



High School Division Handbook

Approved January 2025

This document establishes guidelines, regulations and laws of the game and is intended as requirements for participants of the High School Division in Rugby PA competition.

These regulations are for use for all rugby matches played under the jurisdiction of Rugby PA for the High School division.

Please address any comments or suggestions for improvement to the Rugby PA Competition Committee at dhamilton@rugbypa.org

Safety Policy

Rugby is a contact sport with inherent risks. In coaching and developing players it is imperative that safety is at the forefront. It is the responsibility and duty of coaches to teach proper techniques including but not limited to tackling, rucking, fending and all contact situations in a rugby match. Coaches also have the obligation to monitor their players during a match and remove any player that is continually engaging in dangerous play.

The Rugby PA Laws and Regulations are designed to provide an enjoyable and safe rugby experience for all participants and to develop and maintain a strong, well organized and enduring High School rugby program for players in Pennsylvania and to provide players of all ages, sexes and socio-economic status an opportunity to participate in a positive, rewarding and safe athletic experience.

Competition Structure

High School Division: Ages 14 - 19

- This structure is for the Rugby PA calendar beginning September 1st of the current school year

Eligibility

- Eligible players must be between the ages of 14 And 18 years of age or under as of Sept 1st of the current school year.
- All players must be enrolled in a school (or home schooled in an appropriate program) and be a fulltime student.
- A player who is expelled from school shall be ineligible while expelled.
- All players must complete the registration process through Rugby Pennsylvania before they are eligible to practice or play. This process can be found at www.RugbyPA.org/registration-player

Competition Regulations

Junior players may play on a High School team with their coaches' discretion and parent approval. A player can only be registered with one Rugby PA team at a given time. A player can only participate in one divisional match per week.

High School eligible players are not permitted to play on a Junior team, unless granted special exception by Rugby PA.

If a team uses (or found to have used) any ineligible player(s), the match is automatically forfeited to the opposition for league standing purposes, the offended team will also be assessed a -1 point penalty in league standings. If both teams use an

ineligible player(s), both team are awarded a loss and a -1 point penalty in league standings.

Player Transfers

Rugby PA prohibits all team representatives including coaches, team administrators and parents from recruiting or “poaching” players from another club during the season and during the off-season. Coaches, team administrators and parents cannot encourage their players to recruit or poach a player(s) from another club as well, at any time.

Poaching is considered any attempt by a club representative, coach or parent to coerce or lure a player away from their current club, either directly or through a current player.

Once any player registers with a team, any transfer would be considered a transfer.

If a player does request a transfer during after registration with Rugby PA and during the season, they will not be allowed to transfer simply because they “want to.” There must be a compelling reason or a definitive hardship. For example: a change in the player’s home location, the players Initial Club has folded or been disassociated, an extraordinary event that compels them to want to leave, such as for safety concerns.

Players must submit a request to transfer to the Rugby PA competition committee. The request must include written permission from the head coach of both teams, the current team and new team coach, parent approval and reason for transfer. Rugby PA will consider requests without the current coach permission only under compelling and hardship reasons.

Under no circumstances can a transferred player compete in Rugby PA Playoffs or Championships if the initial request is received after April 15th for spring fifteens competition and October 1st for fall sevens competition.

Seasonal Transfers:

Players are eligible to register and play for one team in the fall sevens competition, and register for a different team for the spring competition. Because not all team compete in both seasons, players are eligible to move around to find playing opportunities. Teams should still not poach or recruit players from other participating teams. If a team is found to have recruited players to gain a competitive advantage, they will be subject to a review and potential removal from the competition.

Off Season:

Players are not bound to a team after the USA Rugby Registration period ends on August 31st. However team representatives including coaches, team administrators and parents cannot recruit or lure players from a team in the off season either directly or through a current player.

Summer Sevens:

Players are eligible to compete in a summer sevens competition, so long as they have registered for either the fall or spring seasons of that rugby calendar year. Player transfers are permitted in the summer without approval requests.

