



**IRFU Age Grade Rugby  
Mini and Leprechaun Rugby (LTPD Stage 1) - “Growing from 6 to 6 Nations”**

**Mini and Leprechaun Rugby Mission Statement**

“The ethos of Mini and Leprechaun Rugby is to foster and develop young players (boys & girls) of all ability in the game of rugby in a safe, **\*non-competition**, enjoyable environment through activities which ensure progressive skill development for all participants in line with the IRFU LTPD (Long Term Player Development) pathway, Child Welfare Policy and Traditions of Rugby Union”

**\* non-competition meaning no Leagues/Cups and Blitzes and/or events resulting in play-off matches or finals.**

## **Child Welfare**

All volunteers involved with Mini Rugby (in any capacity) must read the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document and sign the Declaration of Intent. The signed copy of the Declaration must be handed to the Club Child Welfare Officer/ School Games Master for record-keeping in the club or school. Clubs/ Schools are responsible to ensure that all their volunteers involved in age grade rugby adhere to all aspects of the IRFU policy on Child Welfare.

## **Code of Conduct**

All participants in Mini Rugby are to adhere to all aspects of the IRFU Code of Conduct for Players/ Coaches/ Parents/ Spectators and Referees

## **Fixtures**

Competitions (meaning Leagues/ cups & Blitzes ending with play-off matches or finals) **are not allowed** and Festivals / Events must be arranged according to the National Festival Day format. These must be registered with the respective Branch prior to taking place and all Festivals/Events including matches involving teams from other Unions, must adhere to the IRFU Mini and Leprechaun Rugby regulations.

## **Eligibility**

- Mini Rugby is a participation sport - any boy or girl registered with a club and/or school may take part.
- Date of eligibility for participants is that which is approved by the IRFU Domestic Game Committee (currently, the 1<sup>st</sup> January).
- Where Mini and Leprechaun rugby are part of the school curriculum, eligibility is based the year/ class the player is in.
- Concerns regarding eligibility must be raised through the Club/School to the Branch or if required the IRFU.

## **Players playing at a higher age category**

In the event of clubs not having sufficient numbers, players can play in two age categories – the year a player is eligible for and one year up e.g. U10 playing also at U11, it is the club's responsibility to ensure all players get the opportunity to participate in mini rugby.

## **Procedure for allowing U12 players to play at U13**

- (Only)In instances where clubs have a concern regarding numbers e.g. not enough U13 players in the club, may a club apply to their Branch Youth Committee with supporting documents explaining the reason(s) to allow this.
  - This to only apply to players who are U12 - no U11 player playing at U12 allowed to play up.
- Branch Youth Committee to ensure that the decision does not affect playing opportunities of the U12 team(s).

## **Leprechaun Rugby**

U7

## **Mini Rugby**

U8/ U9/ U10/ U11 and U12

## **Community Games**

As outlined the IRFU does not currently support the Community Games competition format for participants at this level (U12 and or younger) including all matches and events as part of the Community Games Rugby programme.

## Registration

It is the responsibility of Clubs/ Schools to ensure all their players are properly registered with the Club/ School, Branch and IRFU.

## Correspondence

Any correspondence from a club, school or individual regarding Mini Rugby, must be directed to the Branch Mini Rugby Committee.

## Procedure to report concerns relating to Mini Rugby Guidelines and or Regulations

### Internal:

Report to Mini Rugby Coordinator & Club Child Welfare Officer (if required) – liaise with individual(s) and report to Club Committee.

### External:

Report to Mini Rugby Coordinator & Club Child Welfare Officer (if required) – liaise with Branch Mini Rugby Committee who in turn liaise with club(s)/ individual(s) and report to Branch Youth Committee.

## Maximum playing time

Consideration must be given to clubs/teams with small numbers and or no reserves to prevent/avoid exhaustion and or the risk of injuries.

## Wearing of glasses/ Sports goggles

In the interest of safety (of the player wearing the goggles and other players) and best practice the wearing of glasses or goggles when participating in the contact format of rugby cannot be allowed. Regarding "approved eyewear" like boots, shoulder pads and head gear it must be IRB approved before it can be used when playing rugby and as this has not been approved by the IRB it is against the regulations.

