 1 meter further back, as described in Section 5(f) above. When a tackle is made, all the other players from the tackler’s team must attempt to retire towards their own goal-line until they are behind the ball. If a player, in an offside position, intercepts, prevents or slows down a pass from the tackled player to a team mate, a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side. A

player can, however, run from an onside position to intercept a floated pass before it reaches the intended receiver.

7. Obstruction:

- (a) The ball carrier can run and dodge potential tacklers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball and cannot guard or shield their tags in any way.
- (b) Similarly, the ball carrier or a potential tackler must not deliberately make contact with an opponent.
- (c) If such contact is made the game must be stopped, the offender spoken to and reminded of the non-contact rules of Rookie Rugby and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side.
- (d) If the ball is pulled from the ball carrier's grasp, a free pass is awarded to the ball carrier's side.

8. Kicking:

There is no kicking of any kind in Rookie Rugby.

9. Ball on the Ground:

Players play Rookie Rugby on their feet, with the ball in hand. If the ball goes to ground, players can pick it up but they must not dive to the floor to recover the ball.

Penalty: free pass to non-offending side and the following rules will apply:

- (a) If the ball was lost forward, a free pass is awarded to the non-offending side unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side.
- (b) If the ball carrier falls to the ground with the ball then a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side.
- (c) If the ball is passed other than forward and goes to ground play will continue and either side may pick up the ball. If the passed ball rolls into touch a free pass will commence from the touchline to the non-passing side.

10. No Contact:

The only contact allowed between the two teams is the removal of a flag 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, etc. must be penalized with a free pass and the players concerned reminded of the rules.

11. Prohibited Play:

In Rookie Rugby, there is total emphasis on running with the ball, evasion, running in support of the ball carrier, passing and running to tackle the ball carrier. In Rookie Rugby there is:

- (a) no tackling;
- (b) no scrummage;
- (c) no line-out;
- (d) no kicking;
- (e) no hand off/fend off (a hand off being the placing of an open palmed hand by the ball carrier against an opponent's face or body while a fend off is an outstretched arm by the ball carrier towards an opponent to discourage that person making a tag);
- (f) no going to ground; and
- (g) no ripping of the ball.

12. Pitch

The maximum pitch size is 60 meters by 30 meters, plus 5 meters for each in goal area.