Should instances of poaching/raiding be alleged and found to have occurred by Rugby PA. The offending club will be deemed as not in good standing and will be barred from participating in Rugby PA sanctioned activities until a time Rugby PA determines the situation resolved. If a coach or club representative is found guilty of poaching, or encouraging their players to poach, said party will be subject to a suspension levied by the RugbyPA Disciplinary Committee. Suspension length and determination is at the discretion of the Disciplinary Committee.

Season Structure

The competitive 15's regular season will begin in March and will end with the RugbyPA State Championship Tournament in May. Teams are permitted to arrange fixtures outside the league schedule.

The competitive 7's season will begin in September and will end with the RugbyPA State 7's Championship Tournament in November. Teams are permitted to arrange fixtures outside the league schedule

Schedules, Match Cancellation and Postponements

Once a division schedule is released and agreed upon, all teams must abide by the finalized schedule.

Teams must not reschedule a game due to lack of player numbers, lack of field availability, or any other controllable situation, the team requesting a reschedule within 48 hrs of the match shall be issued a forfeit.

No match is to be canceled without the authorization of the Rugby PA with the exception of weather related postponements. A reschedule request must be made no less than 1 week (7 days) in advance of the scheduled game. If a match is canceled for reasons not

weather related and without Rugby PA authorization, the canceling will be issued a forfeit loss.

The non-cancelling team will be awarded a 20-0 forfeit win with 1 bonus point for standing purposes.

All postponed or canceled matches must be reported to the RugbyPA within twenty four (24) hours. If a match is postponed due to weather, the home team is required to present a makeup date options to the opposition within five (5) days. If the match cannot be played due to scheduling difficulties then a draw is to be awarded to both teams. If a team does not reasonable attempt to replay the match, the competition committee will award a forfeit to the opposition. If field availability is an issue for an upcoming game, a neutral alternate location should be agreed upon by both competing teams, and if no neutral location is available, the game may be played at the visiting team's field.

Folding teams

If a team folds prior to the start of the season, Rugby PA will revise the schedule prior to the first week of matches. If revising the schedule is not possible and an unbalanced schedule of game is the result, the standings will be determined by Avg League Points.

If a team folds and disbands after the start of the season, all matches played by the teams will count in the standings for both teams involved including forfeits. Rugby PA will attempt to revise the schedule with minimal disruption to the league schedule. If revising the schedule is not possible all the teams scheduled matches will be declared a forfeit and schedule opposition will be awarded a forfeit win.

Match Protests

Match protests, including league and playoff matches, should be filed with Rugby PA as soon as possible after the match, preferably by 6 pm of the second day following the match

Reasons for Protests: Protests may be made for one or more of the following reasons (this list is not meant to be all-inclusive):

- Ineligible player(s)
- Improper or unsafe field
- Unqualified referee (appointed by other than Rugby PA)

Team Definition for High School Division

An official team for High School Rugby competition consists of a minimum of thirteen (13) players who start the match plus any authorized replacements or substitutes.

A regular season match should initially be played with a minimum of thirteen (13) players per side. The match results will be official in regards to standings purposes.

In an official regular season league match, if a team has fewer than fifteen (15) players, that team may play with down to (13) players. The opposition is not required to match the number of players. If during the match a team is forced to play with fewer than fifteen (15) players due to injury or player safety, the opposition is not required to match the number of players. If a team is force to play shorthanded due to discipline reason by the referee, the opposition is not required to match and remove a player.

Teams are not required to play with equal number of players in Rugby PA playoff matches and competition. Teams still must have a minimum of thirteen (13) players to participate in a playoff match. If a team has less than thirteen (13) players than the match is forfeited, the team with official number of players is awarded the match and a non-league match may be played.

If both teams have less than thirteen (13) players, the match is a draw for standing purposes and a non-league match may be played. If a team has thirteen (13) or more players and accepts temporary players from the opposing coach, the match is still an official match for league standings purposes. If a team has less than thirteen (13) and accepts temporary players from the opposing coach, the match is still forfeited per above regulation and a non league match may be played.