## Date of eligibility categories from 2011/2012 season onwards:

Age Groups	Season 2011/12	Season 2012/13	Season 2013/14	Season 2014/15
Under 7	Born in: 2005	Born in: 2006	Born in: 2007	Born in: 2008
Under 8	2004	2005	2006	2007
Under 9	2003	2004	2005	2006
Under 10	2002	2003	2004	2005
Under 11	2001	2002	2003	2004
Under 12	2000	2001	2002	2003

## Regulations and Laws regarding Mini Rugby

Due to variations in the physical, mental, social and emotional developments of young children, **players under the age of 7 are not allowed to play full contact** games. Children in this age group should be introduced to Rugby Union through the non-contact game of Leprechaun Rugby.

**Mini and Leprechaun Rugby have been broken down into distinct stages which progressively introduce and develop the fundamental skills of Rugby Union.**

	IRFU Long Term Player Development - STAGE 1				
Regulation	Leprechaun	MINI 1	MINI 2	MINI 3	Notes
Age group(s) Age on 1 <sup>st</sup> January	U 7s	U 8's	U9 /U10	U11/U12	
Ball size	3	3	3	4	Must be adhered to.
Maximum time per half – single match.	15 min	15 min	15 min	20 min	No injury or extra time allowed
Maximum time per half – Festivals/Events	7 min	7 min	7 min	7 min	No injury or extra time allowed
Maximum time a squad/ team is allowed to play per day/ event	60 min.	70 min.	70 min.	70 min.	No injury or extra time allowed
Minimum time allowed for half time	1 min	1 min	1min	1 min	
Max no of players per team	8 Recommended	8	8	10	Equal numbers on both teams – emphasis on participation & enjoyment.
No of forwards	N/A	N/A	3	5	
No of backs	N/A	N/A	5	5	
Safety zone between pitches	6 m	6 m	6 m	6 m	

	IRFU Long Term Player Development - STAGE 1				
Regulation	Leprechaun	Mini 1	Mini 2	Mini 3	Notes
Tackle height	Touch on shorts or pull tag	Below waist	Below waist	Below Waist	Dangerous Tackles (e.g. High / Swinging / Dump tackle) to be penalised immediately & player warned.
Hand off	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Below shoulder	Players should be encouraged to carry the ball in two hands.
Time allowed for rucks & mauls	N/A	<b>The 5 seconds “Use it or Lose it” rule applies. This starts from the moment ruck/maul is formed. It is illegal to collapse a maul.</b>			Referee/Coach should count down “5,4,3,2,1” from moment ruck/maul is formed.
No of players per team allowed in rucks & mauls	N/A	3	3	5	
Kicking in Play	No	No	No	Defence zone only	
Start match	Pass-Off : Must be off the ground and after the referee’s whistle			Drop Kick on Half Way	
Method of scoring	Try	Try	Try	Try	No Conversion Kicks
Line out	No	No	3 Players (inc. Thrower)	5 Players (inc. Thrower)	All “forwards” must be involved in lineout. No lifting allowed.
Scrum	No	No	3 Players No contest	5 Players Strike & 1 step allowed	Players must stay bound until scrum is over.

- **No limit on number of players to play in club days or events – emphasis on enjoyment and participation for all.**
- **For safety reasons players should play within their own age group and may not play for a lower age group.**
- **Leprechaun Rugby and Mini 1 – one coach per team allowed on the pitch, coach must stay behind players**

## **Start of Match and/or Restarts**

### **Mini 1 & Mini 2**

All starts and restarts are by pass-off (from the ground) and must be after the referee's whistle. The opposition must retire 10m from the ball and can only move once the scrum half/passer passes the ball. The first receiver must start no more than 2m back from the scrum half/passer.

At the start of both halves and after a try, the pass-off from the centre of the pitch will be used to restart the game.

### **Mini 3**

Starts - Drop Kick on Half Way and must be after the referee's whistle.

In dead ball situations the restarts must take place 10m from try-line (kicking zone).

**Penalties: No quick tap penalties allowed**

### **Mini 1 & Mini 2**

Penalties are taken by a pass-off (from the ground) and after the whistle, the opposition being 10m back from the mark (or behind the goal line). Penalties must be taken through the mark. To play the ball, it must be first tapped with the foot before being passed off the ground. The first receiver must start no more than 2m back from the scrum half/passer.

