

TAG RUGBY – THE BACKWARD PASS TEAM SPORT

1. Introduction.

Tag Rugby is a fun and exciting form of non-contact rugby suitable for males and females of all ages and abilities. There are no scrums and line-outs and tackling is not allowed.

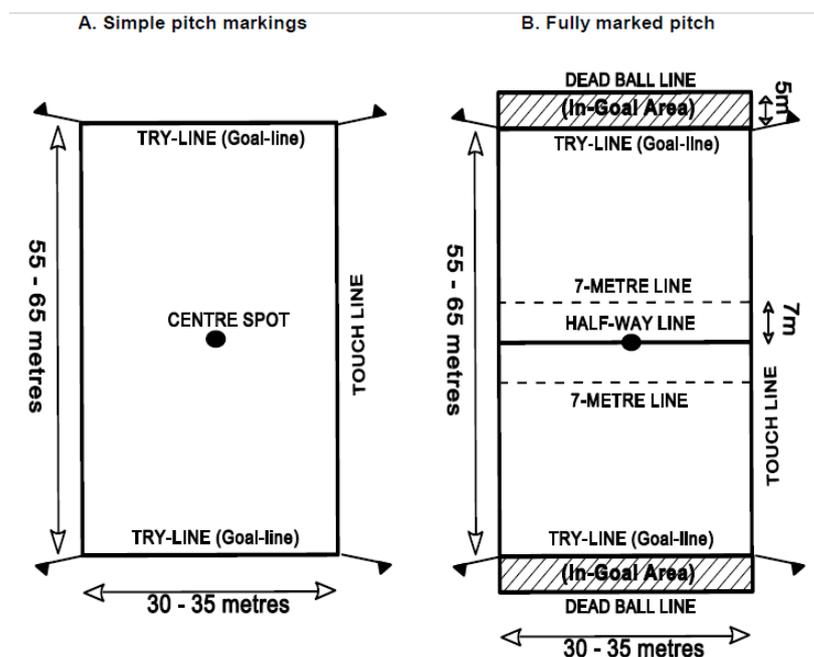
The game was first as a way of introducing youngsters to the game of rugby. Since then Tag Rugby has had phenomenal growth in popularity and has now spread to countries throughout the world. Initially it was only really played by youngsters but increasingly so men and women of all ages and ability are taking up the game and Tag Rugby is now being recognised as not only a way of introducing young players to contact rugby but as a game in its own right.



The object of the game is to score tries. This is achieved by placing the ball with downward pressure on, or behind, the opponents' try-line. The player in possession of the ball (attacker) may run or pass the ball to achieve this but is not allowed to kick it. The ball may only be passed either sideways or backwards and not forwards to the opponents' try-line. It is the object of the team without the ball (defensive team) to prevent progress of the attacking team by removing a tag (ribbon) from the ball carrier. The attacking team have five (5) "tags" or "plays" to score. If a sixth (6th) tag is made a changeover occurs and the defending team is given possession of the ball and then becomes the attacking team.

2. The playing area.

For recreational games of Tag Rugby it is by no means essential to have available a fully marked pitch, as shown in diagram B below. Such games can easily be played on a pitch marked out as a simple rectangle showing only the location of the two touch-lines and try-lines, as in diagram A.



3. Basic Rules

- TEAMS:** Tag Rugby is played between teams of equal numbers of players, each team containing five to eight players (agreed beforehand). Each side can have an agreed number of substitutes. Substituted players can be re-used at any time. Teams can be mixed.
- 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 (towards the opponents' goal-line) then a free pass is awarded to the non-offending side, unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side. In order to keep the game flowing, referees should play advantage wherever possible.
- FREE PASSES:** A free pass is used to start the match at the beginning of each half from the centre of the pitch, from the side of the pitch when the ball goes into touch at the point where the ball went out of play and from where the referee makes a mark when an infringement has taken place. At a free pass, the opposition must be 7m back from the mark. For safety, the receiver must be stationary and within 2m of the passer prior to the pass, but can start moving forward before the ball leaves the hands

of the passer, to receive the ball whilst moving forward. At a free pass, 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. For safety reasons, no player may run until the pass is made. The player taking the free pass must pass the ball when the referee calls "PLAY".