When a match is played with fewer than fifteen players in each team all the Laws of the Game apply except that each team must have at least five players in the scrum at all times, except when there are less than ten (10) players on the field.

Players Nominated as Substitutes

In High School play; teams may nominate unlimited replacements/substitutes. Substitutions may only be made when the ball is dead and with the permission of the referee. This applies to all regular season and Rugby PA playoff tournament matches.

Substituted players may not rejoin the match at any time, unless the laws of rugby permit (front row sub or blood sub) This applies to all regular season and Rugby PA tournament playoff matches.

Playing Time - Game

The playing time restrictions are in place for players' safety and are to be strictly enforced. Each half of a match lasts a maximum of 35 minutes playing time. Play in a match is to last no longer than 70 minutes total. After a total of 70 minutes playing time,

the referee must not allow extra time to be played in the case of a drawn match in a league season match. The match results are official for standing purposes after 70 minutes.

“B” Games or secondary time may be played with a maximum of twenty (20) minutes halves. Reduced time is permitted with the agreement of both coaches and the match referee

Extra Time:

In RugbyPA playoffs matches through the State Championship Finals the following extra time procedure will apply in the event of a drawn match.

- One (10) ten minute sudden death period will be played. In sudden death, the first team to score by any scoring method wins the match.
- Under no circumstances may a match, including extra time, exceed: 80 minutes for High School Rugby
- If the match is still not decided after the extra time, the winner will be determined by a penalty kick shoot-out between the two teams to take place as follows:
 - The kicks at goal should be part of the match and be the responsibility of the referee. The touch judges and Rugby PA officials may assist the referee if requested to do so. Before the kicks at goals, the two captains shall toss a coin to elect whether or not to kick first or second in rotation. The Rugby PA official may move the penalty shoot-out to another field if necessary to accommodate the competition schedule.
 - The first series will consist of five placed kicks taken on the **22 meter line** in front of the posts.
 - The kicks at goal will be taken, for each Team, by each of the five players, nominated by the captains. Only players who were on the field of play at the end of that match are eligible to be nominated. In the event of an injury a player initially nominated to kick may be replaced however his replacement shall be a player who was on the field of play at the end of that match.
 - The five nominated players shall take turns to kick at goal. Teams will alternate: Team A, Team B, Team A, Team B, etc.
 - In the event of a tie after the first series of kicks at goal, additional kicks shall be taken, still from the 22 meter line in front of the posts, alternatively by each Team, until one Team has an advantage for the same number of kicks taken. Each of these additional kicks shall be taken by a different player who did not participate in the first series of kicks.

Playing Time – Player

Under no circumstances may a High School Rugby players' total playing time in one day exceed 80 minutes, including extra time, multiple games and tournaments.

Discipline

The referee decides that a player must cease to participate in a match as follows may

- If a yellow card offense, the player should go to the sin bin and rejoin the game after 10 minutes.
- Following a red card, that player is to take no further part in that match or tournament. A red card will result in a seven day or at least one match suspension for the offending player.
- The match referee is to report all yellow and red cards per Rugby PA disciplinary procedure via the Rugby PA website.

Coach Certification

All teams must have at least one coach certified with a minimum Level 1 World Rugby Coach certification. Coaches are also required to complete all course work and background checks to be eligible. This includes Safesport modules, Concussion modules, Background Checks, and Rugby Ready Course.

Equipment

- High School Rugby should use a size five (5) ball
- Players may use only studs, clothing, and padding during matches that are in accordance with World Rugby Laws of the Game and associated Regulations.
- Sports Goggles that are World Rugby approved may be used
- Mouthpieces are required in a tackle game.

Medical

Rugby PA requires all home teams to provide a Certified Athletic Trainer at all matches.

RugbyPA recommends having a medical kit and medically-trained personnel (such as a Certified Athletic Trainer) at all practices.

At each match, there must be a person designated as the team medical person who is to promptly enter the playing area whenever a player is injured to attend the player, whether or not the referee has seen this injured player and stopped play.