### **Mini 3**

Penalties must be taken through the mark designated by the referee. A scrum to be awarded to the opposition if persistently done incorrectly.

Opposition must be 10 m back or behind the goal line. To play the ball, it must be first tapped with the foot before being passed off the ground. The first receiver must start no more than 2m back from the scrum half/passer.

Penalties inside the Kicking Zone: The DEFENDING team awarded the penalty may kick directly to touch and are awarded throw in.

## **Kicking**

### **Mini 1 & Mini 2**

Not allowed

### **Mini 3**

It is not permitted to kick the ball outside the "Kicking Zone" (10m from own goal line). If the offence is unintentional, a scrum is awarded to the opposition and if intentional, a penalty is awarded to the opposition.

Pass back into Kicking Zone rule (as per 15-a-side) to apply.

Players in front of the kicker must be brought onside before they can take part in play.

## **Hand Off**

### **Mini 1 & Mini 2:**

Not allowed

### **Mini 3:**

Hand Off only allowed Below the Shoulder. Penalty awarded if Hand Off is to the face or neck.

## **Scrum**

### **Mini 2: (3 players)**

1. All players stay bound until ball has emerged.
2. No push or contesting allowed, ball must be put in straight.
3. Opposition scrum half behind his forwards – no follow around allowed.
4. Scrum is over when ball is in the hands of the attacking scrum half.
5. Scrum half must pass the ball – no break allowed.
6. Both back lines 5m back from scrum.
7. Always 10m from touch line and 5m from goal line.

### **Mini 3: (5 players)**

1. All players stay bound until ball has emerged.
2. Scrum may not move further than 1 step from the mid-point of original scrum. Only strike can be contested (hooker v hooker).
3. Scrum half to feed the ball into the scrum with two hands and straight.
4. No forward allowed to pick up the ball from the scrum.
5. Opposition scrum half behind his 2nd Rows – no follow around allowed.
6. Both back lines 5m back from scrum.
7. Always 10m from touchline and 5m from goal line.
8. Scrum is over when referee calls “scrum over” or when the ball is in the hands of the scrum half who may break.

**Line out:** No Lifting or Quick throw allowed

### **Mini 2: (3 players including the Thrower)**

1. Line out 2m from touch line.
2. No contest.
3. Ball must be caught and delivered to scrum-half - Line out is over when the scrum half passes the ball.
4. Both hookers/throwers must be at the front of the line-out and both scrum halves behind their forwards.
5. Scrum halves must pass the ball. No break allowed.
6. Both back lines 5m back from Lineout.
7. Ball must be thrown straight into the line-out – no over throw.
8. No catch and drive allowed.

### **Mini 3: (5 players including the Thrower)**

1. Line out 2m from touch line.
2. The ball may be contested.
3. A space of one metre (arm's length) between all players in the line-out
4. Both hookers/throwers must be at the front of the line-out and both scrum halves behind their forwards.
5. Both back lines 5m back from Lineout.
6. Ball must be thrown straight into the line-out – no over throw.
7. Line out is over when the scrum half passes the ball/ makes a break or when team catching the ball catches & drives (5 seconds "Use it or Lose it" in driving maul to apply).

### **Rucks and mauls**

Referee/Coach should count down "5,4,3,2,1" from moment ruck/maul is formed.  
The "Use it or Lose it" rule should be strictly applied.

It is **ILLEGAL to COLLAPSE** a Maul.

Players joining a Ruck or Maul must do so in a safe and legal manner, **e.g no shoulder-charging, diving off feet etc.**

### **Discipline**

No sending off in Mini Rugby only compulsory substitutions to ensure same numbers on the pitch at all times.

### **Dangerous Tackles: High /Swing and Dump Tackles**

Player to receive 1 (one) verbal warning from the referee. If the player offends again, compulsory substitution to be made by coach on request by the referee.  
Player is allowed to participate in next match/ rest of the day's event unless there is a repeat of the offence.