If an infringement takes place or the ball goes into touch over the goal-line or within 7 m of the goal line, then the free pass must be awarded to the non offending side 7 m from the goal-line. This gives more space for both attacking and defending teams to play in.

d) THE TAG: All players wear a tag belt around their waist with two tags attached to it by Velcro positioned over each hip. Tag belts are to be securely fastened and any excess belt is to be tucked away so that this cannot be pulled by mistake. Tag belts are to be worn outside of shirts and not obscured in any way. Referees are to be watchful for tags being wrapped around the belt preventing them from being pulled off. You should remind that the tags are to be positioned on the hips, not at the front or back, which may require the belt to be adjusted slightly for players with particularly small waists.



A "TAG" is the removal of one of the two tags from the ball carrier's belt. Only the ball carrier can be tagged. The ball carrier can run and dodge potential taggers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball and cannot guard or shield their tags in any way. The ball cannot be pulled out of the ball carrier's hands at any time.

If a player does not have two tags on their belt, one on each hip, they will be penalised if they become a ball carrier or if they tag an opponent and a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.

- Actions by the ball carrier:

- When the ball carrier is tagged, the ball must be passed to a team mate within 3 seconds. This includes stopping time. The ball carrier must attempt to stop as soon as possible; within 3 strides is a reasonable guide for referees, 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 penalised and a free pass awarded to the non offending side at the place where the tag occurred.
- After the ball has been passed, the player must go to the tagger, retrieve their tag and place it back on their belt before re-joining play. If the player continues to play and influences the game without collecting their tag, they must be penalised and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.
- Players are however only allowed one step to score a try after being tagged.
- If the ball carrier is tagged whilst standing inside the goal area they must ground the ball immediately in order to score. Referees should help this part of the game along by advising the ball carrier "Touch the ball down and I'll award the try", or similar.
- 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 7m out from the try -line.

- Actions by the tagger:

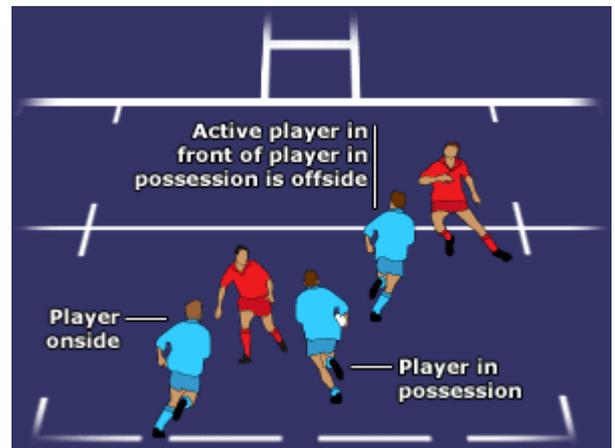
- When a tag is made, the tagger must stop running, hold the tag above their head and shout, "TAG". At this stage the referee must shout, "TAG - PASS".
- If the ball carrier stops running within 1m of the tagger, the tagger must move back towards their own goal-line, at least 1 m, to allow room for the ball to be passed. If the tagger fails to retire at least 1 m before rejoining the game, they are to be considered "offside" and a free



pass will be awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.

- Once the ball has been passed, the tagger must hand back the tag to the player and cannot re-join the match until this has been done. If a tagger continues to play and influences the match with an opponent's tag in their hand, or throws it to the floor, they must be penalised and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.

e) **OFFSIDE:** Offside occurs only at the time of the tag where the offside line is through the centre of the ball except for the tagger for whom it is 1 m further back. When a tag is made, all the other players from the tagger'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 tagged player to a teammate, 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.



f) **OBSTRUCTION:** The ball carrier can run and dodge potential taggers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball and cannot guard or shield their tags in any way.