Emergency Action Plan

Each home team must develop an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and present the EAP to the opposing coach prior to match kick off.

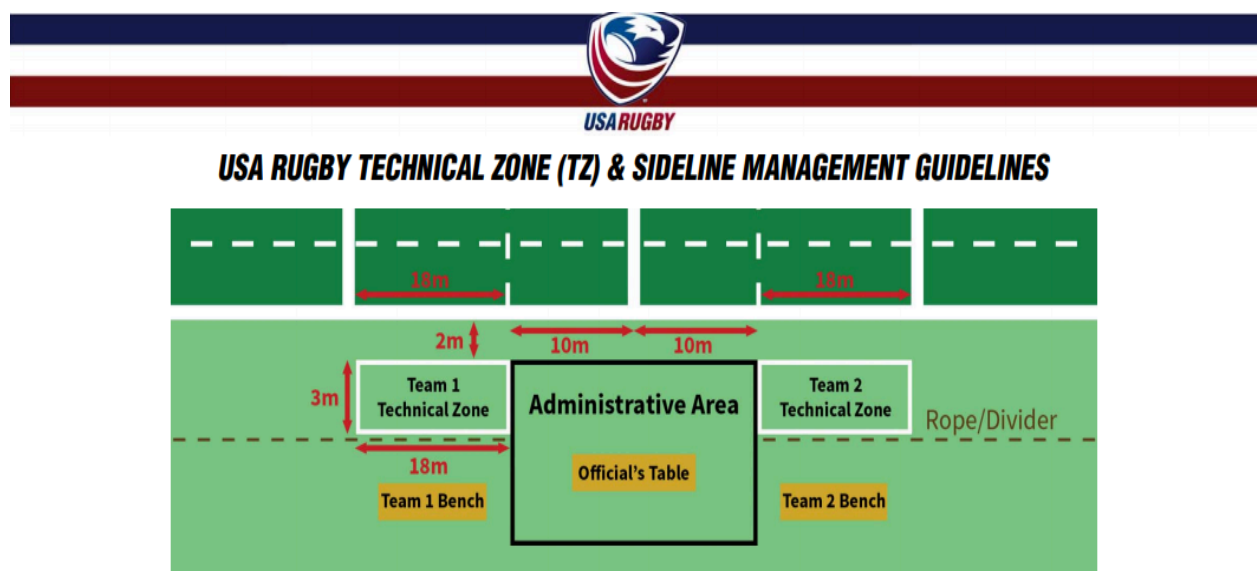
Field Size

The recommended minimum dimensions for the field-of-play are 70m long and 45m wide. If both coaches do not agree on the safety of a field then it is a decision of the match referee if a field is not adequate for playing.

Technical Zone Enforcement

RugbyPA is working with the Local Referee Societies to enforce that each match, the home team **MUST** have Technical Zones (TZs) set up. If the TZs are not set up, the referee may delay Kick Off until the zones are set up. No exceptions. If fields are an issue in creating TZs, please

reach out to the match official and see what best way can work. **THIS IS A USA RUGBY REQUIREMENT**. A diagram of how the Technical Zones should be set up can be found below.



Note: Spectators **MUST** be placed on the opposite sideline from the teams unless a second rope is present to prevent mixing of spectators with players/staff/admins.

Match Results

It is the responsibility of both teams to properly input Match Results via Rugby PA Match Report within 48 hours.

Rules of Play

All matches shall be played in accordance with World Rugby and USA Rugby laws of the game, Under 19 Variations shall apply to all contact rugby matches but where USA Rugby provides latitude for choice of law variations for various age groups the following exceptions will be adhered to in Rugby PA competition.

Methods of Scoring

In Rugby PA High School matches all scoring methods permitted including tries, penalty tries, conversions, penalty kicks and drop goals.

Try Conversion Kicks – the kick at goal will be attempted at point of which the ball is downed.

