Age Grade Rugby | Game-time

In-line with the principles of the Schools & Youth Conference programme the Scottish Rugby Board has approved the Age Grade Game-time Policy and the National Competition Rule (NCR) below. Both the policy and the NCR shall come into effect from season 2017/18.

Age Grade Game-time Policy (applies to all schools & youth fixtures)
The maximum game-time that should be played for all age grade rugby players U9 – U18 should not exceed 90 minutes of game time in a 48 hour period.

Schools & Youth National Competition Rule 4.4
A Player who participates in a U18 or U16 National Competition fixture shall not be eligible for selection for any other National Competition fixture on that weekend.

National Competitions include;
- S&Y Mitsubishi Motors Conferences (Tiers 1-3); Shogun, Galant, Lancer, Colt, L200, Eclipse, Barbarian, Evolution, Grandis, Outlander, Warrior & Mirage
- National Cup Competitions (boys & girls); Schools' Cup (including Shield, Plate, Bowl), Youth Cups

To clarify the basis of the policy and NCR we have provided some additional information around how these fit with the Conference principles.

More players playing more competitive rugby more often
From the outset of the conference programme the concept of *'Two players playing once not one player playing twice'* has been regularly communicated by Scottish Rugby. Although the policy and NCR above do provide some flexibility around the younger age groups, and on non-conference weekends, this principle is vitally important for growing the game through the provision of more meaningful playing opportunities to more young people.

Player welfare at the forefront of all that we do
As part of our commitment to ensuring the game is as safe as possible Scottish Rugby requires clubs and schools to report all serious injuries which has allowed us to identify a spike in the number of serious injuries sustained by players between the ages of 10 and 15. We believe limiting the amount of game time played over a 48-hour period could help reduce this spike while we work with the medical profession to better understand the contributing factors.

Clubs and Schools working together to grow the game and improve the standards of play
Where a player has a history of playing at both a school and club the decision on where that player should play on any given weekend (or 48-hour period) should be made through an open discussion between the player, their parents/legal guardian, the school and the club. Player welfare and development of the player as an individual and as a rugby player, must be at the centre of this decision.

Emphasis based on the long-term player development process
Feedback received from players and coaches through conference surveys suggests players are receiving more training and preparation than ever before and the quality/competitiveness of fixtures delivered by the conference programme is strong. We believe that within the context of a well-rounded development programme one game in a weekend is enough for U16 and U18 players. Rugby is a late specialisation sport and we believe too much too soon can result in burnout which ultimately results in players walking away from our sport. It is also important to manage every game as part of that long term process ensuring that playing experiences have a development aspect to them, with this in mind it is crucial that coaches and teachers manage squads and match circumstances to ensure

that games provide a positive development for children. There is no development in players being resoundingly thumped in a game - make sure you manage the game to ensure this doesn't happen.

Although this policy and NCR will require a degree of self-regulation Scottish Rugby will review team sheets submitted within the conference competitions. Scottish Rugby will also investigate any reports received from schools and clubs about possible bad practice in this area. Any alleged breaches of the policy or NCR 4.4 will be referred to Scottish Rugby's disciplinary and competitions committees as appropriate.