Similarly, the ball carrier or a potential tagger must not deliberately make contact with an opponent.

If such contact is made the game must be stopped, the offender spoken to, reminded of the **non-contact rules** of tag and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side.

If the ball is pulled from the ball carrier's grasp, a free pass is awarded to the ball carrier's side.

g) **BALL ON THE GROUND:** Players play Tag 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:

- If the **ball was lost forward**, a free pass is awarded to the **non-offending side** unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side.

- If the **ball carrier falls to the ground** with the ball then a free pass will be awarded to the **non-offending side.**

- 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.

h) **NO CONTACT:** The only contact allowed between the two teams is the removal of a tag 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 penalised with a free pass and the players concerned reminded of the rules.



g) **SCORE:** Try is the only method of scoring in Tag Rugby; **a try is scored** when the ball is grounded by an attacker on or over the try-line but before the dead ball line. A try is worth one (1) point in Tag Rugby however, to encourage greater team work when playing in mixed games a try is worth two (2) points if scored by a female.

4. Glosary.

ADVANTAGE: If an infringement or offence has occurred, rather than blow the whistle and stop play immediately, the referee will allow play to proceed if it is to the territorial or tactical advantage of the team which has not committed an offence or infringement.

ATTACKING TEAM/ATTACKER: Is the team/player that has possession of the ball.

BALL AWAY: When a ball carrier is tagged simultaneously in the act of passing and the referee has ruled in favour of the attacking team and not counted this as a proper tag. In this situation the referee should call "BALL AWAY, PLAY ON".

BALL CARRIER: Is a member of the attacking team who has possession of the ball.

CAPTAIN: The captain is a player nominated by the team. Only the captain is entitled to consult the referee during the match.

CHANGEOVER: Is the surrendering of the ball to the opposition; the game restarts with a tap & pass to the team now in possession of the ball.

DEAD BALL LINE: A line parallel to and five metres (5m) behind the try-line defining the end of the In-Goal Area.

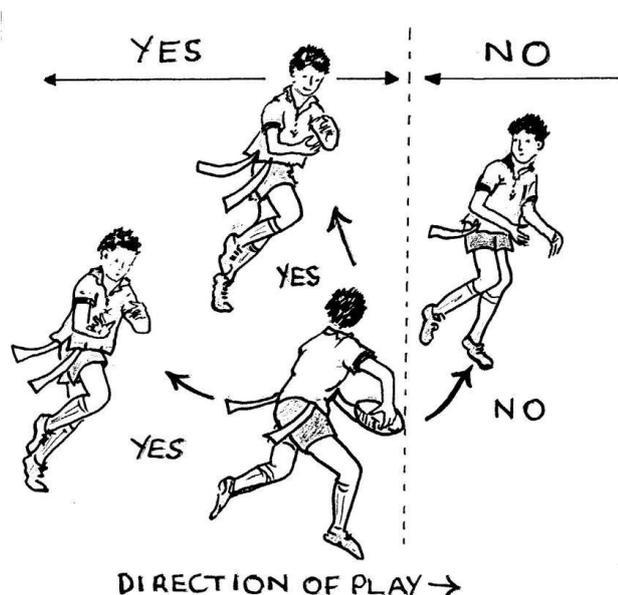
DEFENDING TEAM/DEFENDER: Is the team/player without possession of the ball.

DEFENSIVE LINE: This is an imaginary line across the ground from one touch-line to the other, parallel to the try-line. The position of this line is seven metres (7m) back from a tap & pass. All defenders should retire back behind this line to be on-side when play restarts.

FORWARD PASS: Where the ball is passed forwards towards an opponent's try-line. This is an illegal pass in Tag Rugby and is penalised by awarding a tap & pass to the non-offending team.

Note: A pass directly sideways is allowed.