Mercy Rule

If a team is to have achieved a lead of 35 points or more, the score will be frozen at that time. The match official will make both teams aware of this once it has occurred. The match will continue for the remainder of the match time. Teams should report the Mercy Rule score when completing match reports.

Play Variations – High School:

Dangerous Tackle

High tackles, no-wrap tackles, scrag tackles, spear tackles, and pile-drivers are dangerous and shall not be tolerated. Referee shall immediately stop play and call a penalty. No advantage. Offending player cautioned, possibly temporarily suspended (yellow card).

Penalty: Penalty Kick

Note 1: Any contact, including fend-off, level with or above the armpit is to be considered a high tackle.

Note 2: The scrag-type tackle (i.e. swinging the player round by the shirt) must be considered dangerous play and must be penalized.

Note 3: The piledriver-type tackle (i.e. lifting the ball carrier off the ground and then slamming the ball-carrier to the ground violently) must be considered dangerous play and penalized.

Fending

Fending Players will be permitted to fend off, however the arm must be presented prior to contact and must be below the armpit. No contact above the arm pit is allowed

Penalty: Penalty Kick

Lineouts

Lineouts will be played in full accordance to World Rugby Laws. Quick throw in's will be permitted in full accordance to World Rugby Law.

Scrum

Number of players: Eight.

A standard scrum must have eight players from each team. All eight players must stay bound to the scrum until it ends. Each front row must have three players in it, no more and no less.

Front rows coming together

The scrum engagement sequence per World Rugby laws will be implemented. (Crouch - Bind - Set) Any player at any stage in a scrum who has or causes an opponent to have, the shoulders lower than the hips must immediately be penalized.

Penalty: Penalty Kick

Scrum Drive

A team in a scrum must not push the scrum more than 1 meter towards their opponents' goal line.

Penalty: Free Kick

Wheeling

Wheeling of the scrum is not permitted in High School rugby. A team must not intentionally wheel a scrum.

Penalty: Free Kick

An unintentional wheeled scrum will be stopped and restarted by the referee

Uncontested Scrums

A coach may request uncontested scrums at any time prior to or during a match and it must be honored, no exceptions

Kicking

Kicking is permitting with the exception that a player cannot kick the ball off the ground when an opponent is attempting to pick up the ball or in the vicinity of other players, no deliberate fly hacking

Penalty: Free Kick

Rugby PA Points & Standings – High School Division

Points Standings Values The Point Standings and Ranking values are as follows:

Standings Point Values:

- Four (4) for a win
- Two (2) for a tie
- Zero (0) for a loss

Bonus Points

- One (1) point for 4 or more tries scored in a game
- One (1) point for a loss by 7 points or less

Forfeit Values

- Teams will receive 5 points for a forfeit loss and report score as 25-0

Standings

League standings will be determined by the average number of Rugby PA points achieved per match.

Playoff Seeding:

Playoff Seeds are based on the following criteria for fair competition-based Championship Tournament.

- First Criteria: Average Rugby PA Points per match
- Second Criteria: Tie-breaker Order
 - Head to Head (only for 2 team tiebreaks)
 - Average points allowed (in Conference Matches)
 - Point Differential (in Conference Matches)
 - Coin flip

Playoff Eligibility

In order for a player to participate in the Rugby PA High School division playoff match the following Eligibility Rules must be met as defined in the Rugby PA eligibility regulations which include, but, are not limited to:

- Players are eligible if they are currently enrolled in 12th grade or below and nineteen (19) years of age and under as of September 1st prior to the start of the current season.
- Player must have played for the team in at least three (3) qualifying matches during the competitive season to participate in a Rugby PA championship playoffs or invitational event. A qualifying match is defined as regular season league match as defined through Rugby PA competition structure.
 - If player joins a team mid-way through season, they may be granted special exemption

- Players must not had participated in a qualifying match for any other club or division in a fifteens match, high school side or U-19 club side, college club, or senior club competitions, while those players' High School qualifying match season is in progress.
- Players must registered with Rugby PA and on the teams Rugby PA roster.