### **Punching/ Kicking of an opponent**

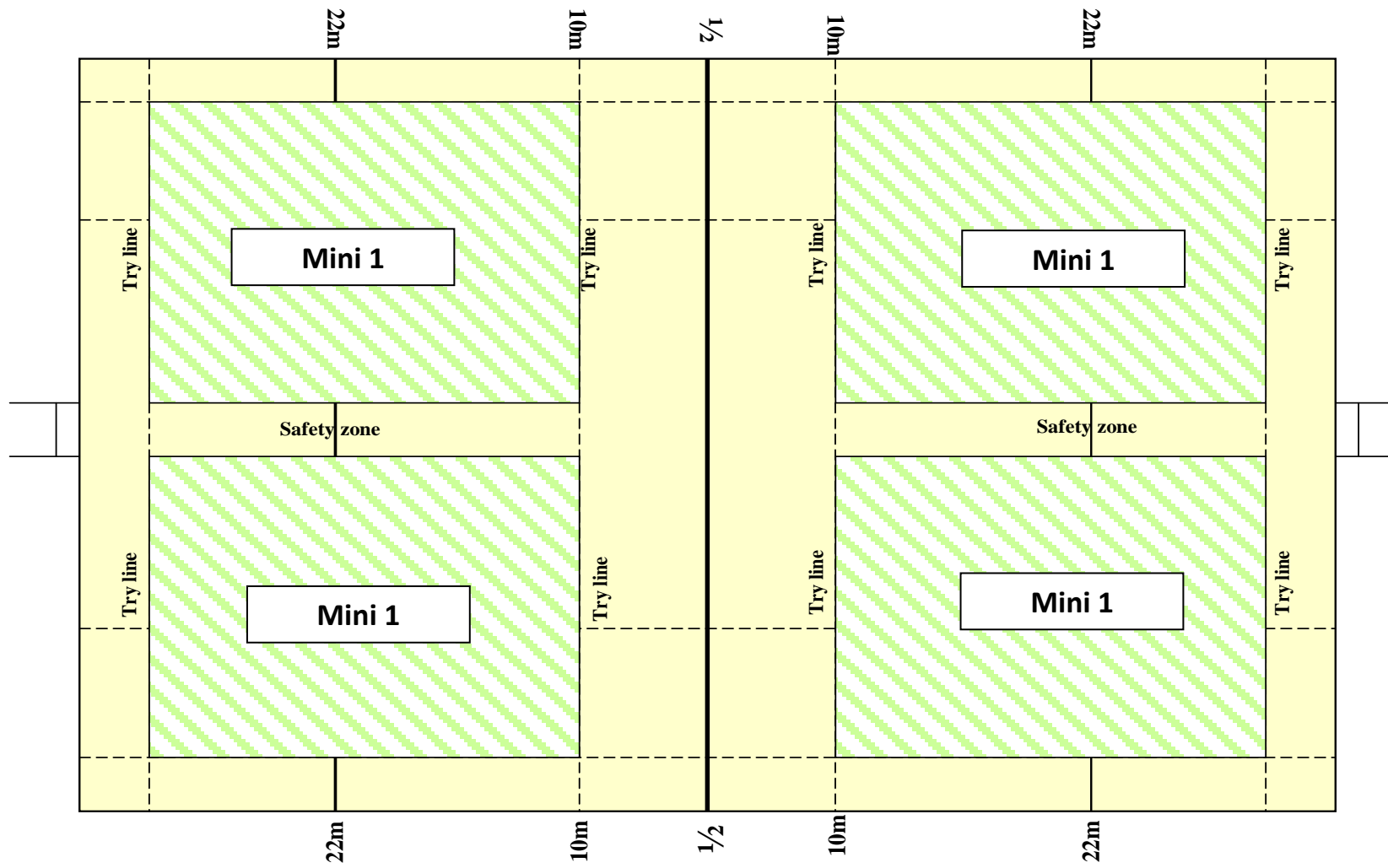
No verbal warning – immediate compulsory substitution and the player is not allowed to participate in next match or rest of the day's event