THE NO FORWARD PASS RULE

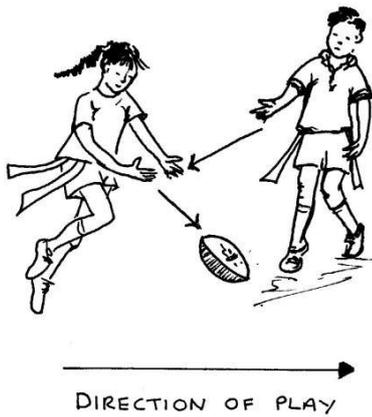


GROUNDING THE BALL: A player grounds the ball by holding the ball and touching the ground with it in the in-goal area. 'Holding' means holding in the hand or hands, or in the arm or arms.

IN-GOAL AREA: The area between the try-line and the dead ball line, it includes the try-line but not the touch-lines or the dead ball line.

KNOCK-ON: When a player attempting to catch the ball fumbles it with the hand or arm and knocks it forward to the ground in the direction of the opponents' try-line.

KNOCK ON



MARK: The position on the pitch where a tap & pass is awarded.

OFF-SIDE: A defending player who, when a tag has occurred, has not retired towards their own try-line until they are behind an imaginary line which goes through the ball and across the pitch which is the off-side line.

OUT OF PLAY: This happens when the ball or the ball carrier has touched the touch-line, touch-in-goal line, or the dead ball line or anything or anyone on or beyond these lines.

PENALISE: Is to award a tap & pass against an offending player or team.

PENALTY: This is awarded against a player or team that has committed an offence and there has been no advantage gained by the non-offending team. Play is restarted with a tap & pass being awarded to the non-offending team at the place the offence was committed.

PENALTY TRY: This is awarded if a player would have scored a try but for foul play by an opponent.

PHANTOM TAG: When a defender calls "TAG" without physically removing a tag. This is penalised by awarding a tap & pass to the non-offending team.

SEVEN-METRE (7M) LINE: These lines run from one touch-line to the other and are seven metres (7m) from each side of the half-way line.

SPINNING: When the ball carrier deliberately rotates their body around in a pirouette type movement to avoid being tagged by a defender. This is an illegal movement in Tag Rugby and is penalised by awarding a tap & pass to the non-offending team.

'TACKLE' (TAG): A 'tackle' (tag) is simply the removal by a defender of one of the two tags (ribbons) from the ball carrier.

TAG: Either refers to one of the two tags (ribbons) attached to a player's Tag belt or Tag shorts, or to a 'tackle' being made when a defender removes one of the tags (ribbons) from the ball carrier.

TAG COUNT: For every time a player is tagged whilst in possession of the ball the team's

Tag Count increases i.e. from Tag 1, Tag 2, etc. The referee should normally call out the Tag Count after each tag e.g. "TAG ONE...PASS", "TAG TWO...PASS" etc.

TAGGER: The defender who has removed the tag (ribbon) from the ball carrier is called the tagger.

TAP & PASS: A tap & pass is used to start the game from the centre of the half-way or restart play at the place the ball went out of play or an infringement or changeover took place. The ball may be placed on the ground or held in the hand and on the instruction "PLAY" by the referee, and not before, the attacker must deliberately touch the ball with the foot whilst it is in the hands or on the ground and pass the ball. The attacker must tap and pass the ball they are not allowed to tap it and run with the ball themselves.

At a tap & pass the opposition players must retire back seven metres (7m) towards their own try-line, or until they have reached their own try-line if this is nearer. Defenders are not allowed to move forward until the actual pass has been made.

TOUCH-LINE: The line that marks the lateral edge of the pitch.

TRY: This is the only method of scoring in Tag Rugby; a try is scored when the ball is grounded by an attacker on or over the try-line but before the dead ball line. A try is worth one (1) point in Tag Rugby however, to encourage greater team work when playing in mixed games a try is worth two (2) points if scored by a female.

TRY-LINE (GOAL-LINE): The horizontal line at either end of the pitch, over or on which a try is scored.

5. Bibliography

http://www.rugbynl.ca/Tag_Rugby/tag-rules-junior.pdf

http://www.englandrugby.com/mm/Document/General/General/01/30/14/95/Rules_of_Tag_Rugby.pdf