



Deeside Rugby Football Club

Policy on Age Banding

February 2011

In line with the SRU policy, children and young people should be playing and training with other people of the same age and physical maturity. This is based on medical research that shows that players playing in older age groups are at greater risk of serious injury. As a Club, we are keen to enable the safe development of all our players and to ensure they are playing at the correct level for their ability and maturity, whilst not hampering their development.

There are exceptional cases of players who combine increased technical ability, experience and physical development that enable them to play in an older age group if appropriate. This is required for any player under 16 years of age to play at U-18 level and any player under 18 years of age to play at senior level.

This process will several weeks and will require combined training and good communication between the player, parents and relevant coaches.

There is also an exemption that allows players to play down an age group if they are not suitably physically developed to play in their own age group.

When deciding if players should be playing up (or down) in an age group, the following will apply at all levels within the Club:

- Internal club communications:-
 - A player can only be allocated to one suitable age group;
 - The allocated teams' coaching / management are primarily responsible for that players' development and welfare;
 - If a junior player (Rugby Ready qualified) is being requested to play up (or down) an age group, the two team coaches must discuss and agree the suitability of the player during the week before the game.

- Any junior that is playing up an age group will not play in the front row of the scrum at U18 or Senior level.
- If a player is playing down an age group, the relevant SRU dispensation has been agreed.
- All U-16/U-18 players must have passed the relevant SRU ‘Rugby Ready’ assessment to play up an age group:
 - The player must complete the IRB online Rugby Ready Course;
 - The players’ coach must complete the application form on skill level, physical development, experience level and standard of competition to be played;
 - The player and parent / guardian must agree and sign off the application form, based on understanding of relevant issues;
 - The player must pass the physical maturity assessment with SRU medical representatives;
 - For an U18 player to play at senior level, the application must be agreed and signed off by club president.

John Colleran			
Acting Club President		Youth Convener	
date		date	

Medical Research

Medical research into boys' rugby strongly indicates that there is increased risk of serious injury when under-16 players play under-18 rugby, and when under-18 players play adult rugby. It is Scottish Rugby's policy that the age at which male players are allowed to play under-18 rugby is 16 years old.

Girls may play under-18 rugby aged 15 years old and this difference is due to the relative physical maturity of 15-year-old girls when compared to boys. It will remain Scottish Rugby policy that the age at which any player is permitted to play adult rugby is 18 years old.

Exemption

There are sometimes exceptional cases of players who combine increased technical ability and early physical maturity. For a few of those players it may be that they are capable of safely playing up an age band. Scottish Rugby offers exceptional players the opportunity to apply for exception to play up in the following age grades.



Under-18 players in adult rugby

Players should be training and playing with other people of the same physical maturity. With over 500 under-18 male players completing the exemption process and being cleared to play adult rugby in season 2009/10, we are urging clubs to only submit applications for their **exceptional** male players.

Over the next few seasons Scottish Rugby will be working hard with clubs and schools to improve the quantity and quality of playing opportunities in under-18 rugby, to ensure regular and appropriate fixtures for all male players.

Scottish Rugby is concerned that over 500 under-18 male players are currently cleared to participate in the adult game. We will be monitoring this figure closely over the next two seasons, with a view to removing the under-18 exemption if this trend continues. Any decision would be in line with several other unions worldwide and in accordance with guidance from the IRB. The rationale behind such a change is that only the very best male players, such as those with national age-grade representative honours, could be considered to play adult rugby, if remaining in under-18 rugby is deemed to be a hindrance to their playing development.

Female players aged 17 years old or over may currently apply for an exemption through the existing process in a similar way to their male counterparts.

Under-16 male players in under-17 and under-18 rugby

This policy was introduced to cater for the few exceptional male players whose physical maturity and development, skill and experience levels are sufficient to compete safely at under-18 level. In season 2009/10, over 500 boys completed the exemption process, including a physical maturity assessment and were cleared to play under-18 rugby. This season, Scottish Rugby urges clubs and schools to only submit applications for their exceptional male players and keep the majority of under-16 players in their own age banding.

Working in partnership with the SCOT group of orthopaedic surgeons, Scottish Rugby has updated the physical maturity assessment parameters accordingly. The large amount of data gathered from over 500 physical maturity assessments - and pilot projects conducted in some sample schools - has formed the basis of these revised parameters. We will continue to monitor this process with the medical profession.

Under-15 girls in under-18 rugby

Exceptional female players in the under-15 age group but turning 15 years old between 1 January and 30 June (inclusive) may apply for exemption to play under-18 rugby through the existing process in a similar way to their male counterparts.



Player dispensation process

In response to a number of requests, Scottish Rugby has introduced a new policy which would give a player permission to play down an age grade when his or her safety may be compromised due to an existing or previous medical disability, physical or behavioural condition.

Details of how to apply for this type of dispensation, along with all of the above policies and forms are available at www.scottishrugby.org in the age banding section of **Are You Ready to Play Rugby?**