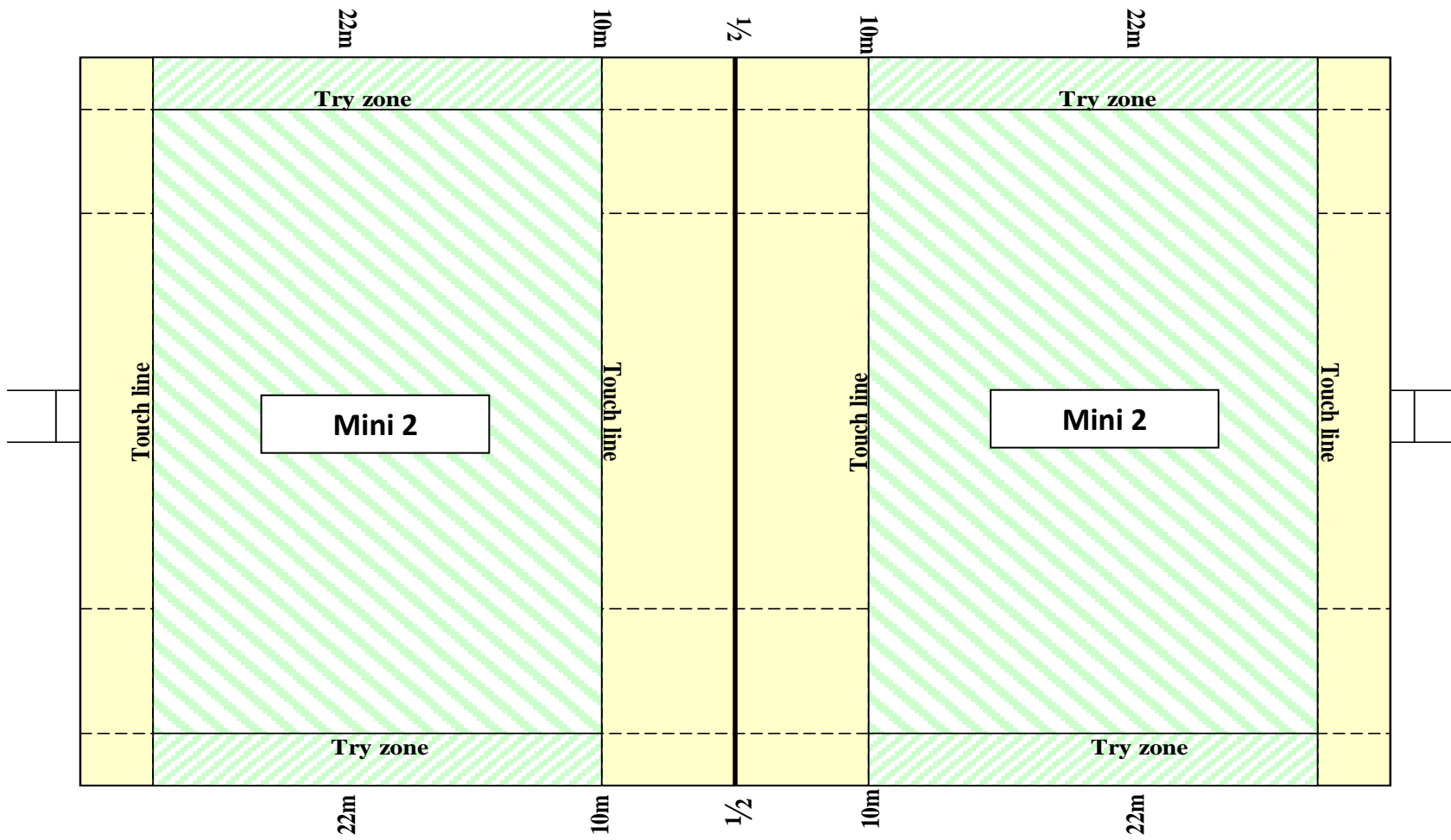
### **Squeeze ball and Bridging**

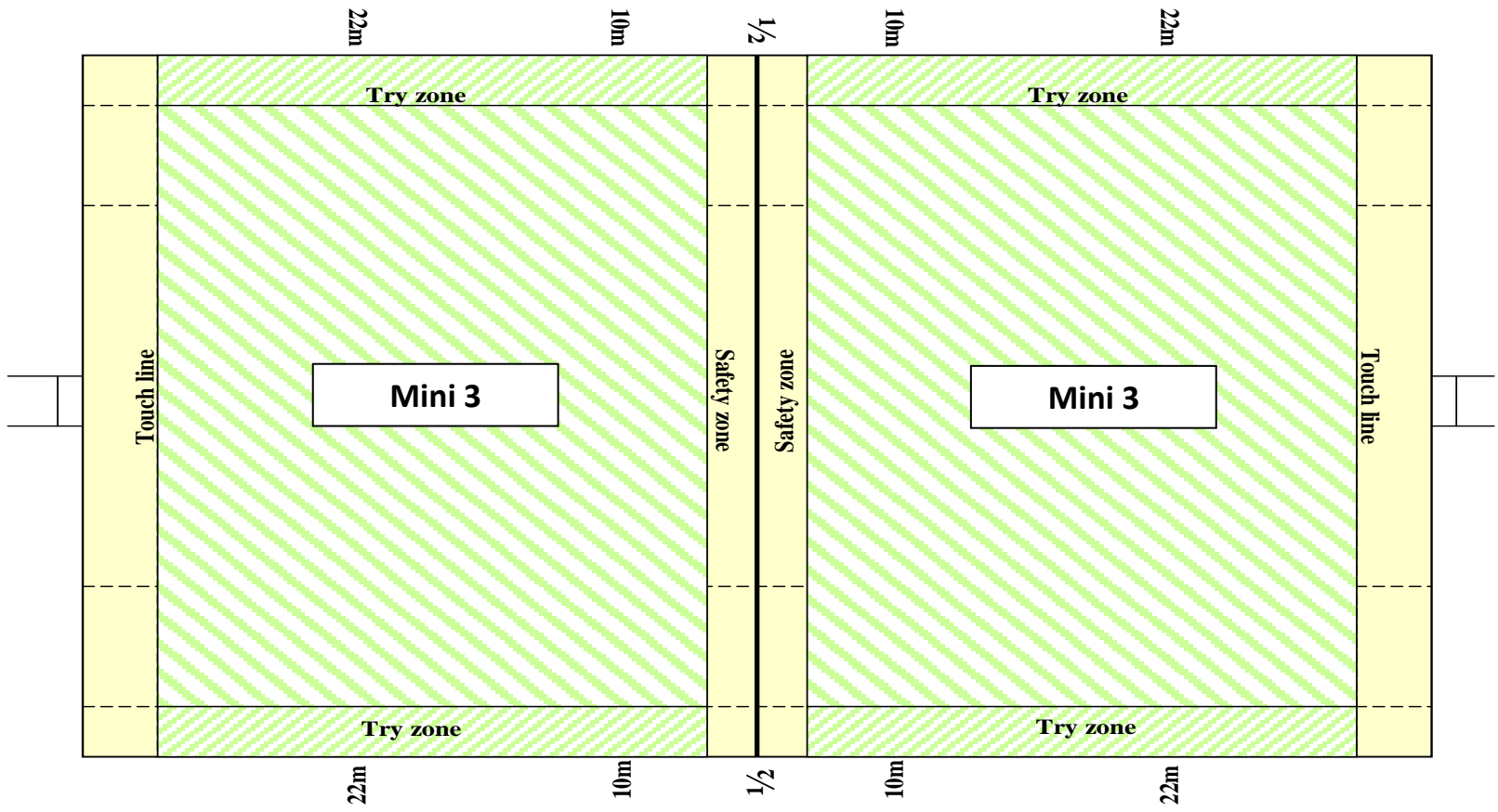
Not Allowed



Pitch Size regulations: (diagrams below)







## Leprechaun Rugby

**Leprechaun Rugby has been developed to introduce the Game of Rugby Union to young players new to the Game. The non-tackling and soft contact nature of Leprechaun Rugby contains all the running and handling skills of Rugby Union. It is a game, which is designed to be FUN**

### **Number of players**

Can vary from 4-a-side to 8-a-side and or 10-a-side games and the emphasis is on the introduction of the skills, inclusion of all participants; safety and enjoyment.

### **Playing area**

Depends on the number of participants and vary from 10m x 20m to 30m x 40m and or 50m x 70m.

### **Duration of games**

Depends on the time available and can vary from 5 min. each way to 10 min. or 15 min. each way. Young players (beginners) playing non-contact rugby can only play a maximum amount 30 min. of rugby per day.

### **Start of play**

The game starts by a pass-off with the referee indicating the mark. The opposition must be 5 to 10 m away depending on the size of the playing area and the size of the teams.

### **Attacking team**

The attacking team carries the ball downfield, running, passing (or handling) back to score try by placing the ball over or behind the opposition goal line. The ball can only be transferred to a player behind the ball carrier. No forward (handling) or passing allowed.

### **Defending team**

The defending team attempts to halt the running progress of the attacking team by tagging the ball carrier.

### **Tagging and ball take**

To tag a player must contact the ball carrier with two hands (one on each side of the hips). The ball carrier must then (immediately) pass backwards within a maximum of 3 steps. Any attempt to deliberately gain territory without trying to pass, will result in loss of possession.

### OR

If the ball carrier can't see anyone to pass to he/she should (immediately) stop, turn and present the ball immediately to a support player. The support player must then take the ball and pass to another player without running.

## **Off-side**

Applies only to the pass-off and the ball take.

## **Gaining possession**

**The defending team can gain possession as follows:**

### **Intercepting the ball**

An opposition pass can be intercepted.

### **Gathering a dropped ball**

If the attacking team drops or throws the ball to the ground, the defending team can pick up the ball and play on.

### **Knock on**

If the attacking team knocks the ball on (dropping a pass forward) the defending team will restart with pass-off.

### **Forward pass**

Forward passes are not allowed and a pass-off is awarded to the non-offending team.

### **Ball in touch**

**If the ball or attacking player carrying the ball crosses the touchline, play is restarted by a pass-off awarded to the non-offending team.**

## **Penalties**

All penalties are taken with a pass-off. A player from the non-offending team taps the ball on the ground with his foot and then passes to a team mate. Opposing players must 5 to 10 m back depending on the size of the team and or the pitch.

### **Reasons for penalties**

- Ball carrier hands-off a player.
- Interference by a defending player not allowing a transfer, pass or ball take immediately after a tag.
- Ball carrier makes further ground after a tag without passing, transfer or ball take.
- A defending player takes the ball from the ball carrier.
- Deliberate obstruction of an opponent.
- A defending player is offside.
- In all instances the opposition must be 5 to 10m backs depending on the size of the teams or the pitch.

## Code of Conduct for Players – Adopted from the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document

1. Play for enjoyment and become part of the rugby family.
2. Respect the “Game of Rugby” and play within the Laws of the Game.
3. Accept the referee’s decision and let your captain or coach ask any relevant questions.
4. Play with control. Do not lose your temper.
5. Always do your best and be committed to the game, your team and your club.
6. Be a “good sport”. Applaud all good play whether by your team or the opposition.
7. Respect your opponent. Treat all players as you would like to be treated. Do not “bully” or take advantage of any player.
8. Rugby is a team sport and make sure you co-operate with your coach; team mates and members of your club.
9. Remember that the goals of the game are to have fun, improve your skills and feel good.
10. At the end of the match thank your opponents and the referee for the match.
11. Always remember that you owe a duty of care to your opponents. Tackle hard but fairly, do not intend to hurt your opponent.
12. Winning and losing is part of sport: Win with humility – lose with dignity.
13. As part of the team it is important that you attend training regularly and listen to your coach and help your team.
14. As a team sport it is important to understand that all members are important to the team!
15. Remember you are representing your team, club, family and the Game of Rugby.

## Code of Conduct for Coaches - Adopted from the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document

1. Remember that as a coach of an “age-grade team” you are acting “in loco parentis” and that you have a duty of care to all your players.
2. Lead by example - young people needs a coach they can respect as a Role Model.
3. Be generous with your praise and never ridicule or shout at players for making mistakes or losing a match.
4. Teach your players that the Laws of the Game are mutual agreements which no one should evade or break.
5. Ensure that you are appropriately qualified by gaining the relevant coaching accreditation for your particular level.
6. Be reasonable in your demands on the players’ time, energy and enthusiasm.
7. Encourage respect for all participants – team mates and opponents, as well as match officials.
8. Create a safe and enjoyable environment in which to train and play.
9. Always follow professional medical advice in determining when an injured player is ready to play again.
10. Develop policies for your club / team to agree procedures regarding discipline, injury prevention and treatment, team selection etc.
11. Be responsible and ensure you uphold the ethos of the game and the IRFU.
12. Support the IRFU Child Welfare Policy and all policies regarding Children in Sport.

## Code of Conduct for Parents - Adopted from the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document

1. Remember, young people play rugby for their enjoyment, not only yours.
2. Encourage your child always to play by the Laws of the Game.
3. Teach young children that honest endeavour is as important as winning, so that the result of each game is accepted without disappointment.
4. Help young people to work towards skill improvement and good sportsmanship.
5. Set a good example by applauding good play on both sides.
6. Never ridicule, humiliate or shout at young players for making a mistake or losing a match.
7. Do not place emphasis on winning at all costs.
8. Do not force an unwilling child to participate in the playing of rugby. If the child is to play, he/she will do so in good time through your encouragement.
9. Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from rugby.
10. As a spectator do not use profane language or harass referees, coaches or players.
11. Do not publicly question the referee's judgement and never their honesty.
12. Recognise the value and importance of volunteer referees and coaches.
13. Identify and acknowledge the good qualities of the Game of Rugby and uphold these values.
14. Remember you and your child's contribution to the Game of Rugby are very important to the IRFU and be proud of your contribution.
15. Understand the value of team sport and its importance.



## Code of Conduct for Spectators - Adopted from the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document

1. Remember that although young people play organised rugby they are not “miniature internationals”.
2. Be on your best behaviour and lead by example. Do not use profane language or harass referees, players or coaches.
3. Applaud good play by the visiting team as well as your own.
4. Show respect for your team’s opponents. Without them there would not be a match.
5. Condemn the use of violence in all forms at every opportunity.
6. Verbal abuse of players or referees cannot be accepted in any shape or form.
7. Players or referees are not fair targets for ignorant behaviour.
8. Encourage young players to play by the Laws of the Game.
9. Spectators can contribute to the enjoyment of the event and all involved.
10. Be proud of your club and the Game of Rugby.

## Code of Conduct for Referees - Adopted from the IRFU Child Welfare Policy Document

1. Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every child and treat everyone equally, regardless of gender, disability, ethnic origin, religion, etc.
2. All referees (youth rugby -15-a-side) must be a member of their Branch Referees Association. Mini Rugby Referees to attend and complete mini rugby coaching course.
3. Act as a role model and promote the positive aspects of rugby and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct.
4. Be responsible for monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with players.
5. Avoid being alone with underage persons.
6. Never deal with injuries unless qualified to do so.
7. Encourage coaches/parents to act responsibly and to be responsible for the behaviour and performance of players.
8. Ensure that safety is paramount in all games.
9. Follow agreed protocols regarding shower arrangements after matches.
10. Agree appropriate times for entry to changing rooms to deal with match preparation and ensure members of the team management are present.
11. Be punctual, prepared and well presented.
12. Ensure players and officials comply with the Laws of the Game.
13. Never criticise individual players and or coaches or parents.
14. Adhere to all rules and procedures as agreed by the Branch Referees Association

## INFORMATION

If you would like more information about Mini Rugby or would like information on Coaching Courses, Refereeing, or additional coaching material, please contact your Provincial Rugby Development Department.

### Connacht

IRFU Connacht Branch,  
Galway Sportsground,  
College Road,  
Galway.

Tel: 091 – 561-568

Fax: 091 – 560-097

Email: [info@cbirfu.com](mailto:info@cbirfu.com)

### Leinster

IRFU Leinster Branch,  
Newstead Building A,  
UCD, Belfield,  
Dublin 4.

Tel: 01 – 269-3224

Fax: 01 – 269-3142

Email: [information@leinsterrugby.ie](mailto:information@leinsterrugby.ie)

### Munster Branch:

#### Cork:

IRFU Munster Bran  
Musgrave Park,  
Pearse Road,  
Cork.

Tel: 021 – 432-3563

Fax: 021 – 432-3956

Email: [info@munsterrugby.ie](mailto:info@munsterrugby.ie)

#### Limerick:

IRFU Munster Branch  
Thomond Park,  
Limerick.

Tel: 061 – 451-392

Fax: 061 – 325-000

Email: [info@munsterrugby.ie](mailto:info@munsterrugby.ie)

### Ulster Branch

IRFU Ulster Branch  
Ravenhill Grounds,  
85 Ravenhill Park,  
Belfast BT6 0DG.

Tel: 048 – 9049-3111

Fax: 048 – 9049-1522

Email: [info@ulster-rugby.co.uk](mailto:info@ulster-rugby.co.uk)

### IRFU

[www.irishrugby.ie](http://www.irishrugby.ie)

Tel: 01-647-3850

Fax: 01-647-3895

